



Maine School Performance Grading System

A-F Report Cards for Schools

Overview

During his State of the State address in February 2013, Governor LePage announced that Maine will introduce a school performance grading system so students, parents, taxpayers and others can easily understand how their schools are doing, just as report cards help parents understand how their kids are doing.

The goals of A-F grading are to provide a starting point, with easy-to-understand and concise information showing how a school is doing, and to make sure that schools are accountable for explaining that to their communities.

No one score or grade tells the whole story of a school. That's why the grading system is based on several factors, including student achievement in reading and math, growth/progress in achievement, and, in particular, the performance and growth of the bottom 25 percent of students (for elementary schools) and the graduation rate (for high schools).

We encourage parents and others to dig deeper by visiting the Education Data Warehouse, which contains multi-year, detailed information about each school and provides the ability to compare a school to others throughout the state using a wide range of measures.

We hope people will use both – the letter grade overview and the details that come with digging into the Data Warehouse – to make determinations about how their schools are doing, and to ask informed questions of their school and district administrators.

We also plan to support struggling schools. Until now, we've only been able to provide that kind of support for underperforming Title I schools because of restrictions on the use of federal improvement funds. Governor LePage's proposed budget includes money for school improvement and support. We'll use this funding to assist underperforming schools with direct funds and with technical assistance.

Maine's grading system

Thirteen other states and New York City have A-F school grading systems in place, with many similarities among them. In seeking a system that would work for Maine, we examined several of these. Florida's was one that was examined closely, but not all elements of Florida's plan work for Maine. We also looked at Oklahoma and Indiana, among others.

From the start, it was clear that the grading system should include student achievement as well as student growth. Absolute performance is essential, but so is helping students improve. For example, if a student starts a school year reading two years below grade level and starts the

next school year only one year below level, that school/teacher helped that student achieve two years of growth in one year. If that happened with many students, it should be reflected in the school's grade. Maine's elementary school grading system also incorporates performance and growth among the bottom 25 percent of students. A school must be held accountable not only for improving overall performance, but also for those students who are struggling or might otherwise fall through the cracks.