

OFFICE OF CHIEF OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
September 15, 2016

OFFICE OF SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

03. Action: Revise the business rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System to include the recommended cut scores beginning in school year 2015-2016 [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan]
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)

Background Information: On August 9, 2016, Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE's) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met and approved the proposed standard setting plan to establish the cut scores for schools and districts in the accountability model. The Accountability Task Force met on August 10, 2016 and participated in a standard setting process for the purpose of making recommendations for cuts scores to the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System beginning in school year 2015-2016. The Commission on School Accreditation met on August 16, 2016 and approved recommended cut scores proposed by the Accountability Task Force.

This item references Goals 1 and 2 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The accountability system is designed to improve student achievement and increase the level of accountability for both school districts and individual schools. The accountability model focuses on student achievement at each school and at the district level. Performance standards have been established, and student assessment data from the statewide assessment program will be used to determine individual school performance classifications and district level performance classifications.

The following specifications for establishing school and district performance standards and accountability requirements are addressed in Sections § 37-18-1 through 7 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*.

The State Board of Education (SBE) shall establish, design, and implement a program for identifying and rewarding public schools that improve. Upon full implementation of the statewide testing program, the State Board of Education shall apply an "A," "B," "C," "D," and "F" designation to the school and school district statewide accountability performance classification labels.

A school shall be identified as a School At-Risk and in need of assistance if the school:

- (a) Does not meet its growth expectation and has a percentage of students functioning below grade level, as designated by the State Board of Education;
- (b) Is designated as a Level 1 School, or other future comparable performance designation by the State Board of Education; or
- (c) Is designated as a Level 2 School, or other future comparable performance designation by the State Board of Education, for two (2) consecutive years.

Note: Section § 37-17-6, as amended in 2013, includes the following definitions for Proficiency and Growth:

The State Department of Education shall establish five (5) performance categories ("A," "B," "C," "D," and "F") for the accountability system based on the following criteria:

- (i) Student Achievement: the percent of students proficient and advanced on the current state assessments
- (ii) Individual Student Growth: the percent of students making one (1) year's progress in one (1) year's time on the state assessment, with an emphasis on the progress of the lowest twenty-five percent (25%) of students in the school or district

INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LEARNERS (EL)

The Mississippi Statewide Assessment System provides procedures to ensure the inclusion of all students in the assessment programs, including a wide range of testing accommodations, instructional level testing on the MCT2 (2013-2014), PARCC (2014-2015), MAP (2015-2016), SATP2, and alternate assessments. The data for students using testing accommodations are treated no differently from any other test data. The scores for students with disabilities taking alternate assessments are included in the achievement and growth components. The weighting procedures in the achievement component ensure that those students count equally within the achievement level assigned to the school.

School districts are allowed to exclude the academic achievement results only for first-year English Learners (EL) students (on a case-by-case basis) from determinations of Mississippi Statewide Accountability System results, consistent with the requirements for ESEA federal accountability.

MISSISSIPPI STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM, EFFECTIVE 2013-2014

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, accountability labels will be assigned based on the following school grading assignments:

Schools (and Districts) with no 12th grade will have seven (7) components, each worth 100 points, totaling 700 possible points:

1. Reading Proficiency
2. Reading Growth – All Students
3. Reading Growth – Lowest Performing Students
4. Math Proficiency
5. Math Growth – All Students
6. Math Growth – Lowest Performing Students
7. Science Proficiency

For schools (and districts) with a grade 12, the following schedule will be used:

During the 2013-2014 school year, schools (and districts) with a grade 12 will have 9 components, totaling 900 possible points:

1. Reading Proficiency (100 points)
2. Reading Growth – All Students (100 points)
3. Reading Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
4. Math Proficiency (100 points)
5. Math Growth – All Students (100 points)
6. Math Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
7. Science Proficiency (50 points)
8. U.S. History Proficiency (50 points)
9. Graduation Rate – All Students (200 points)

During the 2014-2015 school year, schools (and districts) with a grade 12 will have 9 components, totaling 900 possible points:

1. Reading Proficiency (100 points)
2. Reading Growth – All Students (100 points)
3. Reading Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
4. Math Proficiency (100 points)
5. Math Growth – All Students (100 points)
6. Math Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
7. Science Proficiency (50 points)
8. U.S. History Proficiency (50 points)
9. Graduation Rate – All Students (200 points)
10. Deleted

Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, schools (and districts) with a grade 12 will have 11 components, totaling 1000 possible points:

1. Reading Proficiency (100 points)
2. Reading Growth – All Students (100 points)
3. Reading Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
4. Math Proficiency (100 points)
5. Math Growth – All Students (100 points)
6. Math Growth – Lowest Performing Students (100 points)
7. Science Proficiency (50 points)
8. U.S. History Proficiency (50 points)
9. Graduation Rate – All Students (200 points)
10. College & Career Readiness (Math 50% and English/Reading 50%) (50 points)

(Note: The CCR component is contingent upon legislative funding.)

11. Acceleration (Participation and Performance Combined) on the following sliding scale:
 - a. Year 1 (2015-2016): Participation - 70%/Performance - 30% (50 points)
 - b. Year 2 (2016-2017): Participation - 60%/Performance - 40% (50 points)
 - c. Year 3 (2017-2018) and beyond: Participation - 50%/Performance - 50% (50 points)

Mississippi Statewide Accountability System: Business Rules

1. Assignment of Grade Classifications

- 1.1 Standards for student, school, and school district performance will be increased when student proficiency is at a seventy-five percent (75%) and/or when sixty-five percent (65%) of schools and/or districts are earning a grade of "B" or higher, in order to raise the standard on performance after targets are met. (§ 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 1.2 Grades for schools (and districts) with no 12th grade (elementary/middle schools) will be determined based on the following cut-points effective with the 2015 - 2016 school year:

	A	≥	518
455	≤	B	< 518
400	≤	C	< 455
325	≤	D	< 400
	F	<	325
	A	≥	<u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>63rd Percentile*</u>	≤	B	< <u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>38th Percentile*</u>	≤	C	< <u>63rd Percentile*</u>
<u>14th Percentile*</u>	≤	D	< <u>38th Percentile*</u>
	F	<	<u>14th Percentile*</u>

*Numerical values will replace percentiles following the appeals' decisions and the final calculations of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

- 1.3 Grades for schools ~~(and districts)~~ with a 12th grade will be determined based on the following cut-points effective with the 2015 - 2016 school year ~~for the 2013-2014 school year:~~

	A	≥	695
623	≤	B	< 695
540	≤	C	< 623
422	≤	D	< 540
	F	<	422
	A	≥	<u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>63rd Percentile*</u>	≤	B	< <u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>38th Percentile*</u>	≤	C	< <u>63rd Percentile*</u>
<u>14th Percentile*</u>	≤	D	< <u>38th Percentile*</u>
	F	<	<u>14th Percentile*</u>

*Numerical values will replace percentiles following the appeals' decisions and the final calculations of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

- 1.4 Grades for districts will be determined based on the following cut-points effective with the 2015 - 2016 school year:

	A	≥	<u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>63rd Percentile*</u>	≤	B	< <u>90th Percentile*</u>
<u>38th Percentile*</u>	≤	C	< <u>63rd Percentile*</u>
<u>14th Percentile*</u>	≤	D	< <u>38th Percentile*</u>
	F	<	<u>14th Percentile*</u>

*Numerical values will replace percentiles following the appeals' decisions and the final calculations of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

~~Cut-points for schools with a 12th grade will be reset with the implementation of the College & Career Readiness component and the Acceleration component.~~

- 1.5 Assignment of district grades will be calculated by treating the district as one (1) large school based on the same grading assignments used for schools.
- 1.6 Cut-points for schools/districts will be reviewed following the implementation of a new assessment.

2. Full Academic Year (FAY)

- 2.1 In order for a student to meet Full Academic Year (FAY) and be included in the proficiency and growth calculations, he/she must have been enrolled (regardless of attendance) for at least 75% ($\geq 75\%$) of the days from September 1 (of school year) to the first day of testing. This date will be published yearly by the MDE and will be the same for all schools, students, and assessments. For schools on a traditional school calendar, the date will be in the spring.
Note: 74.5% will not be rounded up to 75%.
 - 2.1.1 Enrollment is defined as enrollment at the school/district level except for students in 4x4 block scheduled courses.
- 2.2 For students in 4x4 block scheduled courses, FAY for the Fall semester will be calculated from September 1 of the school year to the first day of Fall primary test administration. The specific date will be published yearly by MDE. FAY for the Spring semester will be calculated from February 1 to the first day of Spring testing, the same day as schools using a traditional school calendar. These dates will be published yearly by MDE.
- 2.3 The beginning and ending dates will be included in the calculations. Calculations will be based on calendar days, not instructional days. Weekends and holidays will be included in the calculations.
- 2.4 If a student meets FAY at a school other than the school where he/she is enrolled at the time of testing, his/her scores will count at the school where he/she met FAY.
- 2.5 This definition of FAY will not be applied to students for previous years where a previous definition of FAY was applied. In the event that no FAY was calculated for a student in a previous year, this method will be applied.
- 2.6 FAY will be calculated at the school level as well as at the district level. Therefore, it is possible for a student who transfers within a district to meet FAY for a district and be included in the calculations for the grade assignment for the district but not be included in the calculations for a school. Scores of all students will be included in the state level calculations regardless of FAY status.
- 2.7 If a student enrolls and withdraws in the same or different school on the same day, the student will be considered as having been enrolled for one (1) day in the receiving school.
- 2.8 (Deleted) Rule 2.9 supersedes.
- 2.9 If FAY cannot be calculated or discerned because of incorrect MSIS coding, the student will be forced to meet FAY at the school/district if the movement of the student appears to be within the same school/district.
- 2.10 If a student drops out of school and re-enrolls within the same school year, the re-entry date of the student will be included as the next enrollment date for the student.

3. N-Count Minimums

- 3.1 School Totals
 - 3.1.1 In order for a school to earn a grade, the school must have a minimum of ten (10) valid test scores in each of the required components. Schools that do not have the minimum of ten (10) valid test scores for each of the components but meet the 95% minimum participation requirements, the available data will be reported but the school will not receive a grade. If a school does not meet the minimum of ten (10) valid test scores requirement because they do not meet the 95% minimum participation requirement, the school will receive a grade based on the available data for each component. (See Sections 22 and 24 for exceptions to this rule.)
- 3.2 Lowest Performing Students Subgroup N-Count Minimums

- 3.2.1 This subgroup must have a minimum of ten (10) valid test scores. If there are less than ten (<10) students in the Lowest Performing Students subgroup, the subgroup will consist of All students except for the students scoring at the highest achievement level. If this calculation still results in a number less than ten (<10), then ALL students will be included in the calculation of the Lowest Performing Students subgroup.
- 3.2.2 At the grade-level, a minimum of four (4) students with valid scale scores are required to identify the Lowest Performing Students. If a grade has less than four (<4) students with valid scale scores for the subject, there will be no students identified as being in the Lowest Performing Students for that grade level for that subject.

Note: See Section 7 for more information on the Lowest Performing Students subgroup.

4. Participation Rates

- 4.1 If a school/district does not meet the 95% minimum participation rate, the school/district will automatically be dropped a letter grade. Although subgroup participation rates will be reported, this penalty will apply to the overall participation rate only. (A 94.5% participation rate will not be rounded to 95%.)
- 4.2 Elementary schools with no assessments (K, 1, and 2) will not be assigned a participation rate. Therefore, these schools will not be impacted by the participation rate minimum requirements.
- 4.3 Students may be removed from the denominator of testing participation calculations if he/she meets the criteria set forth by the Office of Student Assessment as having a Significant Medical Emergency which made participation in the state testing impossible. For details regarding the definition of Significant Medical Emergency and the process of requesting a student be removed from the calculations, please contact the Office of Student Assessment.
- 4.4 High School participation rates will be calculated based on the Senior Snapshot. Data from all statewide high school level end-of-course assessments required for graduation will be used in the participation calculations.
 - 4.4.1 For the 2013-2014 school year, the Senior Snapshot process used for calculating participation rates in high school level end-of-course assessments will remain consistent with previous years. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, U.S. History will be included in the participation rate calculations. (Refer to rule 4.5 for additional clarification.)
- 4.5 Students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) with no U.S. History assessment scores will be removed from the denominator for the participation rate calculation for U.S. History.
- 4.6 If and when the ACT assessment becomes a state required assessment, it will be included in the participation rate calculations. (See Section 25.)
- 4.7 If a student is expelled but is still enrolled in MSIS for the school/district during the testing window, he/she will be included in the denominator. If the student does not test, the student will count as “not tested.”

5. Proficiency

- 5.1 Proficiency will be determined by the percentage of students who achieve a performance/proficiency of Proficient and above. No additional credit will be given for students scoring in a performance/proficiency level above proficient (e.g., “Advanced”). No partial credit will be given for students scoring in any performance level below proficient.
 - 5.1.1 For proficiency components worth fifty (50) points, the weighted percentage of students proficient will be multiplied times 0.5 to determine the points applied to the component.
 - 5.1.2 The science proficiency component for schools with a 12th grade will be based on all science assessments administered at that school. Therefore, for schools with a 12th grade that also have a 5th and/or 8th grade, the science component for that school will still be worth fifty (50) points.
- 5.2 Assessments included in the proficiency calculations will consist of all federally-required statewide assessments in Reading/Language Arts/English, Mathematics and Science, and any

additional high school level end-of-course assessments required for graduation. This includes all Alternate Assessments based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS) for SCD students. (This rule will need to be reviewed with the implementation of any new statewide assessments.)

6. Growth

- 6.1 Growth is determined by whether or not a student increases in performance/proficiency levels from one (1) year to the next based on the following criteria:
- An increase of ANY performance/proficiency level
 - Staying at the same performance/proficiency that is at or above Proficient from one (1) year to the next
 - An increase within the lowest ~~two (2)~~ three (3) performance/proficiency levels that crosses over the mid-point of the level. (Example: Bottom half of Basic to top half of Basic)

Following the implementation of new assessments, a linking/equating process will be used to establish comparable scales across the new and old assessments and to determine the criteria for meeting growth as defined above.

- 6.2 Additional weight in the numerator is given for the following increases:
- Any increase of two (2) or more performance/proficiency levels will be given a weight = 1.2.
 - Any increase to the highest performance/proficiency level will be given a weight = 1.25.
 - An increase within the highest performance/proficiency level and any other increase is given a weight = 1.

Note: Because additional weight is given, it is mathematically possible for a school or district's growth value to be greater than 100 points for any/all of the four (4) growth components.

- 6.3 Any decrease in performance/proficiency levels = 0.
- 6.4 The lowest ~~two (2)~~ three (3) performance/proficiency levels will be split into half at the mid-point of the range. In the event that the range is an odd number and cannot be split into two (2) equal halves, the lower half of the performance/proficiency level will be one (1) point larger than the upper half. (Example: If the range of the performance/proficiency level is thirteen (13) scale score points, the bottom half of the range will be seven (7) scale score points and the upper half of the range will be six (6) scale score points.)

The splitting of the lowest ~~two (2)~~ three (3) performance/proficiency levels into half at the mid-point range is not intended to create ~~two (2)~~ three (3) new separate performance/proficiency levels. Therefore, students who move from the bottom half of the lowest performance/proficiency level to the bottom half of the second lowest performance/proficiency level will not be given additional weight for increasing two (2) performance/proficiency levels. That student will be considered to have increased one (1) performance/proficiency level.

Note: Rules regarding the splitting of the lowest ~~two (2)~~ three (3) performance/proficiency levels are subject to review and change with the implementation of any new assessments.

- 6.5 Assessments used for calculation of growth will include:
- Grade-level (3-8) assessments in English Language Arts;
 - Grade-level (3-8) assessments in Mathematics;
 - High School level assessments in English Language Arts;
 - High School level assessments in Mathematics;
 - Alternate Assessments (3-8 and High School) in English Language Arts; and
 - Alternate Assessments (3-8 and High School) in Mathematics.

Note: Growth will not be calculated for Science or U.S. History.

- 6.6 Students taking Algebra I in 7th or 8th grade are required by ~~No Child Left Behind (NCLB)~~ Federal regulation to also take the grade-level assessment in mathematics. Therefore, these students will have two (2) growth calculations: grade-level to grade-level and grade-level to Algebra I.

- The grade-level to grade-level growth calculation will be applied to the current school. The grade-level to Algebra I growth calculation will be banked until the student's 10th grade year.
- 6.7 To calculate growth for the High Schools for Math-All Students, Math-Lowest Performing Students, Reading-All Students and Reading-Lowest Performing Students, the 8th grade grade-level assessments will be used as the baseline. The exceptions to this are as follows:
 - If a student takes Algebra I during his/her 8th grade year, his/her 7th grade grade-level assessments will be used as the baseline and banked until the student is in the 10th grade.
 - If a student takes Algebra I in the 7th grade, his/her 6th grade grade-level math assessment will be used as the baseline and banked until the student is in the 10th grade.
 - 6.8 If a student does not have the previous year's grade-level assessment, the student will be excluded from the growth calculation(s) except in the cases of the high school level assessments.
 - 6.9 For students taking high school level assessments in grades lower than 10th grade, growth will be banked until the student's 10th grade year and then applied.
 - 6.10 If a student does not take the required high school level assessments until 11th or 12th grade year, growth will be calculated and applied in the first year he/she has a valid score. The exception to this will be for students taking the alternate assessment. For students taking the alternate assessment, a cap of two (2) years will be applied to the growth calculations. Therefore, if a student takes the alternate assessment in 8th grade and does not take the high school level alternate assessment until 11th or 12th grade, he/she will not be included in the growth calculations.
 - 6.11 Students who are retained in grades 3-8 will have a growth calculation based on the retained grade from the previous year. (Example: A 4th grade student who was retained will have growth calculated based on his/her previous year's 4th grade assessment scores.)
 - 6.12 For K-3 schools, growth of 4th grade students in the district will be used for the growth calculations of the K-3 school in which they met FAY. Growth of the 3rd grade students who are retained will be included with the 4th grade student growth calculations.
 - 6.13 The student must meet FAY for the current year in order to be included in the growth calculations but is not required to meet FAY for the previous year.
 - 6.14 Growth will not be calculated for students who take the Alternate Assessment in the current year but took the grade-level general education assessment the previous year or vice versa.
 - 6.15 The denominator for the growth calculation includes any FAY student with two (2) valid assessment scores (as defined above). The numerator will include any student included in the denominator who has demonstrated growth as defined above, and weighted accordingly.
 - 6.16 After the implementation of the assessments for the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards, if a student comes to Mississippi from another state and has taken the same assessment as the one given in Mississippi, his/her score will be used to calculate growth for the student and the student's growth will be included in the calculations (provided that he/she meets FAY). If the student took an assessment (in another state) that is different from the assessments given in Mississippi, he/she will not have a growth calculation.

7. Lowest Performing Students

- 7.1 Calculation methodology for students whose baseline assessment score is 3rd – 7th grade:
 - 7.1.1 The Lowest Performing Students subgroup in reading and the Lowest Performing Students subgroup in mathematics are determined using the same method but applied separately to reading data and to mathematics data. The procedure used to identify the lowest performing the students in a school is applied separately by grade, and the identified students are combined across all grades to comprise the Lowest Performing Students subgroup and to determine learning gains.

Note: The Lowest Performing Students subgroup will be determined by identifying the percentage (e.g., 25%) of students, as defined by MS Code 37-17-6, who are the lowest performing students in a given subject area.

The process:

1. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the scores of all students participating in the general education and alternate assessments will be standardized by subject area, grade level, assessment type, and school year.
2. Sort the standardized scores of all FAY students in a grade from highest to lowest based on their prior year standardized scores. Students without an eligible score from the previous year are not included. (See Section 6. Growth and Rule 7.1.3 for additional clarification.)
3. Divide the number of students in the list by four (4).^{*} If the result is not a whole number, then automatically round up to meet the 25% minimum.
4. Count, from the lowest score up, the number of students identified in step 3. Then identify the standardized score that corresponds to that student. This standardized score becomes the boundary score.
5. Identify all students with the boundary score determined in step 4. All students with the same boundary score or lower standardized score will be included in the Lowest Performing Students subgroup for that subject/grade.
6. Repeat the process for each grade for the subject then combine students to form the Lowest Performing Students subgroup for the school for the subject.

Note: The number of students in the Lowest Performing Students subgroup must meet the minimum n-count as defined in Section 3.2. If the minimum n-count is not met, the rules outlined in Section 3.2 will be applied. (See Section 3 for more details on N-Count minimums.)

It is possible for the Lowest Performing Students subgroup to be more than 25% when steps 5 and 6 are applied.

7.1.2 Deleted

7.1.3 The Lowest Performing Students subgroup for schools whose highest grade is lower than fourth grade will be identified based on the students who attended the school, not based on their fourth grade school's Lowest Performing Students subgroup. Therefore, a student may be identified in the Lowest Performing Students subgroup in one (1) school, but not the other.

7.2 The Lowest Performing Students subgroup for a district will be identified using the same method described above [i.e., the district will be calculated as if it were one (1) school]. Therefore, it is possible that some students may be identified as members of the Lowest Performing Students subgroup for their school but not for their district, or for their district but not their school.

7.3 The Lowest Performing Students subgroup for the state will be identified using the same method [i.e., the state will be calculated as if it were one (1) school].

7.4 Deleted

8. Graduation Rate

8.1 The federally-approved four-year graduation rate will be used. (SECTION 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)

Definition: The number of students who graduate in four (4) years from a school and LEA with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered four (4) years earlier as first-time 9th graders, with adjustments for deaths, emigration, and transfers in and out. Ninth grade students who repeat 9th grade will stay in their original cohort.

Definition: A "regular high school diploma" is the standard high school diploma that is fully aligned with the state's academic content standards. No exceptions are made for students with disabilities (SCD students or non-SCD students) or students receiving an occupational diploma, GED, certificate of attendance, etc.

8.2 Deleted

8.3 The schools/district graduation rate will be multiplied by 2.0 to calculate the points applied to the graduation component for schools/districts.

^{*} The Mississippi Statewide Accountability System determines 25% of the student population by multiplying the number of students by 0.25.

- 8.4 The methodology used for the calculation of the graduation rates for schools/districts are outlined in the Graduation Rates Technical Manual.
- 8.5 The school/district graduation rate applied in the graduation component is lagged one year.

9. Acceleration

- 9.1 Beginning in school year 2015-2016, high schools will have an Acceleration component in their calculations.
- 9.2 The Acceleration component refers to the percentage of students taking and passing the assessment associated with the accelerated courses such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), or SBE-approved industry certification courses. For students taking dual credit and dual enrollment courses, passing refers to students who are passing the course with a "C" or above. For AP courses, the student must score at least 3 on the AP exam. For IB courses, the student must score at least 4 on the IB exam. For AICE courses, the student must obtain a passing score on the exam. (Passing scores of "A", "B", "C", "D", and "E" on the AICE exams are not based on the American "A-F" grading scale.) For industry certification courses, the student must pass the exam.
- 9.2.1 College courses must be credit-bearing courses with a minimum of three (3) semester hours credit and may be in any subject/content area.
- 9.3 The Acceleration component will consist of a Participation and a Performance component. These two (2) components will be combined for one (1) score worth fifty (50) points and phased in on the following sliding scale:
- Year 1 (2015-2016): $(\text{Participation-70\%/Performance-30\%}) \div 2$
 - Year 2 (2016-2017): $(\text{Participation-60\%/Performance-40\%}) \div 2$
 - Year 3 (2017-2018) and beyond: $(\text{Participation-50\%/Performance-50\%}) \div 2$
- 9.4 Calculation of Participation
- 9.4.1 The numerator for the Participation component calculation will be the number of students taking accelerated courses and/or related exams such as AP, IB, AICE, dual credit, dual enrollment, or industry certification courses based on the definition above.
- 9.4.2 The denominator for the Participation component calculation shall include all students not identified as Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SCD) students whose Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) grade or peer-grade equivalent is 11th or 12th grade plus any 9th or 10th grade students who are taking and passing these assessments/courses ~~plus any 11th or 12th grade SCD students who are taking and passing these assessments/courses.~~ (9th and 10th grade students ~~and SCD students~~ will not be included in the denominator unless they are also included in the numerator.)
- 9.4.3 Students participating in multiple accelerated courses during the same school year will be given additional weighting in the numerator as follows:
- 2 courses: 1.1
 - 3 courses: 1.2
 - 4 courses: 1.3
 - 5 courses: 1.4
- 9.5 Calculation of Performance
- 9.5.1 The numerator for the Performance component calculation will be the number of students taking and passing accelerated assessments/courses such as AP, IB, AICE, dual credit, dual enrollment, or industry certification courses based on the definition above.
- 9.5.2 The denominator for the Performance component calculation will consist of all students participating in the courses and/or tests identified in the participation calculations.
- 9.5.3 Students who are enrolled in accelerated courses but do not take the required assessment will be considered as "not proficient" in the performance calculations.

- 9.6 For students taking and passing multiple courses, the additional weighting used in the participation calculations will be applied.
- 9.7 In the calculation of participation, Students who take an accelerated course during their 11th grade year but do not take an accelerated course during their 12th grade year will be counted in the denominator both years, but in the numerator during their 11th grade year only.
- 9.8 FAY requirements will not be applied to the participation or proficiency calculations in the Acceleration component.

10. Banking Scores: High school end-of-course assessments taken before 10th grade

- 10.1 Scores of students taking Algebra I, Biology I, English II, or U.S. History end-of-course assessments in a grade below 10th grade will be “banked” for proficiency/achievement and growth calculations until the student is in the 10th grade and then applied to the student’s 10th grade school (if the student met FAY requirements the year he/she was assessed and during his/her 10th grade year). (See Section 6 for additional clarification on Growth.)
- 10.2 If a student transfers out of the district before or during their 10th grade year, his/her scores (achievement and growth) will not be applied to the school of origin or receiving school in the new district.

Note: Refer to Section 4 (Participation) and 6 (Growth) for additional information.

11. Focus Schools

- 11.1 Schools identified as “D” or “F” schools for two (2) consecutive years and not identified as “Priority” will be identified as “Focus” schools. (SECTION § 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 11.2 If at least 10% of the schools in the state are not graded as “D” schools, the lowest 10% of schools, which are not already identified as Priority Schools, will be identified as Focus Schools. (SECTION § 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 11.3 Beginning with the 2013-2014 grade assignments, any school designated as “Focus” will implement Focus School interventions for a minimum of two (2) years. If the school’s grade level improves, the school will take the higher grade level but continue to be considered as a “Focus School” for federal reporting and will continue to implement the Focus school interventions for the two-year minimum.

12. Priority Schools

- 12.1 Schools identified as “F” schools for two (2) consecutive years will also be identified as “Priority” schools. (SECTION § 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 12.2 If at least 5% of the schools in the state are not graded as “F” schools, the lowest 5% of school grade point designees will be identified as Priority Schools. (SECTION § 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
- 12.3 Beginning with the 2013-2014 grade assignments, any school designated as “Priority” will implement Priority School interventions for a minimum of three (3) years. If the school’s grade level improves, the school will take the higher grade level but continue to be considered as a “Priority School” for federal reporting and will continue to implement the Priority school interventions for the three-year minimum.

13. Reward Schools

- 13.1 Schools identified as “A” schools will also be identified as “Reward” schools. (§ 37-17-6, MS CODE OF 1972)
 - 13.1.1 Any school also meeting the federal criteria for “Reward-High Progress” or “Reward-High Performing” will be recognized.

14. Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

- 14.1 AMOs will be reported for federal requirements but will not be factored into the calculations for the assigning of A-F accountability labels.

- 14.1.1 Deleted

15. English Learners (EL)

- 15.1 Scores of English learners (EL) will be included in all calculations (e.g., Proficiency, Growth—All Students, Growth—Lowest Performing Students) UNLESS the district requests that the scores of an English learner who has attended a U.S. school for less than 12 months be excluded. The scores of English learners who have attended a U.S. school for less than 12 months will only be included in the participation calculations. (For more information on English learners who have attended a U.S. school for less than 12 months, contact the Office of Federal Programs.)

- 15.1.1 LEAs must identify English learner students, who have attended a U.S. school for less than 12 months, to be designated for exclusion on or before February 1, annually. (For more information, contact the Office of Federal Programs.)

- 15.1.2 Deleted

- 15.1.3 Any English learner student whose scores are excluded based on rule 15.1 will have their score invalidated in the accountability calculations. Therefore, the score will NOT be used the following year as a baseline for any growth calculations.

16. Students with Disabilities

- 16.1 United States Department of Education (ED) regulations limit the number of scores of children taking alternate assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) scoring proficient or above to 1% of the students at the state and district level. This rule does not apply at the school level because these regulations recognize that some schools offer specialized services or are near specialized medical facilities that attract higher numbers of students with significant special needs. Therefore, if a district has >1% of their total population scoring proficient or above on an alternate assessment, the percent above 1% will be adjusted.

- 16.2 All eligible SCD students will be expected to participate in statewide assessments per the schedule provided by the Office of Student Assessment. (This rule will need to be updated and revised with the implementation of any new alternate assessment.)

- 16.3 Non-SCD students are not allowed to participate in alternate assessments. If any such students have alternate assessment data, the test data will be considered not valid.

- 16.4 Students with disabilities will be those students whose SPED indicator in MSIS is "Y" (Yes) at the end of month 8 (closest approximation to the test administration dates).

- 16.4.1 In order for a student to be counted as SCD, his/her SCD indicator and SPED indicator must be set to "Y" (Yes) in MSIS.

- 16.5 Students with disabilities who are coded as "ungraded" (56 or 58) in MSIS will be assigned a peer-grade calculation based on his/her age on September 1 of the current school year.

17. Duplicate Test Scores

- 17.1 If a student takes the general education (grade-level) assessment AND the alternate assessment, the scores from the general education assessment will be used in the school/district accountability calculations.

- 17.2 If MSIS records indicate two (2) valid assessment scores for the same assessment in the same year, the score from the first administration date will be used. In the event that MSIS records indicate two (2) valid assessment scores for the same assessment on the same date, the higher of the two (2) scores will be used in the school/district accountability calculations.

18. Invalid Test Scores

- 18.1 Students with invalid test scores will be counted as "not tested" for participation calculations. The first VALID test score will be used in the proficiency, growth, and participation calculations.

- 18.2 If an invalid score is validated after the accountability calculations are performed and final school/district grade classifications have been assigned, the school/district's grade classifications will not be recalculated and adjusted to reflect the validated score. If during the next year, the student tests again and has a valid test score, that test score, although it was not the student's first test score, will be used during the next year's calculations. Please refer to the Office of Student Assessment regarding deadlines for appealing invalid test scores.
- 18.3 If a student's MSIS grade level (or peer grade level for ungraded students) does not match his/her assessment grade level, the student's scores will not be included in the numerator for participation, growth, or proficiency calculations. (The student will count as not proficient, not meeting growth, and not tested.) Likewise, the student's scores will not be used the following year in growth calculations.
- Note: This rule does not apply to high school end-of-course assessments or high school alternate assessments.

19. **Rounding**

- 19.1 In the calculation of each of the components in the accountability system that are reported to schools, the final value of each component will be rounded to one (1) decimal place (tenths place). After the components are summed, the total value will be rounded to a whole number and reported for the final grade value calculation.

Example:

Reading Proficiency	80.5
Reading Growth – All Students	80.5
Reading Growth – Lowest Performing Students	80.5
Math Proficiency	80.5
Math Growth – All Students	80.5
Math Growth – Lowest Performing Students	80.5
Science Proficiency	80.5
Total Score	564

Note: Other rounding rules are embedded in the explanations of the specific components.

20. **School Reconfigurations or Redrawing of District Lines**

- 20.1 A school's accountability calculations will be based on the grade configuration of the school (and the students in that school) on the date that corresponds with the Full Academic Year rules at the time of testing. (See Section 2 for details on Full Academic Year.) The calculations are applied to the school the following year, regardless of any reconfigurations or redistricting that takes place during the summer after testing or during the school year before testing.
- 20.2 Consolidated districts/schools who maintain the same grade configuration and/or student population as existing in the previous school district will receive the eligible scores or statuses of students who previously attended the school in the previous school district.

21. **Alternative, Career, Technical, and Vocational Schools**

- 21.1 No school grades or differentiated accountability labels will be assigned to alternative, career, technical, and/or vocational schools. Scores of students attending these schools will be included in the school grade of the student's official MSIS home school of enrollment.

22. **Schools without Tested Subjects or Grades**

- 22.1 Elementary/Middle Schools
- 22.1.1 Any elementary/middle school that does not have reading or math scores because the school does not have the required grade level, the scores from the students in the next

higher grade in the tested subject within the same district will be applied back to the student's lower elementary school of origin. In order for the scores to be applied, the student must meet FAY at the lower grade school, the current school and if there is a gap in years, anywhere in the district for the years in between.

Example 1, K-2 School:

- Reading and Math Proficiency - The reading and math scores from students in grade 3 who attended the K-2 school and are still in the same district will be used to calculate the math and reading proficiency for that K-2 school.
- Science Proficiency - An equating process will be used to adjust the scores for this component.
- Growth - The reading and math scores from students in grade 4 who attended the K-2 school and are still in the same district will be used to calculate the growth for Reading-All Students, Math-All Students, Reading-Lowest Performing Students, and Math-Lowest Performing Students for that K-2 school. The students would have to have met FAY in
 - the K-2 school during 2nd grade,
 - the 4th grade school in the same district, and
 - any school within the same district during 3rd grade.

Example 2, K-3 School:

- Reading and Math Proficiency - The reading and math scores from students in grade 3 at the school will be used to calculate the math and reading proficiency for that K-3 school.
- Science Proficiency - An equating process will be used to adjust the scores for this component.
- Growth - The reading and math scores from students in grade 4 who attended the K-3 school and are still in the same district will be used to calculate the growth for Reading-All Students, Math-All Students, Reading-Lowest Performing Students, and Math-Lowest Performing Students for that K-3 school.
- All applicable FAY rules will apply.

Example 3, K-4 School:

- Reading and Math Proficiency - The reading and math scores from students in grades 3 and 4 at the school will be used to calculate the math and reading proficiency for that K-4 school.
- Science Proficiency - An equating process will be used to adjust the scores for this component.
- Growth - The reading and math scores from students in grades 3 and 4 at the school will be used to calculate the growth for Reading-All Students, Math-All Students, Reading-Lowest Performing Students, and Math-Lowest Performing Students for that K-3 school.
- All applicable FAY rules will apply.

Example 4, 6-7 School:

- Reading and Math Proficiency - The reading and math scores from students in grades 6 and 7 at the school will be used to calculate the math and reading proficiency for that 6-7 school.
- Science Proficiency - An equating process will be used to adjust the scores for this component.
- Growth - The reading and math scores from students in grades 6 and 7 at the school will be used to calculate the growth for Reading-All Students, Math-All

Students, Reading-Lowest Performing Students, and Math-Lowest Performing Students for that 6-7 school.

- All applicable FAY rules will apply.

22.1.2 An equating process to adjust the points required will be used for elementary/middle schools that do not have science scores because the school does not have a 5th or 8th grade.

22.1.3 Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the cut-points established for elementary/middle schools that do not have science scores will remain static in succeeding years. The cut-points will be reviewed following the administration of a new assessment.

22.2 High Schools

22.2.1 Schools with missing data for components specific to high schools (U.S. History, graduation rates, etc.) will have proxy data (i.e., district average, historical average, etc.) applied if available. If no proxy data is available, an equating process will be used to adjust for the missing components.

22.3 Schools with only Pre-Kindergarten and/or Kindergarten will not be assigned a school grade label.

23. *State and Other Special Schools*

23.1 Mississippi School of the Arts (MSA) and Mississippi School for Math and Science (MSMS)

23.1.1 The Mississippi School of the Arts and Mississippi School for Math and Science will not earn grades.

23.1.2 If a student takes a high school end-of-course assessment for the first time while at MSA or MSMS, his/her scores will be sent back to their school/district of origin and rolled into the state totals.

23.1.3 (Pending the implementation of the College Readiness component) Students enrolled at MSA and/or MSMS during the time of the Senior Snapshot will have their ACT scores sent to their high school of origin.

23.1.4 For students enrolled at MSMS or MSA, the school/district of origin is defined as the school/district where the student was enrolled and met FAY requirements in the school year immediately prior to enrollment at MSMS or MSA.

23.2 Mississippi School for the Blind (MSB) and the Mississippi School for the Deaf (MSD)

23.2.1 The Mississippi School for the Blind and the Mississippi School for the Deaf will not earn grades but will have results reported to meet federal regulations. (Minimum N-counts and FAY rules will apply.) (Pending technical amendment to SB2396)

23.3 Other State/Special Schools

23.3.1 State agencies (i.e., Hudspeth, Ellisville State School, etc.) will not earn grades.

23.3.2 Students placed in non-public schools (special private schools; i.e., Millcreek, CARES, etc.) but are enrolled in regular Mississippi public schools will have their scores included in the calculations of the school/district in which he/she is enrolled in MSIS.

23.3.3 Students enrolled in schools 200 and 500 have no enrollment and are not used for any of the usual statistical and reporting purposes. If a student is enrolled in a public school during the testing window, he/she would have to be tested (and counted in the testing participation rates) and his/her score (if FAY) would be used for accountability purposes.

23.4 Students in Correctional Facilities/Juvenile Justice System

23.4.1 According to the USDE, these facilities are considered “programs” not schools and would not be assigned accountability labels.

23.4.2 If a student, who is still enrolled in MSIS, is in such a program and is not tested, the student will count as “not tested” in the participation rate calculations of the school/district. If the student is tested, his/her scores will count at his/her MSIS resident school.

23.5 Virtual Public Schools

23.5.1 Only schools classified under the U.S. Department of Education’s EDEN (Education Data Exchange Network) reporting requirements as a separate school entity will receive a grade.

24. 9th Grade Only Schools

24.1 Scores of a 9th grade only school will be combined with the high school to which that school feeds and calculated as one (1) school but reported as two (2) separate schools. In other words, both schools will earn the same school grade because it will be based on the same data calculations.

25. College & Career Readiness Indicator

The College & Career Readiness component will be dependent on legislative action. The following rules will apply only if the state legislature mandates statewide ACT testing and appropriates funding for such testing.

25.1 The ACT will be used as the College & Career Readiness Indicator.

25.2 The College & Career Readiness component will be comprised of a Mathematics and an English/Reading component. These two (2) components will be equally weighted and combined for one (1) score worth fifty (50) points: $(\text{Math} + \text{English/Reading}) \div 2$

25.3 A student will be included in the numerator for Mathematics if he/she is considered College & Career Ready in Mathematics by having a score on the Mathematics component of the ACT at or above the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for the Mathematics component at the time of the student’s assessment.

25.4 A student will be included in the numerator for English/Reading if he/she is considered College & Career Ready in English/Reading by having a score on the English component of the ACT at or above the ACT College Readiness Benchmark OR if his/her score on the Reading component of the ACT is at or above the ACT College Readiness Benchmark at the time of the student’s assessment.

Note: As of September 1, 2013, the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are as follows: English - 18; Reading - 22; and Mathematics - 22.

25.5 Science ACT sub-scores will not be included in the College & Career Readiness component.

25.6 ACT Composite scores will not be included in the College & Career Readiness component. (Rationale: ACT does not designate a composite score to indicate college readiness.)

25.7 The highest sub-score for each student (at the time of the Senior Snapshot) in Mathematics and English/Reading, as described above, will be used in the College & Career Readiness Indicator accountability calculations.

25.7.1 Students included in the Senior Snapshot will have until February (pending availability of data) of the academic year to participate in the ACT and have their highest subscores in English/Reading and Mathematics included in the College and Career Readiness Component.

25.8 Contingent upon legislative funding, the state will pay for one (1) statewide ACT administration to be held in the spring for students classified in MSIS as juniors. Ungraded students whose birthdates link them to the cohort of students identified as juniors will also be included. Students may take the ACT as many additional times as they choose, at their own expense.

25.9 Students identified in MSIS as SCD will not be required to participate but may participate if the IEP committee deems it appropriate.

- 25.10 The ACT scores of all students identified in the Senior Snapshot will be included in the calculation except students identified in MSIS as SCD. However, if a student identified in MSIS as SCD takes the ACT, his/her score will be included in the calculations.
- 25.11 A student's score will be applied to the school in which the student is enrolled in MSIS at the time of the Senior Snapshot.
- 25.12 No other assessments will be allowed as a substitution for the ACT in the College & Career Readiness component.
- 25.13 The participation rate numerator will include the state administration or non-state administration of the ACT. The denominator will include all students in the Senior Snapshot.
- 25.14 The denominator for the College and Career Readiness component calculation will consist of all students participating in the ACT as identified in the participation calculations.

26. Senior Snapshot

The Senior Snapshot (SS) is a method of identifying high school students for the high school assessment participation rate calculation required by the ED. Because students may take the high school level assessment at any time during high school to meet federal regulations, MDE uses this method to capture the status of students before the end of their fourth year in high school. The SS captures ALL students who have been enrolled in a MS public school for three (3) years (grades 10-12). If the student does not meet the three-year enrollment criteria, he/she will not be included in the denominator for participation rate calculations.

27. Other

- 27.1 Deceased Students
 - 27.1.1 Students indicated in MSIS as deceased will not be included in any accountability calculations.
- 27.2 Foreign Exchange Students
 - 27.2.1 For school year 2013-2014, foreign exchange students will automatically be included in accountability calculations just as any other students. However, if a school/district wishes to have a foreign exchange student excluded from the accountability calculations, the request should be made through the Internal Review Process.
 - 27.2.2 Deleted

PROPOSED REVISION OF MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

APA COMMENTS

August 19, 2016– September 13, 2016

APA Comments Summary Chart

Rule	Narrative of Rule	Topic	Comments		
			Supporting	Concerns	Total
Business Rules	The proposed revisions would change the MS Statewide Accountability System to include the recommended cut scores beginning in school year 2015-2016.	Revision of business rules of the MS Statewide Accountability System	0	139	139
	TOTAL COMMENTS		0	139	139

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

APA Comments Summary Chart

Role	Number of Commenters
Superintendents/Conservators	9
Assistant Superintendents	1
District School Board Members	
Teachers	35
Librarians/Media Specialists	
Federal Programs Directors	
Curriculum Directors	3
Special Education Directors	
Principals	2
Assistant Principals	1
Vocational School Directors	
Other District Personnel	3
Instructional Specialists/Academic Coaches	
Advocacy Groups	8
MDE Offices	
Citizens (Parents)	70
Unknown	2
State Organizations	
TOTAL	134

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New Law for School Rating
Date: Monday, September 05, 2016 10:27:39 AM

I protest the proposed new law as it certainly hurts public schools funding. I understand only 10% of the state public schools can have an "A" rating, regardless of how well they did on their testing. And each year, 14% of the public schools have to be rated "F", regardless of how much they have improved.

I understand Senator Tollison got a bill passed this year that allows Private Charter Schools to take students and school tax dollars from any F, D or C school district without board approval.

This all seems designed to help private charter schools at the expense of public schools and is a reward to campaign donors.

DO NOT VOTE FOR THIS BILL!! Put education first!

Harry Addington

[REDACTED]

From: [Sherry Akins](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 11:38:57 AM

I do not agree with the newest concept concerning scoring schools after state testing, The State Board of Education needs to reevaluate their ideas and thinking processes because it makes no sense. That would be the same as me telling my students only 10% could make an A, even though half actually did. Would it be fair? And what would parents say if I gave 14% an F when no one had actually earned an F?

From: [Allan Alexander](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed changes to school rating system
Date: Tuesday, September 06, 2016 9:14:03 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I write to express my very strong opposition to the proposed changes for Mississippi's public schools. Please be guided by your consciences instead of private education interests in considering these proposed changes. Mississippi's very future is in your hands on this issue.

Thank you,
Allan Alexander

From: [Shonda](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Re: Fw: A Substantial Change that Affects Your School
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 10:56:29 AM

Dear Mr. Johnson: I am with the Jackson State University ICN, a Computational Chemistry Center.

We are partners with JPS.

Such a rule nullifies the basis of a merit system designed to promote both individual student achievement and statewide school advancement .

We do not approve of such a change.

Please let us know how we may be of further assistance.

Shonda Allen

On Tue, Aug 30, 2016 at 9:11 PM, kjsalone <kjsalone@aol.com> wrote:

This is ridiculous!

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

----- Original message -----

From: "Salone, Kyla" <ksalone@jackson.k12.ms.us>

Date: 8/30/16 9:07 PM (GMT-06:00)

To: kjsalone@aol.com

Subject: Fw: A Substantial Change that Affects Your School

Kyla Salone

Teachers who inspire know that teaching is like cultivating a garden, and those who would have nothing to do with thorns must never attempt to gather flowers.

~Author Unknown~

From: Johnson, Sherwin
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:22:31 PM
To: District Employees
Subject: A Substantial Change that Affects Your School

District Employees,

If you have ever had a teacher to tell you that no matter how well you do in my class, there will always be 14% of you that will make an F and only 10% of you that will make an A, then you understand what this percentile arrangement will do to the districts in Mississippi. In an effort to keep you informed about new changes to the new school rating system, at the request of Superintendent Dr. Cedrick Gray, please take a few moments to review the information below provided by The Parents Campaign. Please send your comments to the name, physical address and/or email address highlighted below.

The State Board of Education has voted in favor of a dramatic change to the school rating system, one that **sets in stone the number of schools and school districts that can be rated in each of the A through F categories in a given year.** Exactly 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve.

This is [very different](#) from the current system, which sets a minimum score that a school or school district must achieve to earn a given rating. Note that the State Board of Education has decided that we should always have 40 percent more Fs than As.

The good news is that the **law requires the Board to accept feedback from the public before such a policy is implemented.** This is your chance to weigh in. Click [here](#) to see the proposed changes, then **send your comments in writing by mail, email, or fax to:**

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director, Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

You may email comments to: accountability@mdek12.org or fax them to [601-359-2471](tel:601-359-2471)

According to the proposed policy, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14% of them would still be assigned an F. Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10% of them would still get an A. This "*Hunger Games*" approach to rating schools discourages collaboration among school districts; for a district to move up a level, another district will have to fall. That is bad for our children and our state.

Please weigh in; your feedback is important. The deadline to submit comments is **5 p.m. on September 13, 2016.** Our scholars are counting on us!

Sherwin Johnson

Executive Director of Public and Media Relations | **Jackson Public School** District
662 South President Street | Jackson, Mississippi 39201
[601.960.8935](tel:601.960.8935): office | [601.960.8810](tel:601.960.8810): fax
sherjohnson@jackson.k12.ms.us | www.jackson.k12.ms.us

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: madison new rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 8:39:33 AM

i am completely against the new rating system that will affect Madison Crossing Elementary. This is not a fair rating system.

Jenifer Ammons

From: [Rims and Judy Barber](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: NEW RATING SYSTEM
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 9:28:52 AM

SIRS: I do not understand the use of arbitrary percentages being set for the various grade levels, particularly the 14% that will be rated "F". I dream of a day when Mississippi has no failing schools. Why do you want to prevent that dream from ever coming true?

RIMS BARBER

Chair, Mississippi Human Services Coalition

From: [Claiborne Barksdale](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Re: Proposed School Rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 1:58:32 PM

A follow-up: my math was wrong. Roughly 20 districts would be rated F, regardless of their performance.

Claiborne Barksdale

Sent from my iPad

> On Aug 29, 2016, at 6:08 PM, Claiborne Barksdale <barksdac@msreads.org> wrote:

>

> It is my understanding that the proposed rating system would create a bell curve whereby no more than 10% of districts would be A rated, and no fewer than 14% would be F rated. I do not understand the rationale for such an arbitrary system.

>

> Carry this to its logical conclusion. Suppose, for example, that all districts knocked the roof off of the assessments, etc., with terrific growth among the previous year's lowest performing students. Regardless, under the proposed system, the lowest 14% of the districts - currently 6 such districts - would still be rated F. This arbitrary system makes no sense. Good luck to the school boards, superintendents, administrators and teachers trying to convince the parents, etc, that, despite the F rating, they really did well.

>

> Please reconsider this.

>

> Claiborne Barksdale

>

> Sent from my iPad

From: [Barnes, Mike](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Charter schools
Date: Saturday, September 10, 2016 2:15:25 PM

Charter schools were a good idea until 'payola' entered the picture. Do you really think that diverting funds from public education will strengthen our outmoded, underfunded, lousy school systems. Setting quotas for performance will kill incentives for improvement. Have you lost your minds. Wouldn't you like to see all systems rated A+, what an achievement that would be. What about voc-tech? Not all kids are college material and would thrive with training in a vocation. As an example, our furniture industry in Mississippi is screaming for qualified workers but can't find them; good paying jobs go wanting because our education system has nothing in place to produce them.

As a college professor for 45 years, I have seen our school systems die on the vine because of bureaucratic mis-steps and politics. Enough is enough. If you can't devise a real fix, then get out of the way and find someone who can.

Respectfully submitted,

HM Barnes, PhD
Starkville

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Jay Hughes](#)
Subject: School rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 7:54:23 AM

My wife and I are vehemently opposed to the proposed draconian policy to take money from public schools and give it to charter schools based on an innate grading system. Do your job to support and foster the public schools of this state and let the charter schools take care of themselves.

Bruce and Mary Betsy Bellande

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Virgil Belue](#)
To: [Accountability](#); [Dr. Phil Burchfield](#); [Nancy Loome](#)
Subject: SCHOOL DISTRICT RATINGS
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 2:39:15 PM

To: Mississippi State Board of Education,

Please reconsider your decision to change the School District Ratings wherein 14% of the school districts would receive a "F." If I understand the present law or policy correctly, a district that receives a "F" rating two years consecutively is subject to a state take over. If this is true, is the state prepared to take over that many school districts ad infinitum? Also, if this is a great grading system, should we require all teachers to give all students in the bottom 14% a failing grade?


Since I have been retired for several years, I may have not stated the above statements correctly. If so, throw this communication in the trash can.

Thank you for your outstanding leadership for the children of the State of Mississippi.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!!

Virgil Belue
Clinton

From: [Susan Benson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Susan Benson](#)
Subject: Proposed Accountability Changes
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:28:02 AM

I am not in favor of having a moving target each year, such as the top 10% being an “**A**” school. We need a specific target or number to strive to achieve. In this model, it is set up as a standardized assessment, but it should be norm referenced. We should be assessed on how well we have taught the curriculum and how well our students have learned what we taught. By setting set scores for each level (A, B, C, D,F) everyone has a chance to excel. Thank you for your consideration of this suggestion.

Dr. Susan Benson, Assistant Superintendent
Jackson County School District
4700 Colonel Vickrey Road
Vanceleave, Mississippi 39565


From: [Regina Biggers](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New accountability proposal
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 6:13:00 PM

Greetings,

I am hoping you can clarify the new accountability for me. The way I understand it, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14% of them would still be assigned an F. Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10% of them would still get an A. Is this correct? I do not understand why our state would take this approach. This seems to me as if it would discourage collaboration among school districts in addition to setting up potentially successful schools for failure. If only 14% of districts can attain an A, this seems it would discourage many districts from even setting their sights on trying. I would appreciate any insight you may have in this area.

Thank you,
Regina Biggers
Elementary Curriculum and Intervention
Scott County School District

From: [Lindsey Binion](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed new school rating system is terrible
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 9:50:06 PM

I thoroughly disapprove of the proposed new school rating system which predetermines the number of schools that can receive each ranking. The only comparisons that should matter in school rankings is how each school's performance compares against its own previous score. Predetermining that more schools should receive F's than A's is setting the system up for failure, as schools' performances in relation to each other is irrelevant. This removes incentive for collaboration among schools and school districts, and the students will suffer for it. Please do not pass this ridiculous new rating system.

Thank you,

Lindsey Binion

From: [Holly Blakeney](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:59:39 AM

This is insane!!!! Who is making such changes? Obviously they have never been in the classroom. As teachers, we are tired of teaching just to the tests. Let us get in our classroom and teach the way we know how to move our children forward, and allow us to get a true score. This change would be crazy!!!! The teachers and students would get so discouraged. Any amount of growth is a big deal!

From: [Christine Bondi](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: proposed changes to schools ratings system
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 8:40:32 AM

I have read the proposed changes to the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System. I am completely opposed to these changes in the school rating system and believe that they would impact the state of education in Mississippi in a very negative way.

Accountability must always be objective. Using a percentile rating system is subjective by definition. We want our schools to teach our students well, and provide them with an effective education that prepares them for college and life beyond high school. Using a percentile rating system would merely assess how each school performs in these areas relative to other schools in the state. It would not assess which schools are effective and which are not. A percentile system would allow schools to be ranked with failing marks, even if effective, under the circumstances in which most schools in the state were effective as well. A percentile system would also allow a completely ineffective school to receive passing or even high marks if that school is merely more effective than other failing schools in the state. It is imperative that all schools in our state are held to the same high standard, and that all schools are given the tools and opportunity to provide the education that our children need to succeed.

Each school in this state must be **objectively** compared to the standards required for an effective school. Every school that meets those standards should be rated accordingly, as should every school that fails to meet those standards. A percentile rating system would subjectively compare the schools only to each other, and would not truly hold each school accountable to its goal.

Please take the opportunity to consider the consequences of these changes before deciding to implement them. Mississippi's schools cannot afford to be sidetracked by an unfair evaluation system that does not hold them to objective standards.

Thank you,

Christine Bondi



From: [Taylor Boone](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Jay Hughes](#)
Subject: New school rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 6:17:44 PM

To whom it may concern better yet to those whom don't care about education:

I am curious about the thought process behind this legislation. As a State, we continue to be dead last or next to last in education year over year. Mississippi is the worst educated state in the Nation and it all starts with our State's leaders.

Imagine if we would rate our leadership in Jackson the same way. I am sorry (name the representative) but you will be removed from office because you have done an outstanding job helping your district grow, be better educated, brought more new industry in, found a way to increase the State's revenue with no cost to the tax payers, and have completely taken all children in your market out of poverty but because we have reached our maximum percentage; we must fire you.

Why in the world are we allowing representatives that do not have children in our public school systems vote on what is best for those families that actually use our schools?

It sounds like our leaders need to be better educated.

IT ALL STARTS WITH EDUCATION.

Taylor Boone
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Gus Bowering](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Accountability Rating System
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:49:18 PM

Having been an educator for 34 years and having worked in the State Department of Education, I'm very concerned over the proposed changes in the school rating system. It appears more and more public funds are being funneled into Charter Schools (which research shows they are not more effective than public schools). Until Charter Schools face equal accountability in evaluations, this proposal should be revisited and/or tabled!

From: [Dill, Stacy](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New rating system
Date: Sunday, September 04, 2016 6:06:19 PM

I am not sure who suggested this new school rating scale that has been compared to The Hunger Games fixed system. I have always achieved high test scores with my students. When I heard that a fixed number of schools will fall into each of the A-F ratings regardless of how well or how poorly they perform, I literally got sick to my stomach. What is the reasoning behind this new way of rating our schools? I am sad to see what may happen to Mississippi schools. I will leave the profession if this is passed or approved of. What has happened to education overall in America?

Stacy Bozeman
Montessori Teacher 6-9
McWillie Elementary School
Jackson Public Schools

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: State Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 1:04:44 PM

The Mississippi Board of Education 5-Year Strategic Plan 2016-2020 stated under goal #6-Every School and District is Rated "C" or Higher. How is that possible if 14% must be rated "F" regardless of their achievement? Was your goal wrong or the new rating system? I maintain that the goal is great but the new rating system is WRONG! What is gained when your rating system doesn't rank schools according to what they earn?

Debbie Brann

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 7:51:59 AM

I am incredulous that ANY educators would consider any rating system as artificial as this new system appears. I can't imagine that any one of you would willingly allow YOUR CHILD to walk into a classroom that specified how many A's would be earned before a single item had been taught. I work in a Mississippi school and am very disheartened by the prospect of this new rating system. When I say work...I mean we all WORK at our school. We care deeply about the futures of our students and we care about how we are perceived in our community. The new rating system does not encourage striving for excellence, which is what we do. It tells us that no matter what we put into our work, we are subject to earning preset percentages. This puts another negative wrinkle in an already difficult vocation.

Please use some common sense in considering this new rating system. I can't imagine that so many districts were earning A's under the old system that it created a problem.

Debbie Brann
Harrison County Schools

Sent from my iPhone

From: Lundy Brantley <BrantleyL@unioncity.k12.ms.us>
Date: August 24, 2016 at 8:01:24 AM CDT
Subject: APA Comment ACT

Hey Guys,

I hope you are doing well! I am going to leave my APA comment below on the proposed ACT changes.

- In an April 8 meeting at MDE, we discussed and agreed that we would take the 2016 senior's ACT scores through the February date of their Senior year which is in the business rules (25:10). We said we would verify these scores just as we would graduation cohorts. I was totally shocked to find this was proposed to be changed.
- We can't have the senior snapshot at this time because month 1 has not been completed for MSIS.
- For four years we have prepared our instruction and budgeted funds to support our students through this process. If we are to make this count only through the junior year, then we are doing a disservice to the students because by their senior year they will have had what they need to maximize their ACT scores.
- We had numerous students to improve over the last year due to a great focus on ACT prep. Our 2016 Senior class went from a 19.4 average on their junior test to a 20.7 overall average. This is the result of great work on the behalf of our students and staff. To change this at the last minute is a disservice to the students.

Dr. Lundy Brantley
Superintendent
Union Public School District



The mission of the Union Public School District is to cultivate life-long learners who will compete in an ever-changing global society.

From: Lundy Brantley <BrantleyL@unioncity.k12.ms.us>

Date: August 26, 2016 at 8:03:52 AM CDT

To: "cwright@mdek12.org" <cwright@mdek12.org>, Paula Vanderford <PAVanderford@mdek12.org>, Kim Benton <KBenton@mdek12.org>, JP Beaudoin <jbeaudoin@mdek12.org>

Subject: APA Comment on Percentile Rankings

Hey Guys,

I hope you all are doing well!! Here is my APA comment on the percentile rankings:

- I totally understand using percentile rankings in the first year to set the cut score.
- I am against using percentile rankings after the first year due to the fact that you could improve your scores but lose your ranking due to other schools improving as well.
- Using percentiles each year guarantees that there will always be "F" schools no matter how hard you work and how far a school district moves.
- Schools/districts should have a target each year. With percentiles, the target is always moving. Actually, there is no target.
- Using this method would basically kill collaboration between districts due to the fact that you would not want someone to move ahead on the percentile.
- With using percentiles, the state could never improve because it will be a set number each year in each level.
- By using percentile, you never know how far you are from the level you want to achieve.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this very important subject. I appreciate all your hard work and I realize this is a very trying time for all of us.

Dr. Lundy Brantley
Superintendent
Union Public School District



The mission of the Union Public School District is to cultivate life-long learners who will compete in an ever-changing global society.

From: [Louis Bridges](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Nancy Loome](#)
Subject: School accountability
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 2:55:59 PM

After reviewing the proposed changes as to the way schools are graded, it has raised a concern for me.

1. Are all those involved in the consideration of this change, do their children attend public school? If they do not then are you looking out for what is best for the schools or the donors to a cause.
2. If percentages are applied instead of a score attained, you will always have schools with a F grade. What does this mean, that would open up districts that charter schools could not apply in before to being open for them to apply because the district has F rated schools.
3. I pay taxes and support my local school, but it astonishes me how individual's who have their kids in private school are so for charter schools in their area, which would now take my tax dollars away from public school and help pay for their child to attend a charter school.
4. If MDE would change the policy on class size to 12 with max of 15, this would put it at the ratio of most private and charter schools. Then the teachers would be able to achieve better with their students.

v/r
Louis Bridges

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Brown, Ruth](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Changes in the Schools Rating Systems
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 12:10:47 AM

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director, Division of Research and Development

This email is written to complaint about the suggested new policy that would only allow the following:

Only 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve. I am sure that the Board has not considered the motivational impact of such a policy on teacher and student performance.

The goal of each classroom and school should be growth for each teacher, each student, each administrator and each district department as well as each Superintendent. Such a policy that is being considered with only 10% of schools allowed to receive an A rating and 14% to be rated at an F will result in a loss of motivation and does not encourage professional growth on the part of the Teachers or the students nor Administration. This policy alone will encourage our great state of Mississippi to remain at the bottom of the academic performance rating scale.

I am requesting that you reconsider the action of implementation of such a policy. Like myself, teachers pride themselves in their ability to make a difference in the lives of students and parents. To teach suggest that we are willing to find our students where they are and to support their educational level to get them where they need to be. Please join with me in making the necessary changes that will continue to support a fair system that encourage each of member of the educational process to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our children and students.

Ruth J. Brown, Keystone Teacher

Master Teacher Economics, AP Government & Politics

Forest Hill High School

2607 Raymond Road

Jackson, MS 39212

School Phone: (601) 371-4313

"It's not the load that breaks you down. It is the way you carry it!" - Lou Holtz

From: [Debbie Bryant](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: The ratings are ridiculous
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 10:15:11 AM

I can't believe what I am hearing about these ratings! Schools need to be rated on merit ONLY!! Debbie bryant
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Butler, Angela](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 10:28:40 AM

Hello; my name is Angela Butler and I am EE Teacher at Peeples Middle School, in the Jackson Public School District. I read the proposed rating system which was forwarded and I do not believe that it is fair for the lower end of the demographic spectrum. According to this system, no matter how hard these student's, who are disadvantaged in the first place, work to improve their success rate, they will still be rated failing in comparison to their same age/grade counterparts.

Sincerely,

Angela Butler
EE Teacher
Peeples Middle School

From: [Scott Cantrell](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: APA comment on the accountability model (percentile rankings)
Date: Friday, August 26, 2016 12:54:10 PM

First, thank you for allowing us to comment on proposed changes. I know this is a time consuming process for the Dept., and I'm sure many of you feel it takes an exceptional amount of time for any changes to be made. I appreciate the efforts of the MDE staff and realize many of you must feel overwhelmed at times.

Personally, I am against using percentile rankings after this first year in determining how many schools / districts will be in each grade range (A,B, C, D, F). I believe this could pit school districts against one another, as all will know there can only be "X" number of A districts. In simple terms, if we will only have 14 "A" districts in the state, your help to another district could serve to help place your district in another grade range.

There is also no targeted total number for the sum of the ten components of the model. In other words, if our district needs a minimum of a 592 to be an "A", we can go set goals within each component of the model that will allow us to reach that magic number. We have no idea what the magic number is if percentile rankings are used.

I also feel that if we say that 14% of our districts will be "F" districts, we have made it difficult for our districts to show the improvements we will be making from year to year. My personal example would be that if an English teacher told her class of 30 on Day 1 that only 10% of them could make an A, and 14% of them were automatically going to receive an F, no matter the work they done, I can only imagine the revolt from stakeholders. I think we will have painted ourselves into a corner with establish set percentile ranks as opposed to actual cut scores.

I do realize the percentile thresholds that were set were determined by the heat map, and where the actual cuts fell, which is fine for year one, but I think after year one it would be best to use actual scores as opposed to a specific percentile. Thanks again for your time.

•

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Scott Cantrell
Superintendent of Education
Monroe County School District

From: [Scott Cantrell](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: APA comment on College and Career Ready component of the accountability model
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2016 2:50:06 PM

To whom it may concern:

An MDE powerpoint released on August 23, 2016 indicated that only ACT scores through the junior year statewide administration will be used in the accountability model. Please find concerns related to his information below.

On April 8, 2016, five superintendents (Lundy Brantley, Ray Morgigno, Lee Childress, Bonita Potter, and Scott Cantrell) met with numerous MDE staff members (Dr. Wright, Dr. Beaudoin, Dr. Vanderford, Dr. Benton, Tollie Thigpen, Jean Massey, Walt Drane, Nathan Oakley, etc..) to discuss issues pertaining to the accountability model. One of the areas discussed was how the MDE could acquire a student's highest ACT score over the course of his / her high school career, since MDE would only receive the scores from the statewide junior year administration held each April.

I was left with the impression that all in attendance agreed that the ACT scores used in the accountability model would be the highest score achieved through the February ACT national administration during the student's senior year. I recall the process for MDE receiving these ACT scores would be identical to the Senior Snapshot process that is used now ("one year lag"). This importantly allows students several more opportunities to reach the benchmark levels in Math and Reading / English during their senior year. I feel this agreed upon process would serve to benefit the student, along with having benefit for the district within the CCR component.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

--

Scott Cantrell
Superintendent of Education
Monroe County School District

From: [Laura Cela](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: why the proposed stack ranking system is wrong
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 11:24:26 AM

Dear Mississippi State Board of Education,

As a concerned citizen, I am writing to express my deep concerns about the proposal to stack rank schools in Mississippi. It is my understanding that the plan is to rate schools on a scale of A through F, and exactly 10% of schools will be allowed to earn the status of "A" and 14% will have to earn the status of "F".

This is stack ranking or curving, by another term. The purpose of using a system such as this is to eliminate anyone below a certain threshold. Does Mississippi want to eliminate its neediest schools and students? As a teacher, I believe that education should support its neediest students and schools.

Furthermore, stack ranking or curving negates any validity of the measurement system. Let's say you have 10 students. All 10 get 90% of the questions right on a test. However, according to your system, only 1 will receive an "A", and 1.5 will receive an "F" regardless of their actual performance. There is zero validity in this kind of system and it is a farce to call it a system of "measurement" or "accountability."

Please stop this nonsense and work to create schools that help all students to reach their own potential instead of measuring them against their peers with an invalid system measurement. Stack ranking and curving have nothing but negative consequences both in the business world and in education. Please stop and please support our students.

Kind regards,

Laura Cela, M.Ed.

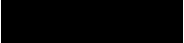
From: [LuEllen Childress](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New school rating plan
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:21:48 PM

Dear Dr. Drane,

Word has just come of the new school ratings guidelines and I must admit to being mystified. Would you be kind enough to share the rationale for limiting the number of schools that can be included in each rating level. Perhaps I am missing some vital facts.

Thank you for your kindness.

Sincerely,

LuEllen Childress, Executive Director
MONROE COUNTY CHILDREN'S VISION CENTER
800 W. Commerce St.
Aberdeen, MS 39730


JPS superintendent just a scapegoat

Beneta Burt, Guest Columnist 1:22 p.m. CDT August 29, 2016



(Photo: Submitted photo)

Jackson Public Schools last week made its annual visit to the City Council's Budget Committee to discuss the school district's spending plan, for which council approval, under state law is a formality.

There was little discussion of the budget. Most of the dialogue focused on the [Mississippi Commission on School Accreditation's vote Aug. 16 to downgrade the district's accreditation status to probation.](http://story/news/2016/08/16/jackson-public-schools-placed-probation/88821826/)

One council member even suggested that Dr. Cedrick Gray's tenure had run its course, an opinion promptly cosigned by several others. Changing leadership at JPS at this juncture would be short-sighted, re-ignite a legacy of board dysfunction and ignore the real issues facing JPS. They are a lot larger than the superintendent.

Probation for JPS, according to the Mississippi Department of Education, was based on questions about graduation standards, school safety and transportation. Transportation is a real issue for us. Our fleet is old, and we don't have enough buses but we are shifting our priorities to eliminate this concern. Safety is an issue largely confined to our high schools, punctuated recently by fights at two schools as well as an altercation between a student and JPS security at a third high school that was captured on video.

While the district may have some issues with safety at some schools, for MDE to imply that we have widespread safety issues is inaccurate and unfair.

MDE also said of the 215 student records it reviewed 15 students who failed to meet graduation requirements were allowed to graduate. JPS administrators acknowledged the records were missing but there is a huge difference between fraudulently awarding diplomas and misplacing records.

Dr. Gray, like most of us, is not perfect. His political skills and his public relations skills sometime frustrate me. His relationships with council members, for example, and other policy makers should be better. He and his staff can do a better job of communicating the district's narrative. However, the record clearly illustrates the district has improved on Gray's watch.

For example, 97.5 percent of our schools are passing schools. Twelve percent of our schools are A schools and 22 percent of our schools are B schools, according the MDE. And 60 percent of JPS schools are rated C or above. In 2013 there were 17 F schools in JPS. Today there are only two. Our pass rate for the Third Grade Literacy Exam jumped from 72 percent to nearly 80 percent. Three of our schools had a 100 percent pass rate.

What's disappointing is that I've not seen this data printed or broadcast by any local media outlets. To suggest there has been a decline in academic performance, as [someone did in this space last week](http://story/opinion/columnists/2016/08/18/jackson-public-schools-needs-new-leadership-samuel-mcgee/88951492/) ([/story/opinion/columnists/2016/08/18/jackson-public-schools-needs-new-leadership-samuel-mcgee/88951492/](http://story/opinion/columnists/2016/08/18/jackson-public-schools-needs-new-leadership-samuel-mcgee/88951492/)), is ludicrous. Our superintendent is doing a good job.

Rather than scapegoating Dr. Gray, let's have a discussion and then take action on the real issues that are stumbling blocks to our school system, which center around resources and policy. As I pointed out in a [May 6 column](http://story/opinion/columnists/2016/05/06/jps-faces-budget-challenges-not-crisis/83983632/) ([/story/opinion/columnists/2016/05/06/jps-faces-budget-challenges-not-crisis/83983632/](http://story/opinion/columnists/2016/05/06/jps-faces-budget-challenges-not-crisis/83983632/)), JPS has been underfunded by about \$67 million over the five years had the Legislature fully funded MAEP. JPS received \$15 million less in 2015 than the previous year. Most of our schools were built prior to 1970, meaning the infrastructure is aging and requires constant maintenance. It seems to me our frustration should be directed at our lawmakers. Until the resource question is addressed, the challenges will remain, regardless of who is superintendent.

There also are some policy issues, including the performance audits, assessments and cut lines.

Just as JPS was making academic improvements, MDE has adopted a new, more rigorous test. The state Board of Education also changed the standards for what is considered an A school and what is considered an F school. This means there is a chance JPS scores could improve, but the district's ranking could still drop because of the new standards. This seems as if MDE has endorsed a moving target, one that is unfair.

Anyone who sat through the [Commission on Accreditation's debate about the grading standards and the cut lines between A and B districts and D and F](http://story/news/local/2016/08/21/state-set-bar-high-student-proficiency/89084852/) ([/story/news/local/2016/08/21/state-set-bar-high-student-proficiency/89084852/](http://story/news/local/2016/08/21/state-set-bar-high-student-proficiency/89084852/)) could recognize the politics at play and what sometimes appeared to be the arbitrariness to the process.

And sadly for JPS, one of the two representatives from Jackson on the commission, who is also a former JPS board member, helped lead the charge to make it more difficult for JPS to recover from probation. That was surprising and hurtful. This individual should be using her influence and expertise to help the board and superintendent improve the district.

There is also the question of the commission's makeup. It includes superintendents, principals, teachers and lay people and is chaired by Corinth Superintendent Lee Childress. Is this a built-in conflict?

Then there is the reality of charter schools, which hits home in Jackson. A district with two years of failing grades clears the path for state takeover. The ratings for D and F schools will also allow charter schools to establish without local permission as well as C districts, where students can leave to attend charter schools elsewhere.

Charter schools, of course, are already a reality in Jackson, and it's fairly easy to connect the dots. The more we allow people and institutions to paint JPS as rife with mediocrity, incompetence and corruption, the more attractive charter schools will be for parents.

This is the big picture, one that the community and its leadership must recognize. Instead of trying to make the superintendent and JPS whipping boys, why not rally around them, give them our support to make sure both are successful.

Beneta Burt is president of the Jackson Public Schools board of trustees.

Town Hall Meetings

The JPS Board of Trustees is sponsoring town hall meetings in each ward, beginning with Ward 3 on Aug. 30 at the Mississippi Roadmap to Health Equity, 2548 Livingston Road, from 6-8 p.m.

Read or Share this story: <http://on.thec-l.com/2c9xkTI>

Some JPS admins to get big raises, others get nothing

Emily Le Coz, The Clarion-Ledger 3:43 p.m. CDT August 21, 2014



(Photo: File photo/The Clarion Ledger)

Dozens of top Jackson Public Schools officials will receive hefty raises starting Jan. 1, according to a new district salary plan obtained by The Clarion-Ledger.

The plan had emerged from a board-approved 2013 JPS compensation study and will cost the district an additional \$426,000 annually when it goes into effect. JPS officials confirmed the salary hikes and said they're part of an overall effort to streamline personnel and maintain fiscal stability.

While some employees anticipate five-digit increases, others will get nothing.

Data Graphic: [See each of the nearly 300 salary hikes here.](#)

(https://public.tableausoftware.com/views/JPSSalaryHike/Dashboard1?:embed=y&:display_count=no)

In line for the biggest raise is former Jackson Deputy Police Chief Gerald Jones, who now heads security for JPS and its nearly 30,000 students. His salary will jump from \$71,188 to \$91,000 – a nearly 28 percent.

That's almost as much as Lindsey Horton earned as police chief over Mississippi's largest city and its roughly 175,500 residents. When he retired last month, Horton took home \$94,999, according to Jackson spokeswoman Shelia Byrd.

Jones will get the pay hike because he's now fulfilling the roles of what used to be handled by two different people – chief of campus enforcement and emergency management coordinator.

"This allowed us to bring that position's pay in line with other executive directors and helped reduce the number of positions," said Chief Communications Officer Darryl Anderson in an Aug. 4 email to The Clarion-Ledger.

Anderson is no longer at JPS. He was among at least four top administrators fired last week. The district confirmed their departures but declined to comment further. All had been slated for a raise.

Of the 290 administrative and support personnel listed in the plan, 18 will earn raises of more than 10 percent of their current salaries, including six whose salaries will jump by \$10,000 or more, the plan shows.

One of them is Lorene Essex, deputy superintendent of instruction and one of the people Superintendent Cedrick Gray brought into the district with him shortly after his hire in May 2012.

Essex and Gray had worked together in the Fayette County School District, where she served as deputy superintendent and personnel director while Gray served as superintendent.

Essex had earned a base salary of \$84,410 while in Fayette County, but got an additional \$104,980 in bonuses from Gray during her last year there.

Her current salary of \$112,151 will swell 13.4 percent to \$127,200, according to the plan.

Sixty-eight staff members, most of them in the special education department, will not get a raise.

The average increase is 2.45 percent – or \$1,469.

"Salaries had gotten a little out of kilter, because there was no system used and people got money based on whatever they could negotiate at the time," said John Jordan of Madison-based Core Learning LLC.

JPS hired Jordan to help develop the plan, which puts all administrators on a salary scale that starts at a base amount and increases in pre-established increments depending on tenure, experience and responsibilities. All the scales cap at a certain point.

"Teachers eventually cap out on a salary scale," Jordan said. "Why would we not have an administrative scale that does the same thing?"

Hundreds of other JPS employees, including bus drivers and food service workers, also got raises that took effect earlier this year. Altogether, the

55 Refer ()

compensation adjustments will cost the district about \$823,600, Anderson had said in his email.

Jordan said the increases bring JPS salaries in line with similar-sized districts.

"A moratorium will be placed on the cabinet and district leadership team for the next two years," Anderson said. "Additionally, the district has implemented new business rules which govern salary administration for administrators."

Contact Emily Le Coz at elecoz@jackson.gannett.com or (601) 961-7249. Follow @emily_lecoz on Twitter.

TOP 10 JPS SALARY INCREASES (by percentage of increase)

1. Gerald Jones, Security Director: \$71,188 --> \$91,999 (+27.83%)
2. KaShonda Day, Asst. District Counsel: \$51,143 --> \$61,950 (+21.13%)
3. Fredrick Nolan, Watchdogs Coord.: \$42,693 --> \$50,500 (+18.29%)
4. Calvin Day, Drop-Out Prevention: \$31,689 --> \$37,200 (+17.39%)
5. Joanne Nelson, District Counsel: \$99,989 --> \$117,201 (+17.21%)
6. Ella Pepper, Custodial Foreman: \$23,631 --> \$27,200 (15.10%)
7. Ella Holmes, Pre-K Coord.: \$48,060 --> \$55,250 (+14.96%)
8. Mary Thomas, Admin. Assistant: \$45,662 --> \$52,400 (+14.75%)
9. Abby Webley, Improvement Dir: \$81,268 --> \$92,900 (+14.31%)
10. Chris Qualls, Network Engineer: \$37,182 --> \$42,200 (13.49%)

Read or Share this story: <http://on.thec-l.com/1oVerUy>

Open letter to parents, teachers from JPS superintendent

Cedrick Gray, Jackson Public Schools superintendent 8:13 p.m. CDT August 26, 2016



(Photo: File)

Dear Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Partners and Supporters of Jackson Public Schools:

By now most of you are aware of the Commission on School Accreditation's vote to place the District on probation. This decision was primarily based on issues surrounding three accreditation standards:

Graduation requirements
Safety
and Transportation

The District has 60 days to submit a Corrective Action Plan, but the enhancements are already underway. We are reexamining our relationships with the Jackson Police Department and the Hinds County Sheriff's Office. Fire extinguishers that were missing have been ordered and will be installed as soon as they arrive. We have shifted priorities and will order at least 10 new buses and equip the entire fleet with GPS. We are in the process of revamping our record keeping procedures for graduation requirements. My administration and JPS' Board of

Trustees understand that these are serious issues. We are responding as promptly as we can. All of these matters will be resolved.

Now, what does probation mean as a practical matter? There will be no negative impact on our students, employees, or day-to-day operations. Our athletic programs will not be impacted. Our high school students will continue to receive Carnegie unit credits that count toward graduation. Students who meet graduation requirements will be awarded a diploma from an accredited school district. Our probation status will not affect any student's ability to enter college.

Our probation status is in no way related to our finances or our students' academic achievement. Even though we have been underfunded by nearly \$67 million over the last five years by the state of Mississippi, we have increased our fund balance by nearly 50 percent. More than 60 percent of our schools are rated C or above. Twelve percent of our schools are A schools, 22 percent of our schools are B schools and 97.5 percent of our schools are passing schools. In 2013, we had 17 failing schools. Today, there are only two. The pass rate on the Third Grade Literacy exam improved from 72 percent to nearly 80 percent. Three of our elementary schools, Casey, Davis IB and McWillie, had a 100 percent pass rate on this assessment. Casey Elementary School has been designated a National Blue Ribbon School.

We still have a lot of work to do but we are working. We owe a huge debt to our teachers especially. Thank you teachers!

Our community partners, citizens and state lawmakers, all have a role to play in our success. Your local state representatives and senators all need to hear from you about your concerns for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). Our students need those funds, which are being cut each year. Executing our mission would be much easier if our students received the funds they are owed each year; it's all about them.

Meanwhile, with the support of our parents, teachers, administrators, staff, students, and community partners, JPS will continue to build stronger schools while ensuring every scholar, every day, is ready for life!

Sincerely,

Cedrick Gray, Ed.D.

From: [Mark Coffey](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed school rating system
Date: Monday, September 05, 2016 3:34:56 PM

I have read, with great interest, about the newly proposed school rating system for public schools in Mississippi. I am a Mississippi taxpayer that pays nearly \$2000 per year in education taxes. The newly proposed rating system makes no sense at all to me. I have also received the opinion from a social activist and political policy expert friend of mine that is a professor at a prestigious university. His opinion that is it will be detrimental to the public schools in Mississippi. Please mark my opinion down as one of disapproval for the new rating policy that is being considered.

Respectfully,

I am:

Mark Coffey

[REDACTED]

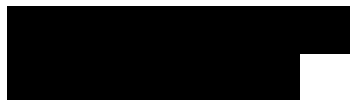
[REDACTED]

From: [Wanda Coleman](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Rating School Districts
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 6:41:13 PM

The proposals you have come up with to rate school districts would be hilarious if not so pitiful. NO WAY is all we can say about it. It is not only absurd, it is bad for our children and for our state. We wonder how even you managed to come up with such bad ideas.

Please do not proceed with this.

Wanda Coleman



From: [Dee Collins](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Nancy Loomer](#); [jbomgar@house.ms.gov](#); [kcampbell@house.ms.gov](#); [jmoore@house.ms.gov](#); [tbarker@house.ms.gov](#); [rboyd@house.ms.gov](#); [gchism@house.ms.gov](#); [ccrawford@house.ms.gov](#); [bcurrie@house.ms.gov](#); [gtollison@senate.ms.gov](#); [ccaughman@senate.ms.gov](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, September 07, 2016 5:38:35 PM

I am writing to express concern over the change to the school rating system. I am trying to figure out how you can choose a percentage that will pass and choose a percentage that will fail. This does not make sense to me.

I understand the need for some accountability in our school system, but the current testing situation has gotten out of control. I have a daughter that was diagnosed with Dyslexia and it often makes me see the school system in a different light. My daughter works very hard, two hours after school every day, to keep up. Along with her dyslexia, she has some working memory issues so memorizing facts and new words is also difficult for her. She has to be exposed to concepts many times before she retains the knowledge. She often struggles and feels dumb and it is hard to keep her motivated. She has a normal IQ, is very creative and has a high social IQ. We know that hard work, social skills and creativity often play a crucial role in success as adults but school tests do not measure these skills. If it were not for her positive social environment at home and teachers who encourage her, she would give up. The school system is simply not set up to reward her hard work. In fact, I'm sure that if it were up to number crunchers, they would prefer she fail a grade or two because it might temporarily help her testing scores. There is lots of scientific evidence that holding someone back with dyslexia does not help them overall but it may improve their testing score for a year or two. Of course, that rewards a school to put their own interests above what is best for the child in our current high stakes testing environment. Apparently, doing what is scientifically proven to be right is often too much trouble, especially when politics is involved. And here I thought we were supposed to have a system where we help every child succeed, but what we really care about is how well can a child test. If you were to ask her, I don't think she would say she is successful. That often happens when you put too much focus on comparing yourself to another rather than focusing on real goals.

The thing is, many scientific studies are showing that a child's home life may be more important to their test scores than their schools and teachers. So while school accountability may be important, is it really worth the money we are throwing at it now?

What I'm really trying to figure out is how you can arbitrarily choose some percentage of schools to get an A and some an F. There needs to be clear guidelines as to what they did not do correctly that gave them their F score. There should be certain standards or expectations they did not meet. It reminds me of the social inequity study that was done on Capuchin monkeys. When the monkeys both given cucumbers they happily worked to give a rock to the researcher. When one monkey got a grape but the other got a cucumber, the monkey getting the cucumber was very upset because the grape was a better treat. No one likes to be

treated unfairly and arbitrarily giving a percentage that can get an A score is ridiculous. Set up some guidelines that need to be met and stick to them.

Here is link to monkey fairness video – I suggest you watch it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meiU6TxysCg>

Sincerely,

Dee Dee Collins

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

From: [Jennifer Colson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 7:40:55 PM

How on earth is it possible that only 10% can be A schools or for that matter 14% be failing. There is no logic in this thinking. If there are no absolute scores to attain for each level, teachers/schools will just feel as if they are spinning their wheels.

Please treat us as professionals. Lawyers, doctors, accountants and other professions must attain a certain score in a test to qualify to serve in their respected fields. In fact, we as teachers have to pass a test to teach. They just don't allow the top 10% to become teachers, doctors, etc. if a school makes a score let them be an A school whether that is 10% or 50%, we should all be striving for that goal.

Sent from my iPhone

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The mission of the Rankin County School District is to prepare every student with the cognitive and social skills necessary to be productive members of an ever-changing global society.

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This email and any attachments to it may be confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, you must neither take any action based upon its contents, nor copy or show it to anyone. Please contact the sender if you believe you have received this email in error.

From: [Stacey Cook](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed Change in School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 12:09:36 PM

To Whom it may concern,

I have been a Mississippi school teacher for 30 years. I am totally against this proposed change in the school rating system. According to the proposed policy, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14 percent of them would still be assigned an 'F'. Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10 percent of them would still get an 'A'. This approach of rating schools would discourage collaboration among school districts. For a district to move up a level, another district would have to fail. Theoretically, why would another school try to help another district if the school they worked with took 'their' higher ranking? This proposed policy is bad for our children, teachers, and state.

Concerned Teacher,
Stacey Cook

From: Tony Cook <tcook@houston.k12.ms.us>
Date: August 25, 2016 at 11:30:19 AM CDT
To: pvanderford@mdek12.org, JP Beaudoin <jbeaudoin@mdek12.org>
Cc: Carey Wright <cwright@mdek12.org>
Subject: ACT discrepancy

Dr. Vanderford,

We were previously told that students' highest score through first semester of their Senior year would be used for Accountability ratings. The last email we received indicates that only scores attained through the April administration of their Junior year (statewide ACT administration) will be used. What is the rationale behind this decision, and why are we finding out about it in August just prior to receiving our ratings? With all the changes being made in accountability and the assessments, we are already struggling to keep up. Now, to throw this in at the last minute, is tough to accept. Please reconsider this decision. It probably won't make much difference for us in Houston, but every point helps.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Tony Cook

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From: [Shonnie Smith-Cooley](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: MS Proposed School Rating Policy
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 5:06:34 PM

I'm writing to give my feedback on the new School Rating System. There should not be a set number of schools rated As or Fs. Schools should be rated according to performance and growth of the school as a whole. The goal should be to lift our schools up instead of hold them down. We as a state should be looking at ways to move our state education system forward.

This proposed policy will hold schools back even if they're test scores are high, they show academic growth and improved graduation rates, can still be assigned an F. Also, schools with low test scores, low academic growth and poor graduation rates can be assigned an A. This is bad for our children and our state's education system as a whole.

This new proposed policy is UNFAIR!!!

LaShron Cooley

Jackson, MS

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LaShron "Shonnie" Smith-Cooley

From: [Crawford, Stephanie](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Feedback on proposed school grades
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 1:03:49 AM

As a dedicated teacher who teaches to the best of her ability, I believe it is unfair to grade schools on a curve. It is not an acceptable practice for teachers to grade on a curve. Why should schools be subjected to such an unfair practice? Please consider the damage such a decision would make for schools, teachers, and students. Teachers will not want to be part of a system that basically dooms them at the beginning.

**Blessings,
Stephanie R. Crawford
Chastain Middle School
Exceptional Education Teacher**

**"To reach a child's mind a teacher must capture his heart. Only if a child feels right can he think right." ~
Haim G. Ginott**

From: [Anita](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Comment: Do not allow this to happen
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:04:32 PM

Please do not put this into effect. Only 10% of the state public schools can have an “A” ranking, regardless of how well they did on their testing. And, each year, 14% of the schools must be rated as “F” districts, regardless of how much they may have improved. (Imagine your child making a perfect score on a test, but getting a B because 10 other kids already made A’s)

Why not try letting the teachers have the freedom to teach, like they allow in charter schools?

This is not putting education first. This is putting special interests first.

From: [D'Amico, Martha](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability Model
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 3:39:24 PM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this email regarding the new Accountability model that will be going into effect this October for scores reported on the 2016 MAP test. I am a principal in Madison County and I am disgusted with the nature of the model. It is ludicrous to give principals and teachers expectations under a new model and then give them absolutely no target to shoot for. Under this new model, the target will be constantly moving as the "A" level will fluctuate with the percentages of schools that are in the top 10% not based on actual performances or proficiencies but based on a total score in an accountability matrix.

The total score in the accountability model is so skewed for elementary schools when you consider 3 different grades testing in ELA on 2 different days counting for one tally in 1 box of 7. Science involves testing 1 grade on 1 day and it weighs the same as ELA and Math—something is wrong with this—there is no balance. In addition, to the balance of proficiencies there is too much weight on a statistical calculation of growth. Children that were proficient in the level of 8 that stay proficient in the level of 7 on the subsequent test are penalized for remaining proficient and not counted toward the growth model; therefore a school could have high proficiencies and low growth which is clearly an indication of success by having that many students in the proficiency calculation but could be reflected as a failing or near failing school—solely based on a faulty model. And children scoring in the levels of 5 and 6 don't count at all towards being proficient, but in 3rd grade are considered to have "passed" the Reading Gate for all 3rd grade students.

When you look at the state's "Burn Report" that was given to districts to list schools from the highest number on the accountability matrix to the lowest, you can find 5 schools with the same proficiencies as mine ranging from an A to a B to a C. This is absurd! A school with proficiencies in the range of 50% of all students in both Math and ELA and scoring in the top 25% of all elementary schools in Mississippi should not be faced with being a low performing or failing school. Under this model, it will happen. Then in subsequent years the model begins a "ping pong" table effect where accountability ratings pong from one end of the model to the other as one year the school performs low in growth and the next year rises to inflate growth just to fall in the subsequent year in the 4 growth boxes of the matrix.

High schools are given an advantage to count "graduation rate" into their total score, when elementary school should share the weight; after all, we equipped them to be successful in high school. When a school is listed 3rd in the state with proficiencies in ELA and Math below 25% and wears the label of an A, you are painting an erroneous picture of a school that is quite clearly struggling to equip their students with the necessary components of life after school: problem solving, questioning, reading, writing and thinking.

Think about what message the model is sending to communities where proficiencies rates are very high and students are learning everyday—where public school are thriving in our state. . . The general public, ignorant of the intricacies of this model, of the illogical nature of its make-up and of the lack of balance in areas making up the matrix, will begin to think that their neighborhood school is substandard thus seeking private or charter schools. This will not only kill our wonderful communities, but erode our tax base and open up Mississippi communities to more welfare, crime and sadness.

I am writing this email with just a few years left to retire and 30 years of service to children with 23 of those in Mississippi. I hope this will receive attention and careful scrutiny so that other bright educators will chose to spend their careers lifting the level of education in the great state of Mississippi. If this is not addressed, public schools run the risk of dying off and the future of our state is dismal.

Feel free to contact me if you would like any clarification.

Sincerely,
Martha D'Amico
Madison Crossing Elementary
601-898-7710

From: [Mary Davidson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating change
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 7:04:32 AM

I am very opposed to this policy change. It immediately set schools up for failure. It would result in a very unfair playing field. Please reconsider.

Sincerely,

Mary Davidson
West, MS

Sent from my iPad

From: [Tim Dickerson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Comment on Proposed Changes to ACT part of Accountability
Date: Sunday, September 04, 2016 3:11:28 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the accountability system. I would like to comment on the ACT part of the business rules. I feel that it is in the best interest of our students to allow ACT scores to be counted through at least February of their senior year. This gives our students an opportunity to increase their score, and at the same time, help our school's accountability results.

Your generous consideration is appreciated,

--

Tim Dickerson
Attendance Center Principal
Hamilton Attendance Center

From: [Lynn](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Plz reverse limit on successful schools
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:21:25 AM

TO: Walt Drane and the Mississippi State Board of Education

FROM: Lynn Evans, Board Member and President of Jackson Public School Board 1996-2000

DATE: August 30, 2016

The Mississippi State Board of Education's decision to in essence use a Bell Curve to grade state school districts needs to be reversed. Using any grading method to fix percentages of winners and losers regardless of how well individual schools and districts perform is self-defeating and destructive.

If we truly believe that all children can be successful and that all schools can be successful, why would we limit the number of schools that can be designated successful?

May I direct you to research published by the **Washington Business Journal** – *CSC begins rating employees on an extreme bell curve*; **Performance Management** – *Forced Ranking*; **Forbes** – *The Myth of the Bell Curve: Look for the Hyper-Performers*; and **Bloomberg Business** – *Microsoft Kills Its Hated Stacked Rankings. Does Anyone Do Employee Reviews Right?* To sum up, this research on employers who use a Bell Curve method of evaluating employees finds it is inaccurate, and tends to depress employee innovation and productivity.

May I also remind you of the research done by University of Virginia professor Eric Turkheimer in 2003 which used a twins adoption analysis to show that the impact of growing up in impoverished circumstances can decrease the IQ levels of even children with successful, highly intelligent parents. And the opposite is also true; children from low SEC background placed in the homes of successful, well-educated parents exceed their birth-family's IQ. Turkheimer's research was confirmed in a follow-up study this year, and by a number of other scholarly researchers. This research has been used to debunk Bell Curve methodology for assigning academic grades.

Again, if you as education leaders really believe that all children can be successful and not that 14% of schools are doomed to fail, you will reverse your decision setting percentage rankings for Mississippi school districts.

From: [Brian Foster](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: APA comment on percentile rankings
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 9:40:33 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Official APA comment on percentile rankings

- It's a fallacy to just say only 10% **can** be an A no matter how much growth a school/district gets. A school could be an A, increase proficiency and growth, but be a B the next year. The same can be said of the other levels as well. The same is true for the F's. An F school can work hard, get solid growth year after year, yet always be an F no matter how good they do because of how they fall in rank.
- I understand using percentile ranks the first year to set cut scores for levels, but after year one, we need to have a target that is known. This proposed system has no target to hit. A school/district will never know where they are, or how far they are from reaching each level.
- This system will kill collaboration between districts. Why would any district assist another if it will be at their own detriment?
- It guarantees the same amount of failing districts regardless of improvements. It prevents true movement in school rankings.
- The logical thing to do is to set a target and allow districts to work to achieve that target. If the target needs to be adjusted at some point, to push districts more, that would be fine, but to just say that a certain percentage will be at certain levels does not allow schools to show progress.

Brian Foster
Director of Curriculum & Assessments
Newton County School District



From: [April Fowler](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 11:32:35 AM

Social Media is posting that "the political appointees of the State Board of Education have voted for a DRAMATIC change to the school rating system, which will further the goal of getting about 90% of public school funding tax dollars available for private charter schools. Under the new politically charged system, only 10% of the state public schools can have an "A" ranking, regardless of how well they did on their testing. And, each year, 14% of the schools must be rated as "F" districts, regardless of how much they may have improved." And also that there exists a "stealthily-worded bill this year that Senator Tollison got passed to make sure that Private Charter Schools could take students and school tax dollars from any F, D or C, School District, without board approval."

As a retired Mississippi teacher, I am appalled that the desires of special interest groups (charter schools) appear to be more important than our public education system. As a former PHYSICS instructor, I know that scores do not always "match the bell curve of normalcy". I would never have given any child a lower grade just because other children had performed at the same high level of achievement to make the bell curve fit. The State Board of Education needs to provide a fair, non-biased measurement of standards of success that all schools can attempt to achieve without worrying about how the various score levels are distributed. And do not place labels of "failing" or "inadequate" on school districts that do not deserve such labels just to acquire their funds for private charters. I find it very sad that funding would be stolen from the very schools that desperately need it. The bill that takes the school tax dollars away from struggling school districts is not trying to help those districts. It makes me think of a bully who kicks people who are already fallen. This is a very sad situation and will not help Mississippi Grow. We must educate all of our youth in order to achieve success in the future. I oppose any rating that automatically requires a certain amount to fail.

Sincerely,
April Fowler

From: [Kristen Fowler](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: changes to school ratings policy
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 10:21:35 AM

Can you imagine how livid you would be if your child came home and said that they missed 5 questions on a 100 question test, and was given a D for their grade because the majority of the students missed less questions? I don't know about you, but I would be livid that a teacher is risking my child's potential scholarships and future success simply because they were grading on a curve where only a set number of students could receive each letter grade. This sounds ridiculous to the average person, and yet this is exactly what you are doing with the proposed changes to the school ratings policy. Every school in the state could score advanced on state tests and show 100% growth and yet 14% would still receive an "F" rating. How is this fair? You may not have children in public schools, but your property values will be affected just like mine if your local school receives a lower rating just because they got 1 or 2 points lower on their scores than other schools in the state.

The only fair way to grade schools is the same as grading our students. Tell them where the bar is for each letter grade and then let school who scored above that bar receive that letter grade. Please do not play politics with our children and with the future of our state.

Sincerely,
Kristen Fowler
Parent to two Mississippi public school students

From: [Morris Gemini](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Comments on APA
Date: Tuesday, September 06, 2016 11:53:03 AM

I reviewed this as part of House Bill 47 or HB0047IN and I am a bit leery of the impact that will have on the state of the Educational System of MS. I have reviewed the update on the MS Department of Education website that indicates that the people commenting are somehow misinformed. If that is the case, please explain the section below from House Bill 47.

(iv) Categories shall identify schools as Reward 197 ("A" schools), Focus ("D" schools) and Priority ("F" schools). If 198 at least five percent (5%) of schools in the state are not graded 199 as "F" schools, the lowest five percent (5%) of school grade point 200 designees will be identified as Priority schools. If at least ten 201 percent (10%) of schools in the state are not graded as "D" 202 schools, the lowest ten percent (10%) of school grade point 203 designees will be identified as Focus schools;

The teachers in the public school system are doing the best that they can with what they have. So to have a system which seems to be stacked against their every efforts to succeed is a bit biased. So what you are suggesting is if a certain percentage of schools are not designated "F" by the ranking system, then they will be rated "F" by percentage. This is totally unfair to these system. It is almost as if you are trying to drive/steer students to charter schools. The public school system is already underfunded, do we really want to take this stance? I am praying that you will take all of this into consideration and rethink this particular stance that the MDEK has taken. Please do not further damage the system that is moving forward by advancing us into oblivion.

Thank you.

From: "Angela Givhan"
To: "Walt Drane" <WDrane@mdek12.org>
Cc: "Paula Vanderford" <PAVanderford@mdek12.org>
Subject: JPS Request to Contact MDE Regarding Proposed Accounting Rating

Mr. Drane,

Attached is an email that employees received on today requesting that we contact you to weigh in on the proposed Accountability Rating System. We were instructed to send comments in writing by mail, email, or fax. Well, here goes.

- 1) I have no problem with the proposed changes. I do have a problem with the proposal being referred to in an email as a "*Hunger Games*" approach, portraying it as savage and inhumane. I strongly disagree with the assertion made by school district leaders that the district's inadequacies are the result of pending MDE policies and insufficient Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) funding (see attached recent publications in the Clarion Ledger).
- 2) The Jackson Public School District has squandered money on exorbitant salary increases (see attached Clarion Ledger article) for district-level administrators and the creation of jobs for friends, reportedly; boyfriends, girlfriends, and family members at the peril of schools and facilities becoming run down due to willful neglect. Why would the legislature or MDE reward the district with more money to funnel into MERC (Mississippi Education Reform Collaborative) or P3 Strategies? JPS receives more money in Title 1 funding than any district in the state of Mississippi, yet it remains stagnant at a "D".
- 3) It is my opinion that the intent of the email is to incite a call to action to prevent what may be inevitable for JPS- a rating of "F" by using an outlandish analogy that is an insult to my intelligence.
- 4) It is appalling that the school board president referred to Dr. Cedric Gray as a scapegoat. The true scapegoats are the "scholars" who are subjected to unsafe schools and buses; inferior instruction; and dilapidated schools- posing health risks.
- 5) I am complying with the Jackson Public School District's request to send my comments to you because I ask the question: "How much more?" A violation of 19 out of 32 standards constitutes blatant disregard for governing procedures; therefore, changes to the Accountability Rating System pales in comparison.
- 6) I am sure that the race card has been factored into the "probation" equation in the sense that it is implied that JPS is being targeted because of its predominantly black population. Yes, race should weigh heavily in the decision to take the necessary actions to ensure that all students get a quality education in a clean and safe environment regardless of their zip code.

From: [Susan Glisson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: the new school grading proposal
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 12:47:42 AM

Dear Mississippi State Board of Education:

Your proposed policy to change the school grading system is an overreach and patently politically driven. I am opposed. It is unethical to mandate "failure" quotas. Instead, schools should be given necessary funding and support so that all schools can thrive. Instead of suggesting that you accept failing schools for any district, you should use your positions and state funds to support all public schools to be the best that they can be and to ensure that those that serve vulnerable populations have even more support and work even harder to serve the children who live there. This proposed policy is a profound dereliction of your duty to serve the Mississippi public school system.

Beyond this myopic proposal, the larger idea of grading schools in Mississippi reflects not only a generational lack of even "adequate" funding but also a racial and class bias. Check out the maps that the Hope Policy Center puts out. Overlay where our deepest poverty rates are with the lowest rated schools. The maps are the same.

How about we try Rep. Clyburn's proposed policy at the national level? Guaranteed funding for any community that has at least 20% of its population that has been in poverty for over 30 years (10-20-30 rule). It is not just that this proposed policy knocks down the door to provide public funding for private charters; it is that this policy just blatantly gives up on our children who have been consistently under-served. I am not opposed outright to excellent charter schools, held to the highest accountability standards that our public schools must adhere to; but I am opposed to schemes that purport to give "school choice" to parents in poor districts that are in fact just efforts to transfer public funds to private corporations without actually improving any offerings for the children who need it the most.

We can do better.

Sincerely
Susan Glisson

--

Dr. Susan M. Glisson
Co-founder and Partner
Sustainable Equity, LLC
Awakening Humanity for the Greater Good
Based in Mississippi

From: [Googe, Karen](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: proposed changes to accountability model
Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2016 1:15:45 AM

Dear Mr. Drane,

I understand that the Mississippi Department of Education is considering a new accountability model, which establishes a set percentage for the number of schools that may score at a particular level (A through F). To me this seems patently unfair to the teachers and administrations of schools in the State. If students demonstrate mastery of stated objectives, they should earn the grade that indicates their level of proficiency, regardless of the percentage of other students who also earn that score. When a school community supports its students and nurtures their academic success, its efforts should be acknowledged; a school should not be kept from earning a rating simply because a certain percentage of schools scored at a higher level. Objectives and score ranges for each level of meeting those objectives should be clearly stated prior to administration of State tests. If a school's students' scores collectively meet that level, they should earn their attained grade. Under the new model, MDE will label a set percentage of schools as failing and a set percentage as successful, regardless of their success or growth in meeting objectives. Please do not adopt the proposed set-percentage accountability model for the State's students and schools.

Sincerely,
Karen Googe

From: [Amber Gray](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New Accountability
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 6:16:21 PM

The new system of ranking schools is absolutely ABSURD. Imagine, if teachers told the students who earned A's that they wouldn't be receiving A's because they were already doled out. PLEASE do the right thing and fight against this. Our schools do not need yet another obstacle!

--

Amber Gray



From: [Hamburg, Martha](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: what are you thinking????
Date: Friday, September 02, 2016 12:09:04 PM

It is a stunning statement that announces a set number of "A" schools and "F" schools as a predetermined outcome.

Because this policy is being put forth from an educated Board, I think there must be some basis in how and why this seemingly outrageous and egregious percentage is being recommended for adoption.

If it's a case of "what you see is what you get" then I join the ranks in "What the heck are you thinking?" Bah. We should quite trying today since according to the percentage rankings, we have failed already.

From: [Devonshae Harrien](#)
To: [Accountability](#); [Walt Drane](#)
Subject: New Accountability System
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:56:34 PM

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to receive clarity on the new accountability rating system. Are there specific criteria for which school districts will be identified as A districts? I see the new business rules that state districts within the top 10% (i.e. greater than 90th percentile) will be an A district. However, what will make a district fall within this category? Any assistance would be greatly appreciated. Thanks!!!

Devonshae Harrien, M.Ed.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Jefferson Davis County Schools



It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading. Something that will stretch their imaginations--something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourage them to reach out toward people whose lives are quite different from their own.

-Katherine Patterson

From: [Cristen Hemmins](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed school rating system=AWFUL
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:55:15 PM

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have three kids in Oxford Schools, and my mother has been a kindergarten teacher in Jackson for about 35 years. I ran for state senate last year against Gray Tollison on the tagline of "Education is Key." I am a solid supporter of MS public schools, and I am very concerned about the proposed changes to our state's school ratings system.

Regardless of performance, only 10% of schools would be able to receive an "A" rating and 14% of schools would be forced to receive an "F" rating. This makes no sense. So the board has decided that we should always have 40 percent more Fs than As?! Shouldn't the goal be for ALL schools to have an "A" rating? A forced bell curve is nuts.

I don't understand how this proposed system is helpful at all. PLEASE rethink this terrible idea.

Cristen Hemmins
Oxford, MS


From: [Ashley Hendrix](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:11:06 PM

To whom it may concern

Imagine your own child making a perfect score on a test, but getting a B because 10 other students had already made A's. In what world is that considered true accountability??

You are setting schools, children, teachers, administrators, parents, and entire communities up for failure. Please reconsider the new school rating system policy. The future of our great state depends upon the education of our kids.

Sincerely,
Ashley Hendrix

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Jordan Henley](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 5:41:44 PM

I do not think a rating system that will automatically fail schools and districts and exclude qualified districts and school from an A rating is beneficial to schools or students. Please reconsider.

Thank you,

Jordan Henley

From: [Gwen Keys Hitt](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Disagree with proposed accountability school rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:37:27 AM

Please reconsider the proposed accountability school rating system. The system dooms to failure most of our schools. Please develop a system that promotes improvement, not failure.

Gwen Keys Hitt
Collins, MS



August 24, 2016

Dr. Carey Wright
Mississippi Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Dr. Wright,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Lauderdale County School District to voice concern over the recent changes to the accountability business rules that were published for Administrative Procedures Act (APA) approval on August 19th, 2016.

Unilateral Changes, No Feedback Sought

As I am sure you are well aware of by now, these changes were made on a unilateral basis without the input of stakeholders across a variety of platforms. It's important the public at large, K-12 superintendents and administrators, the accountability task force, and the commission on school accreditation all have input into contemplated changes to our state's accountability business rules. It is my understanding that the accountability task force met only last week and these changes weren't mentioned during that time.

Districts in Mississippi have, for years, understood that the college and career readiness (CCR) component of the accountability system was to be calculated using the senior snapshot. To change this method at the 11th hour, without public input or explanation, bypassing the accountability task force and commission on school accreditation, frankly, is incredibly short sighted. Decisions such as this help foster an environment where districts believe the MDE isn't on our side and are acting unchecked, without stakeholder input or involvement.

Lack of Transparency

I would be remiss if I also did not voice my concern over a disturbing trend regarding the state's accountability system in general. I have been in public education for over 40 years, and looking back over that time, I cannot recall a less transparent accountability 'season' than the one we currently find ourselves in.

A perfect example of this broken process is the way in which bridge scaling was handled. Instead of that process being explained to districts over a period of time, the method was conceived, released, and became policy in a matter of months with little regard to public or district stakeholder input. The MDE knew for at least a year that they

Randy Hodges, Superintendent of Education

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Dr. Carey Wright
August 24, 2016
Page Two

would be forced to cross compare assessments and had ample time to let stakeholders know the method before we ever had assessment results.

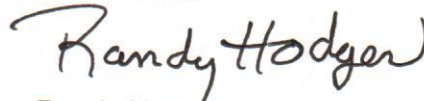
Adopting bridge scaling was a significant change in the way we calculate growth in our state, and in my opinion should have been vetted through the APA process. In past years, the state proposed a change, provided impact data as to it's potential and a chance for public comment before bringing a final rule to the accountability task force, accreditation commission, and state board for approval.

Troubling Shift to Percentile-Rank Cuts

The MDE's shift from setting straight cuts to setting percentile-rank cuts in incredibly disturbing. By shifting schools away from a flat goal to a percentile rank, you eliminate the ability for a district to have a goal and understand the changes required to meet that goal. A percentile-rank *literally* ensures that Mississippi will always have failing districts and schools. This shortsighted change precludes a group of districts or schools at the bottom of the state from receiving credit for making progress and moving kids yearly towards a common goal. If the bottom 10% of districts all move at the same pace, regardless of how fast that pace is, they'll always be an 'F'.

Dr. Wright, in closing, I sincerely believe in order to have a functional, valid accountability system, it must be fair, equitable, and reproducible. Our current model, as it stands today, struggles to meet all three of those standards. Mississippi's schools, and the children we serve, deserve nothing less.

Respectfully,



Randy Hodges
Superintendent

RH:db

Cc: Walt Drane,
J.P. Beaudoin
Paula Vanderford

From: [Dina Holland](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:26:02 PM

Having only the top 10% of schools be labeled an A regardless of performance is just not acceptable to me. You could theoretically have schools perform basically the same within a .01 and receive a very different label. Why not use the cut scores similar to the past? That allows everyone to have a target to shoot for. Without this target, we are shooting in the dark. This plan I do not feel is not in the best interest of schools especially those that work hard to achieve and grow students-

From: [Dawn Hollingsworth](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: *Flawed* School Rating Proposal *Flawed*
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 5:55:29 PM

I never write or complain. NEVER. I typically sit back, watch patiently, and then do what is required of me from the MDE. However, when I disagree I am plainly spoken. So here goes:

Why is it that MDE never knows whether to scratch their watch or wind their butt? The left hand never knows what the right hand is doing! The MDE may very well shoot themselves in the foot with the new rating proposal.... I just hope it doesn't cost our kids the price of working hard and improving and then not being awarded the rating THEY (as students) deserve!! I am passionate about kids; and what MDE is proposing is not fair to the students that I stand by and fight for everyday.

What MDE is saying with the proposal of awarding only certain percentages certain ratings is like telling kids, "Hey, make a 100, but we're NOT going to give you credit for an A, we'll just give you a B or C".

People are tired of MDE's incompetence- especially hard working schools who look to them for clarification & guidance. Schools who try to make education in Mississippi shine. Schools who feel it is part of their job to support and explain decisions made by the MDE. I must say, as an administrator, I am going to have a hard time supporting MDE in the public with this decision.

There are political pushes for charter schools, and MDE is crushing under the political pressure rather than standing behind their supposed passion of public education. The latest test results do not even have charter schools passing state tests! At this point, I do not understand the MDE or legislative decisions being made in Jackson.

I must say, not all in charge at MDE are incompetent or have a lack of caring. I can think of one lady that is already over there who could run the place with no problem!! We need more like her at the top!!!!!! Given the opportunity she'd get things on the right track.

I am closing with heartfelt passion for educating and caring for kids, but with much built up frustration with MDE and current legislation. If we can't count on the MDE to help us (help kids), who can we count on???

Dawn S. Hollingsworth, M.S.Ed
Assistant Principal
Newton County Middle/High School
(601)635-3347 (ph)
(601)635-4045 (fax)

From: [Sabrina Hubb](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New Accountability
Date: Saturday, September 10, 2016 7:45:20 PM

Dear Legislation,

I do not agree with the new accountability system that is being set forth by the state. It is not fair for a school that has receive an A rating to receive a lower rating due to the number being set. I am in education and truly believe that the rating should stay at the current ratings. Schools should be judged on how they are actually performing. No school should be rating higher or lower than their performance. The accountability should hold schools accountable for their performance rather A or F. The government should not set numbers and I think you should vote this bill down.

From: [Judy Humphries](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School ratings
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:02:20 PM

As a retired educator, I am appalled at this new proposal on school rating! I think it is only fair that if you want to use this system, we as educators should be allowed to rate the board in the same manner. No matter how hard you work or how many hours are put in by you, only 40% of you should be allowed to keep your jobs. It should be done at random with no consideration of effort or improvement in your job.

When are you going to learn that at least 90% of a child's education is started at home? When are you going to start holding the parents accountable for getting their children to school and making sure homework is done? Most of my time with my students was spent being a counselor and "mother-like" figure for my students. Grades are the last thing on most children's minds these days. They come to school in a mess and go home to a mess! We cannot teach "the whole" child anymore because of regulations put on us by you people! The only ones losing in this are the children. It's really not about them anymore. It's all about how good administration and you can look compared to others.

Sadly Sincere,
Judy Humphries

From: [Lucy Jacobson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School ratings
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 9:49:20 AM

This is the most ridiculous proposal. Applying this formula to a test my students took Monday: my classroom of 20 students, 2 (10%) would have As instead of the 8, and 3 would receive an F even though only 1 actually failed. How fair is this? Out of the 8 As I had, one made a 100, 3 made a 97. How do I decide which of those 3 (with a 97) would receive an A? Best handwriting??

Please stop setting Mississippi to fail and let educators take care of education!

Leave the current rating system in place and stop changing the finish line! Please, let us teach.

Sincerely,
Lucy Jacobson

Sent from my iPad



COLUMBIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

613 Bryan Avenue
Columbia, Mississippi 39429
Telephone: 601-736-2366
Fax: 601-736-2653

Marietta W. James, Ed.D.
Superintendent
mjames@columbiaschools.org

September 13, 2016

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director, Division of Research and Development
359 N. West Street
Jackson, MS 39405-0771

This letter is sent to be shared with the Mississippi State Board of Education as part of the APA process as the Board considers revisions to the business rules of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

The Columbia School District respectfully wishes to express the following concerns:

- National and regional assessments (NAEP and PARCC) show Mississippi students are making significant progress when compared to other states. The State model should reflect the positive achievements of our students and should not make it appear as if Mississippi students are performing poorly.
- It should be made clear that percentiles are being recommended only for establishing initial cut scores, and cut scores will become the target in subsequent years.
- The Accountability Standards do not address the proposed growth calculations. The standards refer to the "increase within the lowest two (2) performance levels that cross over the mid-point of the level." It should be very clearly explained HOW growth is to be calculated in a document available to all stakeholders. An MDE presentation on Bridge Scales referred to Levels 1, 2, and 3 being split into sections (i.e. 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b) and that growth would be determined by crossing from one of these subsections to another. Since growth is a HUGE part of the accountability model, it should be made very clear HOW it will be calculated.
- If the goal is to have students become College and Career Ready, schools with students scoring at levels 4 and/or 5 should not be penalized so heavily if students move from level 5 to level 4, which is still proficient.
- The model used for assigning grades to K-3 schools assigns two-thirds of their grade based on circumstances over which they have no control. If third grade students at a K-3 school score proficient and/or advanced, but do not "grow" the following year at a different school, the K-3 school is penalized although they had no control over the instruction those students received that year. Currently, 600-point K-3 schools have no target scores. Target scores (cut scores) should be set this year when cut scores for 700-point schools, 1000-point schools, and districts are set after the appeals process. Currently, there is no incentive in the model for K-3 schools to push third grade students to score at a higher level. (For a K-2 school, ALL components are earned at a different school.)

Mr. Walt Drane

Page 2

September 13, 2016

- Two components, acceleration and readiness, in the 1000-point high school model are based partially on students' ability to pay. Schools with students who cannot afford to take the ACT multiple times, pay for dual enrollment classes, or pay for AP exams are at a disadvantage, not because of ability but because of economics.
- Including 11th grade students who take an accelerated class in the denominator of the acceleration component of the model for both their 11th and 12th years, even though they may not take an accelerated class their 12th grade year, seems unfair. There are many circumstances that may cause a 12th grade student to not take an accelerated class their senior year.
- Banking scores is unnecessary. Scores should be assigned to the school(s) the year the scores are earned. (i.e. Assign scores for 8th grade students who take Algebra I to both the 8th grade school and the high school the year it was taken. Assign scores for 9th grade high school students who take Algebra I to the high school only that year.) Waiting to count the scores confuses the issue and leaves room for calculation errors. The Senior Snapshot captures whether students have taken the required assessments before they can graduate.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marietta W. James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'M'.

Marietta W. James, Ed.D.

Superintendent

From: [Tifani Keith](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Comments on Proposed Changes to Accountability Model
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:43:27 AM

The proposed changes to school rankings are unfair, not incentivising, and counter-productive to the improvement of public education.

There is no good reason to tell students, parents, teachers, and districts that no matter what they do and no matter how much they succeed, a predetermined number of them will be labeled as a failure. None. Not one.

Set a bar. You can set it pretty high if you like. But set a clear, fair bar and tell everyone that they have the potential to reach it. Don't tell everyone you will decide what is passing and what is failing after the test is given.

Tifani Keith Jefferis



From: [Johnson, Deborah](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New School Rating System
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 10:50:32 AM

The new proposed plan to rate schools is very unfair and does not truly show how the schools are doing. The new proposal mandates that schools fail whether they are actually failing. Not only is the logic behind this proposal flawed, it also would negatively affect our children mentally and emotionally. It would have a negative impact on the overall morale of the schools and add stress that is unfair and unnecessary. It seems as though the proposal purposely sets up schools to fail. This proposal needs to be stopped!

Sincerely,

Ms. D. L Johnson

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
MISSISSIPPI STATE CONFERENCE

1072 W. Lynch Street, Suite 10 • Jackson, MS39203
(601) 353-8452 • Fax (601)353-1565

www.naacpms.org



September 13, 2016

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Youth & College Advisor

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director
Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Mr. Walt Drane:

On behalf of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP, we respectfully submit the following comment on the Mississippi Department of Education's recent release of the changes to the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System for the 2016-2017 school year.

The Mississippi Department of Education states: "*[t]he purpose for resetting the accountability system is due to the following: (1) a new assessment system that required new cut scores and corresponding performance levels; and (2) two new components added to the statewide accountability system (Acceleration and College and Career Readiness (CCR))*".

The new accountability system is a cause of great concern for many Mississippians. It is our belief that providing all Mississippi's children with a quality education should be the states' goal, and this new system appears to fall short of that goal. More to the point, this proposed accountability system exacerbates present inequities, penalizes and further marginalizes African American and low income students, and contains aspects that appear to be in direct violation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

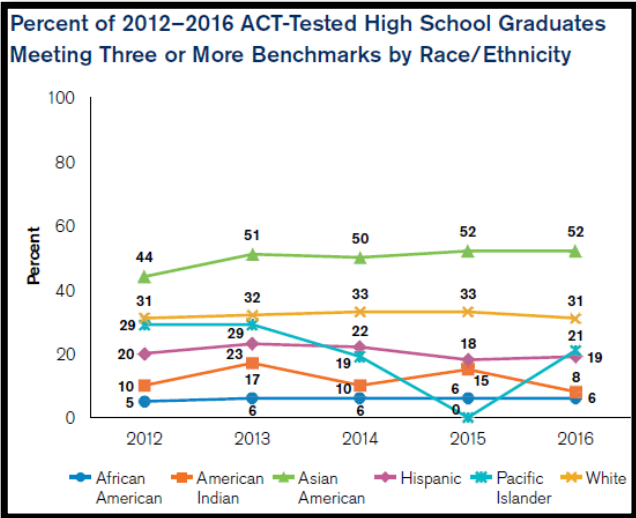
The new accountability system reinforces inequities that already exist in the Mississippi educational system.

Mississippi holds several inequities within its education system, which have been further supported by the current accountability system and will thrive under the proposed new accountability system.

Mississippi NAACP • *Making Democracy Work in Mississippi*

High poverty, majority African American districts continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining fully certified and qualified teachers. Therefore the requirement to increase accelerated courses without accounting for the critical teacher shortage¹ throughout the state especially in high poverty, majority African American districts, automatically places said districts at a disadvantage. We invite you to review your own data on the lack of accelerated courses currently offered in these districts. Accelerated courses provide students with a tremendous learning opportunity and assist with college and career readiness while providing equitable educational experiences for all students. However, using accelerated courses in the new accountability system without ensuring that every child has a certified and qualified teacher to teach those courses creates a bias against high poverty, majority African American districts. This places a disadvantage on students where acceleration courses are not offered, and it locks their schools and districts in a pattern of failure within the accountability system.

Another component of Mississippi’s new accountability system is College and Career Readiness (CCR), which is yet another area of the system that codifies failure for high poverty, majority African American districts within the accountability system itself. For example, the ACT acts as the College and Career Readiness indicator. The ACT published the following chart² for Mississippi:



Notice the wide gap in performance between African Americans and American Indians at the bottom and Asians and Whites at the top. The new accountability system’s inclusion of the college and career readiness component, as measured by the ACT, hems historically low performing districts and schools to the underperforming categories of the accountability model.

To measure college and career readiness using a tool where at least one third of the population will inevitably underperform produces a skewed view of achievement when compared to that of

their white counterparts. This is especially true when factoring in all ACT preparation opportunities afforded to students in high wealth districts, with an adequate number of certified teachers, coupled with curriculum supports. As a component of the new accountability system, this will create yet another barrier for students in high poverty, majority African American communities and their school districts to perform well within the state’s accountability system. This fact has been well documented for several years, and the new accountability system will use it punitively as opposed to providing support and strategies to close this achievement gap.

¹ http://southernecho.org/s/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/explaining-disparity-in-student-performance-_final_revised.pdf

² http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/state25_Mississippi_Web_Secured.pdf

The proposed accountability model will produce the same outcome.

The Mississippi Department of Education releases yearly accountability results for each school district. A review of accountability results for the past several years, using 2014-2015 results as an example, clearly reveals: (1) majority African American, high poverty districts were consistently rated low performing, and (2) higher wealth, low African American districts were consistently rated higher.

School District Name	Black %	White %	2014-2015 Official Grade	2014-2015 w/o Waiver Grade	2013-2014 w/o Waiver Grade	2012-2013 Official Grade	2011-2012 Official Grade	2010-2011 QDI Points
Petal	17%	75%	A	A	C	A	B	201
Forrest County Ag High School	29%	67%	B	B	C	B	B	178
Booneville	22%	70%	A	B	B	A	B	191
Union County	7%	89%	B	B	B	B	B	169
Amory	35%	62%	A	B	C	A	B	182
Desoto County Schools	35%	55%	A	B	C	A	B	182
Grenada	51%	47%	B	B	D	B	B	172
Madison County	39%	52%	A	B	B	A	B	197
Ocean Springs	13%	77%	A	B	C	A	B	189
Biloxi Public	37%	47%	A	B	C	A	B	182
Lafayette County	26%	70%	B	B	C	B	B	168
Tunica County	97%	< 5%	D	D	D	F	D	141
Holmes County	99%	< 5%	D	D	D	F	D	114
Leflore Country	94%	< 5%	D	D	D	F	F	133
Sunflower County Consolidated	96%	< 5%	D	D	D	D	C	119
Laurel	87%	< 5%	C	D	D	C	C	131
Claiborne County School District	99%	< 5%	C	D	C	D	F	150
Columbus Municipal	92%	5%	D	D	D	D	D	143
Durant Public	97%	< 5%	D	D	D	D	F	132
Canton Public	90%	< 5%	D	D	D	D	F	133
Hazlehurst City	91%	< 5%	D	D	D	D	D	104
KEY								
Blue – Top Ten Highest Performing School Districts								
Green – Top Ten Lowest Performing School Districts								

NOTE

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the state department published both “official grades” and “w/o waiver” grades, as allowed by the U.S. Department of Education. A comparison of waiver grades to official grades makes it clear that the use of the waiver grades can mask lower performance. For example, take the Clinton Public School District, although not noted in the chart, the 2015 Accountability Results state “2015 Official Grade – A”, “2015 w/o Waiver Grade – C”. The official grade is two letter grades higher than actual performance. In the Madison County School District, the “2015 Official Grade – A”, “2015 w/o Waiver Grade – B”. In many districts, the use of the waiver in the “Official Grade” still renders the same result, a wide gap between the “w/o Waiver Grade” and the “Official Grade” that gives a false view of what actually occurred in the district.

The use of the proposed system may not be allowed by federal law.

The absence of subgroups appears to stand in violation of the reauthorization of federal law, ESSA, which requires that each state considers each subgroup of students separately. Under this proposed new accountability system, low-income students, African American students, students with disabilities, and English learners are not treated as the discrete subgroups, therefore resulting in de facto super groups that are strictly prohibited with ESSA as written. To ensure that any statewide accountability system is meaningful to all students, particularly those populations that have traditionally been and continue to be underserved, ESSA mandates that states consider each student subgroup as a separate entity and must not be replaced with super groups or even super subgroups.

Furthermore, ESSA requires quality measures other than standardized testing and this new system provides none. Past models and the new proposed accountability system rely solely on test scores (standardized exams and ACT) as the measure of quality for students. To move states and districts away from this singular focus, ESSA requires that at least one other method be used as a measure of quality. The law specifically encourages the use of multiple measures of student learning and progress as well as other indicators of student success. In this way, administrators can make school accountability decisions based on several sources of information and not just from the isolated and incomplete picture provided by testing. The new system fails to meet this standard. Also, it should be noted that MS Code 37-17-6 explicitly prohibits the use of two accountability systems. Since the new system will not comply with federal law, a second system would have to be created and would, in turn, violate state law.

The new accountability system penalizes low wealth districts.

Teacher quality, as defined by our current licensure system, in high poverty, majority African American districts is severely deficient. Because of low tax bases, some districts cannot afford support programs to help cultivate great teachers, thus becoming unattractive to talented educators in the state. In some cases, these individuals would rather commute for several miles to find school districts with more financial opportunity and support. Essentially, these migrations create a void of quality educators and an overreliance on temporary fixes - ultimately producing another obstacle for students in high poverty, majority African American districts. Without a standard of quality education, these school districts have very little chance of success in a standardized test-driven model of accountability. The State Department of Education and the State of Mississippi have failed to provide a viable and stable fix for these issues.

It is important that any accountability system adopted by the state of Mississippi reflects the concerns of its citizens and addresses the needs of its students. Unfortunately, the proposed accountability system will perpetuate concerns by shifting schools from a system of competing against a standard to competing against other schools, and imposing an artificial bell curve that both distorts achievement while keeping historically poor performing schools locked into a pattern of failure. According to the proposed policy's forced bell curve, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14% of them would still be assigned an F. Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10% of them would

still get an A. This approach to rating schools discourages collaboration among school districts; for a district to move up a level, another district will have to fall. That is bad for our children and our state.

The state accountability system must have elements that support student subgroups and components that ensure the closing of historical gaps among underserved student populations. Inequities that currently exist for low income and African American students must be resolved in a manner that enhances the quality of education for every child in Mississippi. The proposed accountability system does not live up to the goals we share and, as such, it is not an appropriate accountability system for Mississippi and should be redesigned so that it will enhance and not harm our students, schools, and school districts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Derrick Johnson,
State President Mississippi NAACP

From: [Jamellah Johnson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Feedback on the MS Accountability System
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:36:26 PM

Our accountability system is arbitrary and flawed. The metrics have changed numerous times over the last 5 years; yet districts and schools are expected to hit a moving target. A clear cut, transparent system is less flawed, but no system can replace educators simply being accountable to the children, families, and the communities we serve. The use of percentile ranks instead of scores is not an acceptable option. Theoretically, if all schools performed well on the state test some would automatically receive an F. This is not right. Many states use a value added system of accountability. Has this option been explored? Please reconsider using percentiles ranks to rate our schools.

Jamellah Johnson
Sent from my iPhone

A Substantial Change that Affects Your School

Johnson, Sherwin

Tue 8/30/2016 3:22 PM

Inbox

To: District Employees <DistrictEmployees@jackson.k12.ms.us>;

District Employees,

If you have ever had a teacher to tell you that no matter how well you do in my class, there will always be 14% of you that will make an F and only 10% of you that will make an A, then you understand what this percentile arrangement will do to the districts in Mississippi. In an effort to keep you informed about new changes to the new school rating system, at the request of Superintendent Dr. Cedrick Gray, please take a few moments to review the information below provided by The Parents Campaign. Please send your comments to the name, physical address and/or email address highlighted below.

The State Board of Education has voted in favor of a dramatic change to the school rating system, one that **sets in stone the number of schools and school districts that can be rated in each of the A through F categories in a given year.** Exactly 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve.

This is [very different](#) from the current system, which sets a minimum score that a school or school district must achieve to earn a given rating. Note that the State Board of Education has decided that we should always have 40 percent more Fs than As.

The good news is that the **law requires the Board to accept feedback from the public before such a policy is implemented.** This is your chance to weigh in. Click [here](#) to see the proposed changes, then **send your comments in writing by mail, email, or fax to:**

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director, Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
[P.O. Box 771](#)
[Jackson, MS 39205-0771](#)

You may **email comments to:** accountability@mdek12.org or **fax them to** 601-359-2471

According to the proposed policy, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14% of them would still be assigned an F. Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10% of them would still get an A. This "*Hunger Games*" approach to rating schools discourages collaboration among school districts; for a district to move up a level, another district will have to fall. That is bad for our children and our state.

Please weigh in; your feedback is important. The deadline to submit comments is **5 p.m.** on **September 13, 2016.** Our scholars are counting on us!

Sherwin Johnson

Executive Director of Public and Media Relations | **Jackson Public School** District

662 South President Street | Jackson, Mississippi 39201

601.960.8935: **office** | 601.960.8810: **fax**

sherjohnson@jackson.k12.ms.us | www.jackson.k12.ms.us

website: www.jackson.k12.ms.us

facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/JacksonPublicSchools>

youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/jpsity>



Jackson Public Schools

From: [Anne Ketchum](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: NO WAY!
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 10:46:07 AM

I understand that tax dollars that go with the student to a charter school stay at that charter school forever---no matter where else the student might decide to transfer. How is that a good thing for any school system??? Having you people in our Legislature meddle in our school systems has all but ruined them! Stay out! It appears that the vast majority of you are only there to pad your own pockets at the expense of everyone who pays taxes. Either that or you are woefully ignorant and uneducated about economics and how to handle real money.

How could you possibly think that this highjacking of public school funds would be good for our state? And limiting the number of schools who can score top grades---no matter how well they actually perform? What if your child could only make an "A" in a class if the limit of "A's" has not been reached? It's ludicrous!

ANK

Anne N Ketchum

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Kinsey, Pam](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Cedrick Gray](#)
Subject: 14% Failure
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 8:29:56 AM

Dear Board Members,

Certainly you are expecting concerns from parents and educators regarding the rating system currently under consideration. As an educator I am personally opposed to this mandatory doom no matter how much improvement or effort is underway. Without benefit of my opinion, I posed the question to my middle school students as if this were their grades, with 14% receiving an F regardless of their actual grade. I will share the questions and responses below.

1. Unanimously voted unfair. Their concern being that 14% of their classmates are not failing. None are.
2. Why would they do something to discourage learning? Isn't that the opposite of their purpose?
3. Isn't there something morally wrong with this?
3. What if this was being applied to their paychecks? If 30% of them receive \$50,000, then this policy means 20% would have a pay cut. No matter how much everyone worked, only 10% would receive their full pay. How many of them would stay? So why would teachers and kids in schools with lower scores even try?

Well, there we have it. Out of the mouths of babes. The babes who represent our future.

I am respectfully submitting their concerns along with mine in hopes that you will re-consider dooming a state that is struggling to retain quality educators, thereby throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Sincerely,
Pamela Kinsey, M.A.
Power Academic and Visual Arts Complex
Jackson Public Schools

From: [Amanda Koonlaba](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School accountability ratings
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 10:58:46 PM

Dear Board of Education,

I would like to make a comment on the accountability rating scale you propose to adopt. I do not think it is fair to force a percentage of Mississippi's schools into an A category or an F category. In fact, I do not support the A-F grading system for schools based on student high-stakes, standardized assessment data at all. I believe these market-based reforms are a ploy to privatize education in this state. I urge you to remove the language from the accountability model that sorts certain percentages of schools into A and F categories. That is a great starting place for fighting the privatization of our schools. Then, we can begin work to get the the A-F grading scale removed from legislation. There are multiple ways that Mississippi's schools can be improved without privatizing them or using punitive measures such as labels of A-F.

Please do not adopt this!

Sincerely,
Amanda Koonlaba

From: [Howard Kuchta](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Opposition to State Board A-F Letter Grade Proposal
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 10:14:08 PM

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director
Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Mr. Drane:

Many of us involved in the world of K-12 Education are astounded at the unsupportable proposal adopted by the Mississippi State Board of Education regarding A-F school grading. A proposal that sets in stone the number of schools and districts that must be forced into each of the A through F categories in a given year is impossible to comprehend or defend. If 10% of schools must arbitrarily be forced into an A rating--regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole--and each year 14% must arbitrarily be forced into an F rating--no matter how much schools improve--it is impossible to discern the incentive for students, parents, or schools to endeavor to improve.

Such a policy is not psychometrically defensible in part because the letter grade assigned to the schools will no longer be statistically associated with the performance of the students or the school. That is a circumstance that cannot be defended as reasonable or logical.

We urge the State Board to reverse this decision. Thank you for including our concern in your report to the Board.

Howard Kuchta, Ed.D.
Educator Preparation Program
Cameron University
Lawton, Oklahoma

From: [Terrena Kyle](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 12:22:46 PM

Please rethink your policy for deciding the rating of each school district. What you have described seems very unfair. If two schools have exactly the same criteria to meet the standards you have set, but there is room for only one more, who gets the higher rating? This seems like gambling. This policy would never work in my classroom. Above all else, students want fair treatment, and they are very quick to let you know if they think they are being treated unfairly. This is common sense. To expect 14% to receive a rating of F is grossly unfair. What incentive is there to do better if you already have your expectations set?

I am a retired teacher teaching only half-time, but I have been teaching in some capacity since January, 1969. I have seen many changes in all these years. I have taught under many different curriculums, testing models, and accountability models. I must say the model you are proposing is the worst I have seen. Please think how this will affect our education in our state. Teachers have had to adjust to so many changes-some of them good and some not necessary. We strive each day to meet the standards you set before us only to find you do not expect us to do a good job. Just like students who need a little praise at times to keep on working hard, teachers need the same thing. We are losing some of the best teachers to other states or other professions. Are we going to lose students, also? Parents want to see that a school district is doing a good job. Your rating system could give good school districts a lower score than it should have. It seems you are trying to kill public education in Mississippi. Whether you want to admit it or not, public schools have been the backbone of our state. When you hurt public schools, you automatically affect the economy. Charter schools are not the answer you seek. Your proposed accountability model will only harm public education.

Please give this matter more attention. Thank you for your time.

Terrena Kyle
Teacher at Pontotoc Junior High School

From: [Danny Lampley](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed Accountability Ratings
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 8:05:21 PM

As I understand the proposed accountability ratings, the percentage of schools that will get an A rating and the percentage that will get an F rating is set, period. In other words, it doesn't matter how well a school does or how much it improves; only a certain number will get an A rating, B rating, etc., down to a set number that *has* to get an F rating and there is nothing a school can do about it. Even if a school should be rated a C, if there are no other schools doing worse, then the school is going to get an F. Is my understanding correct?

If the foregoing is the case, I would certainly view this as more fodder for the lawsuits that will be coming. We are tired of public education in this State being sold out and not supported by the very public educators who are supposed to be trying to fix our system so we can get off the bottom.

To my mind, the only "sensible" way to reason out this proposed accountability system is that it serves to guarantee a sufficient number of "failing" schools to justify moving in charter schools. I can't think of another reason how this would make any kind of sense.

--

Danny Lampley
Attorney at Law

[REDACTED]
Oxford MS 38655
[REDACTED]

From: [Joel Lawhead](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 6:21:00 AM

To whom it may concern,

The new school ratings policy proposal must be abandoned immediately. Setting a quota for a guaranteed failure percentage for schools regardless of performance is insane and un-American. The goal of education is for all schools, and therefore for all students to succeed.

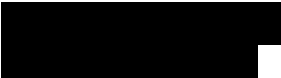
This policy will certainly affect schools in poorer districts adversely at a higher rate than more affluent districts. This policy will also allow political donors invested in superficially not-for-profit charter schools to benefit from a forced failure percentage by the state. The idea is absolutely corrupt and will draw federal investigations and lawsuits costing our state even more money.

Sincerely,
Joel Lawhead

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

--

Joel Lawhead

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

From: [Ashley Lay](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability ratings
Date: Sunday, September 11, 2016 10:43:23 AM

How can a school with grades K-8 possibly be compared to a school with just one grade level?
How can a school with 1200 students be compared with a school of only 100 students?

Are these factors considered in mde's accountability rating scale?

Why is even more emphasis being placed on the growth of the lowest 25%, when some schools are comprised of more students, who fall in this category? Schools with higher numbers of free/reduced lunch eligible students have more students to grow, which will inflate the overall rating of these schools. This is going to drastically impact the ratings of many of consistently A /B rated schools. It will give the public the perception that some top rated schools are underperformed 2015-2016.

EALAY
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Marc Lerner](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: grading on a curve
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:23:31 PM

Dear Board of Ed,

There is no reason to limit the number of A ranked public schools or enforce 14% of schools to be ranked F. And there is certainly no reason to funnel tax dollars to private charter schools. The public school system of Mississippi needs that money and we should support public education.

best,

Marc

From: "Tidwell, Paige D" <ptidwell@tupeloschools.com>

Date: August 24, 2016 at 3:55:39 PM CDT

To: "rgaultman@gmail.com" <rgaultman@gmail.com>, "cwright@mdek12.org" <cwright@mdek12.org>, "PAVanderford@mdek12.org" <PAVanderford@mdek12.org>, "jbeaudoin@mdek12.org" <jbeaudoin@mdek12.org>, "kbenton@mdek12.org" <kbenton@mdek12.org>

Cc: "Loden, Gearl" <GLODEN@tupeloschools.com>

Subject: APA Response



In response to the email concerning changes to the CCR component of the Accountability Model, we asked for clarification regarding this change. To our surprise the Accountability Standards were already in the process of being revised and going through the APA process. There has been inadequate communication concerning these proposed changes and no clear justification for doing so. It seems as though the ramifications of making such changes have not been fully considered.

With modifications as significant as this, superintendents should have been made aware of the proposed revisions earlier as many districts have already allocated resources to prepare their current seniors for taking the ACT. The State of Mississippi already has some of the lowest ACT scores in the state and depriving our students of their critical math courses prior to taking the ACT is a disservice to our students as well as our state. It is our obligation as well as the state's obligation to make decisions that are in the best interest of our children. Students who have had the opportunity to take all of their math courses would, obviously, have a significant advantage over those who have not. We have been preparing our seniors for four years.

When making decisions concerning the operations of the Tupelo Public School District and determining the allocation of certain funds, we, along with other districts in the state, referred to the Business Rules set forth and approved by APA. According to the rules published in the 2015 Accountability Model, Business Rule 25.10 clearly states that the ACT scores of all students identified in the Senior Snapshot will be included in the calculation of the CCR component. To make any adjustments to the model at this time would not be reasonable or appropriate.

To date, MDE has not **officially** notified us about the proposed APA changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Loden'.

Dr. Gearl Loden
Superintendent, Tupelo Public School District

From: "Tidwell, Paige D" <ptidwell@tupeloschools.com>
Date: August 29, 2016 at 10:01:57 AM CDT
To: "rgaultman@gmail.com" <rgaultman@gmail.com>, "cwright@mdek12.org" <cwright@mdek12.org>, "PAVanderford@mdek12.org" <PAVanderford@mdek12.org>, "jbeaudoin@mdek12.org" <jbeaudoin@mdek12.org>, "kbenton@mdek12.org" <kbenton@mdek12.org>
Cc: "Loden, Gearl" <GLODEN@tupeloschools.com>
Subject: APA Response



We would like to express our concern regarding the proposed changes to Business Rule 9. Under the current guidelines, schools and districts are able to track progress and growth based on a set range of cut points. The levels are defined which allows schools/districts to know where they are within the set target. With percentile cuts, there is no clear target. Based on percentiles, only 10% of the schools/districts will obtain an A rating and it guarantees that bottom 38% will always receive a D or an F. Regardless of effort or growth, ratings based on percentiles will consistently yield the same results. Changing the current scale would cause confusion for School Administrators as they try to determine where they fall within the percentile rank or how close they are to achieving their goal.

We would like to propose that the State Board keep the current set of cut points until such time as the results of the current model can be reviewed and prior to assigning future grades.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Loden', is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Gearl Loden
Superintendent, Tupelo Public School District

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PARENTS' CAMPAIGN

Better Schools  Brighter Future

September 9, 2016

Mr. Walt Drane, Executive Director, Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Mr. Drane,

Please accept these public comments regarding the proposed changes to the business rules governing the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, submitted on behalf of The Parents' Campaign. The Parents' Campaign believes that public school children, their parents, and our state are best served by an accountability system that reflects high standards and that provides an accurate measure of the quality of education being provided in Mississippi schools.

Section 1: Changes to the method by which schools and school districts are rated. If interpreted literally as presented for public comment, the changes to the business rules that govern the Statewide Accountability Model would result in a system by which schools and districts are awarded grades based upon a percentile ranking, with schools at or above the 90th percentile receiving a grade of A, those scoring between the 63rd and 90th percentiles awarded a B, etc. The Parents' Campaign opposes such an arbitrary rating system that would require a certain percent of schools be awarded an A and a certain percent be awarded an F, regardless of how schools as a whole perform.

We acknowledge and appreciate that the Mississippi Department of Education has expressed publicly its intent to use percentiles only to determine cut scores for 2015-2016, and for those same cut scores to be used to award grades in subsequent years. Though no such intent is stated in the changes to the business rules that were submitted for public comment per APA, The Parents' Campaign supports the use of this system of awarding accountability grades: using scores, not percentiles, to rate schools and school districts. It is our belief that the State Board of Education should take formal action to ensure this change is enshrined in policy going forward, by voting on the change from percentiles to score ranges and resubmitting the business rules for public comment through APA showing the score ranges (not percentiles) for school and district grades.

Section 9: Acceleration component. The Parents' Campaign reiterates our concerns with the Acceleration component of the Statewide Accountability Model, as submitted in public comments on November 11, 2013. While we strongly support efforts to encourage schools to direct resources toward areas that prepare students at the highest possible levels, with additional rigor and a focus on college readiness, we believe that, due to precedent set in the Mississippi Legislature for chronic underfunding of public schools, this component creates a disproportionate disadvantage for low-wealth school districts. Schools not located in close proximity to a college, and those that

do not have the resources to hire teachers who meet the faculty requirements of community colleges and universities, are further disadvantaged, as access to dual enrollment courses is inequitable. Additionally, national Advanced Placement and similar exams are costly, and low-wealth districts are less likely to have the resources to cover the cost of those exams and are less likely to have students whose parents can afford to cover those costs themselves. It is the opinion of The Parents' Campaign that this component should be contingent upon the Mississippi Legislature appropriating the requisite funding to eliminate or reduce significantly these inequities.

Section 25: Changes to the method by which the College and Career Readiness score is calculated. The changes to the business rules submitted for public comment per APA indicate that ACT scores of high school juniors at the time of the statewide administration, rather than the Senior Snapshot, will be used to determine a high school's points for the College and Career Readiness component of the Statewide Accountability System. Because the ACT is intended to be a college readiness measure, it is the position of The Parents' Campaign that high schools should not be expected to have students "college ready" until the senior year. Expecting junior-level students to meet a college readiness benchmark that is set above the national average ACT sub-score of high school seniors in English/Reading and Math is unreasonable.

We acknowledge and appreciate that the Mississippi Department of Education has expressed its intent not to adopt the changes to this section as submitted for public comment per APA. We agree that this change should not be adopted and that the Senior Snapshot, with students given until February to achieve a higher score, should be used to determine a high school's score for the College and Career Readiness component of the accountability system.

Thank you for considering these comments and for the work you do daily to ensure that all Mississippi children get a shot at a bright future.

Warm regards,



Nancy Loome
Executive Director

From: sandylopp@aol.com
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: proposed change in how schools are graded
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 7:25:18 AM

Good day,

I recently found out that you are proposing to change the way you grade schools based on a percentage of schools will get A's, B's, etc instead of grading schools based on actual performance. This is nonsense. Every one should be graded on actual performance. Please use common sense.

Thank you,
Sandra Lopp

From: [Barbara Lowe](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Need answer to questions
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 7:39:44 PM

According to my representative, the following is true:

Under the new politically charged system, only 10% of the state public schools can have an “A” ranking, regardless of how well they did on their testing. And, each year, 14% of the schools must be rated as “F” districts, regardless of how much they may have improved.

My questions:

1. Are these statements correct?
2. If not, in what way/s are they incorrect?
3. If so, why would we mandate that only 10% of schools can achieve "A" ratings and that 14% must receive "F" ratings. What is the logic behind those numbers? Aren't we trying to increase success and limit failure?

I eagerly await the answer to my questions at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lowe

From: randy.lynn@mwb.com
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed school rating system changes
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:43:00 AM

Regarding the proposed school rating system changes:

As a highly involved parent with two children attending Mississippi public schools, I don't understand the logic of requiring a certain percentage of Fs and, further, drawing the lines to favor Fs over As.

Can you imagine the outcry there would be if a teacher applied this same standard to her classroom, requiring a certain number of students to fail regardless of their mastery of the subject matter?

I find it hard to imagine how these changes would benefit students. I strongly believe that creating more failing schools in our state will only accelerate the departure of high-achieving students and involved parents from quality public schools.

I have seen it happen at my children's school, an excellent school that serves a growing number of low-income families and ELL students. The school received an unexpected "D" grade under the punitive growth requirement that were in place at the time. I believe, as a direct result, many of my son's and daughter's friends were gone the next year, moving into nearby "A" zones and private schools. These were the very students who consistently test at the highest level, so their departure has made it harder for our schools to repeat the high accountability grades that they've seen in the past. I can only imagine what will happen at good schools that unexpectedly receive an arbitrary failing grade.

Please do not favor failure over excellence. Thank you for your consideration.

Randy Lynn

Randy Lynn
randy.lynn@mwb.com
Partner/Creative Director - Digital
601.714.8268
mwb.com

From: [Morgan Mahan](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: PROPOSED CHANGES
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:20:33 AM

To Whom This May Concern:

Please explain how this is a fair system to set in stone how many schools can be rated an A or an F. Why would a school not be allowed a higher rating if the students earned that higher rating? There is already so much pressure on students and teachers to perform, yet now, according to this, it may or may not matter whether we improve or not? I am very confused about how this is a fair system. Please explain. I feel this sets students up for failure before they are even given a chance to perform.

Sincerely,

M.Mahan- a concerned teacher

From: [Erin Mauffray](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System Feedback
Date: Monday, September 12, 2016 9:58:13 PM

Hello,

I think it would be a bad idea to set the number of schools that can be rated A, B, C, D, and F because that requires accepting that we will have failing schools. Instead of modifying the rating system, we should be figuring out how to get all of our schools in the A-B range.

Thank you,
Erin Mauffray



**MADISON COUNTY
SCHOOLS**

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

SUPERINTENDENT
Dr. Ronnie McGehee

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Sam Kelly, President
Philip Huskey, Secretary
Dr. Pollia Griffin
William Grissett

I would like to go on record as strongly opposing MDE's decision to make changes to the CCR component of the Accountability Model, without first soliciting input from superintendents as to how these changes will impact our districts. To date, Madison County has not been officially notified of changes to the Accountability Model and in fact, I was astonished to read this information in Mr. Drane's email of August 23.

In 2013, Madison County Schools was the first district in the state to provide an opportunity for all of our juniors to take the ACT at no cost, in the familiar surroundings of their home school. Our ACT emphasis has resulted in an overall rise in the composite scores of our juniors from 20.4 in 2014 to our most recent score of 21.3. We were anticipating even better scores from our seniors this year, since most of them would have completed higher level classes and been provided remediation in areas as needed. The decision to make adjustments to the current model essentially nullifies the resources and personnel our district has already allocated to prepare our seniors to perform better on the ACT, and sabotages student efforts to enhance their scores. Our lower socio-economic students, who are the very ones who need to perform well on the ACT in order to open the door to opportunities for higher education, are especially penalized. In Madison County, our targeted emphasis on ACT prep has resulted in the composite score of our African American population rising from 17.6 to 18.2 in one year's time.

In addition, the arbitrary decision to change the 2017 Statewide ACT testing date from April to February is not conducive to a true picture of 11th grade academic achievement. One example: by testing in February instead of April, a junior taking geometry will be lacking skills to successfully achieve an optimum math sub score, since 33% of the score in this area comes from geometry. Moving the Statewide ACT testing date further penalizes our efforts to help students maximize their performance on this test.

According to the 2015 Accountability Model Business Rule 25.10, the ACT scores of students in the Senior Snapshot are included in the calculation of the CCR component. Last minute changes to this formula without allowing input from superintendents; coupled with moving the 2017 Statewide ACT assessment date from April to February, essentially dismisses districts who have been budgeting and allocating resources based on the current rule. In addition, these changes do not benefit our students or our state as a whole.

Madison County would recommend that MDE proceed with the already approved May 2015 Business Rules providing students with opportunities through February of their senior year to meet the ACT sub score benchmarks in English/Reading and Math; and to reconsider the decision to move the 2017 Statewide ACT Test date from April to February.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronnie L. McGehee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Ronnie L. McGehee, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Madison County Schools

From: [Frank Mickens](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New A-F School Grading on a "Desired" Curve
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 9:18:03 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please do not institute your proposed method of grading our schools/districts on a "curve" through the use of pre-determined percentiles.

In my opinion instituting this philosophy will be a disservice to the students, teachers, principals, superintendents, parents, taxpayers and citizens of our state.

[Grading on a curve - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)



Grading on a curve - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

One method of grading on a curve uses three steps:

1. Numeric scores (or possibly scores on a sufficiently fine-grained **ordinal scale**) are assigned to the students. The absolute values are less relevant, provided that the order of the scores corresponds to the relative performance of each student within the course.
2. These scores are converted to **percentiles** (or some other system of **quantiles**).
3. The percentile values are transformed to grades according to a division of the percentile scale into intervals, where the interval width of each grade indicates the ***desired relative frequency*** for that grade.

I am appalled, amazed and astounded that you want to grade schools/districts on a curve, irregardless of the actual score breakdowns.

Basically you are locking in a set number of (predetermined?) schools/districts to be either exemplary (A) or failures (D/F).

I'm willing to bet that the same schools/districts will be in the same A, D ad F categories every year, with very little movement between these extreme designations.

The B and C school districts will probably be shuffled among themselves every year.

Colleges gave up on scoring on a curve decades ago because of the assumption of rationed and guaranteed excellence and failures were met with outrage from students, parents and employers.

The recognition and rewarding of excellence, achievement and underachievement should not be rationed !

Excellence and achievement should not be considered a limited resource.

Under achievers need to be identified and have more resources made available to them.

Imagine grading the Ivy League schools with this method. Harvard A, Yale F

Your plan appears to buy into the reverse "Lake WoBeGone Syndrome"

"All of the men are beautiful, all of the women and strong and all of the kids are above average - not".

Shame on you!

In my humble, unlearned and non Phd. opinion, you should set measurable, objective numerical standards and let the chips fall where they may.

As you used to do ever since I've been in Mississippi.

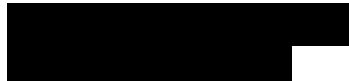
Since this time around you appear to like letters, feel free to convert numerical grades to letter grades, but show both the numerical and letter grades.

Remember, you are not grading the cleanliness of restaurants.

You are creating tools to measure the impacts on the lives of our children.

Thank You

Frank Mickens



From: [Frank Mickens](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Clarion Ledger Reported "Clarification" Still Leaves Basic Issue Unchanged
Date: Monday, September 05, 2016 8:34:09 AM

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I read the Clarion Ledger story this morning captioned as MDE's "Clarification"

In my opinion, the MDE clarification reported in today's Clarion Ledger is no clarification at all. Only more of the same.

The percentiles listed still create a Normal Curve, where achievement is rationed assuming that achievement will follow a statistical Normal curve, a purely traditional random distribution.

My resistance to using a Normal Curve is **not** that it will **guarantee** a set group of A's and D/F's, but rather it will statistically **tend/skew** towards creating the possibility of creating and maintaining, a subset group in the extreme ends of the curve; on both sides of the central "norm".

In my experience percentiles were used in higher education in the 60's to ration the scarce number of available college admissions through the use of tests such as the SAT, ACT, etc.

Again, in my opinion, Excellence, Achievement and the equitable distribution of resources to assist those schools/districts that need additional support to overcome endemic, institutional and policy disadvantages should not be rationed.

In my opinion, all of this percentile statistical gobbledegook can be put aside by simply going back to the old method.

A+ :98-100 (points or percentage)
A :93-97
A- :90-92

And so forth.

Yes this has some built in arbitrary issues as well, but , again in my opinion, it is simpler to calculate, communicate and monitor.

Thank you for all that you are trying to do for our youth and our state.

Frank Mickens



From: [Mollie Miller](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability proposal
Date: Friday, September 02, 2016 8:00:02 AM

I am a 22 year veteran teacher and believe this kind of accountability model will be counter-productive as well as detrimental to our public schools. Administrators will see no reason to push their schools to excel. Teachers will quit because helping their students will be a futile effort, and don't we all ready have enough teacher shortage? Students will be discouraged because they know they will be labeled as insufficient even if they strive to improve. This model punishes everyone involved. Thank you for your time.

From: [bobby moak](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:59:04 PM

The Board needs to actually be accountable. Pre-designated limits on school ranks, whether top or bottom of the scale, is improper. It does however, factor into a plan that will finally designate all public schools as failing. Do the math.

From: [Julie](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School scoring
Date: Saturday, September 03, 2016 11:50:45 PM

I understand the school scoring system is under review. I urge you to set standards using a published rubric to grade our schools - just like the teachers do! You could use the same grading scale our students have. To have a flat percentage leads to complacency and lack of motivation - the top end says we are better than every one else, we will always be an A; struggling schools say we can't be as good as everyone else, we will always be an F. I implore you to let schools stand on their own merit- they get scored, see room for improvement, work hard, and get a better score next year. There is no better motivation for improvement than hard work that is recognized and appreciated. Using a rubric rather than a percentage recognizes and encourages school improvement and gives hope for better scores in the future with hard work and support.

Because it matters - for my kids and all the other children in Mississippi,
Julie Moore

From: lulamooore@yahoo.com
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Changes in School Ratings Policy
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 6:29:53 PM

As a veteran educator and an advocate for children and parents, I am strongly opposing this unfair proposed change in the school ratings policy. Those of you, who have made this proposal, I believe, have not considered the children and the hard work and commitment of school leaders and teachers to strive for better education of our children. Imagine you were in a career that required or/and encouraged you to advance your skills and knowledge by earning another degree; however, you will not receive any monetary incentives or otherwise for your advancement. I wonder how many of you would pursue that additional degree. This proposed school ratings policy change, in my opinion, is a demonstration of that same type of behavior. There is no incentive or support for working for growth because those schools not showing any growth may receive ratings of “A”, as with those who shows evidence of much growth may receive “F”. Is it a random drawing, somewhat like the lottery?

Please discard this proposed school ratings policy and revisit with consideration for righteousness, knowing that it is about those out there on the battle field working – children, teachers, administrators, parents, and public education stakeholders.

Thanks much.

Lula Moore, NBCT, Ed. M
President – Parents for Public Schools of Greenwood & Leflore County, Inc.

From: [Murray, Rachel](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New ratings for schools
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 11:37:12 AM

To whom it may concern:

I do not support the new school rating system. As an educator and a parent, I'm asking that this idea be struck down immediately.

Why would we tell our kids there is no limit to what they can do with an education, then severely restrict what our present system can do. We can all improve, but not with another quota used to make us compete against each other.

Sincerely,
R. Murray

From: [Myles, Valerie](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: MS Secondary School District Rating System Change
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 4:32:14 PM

Great day. If the statement below is true, I am really concerned and definitely against such a rating system. What is the benefit of such a rating system? Who would this rating system benefit? Are there any other states that have adopted an assessment system like the proposed? Was it presented to the PTSA organization or any other organization for consideration such as local school boards? I cannot think of anything of value that would make a state organization accept and write an assessment to actually place it's secondary school system in a required failing situation. Was this vote based on politics and/or maybe distribution of funds? The State Board of Education must explain it's rationale for voting favorably to purposefully fail 14% of its' own schools. Please explain how this rating system will move the state's educational plight forward and upward.

“The State Board of Education has voted in favor of a dramatic change to the school rating system, one that **sets in stone the number of schools and school districts that can be rated in each of the A through F categories in a given year.** Exactly 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve.”

Respectfully,
Valerie Myles
LTC (Ret), U.S. Army
JPS Employee
MS Resident
Concerned Citizen

From: [Cynthia Newman](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:23:16 PM

I disagree with this policy no grades should be predetermine for schools.

From: [Carrie Niolet](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New school ratings system for Mississippi
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 8:34:56 AM

I'm writing to express my outrage over the proposed school rating system that would require 14 % of schools to be failing. If the state department of education thinks that only 10% of Mississippi schools would only ever be good enough to make an A, then education is clearly not the priority here.

Similarly, if the department thinks that at any given time more schools will be failing than succeeding, and that mastery doesn't warrant a passing grade, I am absolutely concerned that ulterior motives are at work in our state. Our great schools need to be funded effectively to maintain their high standing. Our good schools are on the right track. Our weak schools are deserving and capable of improvement. Let's make this happen without assumption of 14% failure.

Sincerely,

Caroline Niolet
Ocean Springs

From: [Chad OBrian](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: 6th Math cut scores
Date: Monday, September 12, 2016 8:40:15 AM

I wanted to take a moment to express my concern over the cut scores for 6th grade math proficiency. In 5th grade a student needs a raw score of 44 to reach level 5. In order for that student to meet growth in the 6th grade their raw score has to be 58. That is an incredible jump. I understand that 6th grade is the first year students can use calculators, but I feel this enormous jump in raw score is setting kids up for failure. I would appreciate any input you can give me. Thanks.

--

Chad O'Brian
Principal
Smithville High School
I Peter 2:15
AVERAGE IS OVER

From: [Daniel O'Sullivan](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Comments about new school rating law
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:38:52 PM

Dear Sir or Madam:

I vehemently oppose the law that will establish a new school ranking system in our state. This is nothing less than a shameless attempt to bankrupt our public schools in order to funnel funds to charter schools. Our legislators should be ashamed of themselves.

By limiting the number of schools that can earn an A and mandating that a 14% of our schools receive an F, they are setting up schools to fail, and then they will cite that failure to take money away from schools earning C, D, and F.

Why doesn't the state government support our state schools? We need to support ALL schools, not just charter schools.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dan O'Sullivan

--

Daniel E. O'Sullivan, Ph.D.
Assistant Chair and Professor of French
Graduate Program Coordinator in French, German, and Spanish
Editor-in-Chief, Medieval Perspectives
Editor-in-Chief, Textual Cultures



TO: Mr. Walt Drane
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Education, Division of Research & Development

FROM: Greg Paczak, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Development

CC: Ronnie McGehee, Ph.D.
Superintendent

DATE: September 13, 2016

SUBJECT: Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Process Response

Statewide Accountability System

A) **Assignment of Grade Classifications**

Rationale:

- 1) More rigorous standards and assessments were in their first year of implementation, which is a baseline data year
- 2) The Accountability Task Force developed and the Accreditation Committee confirmed that the cut-point for an “A” school and district should be at the 85th percentile

Recommended Implementation Step(s): the State Board should either suspend issuing school/district ratings for the 15/16 school year or allow for the determination of “A” schools and/or districts at the 85th percentile

B) **Growth**

Rationale: The new assessment system yields results utilizing five achievement levels; one third of Mississippi students performed at Level 3

Recommended Implementation Step(s): Split Level 3 into half at the mid-point with students who move from the bottom half to the top half being recognized as having grown

From: [Elizabeth Payne](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Public Schools
Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2016 11:23:55 AM

I am totally opposed to using up to ninety percent of our public schools for charter schools. Charter schools do not always hire certified children. I see this as an effort to privatize public education and to undercut the public school system in this state.

My husband, my sisters, and my daughter are products of Mississippi's public schools. My grandson is thriving in Oxford's public system. I will not support any politician or any appointed official who does not support public education. Elizabeth Payne, Oxford, Mississippi

From: [JACK PICKERING](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:52:48 PM

As a retired educator, I am aghast over the Board of Education's Plan to limit the number of schools and school districts that can be rated in each of the categories. Once the 10% A rating category has been filled, other schools must be rated B even though they have achieved the same standards as those in the 10% quota.

If I had tried that in my class room, I'd have been tarred and feathered by the parents and the administration. I really cannot believe the Board is considering such a ridiculous concept! I will be sure to let the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker know what I think of their appointees to the Board of Education.

--

After Enlightenment, the laundry. -Fortenberry -

From: [Lauren](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New Accountability Model
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:08:59 PM

As a teacher in a low-income, Title 1 school I am absolutely appalled at the new accountability model. No matter how well my students improve, it is possible that they will still be a part of an F school, because we could possibly be in the bottom 14%. Why do we always have to have an F? Can't we just be grateful that schools are excelling. We work our butts off each and every day in our classrooms hoping to move our students and to push them to be the best they can possibly be, and our reward or lack there of is that if we don't beat other schools around us, then we could be an F. It's outrageous. Please come to our classrooms and see what we deal with each and every day. See those students who are reading at a 1st grade level in a 5th grade classroom, finally feel successful because we are teaching them where they are pushing them to go where they need to be. It's hard. It's not easy, and you aren't making it any easier. Before you change things, please think of the repercussions that will happen.

From: [K Rachal](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System Proposal
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 11:39:25 PM

Dear Mr. Drane and the MS Board of Education:

As a citizen of this state and parent of two children in public school, I'm writing to inform the Board of Education that I do not support the proposed policy that designates the number of schools and districts that can be rated in each of the A and F categories in a given year. The proposal defies logic in that exactly 10% of schools would be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well or poor the school performs as a whole. Conversely it makes no sense that each year 14% of schools would be rated F no matter how much schools improve. I implore the Board to reject this proposal and instead develop and implement policies that give all schools in our state an equal opportunity to excel and be fairly rated.

Thank you,
Kenya Rachal

--

Kenya Rachal

From: [Alison Rausch](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 7:16:01 PM

Dear. Mr. Drane:

I am expressing my opposition to the proposed changes with the rating scale for public schools. I do NOT agree under the new politically charged system that only 10% of the state public schools can have an "A" ranking, regardless of how well they did on their testing. I do NOT agree that 14% of the schools must be rated as "F" districts, regardless of how much they may have improved.

The current rating scale has been in place less than 5 years. Any good researcher knows proposing such a drastic change before knowing if the current system works is a waste of money which the people of Mississippi cannot afford. Again, I disagree with the proposed changes to the Mississippi School Rating System.

Sincerely,

Alison Rausch,
14 year veteran teacher
of public education

From: [Bonnie Reid](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Objection to New Proposal
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 7:05:32 PM

As a grandmother of children in public school and as a retired teacher, I am invested in education in Mississippi and concerned about its direction. I am very distressed at the proposal to adopt a percentile rating system. The rating should be based on scores attained, not a percentile in each category. Thank you for considering the public's input; the public wants a fair system! Bonnie Reid

From: [J.Richert](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New school rating system bad for Mississippi
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 7:58:08 PM

To Whom it May Concern:

The school rating system that it is being proposed so that it is mandatory that 14% of districts receive an F, and only 10% are A districts, is beyond the pale.

It makes absolutely no sense...unless the objective is this: you must implement a way to guarantee that we have a large number of districts that are C or less, so that charter schools can be opened there without approval of the local school district.

I thought your office was in place to make all schools successful? Clearly, mandating failure is not living up to the mission we voters envision.

Sincerely,

Jan Richardson
arichert@bellsouth.net
Madison County School parent

Parent of Ridgeland High Class of '16, Rice University Class of '20, Star student,
Valedictorian, normal everyday public school student who got a wonderful
education in a Mississippi public school.
Ridgeland High Class of '24
Ridgeland High Class of '27



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September 13, 2016

Walt Drane, Executive Director
Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Mr. Drane:

On behalf of the nearly 13,600 members of the Mississippi Professional Educators and our 16-member Board of Directors, please accept these comments in response to the proposed revisions to the Business Rules of the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System filed with the Secretary of State's Office on August 19, 2016.

- **Grade Classifications (Section 1):** The proposed revisions provide for the assignment of A-F grade classifications for schools and districts based on percentiles, rather than traditional numeric cut scores. Although the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has since issued several memos and advisories stating that, once established, numeric values will be used to assign performance classifications for 2015-2016 and future years, the Business Rules as put out for APA contain percentiles. MPE encourages the State Board of Education to adopt final Business Rules that either state the percentiles will be converted to numeric values or that contain actual numeric cut scores, rather than the proposed percentiles.
- **Acceleration (Section 9):** The proposed revision incorporates the number of students taking exams for accelerated courses into the numerator for the participation component. The business rules currently provide for performance on these exams to increase over the next three years until it accounts for 50% of acceleration. The state does not provide funding for these exams; thus, this financial burden falls to the student and their family unless another funding source is identified by the district. Some students may be denied access to these courses if their families cannot afford the exams. MPE is concerned that this presents an inequitable challenge for our state's lower socio-economic districts.
- **College & Career Readiness (Section 25):** The proposed revisions eliminate the Senior Snapshot and replace it with a student's ACT score at the time of the statewide administration in the student's junior year. MDE has since notified districts that the department will remove the proposed language for Section 25 after the APA comment period ends and will continue to use Section 25's current language which requires the use of the Senior Snapshot. MPE encourages the State Board of Education to adopt final Business Rules which reflect Section 25's current language requiring the use of the Senior Snapshot, as this will recognize and reward schools and districts for growth in students' ACT scores.

Most importantly, any revisions to the Business Rules should be in the best interest of students. We must set high expectations for all students and all educators. The State Board should not adopt any revisions which do not encourage districts and educators to collaborate with one another. MPE also respectfully requests that future matters approved for APA be distributed to those parties registered on the MDE's APA Notification Listserv, as these proposed revisions to the Business Rules were not distributed to the listserv for public review and comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly L. Riley". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kelly L. Riley
Executive Director

From: [Erica Robinson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed school rating system: A-F
Date: Thursday, September 01, 2016 3:22:36 PM

Dear Sir/Madam:

Regardless of test scores: bottom 14% automatic fail? Even if they pass.

Please, please do not adopt this new form of school grades!

Why not strive to have as many schools as possible be rewarded as A, B, and C schools, based on testing.

We need to fully fund public education so that all of Mississippi's children have the opportunity to grow mentally and secure living wages as adults and help Mississippi in general thrive.

Every school in Mississippi should offer the same quality education: no matter where I live, my child can be well educated by my public school and I can stand confidently behind her.

Thank you for considering the negative effects of automatic failing: without merit!

Yours respectfully,

~erica

Erica Robinson

public school parent

From: [Ken Rutherford](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [Elizabeth Payne](#)
Subject: Public schools
Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2016 12:48:11 PM

I am totally opposed to using up to ninety percent of our public schools for charter schools. Charter schools are not required to, and do not always, hire certified teachers. I see this as an effort to privatize public education with public funds and to undercut the public school system in this state. My wife, my sister, and my daughter and I are products of Mississippi's public schools. My grandson is thriving in Oxford's public system. I will not support any politician or any appointed official who does not support public education in Mississippi.

Sincerely,
[Ken Rutherford](#), Oxford, Mississippi

Kenneth A. Rutherford, Esq. | Daniel Coker Horton & Bell

265 North Lamar Boulevard, Suite R | Oxford, MS 38655 | P.O. Box 1396, Oxford, MS 38655-1396
T: +1.662.232.8979 | F: +1.662.232.8940 | <http://www.danielcoker.com/attorneys-Kenneth-Rutherford.html> | krutherford@Danielcoker.com

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From: [Noah Sanford](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New adopted scoring methodology
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 5:49:37 PM

Dear Members of the State Board of Education,

I understand that the Board has voted to changed the methodology upon which schools are scored. As a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, I am troubled by this. I was scored this way in law school, and do not think it is a good idea. I wrote a letter to several people and educators explaining the change and why I disagreed with it. I will copy and paste it below.

"The Mississippi Board of Education (not the Legislature) has voted to enact a change in how schools are graded on the A to F scoring system, which is based on students' state test scores. The way that scoring has been done in the past is the way grading is done in school. If a student makes over a certain grade (usually a 90), he gets an A. If he gets below a certain grade (usually 70), he gets an F. And you know the in between.

Now, the state Board has said that rather than following that same outline, it will instead begin scoring differently. The new rules (not yet enacted) would say that the top 10% of schools will get an A, no matter how good or bad their scores. Likewise, the bottom 14% of schools—no matter their scores—will get an F. The middle 38% to 63% of schools—regardless of their scores—will get a C. You get the idea. In other words, if there were 100 schools, the state MUST give 10 As, 27 Bs, 25 Cs, 24 Ds, and 14 Fs, regardless of how well or how poorly each school performed.

On its face, this may not seem like a bad idea but, in my opinion, it is. This new rule means that no matter how well your child's school performs, it will be scored based NOT on how well it performs, but rather where it falls on the spectrum of all other schools across the state.

Imagine this setup in the classroom: Let's say your child gets 95% correct on a math exam. Normally, you would expect that to be an A grade; instead, Little Johnny is given a C. The teacher's response is "Well, all the students did well, and I could only give out a certain number of A's." That's absurd! Likewise, assume Johnny gets only 40% correct on a history exam. Instead of getting an F, he's given a B; after all, the teacher HAD to give a certain number of each letter grade.

The new scoring system can be useful, since it shows you how your school compares to others across the state. However, just as it would be unfair to Johnny in the above paragraph, it would be unfair to schools to score them this way. I should know—my classmates and I were graded this way in law school; it was a bad idea then, and it's a bad idea now. It sets students and schools up to underperform or overperform because it scores them based not on their OWN performance, but rather on how OTHER students across the state performed.

How demoralizing to teachers and students alike to know that no matter how hard they work and no matter how much their scores improve, their school CANNOT be bumped up from a C to a B, for example, unless—at the same time—a B school drops down to a C!"

Please reconsider. This is not fair or wise.

Sincerely,

Noah L. Sanford
Mississippi House of Representatives
District 90—Covington, Simpson, Jefferson Davis Counties

From: [Marty Sanford](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: State Department of Education Gets F
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 7:38:26 PM

The school should be scored based on how well IT performs—not on how other schools across the state perform. I think it is absurd you would make this decision.

From: [George Schimmel](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Accountability Rankings
Date: Wednesday, September 07, 2016 6:55:22 AM

Comments on Proposed Changes by MDE to School Accountability Rankings

Recently the Mississippi Department of Education asked for comments regarding a proposed change to the method of determining school and district rankings according to the Mississippi Accountability tests. If one looks at the correlation between district rankings and the family income of students, one might ask why do accountability testing at all.

One can predict with reasonable accuracy a district's ranking without giving the test. A review of the 2011-2012 and the 2012-2013 accountability testing for schools shows that for a district with 25% to 75% of its students on free or reduced lunch the average ranking is B. The closer a district is to the 25% mark of students at risk and presumably the higher performing its teachers and principals are, the more resources it has, and/or the more supportive its community is, the more likely it is that the district will achieve an A ranking. Those districts closer to the 75% mark of students at risk and presumably with lower performing teachers and principals, fewer resources, and/or a less supportive community are more likely to receive a C.

If a district has 75% to 100% of its students on free or reduced lunch the average grade is D. With rare exception the best that district can hope for is a C. Presumably with lower performing teachers and principals, fewer resources, and/or a less supportive community, the district will receive an F.

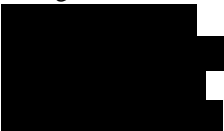
The reason we can predict with confidence the result of accountability testing beforehand is the growing understanding of the devastating impact profound childhood poverty has on academic achievement. A 1995 study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley showed that by age 3 many children of low income families had heard 30 million fewer words than children of more affluent families. A smaller study in 2014 by Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek supported this finding.

Severe poverty can also cause neuroendocrine damage in children as a result of the stress frequently associated with childhood poverty (Felitti and Anda, 1998; Evans and Shamburg, 2009; Nadine Burke-Harris, 2011). This neuroendocrine injury frequently produces lifelong health and achievement challenges.

Additionally poverty presents day-to-day barriers such as a lack of transportation when a child misses a bus, difficulty finding someone in the household to help with a homework assignment, uncertainty about where one will sleep at night when a caregiver is unable to pay rent, and an inability to afford basic school supplies such as paper and pencils.

Changing the ranking cut points or the percentage of districts in each ranking is akin to rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic. It may make us feel better, but it does nothing to improve the educational outcomes of our children.

George Schimmel



From: [Daryl Scoggin](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: accountability
Date: Wednesday, September 07, 2016 7:54:50 AM

I have read the information sent from MDE about accountability. As written the revision to the Business Rules still uses a percentile to determine cut scores. I know you have sent out a disclaimer but I see no changes proposed to the previously written revisions of the Business Rules. How can you unilaterally make the decision to use cut scores when it's not written in the Business Rules?

Please define first time test takers who will be used in the accountability model for the 2015-2016 school year.

Daryl J Scoggin, Ed.D
Superintendent of Education
Tate County Schools

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From: [Janet Shearer](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Public Comment/Mississippi Statewide Accountability System Changes
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:19:03 AM

August 30, 2016

Mr. Walt Drane
Executive Director
Division of Research and Development
Mississippi Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

Dear Mr. Drane:

As a former local board of education member, former PTO president and parent of two high school students in Madison County, I am writing to express disagreement with the proposed changes to the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, specifically the changes to Assignment of Grade Classifications. Accountability grades have been assigned based on objective scores achieved by the school or district. The proposed changes would assign grades based on percentile, compared to others within the state.

The score-based system increases the direct accountability of the schools/districts and increases their incentive to do better. The percentile-based system does just the opposite, determining the percentage and thus the number of schools/districts that can achieve each rating. No matter how well--or how badly--schools/districts perform objectively, those in the top 10% will always be graded A and those in the bottom 14% will always be graded F.

This reminds me of the time I made a 24 on a college physics test but received an A because of the curve. I assure you, I did not demonstrate adequate understanding of the concepts on that test.

The structure of the proposed grading system has the potential to artificially inflate the grade of some schools/districts, and deflate the grade of others. Parents and students of public schools in Mississippi deserve better than this trickery. Parents and students deserve an objective measure of the performance of their school/district.

Sincerely,
Janet Shearer
Ridgeland, MS

From: [Shelmire Suzette](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Our Public Schools
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:37:51 PM

When you move the funding away from our public schools you are cheating everyone who pays taxes to make our public schools a quality education. It is so unfair to give charter schools tools you don allow the public schools to use!

I am absolutely against your taking MY tax dollars and turning them into private school dollars. You should NOT have the clout to do this! You are undermining our hard working public school teachers!

Sincerely,
Suzette D. Shelmire



From: [Shelmire Suzette](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: our public schools in Mississippi
Date: Saturday, September 03, 2016 8:36:23 AM

To the board of Education -

I am so worried that you have NOT taken into account how you are leaving our public schools in an even greater decline than imagined. **DO NOT TAKE AWAY FUNDS FROM OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS!** This makes no sense to me and I hate to think that you are in the “pockets” of the lobbyists for private education. You need to pay teachers a decent wage in the public schools. My daughter has to supplement her children’s supplies out of her own pocket. It is disgraceful . It is hard to see you in a positive light when I see that you are taking money from lobbyists. You just can’t do this to the citizens of this lovely state.

Most sincerely,
Suzette D. Shelmire



From: [Stewart Smirthwaite](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New school rating rules
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 3:53:42 PM

Dear Mr. Drane,

I am writing to share my vehement opposition to the new rules setting the number of school districts that can be rated in each A-F category. If a school meets a certain score, there should be a clear grade not based on a bell curve. So if all districts made the maximum scores in all areas, there would still be 14% of them called an F? That simply defies logic. Please reconsider this proposal and add my name to the list of voices in opposition. Thanks for your time.

Stewart Smirthwaite

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Chrystal Smith](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School ratings
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 4:44:20 PM

Please reconsider this very unfair, counterproductive proposal. Requiring that 40% more districts have F ratings than A ratings is inconceivable. This proposal sets a system for failure and threats. Our districts deserve fairness. If I were to, in my classroom, institute this policy for my assessments, some students would have to receive a failing grade (even if they didn't).

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Rebecca Springer](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Accountability
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 6:14:35 AM

Dear Mr. Drane.

The new accountability standards for school ratings is ludicrous. Rating schools by percentile rather than score doesn't give a true rating at all. You should go back to the previous rating system where performance is based on the numbers....not the percentage. Everyone knows that there are underperforming schools that shouldn't even be given a rating at all and there are those that go above and beyond to prepare their students.

The accountability should be for the students to actually do the work. If the administration of those schools can't help their students perform and hold them accountable, they should be closed. Period. Give the students that want to learn an option to go to a better performing school. But make them accountable for doing the work. Send the ones that don't care to an alternative school where they can just slide by and be treated like the hoodlums they are.

This is my opinion and I'm sticking to it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Springer". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Parent at Madison Co. School District – Ridgeland High School

From: [Stovall, Rebecca](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Assignment of Grade Classifications to Schools and School Districts
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 5:18:32 PM

To Whom It May Concern: As a public school teacher, I am very ill at ease with the changes in how schools and school districts are to be graded. Even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, would 14% of them would still be assigned an F? Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, would 10% of them would still get an A?

The fact that no matter how hard a school or district tries to improve, or DOES improve, they may still be given an F rating simply because someone has to receive an F is ludicrous! Inversely, the same is true. I cannot believe that this could be proposed as a LOGICAL and BENEFICIAL system for our state, and I greatly hope that this is drastically amended!

This approach to grading schools tears apart any sort of unity and discourages collaboration among school districts- the very opposite of what we are teaching our scholars. In no sense is this new system one that would improve our state's education. It must be changed.

Becca Stovall

From: [Michael Stribling](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Cc: [AANancy](#); [Ben Clark](#); [Betsy](#); [Bonnie Siebert](#); [Carol Schweitzer](#); [Chris Blount](#); [Jeff Johnson](#); [Julliette Schweitzer](#); [Mark Johnson](#); [Renee Johnson](#)
Subject: propose new school ranking system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 8:58:54 AM

State Board of Education,

Under your proposed new school ranking system which you recently voted to approve, even if all districts attained the highest possible test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates, 14% of them would still be assigned an F? Really? Likewise, if all districts sank to the lowest possible performance, 10% of them would still get an A? Really! You are required to take and consider public feedback before you implement this ridiculous policy. Are you lazy or are you intentionally trying to drag Mississippi education toward a new low?


Michael Stribling, J.D.
President
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101 Shaffer Court
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From: [Wright Thompson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: letter from oxford
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 3:33:29 PM

I'm a resident of Oxford and had a question. The new school rating system/protocol was explained to me after coffee this morning as being designed after a bell curve: a pre-set percentage of schools are exceptional, and a pre-set percentage of schools are failing, with the other grades filled in accordingly. I figured I'd ask. That doesn't seem to make sense, as it precludes the possibility of all Mississippi schools trying to be excellent. I understand a true curve but there's a reason almost no university's actually grade that way ... it is spectacularly unfair.

thanks,
wright

--

Wright Thompson
Senior Writer
ESPN.com ~ The Magazine


From: [Mary Thompson](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:45:59 PM

Placing school ratings on a quota system with the possibility of only 10% A schools and a preordained 14% failing schools is illogical, unfair, de incentivizing, demoralizing, punitive, and a slap in the face to educators and students working hard to do better.

From: [Terry Turnage](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School accountability
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 9:20:25 PM

Please give the public schools known goals to meet. Saying we will only award a certain number of A's and a certain number will be F's is unfair. If you meet the goal you get the good grade. You fall short, you score the F. Can you imagine the outcry if a teacher used your model in his or her classroom?

From: [jayappraiser](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New ratings system for Madison crossing
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 8:19:22 PM

I strongly oppose the new ratings system and do not believe it to be a fair ratings scale.

From: [cellogirlmso](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: New rating system makes no sense
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 5:18:35 PM

If lawmakers are going to arbitrarily decide what percentage of schools get an A rating (regardless of the percentage of schools that ACTUALLY EARN AN A RATING) and what percentage get an F (again, regardless of what percentage ACTUALLY EARN AN F), THEN WHAT IS THE POINT OF RATING SCHOOLS BASED ON TEST SCORES?!?! ALSO, WHY IS IT ASSUMED THAT A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS WILL BE FAILING THAN EARN AN A?!?!

From: [Tracy Vainisi](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating Policy
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 7:56:45 AM

Is the following an accurate statement?

The State Board of Education has voted in favor of a dramatic change to the school rating system, one that **sets in stone the number of schools and school districts that can be rated in each of the A through F categories in a given year.** Exactly 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve.

If it is, could I please have an explanation of how this plan makes sense?

Sincerely,

Tracy L. Vainisi, New Albany School District

From: [REDACTED] on behalf of [Candis Couch Varnell](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School ranking proposal
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 9:37:25 AM

Keep special interests OUT of education!

Put the needs of the students and teachers first! Study and learn what they need to be successful and then meet or exceed those needs.

This proposed ranking system is counter-productive to learning and demoralizing to students and teachers alike.

Thank you.

Candis Couch Varnell M.ED CHE
Hospitality Management Lecturer and Internship Director
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cvarnell@olemiss.edu

From: [ann.jones](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Concern
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 3:22:15 PM

Mr. Drane,

I am writing you with regards to the newly proposed accountability policy. I do not understand why the State Department of Education would implement a policy that guarantees a designated percentage of school districts to FAIL! Do you not believe that the public school system can achieve more?? As an educator, I set my standards for scholars high. I NEVER tell them that a certain percentage will fail, regardless of their growth and achievement. As an educator, mother, and resident I truly believe that this new rating policy is setting the foundation for schools to FAIL. How do you expect teacher, administrators, scholars, and parents to believe that they can achieve educational growth when you are already predetermining that we cannot? I truly hope that you and the others involved in accountability policy will reconsider this new rating system and design a policy that makes it possible for ALL school districts to succeed. In the world of public education, we are constantly faced with challenges beyond our control, however, this is a challenge that could be easily avoided if you and your team would reconsider this policy. I BELIEVE in the power for ALL school districts in my grate state of Mississippi to succeed and I truly hope you do to!

Sincerely,
Ann Walker
Educator
Mother
Mississippian

From: [Lillie White](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: my opinion
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 4:57:03 PM

Hello,

I noticed where The State Board of Education has voted in favor of a dramatic change to the school rating system, one that sets in **stone** the number of schools and school districts that **can be** rated in each of the A through F categories in a given year. I understand 10% of schools will be allowed an A rating, regardless of how well (or how poorly) schools perform as a whole. And, each year, 14% will be rated F, no matter how much schools improve. The State Board of Education has decided that there should always be 40 percent more F's than A's.

Frankly, I think this is a much of junk. The students have enough that they have to deal with. It is already stated that Mississippi is the nation's poorest state in the United States. Now, you want to show that we always have 40% of our schools that are rated F.

Someone once said that they notice how standardized tests scores were used to determine teacher's pay and to show the school how to improve. Professionals at the state and local level come up with these tests. There should be a reasonable time allowed for standardized test, something like 3 days per year. Most high schools and colleges can test students on final exams in three days for all subjects. The test should be design to be quick and effective.

A good start might be to eliminate the Federal Dept. of Education. There is more to the life of a child then just doing stats, crushing numbers, and the big boys getting paid big bucks to sit on the rear ends and make ignorant decisions. What if your boss told you that out of the 10 people that work in your department, only 3 will get paid and the other 7 will get cheese and peanut butter for pay.

Take the time out and look at the big picture. Our children of Mississippi don't deserve to have to work hard to get good grades and a few children sit and worry about if daddy is coming home. Or, the fact that they might not have hot meal to eat after school or even a place to lay their head.

Stop the madness once and for all. Stop making it so hard, causing our children not to succeed in life. You got where you are and it wasn't because someone sat behind a desk doing stats on your school. I hope by now that you get the overall picture.

Good day,

Lillie White



From: [Sonji White](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed Policy
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 2:54:20 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am speaking as a parent. I do not support the proposed policy. In order for one district to move up a level, another one has to fail. Our children deserve better than that. My child deserves better than that.

From: [Wilkinson, Christina](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School rating system feedback
Date: Monday, August 29, 2016 6:54:06 PM

It is hard to comprehend the motivation behind the State Board of Education's actions when they voted for this new school rating system. I want to tell you how deflated that makes teachers feel. Teachers put their heart and soul into this job, a job that already pays the lowest wage in the nation, and now they don't even be able to have the satisfaction of a rating that is reflective of the time and effort that they put into their students on a daily basis. We work without curriculum books, we work to make up the differences by working late hours and coming in on the weekend. We teach our students that hard work pays off, and as adults that is what we grow up to think when we seek employment. This new rating system is a clear indicator that apparently this is not the same sentiment that is held from our state. I really think this policy will make teachers who are already tired of the bureaucracy, be willing to retire or consider alternative jobs in other states. If only 10% of schools will make into the "A" rating category, what is the incentive for anyone to try any harder? You have a profession who is already beat down in so many ways, is the state really willing to add one more way?

From: [Will, Andrea](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Proposed accountability
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 10:55:26 AM

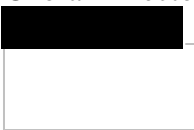
I am not even sure how to respond to such a proposal. If there is not a concrete factual way to determine what constitutes an A or an F or any score in between than what is the point? Why would a school, teachers, or students, work toward a subjective imaginary goal of possibly, maybe, hopefully receiving an A? Why would anyone in any walk of life work tirelessly toward a goal that has no concrete way to determine if they have reached said goal? If 30% of the school districts in Mississippi make the same score, then who gets and A or B? Will the State Board of Education then take over 14% of schools in Mississippi each year to improve their tests scores? How will the State Department then determine if they really helped improve their scores? If 14% will fail regardless of their score or how much they improve then why try? If I am a student in a classroom and there is no set grading scale or number that lets me know how I am doing in the class, then who determines the grade I receive? Not me as the student - because regardless of my effort I get a grade simply based on the 10%/14% rule. My effort and work as a student is meaningless in terms of grades. This subjective grading scale then affects my life because I was 11th out of the 100 in the class so I didn't receive an A - my GPA goes down, colleges scholarships are not offered - just because only 10% got an A and I was out of luck. Our country was founded on principals that put the responsibility on each individual to work toward their dream. That no government can hold them back based on social status, financial state, region, religion, race, or gender. Each person has the privilege and right to determine their own course. This proposal takes away school districts and ultimately each student's right to an appropriate education because no longer does effort or even doing well determine their course - an arbitrary rule does, someone that sits on a committee does.

Please reconsider this proposal of accountability. Instead consider the thousands of children whose lives this will affect.

Thank you,

--

Andrea Will
Poplarville Middle/High School
Choral Director



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TO: Mr. Walt Drane
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Education, Division of Research &
Development

FROM: Cassandra Williams, Superintendent of Canton Public School District

DATE: September 13, 2016

SUBJECT: Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Process Response

Statewide Accountability System

I. Point values and Labels

The MDE should provide a transparent process for assigning point values to school and district labels (A,B,C,D and F). This transparent process would have provided ranges of point values in addition to percentiles as part of this APA process so that districts know preliminary performance labels. MDE plans to re-run the percentile rankings making the accountability model a moving target. This process keeps districts guessing about school and district level performance.

II. Growth Within Level 3

In order to ensure that all districts have a fair chance at accelerating students, MDE should consider splitting Level 3 into half at the mid-point with students who move from the bottom half to the top half being recognized as having grown. I was told that there is growth within level 3 by staff at MDE but some educators still say that there is no growth within the level 3 performance band.

From: [Angela Shelton](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: school rating system
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 7:33:51 PM

To whom it may concern:

While I appreciate your attention to the matter of substandard performances that we have school systems when compared to other states, I do not agree with your proposed change to the rating system. It seems to me that you could be spending your time in other ways to improve our education system and help our children receive the best education possible.

I can imagine how much debate and time has been spent in a meeting room or board room debating on how to implement the proposed 15 page change and how to calculate the scores. There are several edited dates in the documentation which proves this has been in progress for years. What a complete waste of my tax dollars. While I agree that school needs to be graded on the ability to educate our children, I do not agree with your methodology. What is the point of allowing 62% of our schools to be classified as a C or below. This is just another way to force people seeking the best education for their children to seek enrollment in a private school.

According to this change, we will have schools ranked D or F because someone has to be at the bottom and these schools will be prioritized as a focus school or priority school, but those overachievers at the A schools are reward schools. So my questions is how do I get my child in an "A" school or since 10% of schools have to be ranked "A" schools, do they really even exist? It seems we are making the rating system even more lax as now we just compare all the schools with each other instead of having a set standard.

We need education reform, but this proposed change is not what the parents of publicly educated children are looking for. It is not in the best interest of our children, our schools, and it sure will not increase morale within our population of educators and administrators. Our leaders need to quit drinking the kool-aid provided by the federal government and figure out how to get Mississippi off of the bottom of the list in public education. It is a paying job for the people making the decisions, but it is my child's future and thus the future of our state.

Thanks,
Angela Winders

From: [Robert Winkler](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Fail the proposed school rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 11:36:13 AM

Dear Members of the State Board of Education,

As a former teacher in Mississippi Public Schools and a supporter of improving public education in Mississippi, I am writing to urge you to withdraw your proposed school rating system. By proposing a percentile-based (quota-based) system that apportions the number of schools that can receive each grade by percentage of the number of schools in the state rather than actual measures of those schools' performances, you are proposing a rigged system that would in no way conform to reality. This radical departure from reality-based school ratings would punish schools and districts for improving performance if other schools and districts also improve their performance, creating a system in which the greater the quantity of schools and districts that achieve desirable levels of performance, the greater the number of schools and districts that will be unfairly punished. Furthermore, the proposed rating system will allow charter schools with no accountability to local residents to siphon funds from public schools in nearly *two thirds* of the districts in Mississippi, vastly undermining these districts' ability to improve.

A valid school rating system should grade schools on their merits, not on percentile-based quotas that don't accurately reflect the range and distribution of measured performance across school districts. Please propose a new rating system that will accurately assign ratings based on measured performance. Otherwise, please resign your position on the Board in the interest of the public good, Mrs. Rosemary G. Aultman (601-924-4830), Dr. Jason S. Dean (601-664-8858), Dr. Carey M. Wright (601-359-1750), Mr. Buddy Bailey (601-825-5590), Mrs. Kami Bumgarner (601-605-4171), Dr. Karen Elam (662-513-0705), Johnny Franklin (601) 664-8363, Mr. William Harold Jones (601-545-8324), Dr. John R. Kelly (228-868-5770), and Mr. Charles McClelland (601-991-2412).

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Rob Winkler



From: [Brenda Winters](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: new school rating system
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 8:51:27 PM

this is NOT an acceptable way to rate MS schools. its not fair and will hurt our education system greatly.

signed,

a JCSD employee and grandparent

From: [Chuck Wise](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: Strongly DISAGREE
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2016 9:04:03 AM

I strongly disagree with proposed school rating system!
Charlene Wise
Jackson

From: [Joe Wise](#)
To: [Accountability](#)
Subject: School Rating System
Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 9:50:32 AM

Gentlemen:

The dramatic changes made to the school rating system make absolutely no sense to me, and the Board has provided no justifiable basis for these changes to the public or how these changes would benefit the public schools of Mississippi. I therefore must respectfully oppose them.

Joseph P. Wise

