

# The New Texas A-F Academic Accountability System

*Empowering Texans to Improve Student Results*

Do you want a school district academic accountability system that—

- Uses **easy-to-understand** letter grades for each Texas school district?
- Provides Texans with **independent information** about their school district's performance?
- **Accurately recognizes** and rewards school districts where economically disadvantaged students are growing academically each year?
- Helps school districts **take action** by readily determining how their grade was calculated and how student achievement can be improved?
- Identifies the state's lowest-performing districts so they can improve and the state's highest-performing districts so that best practices can be replicated statewide?
- Focuses all Texans on **continuously improving all student results** by moving their school districts from D or F to A or B letter grades?

## Texas has it!



We need easy-to-understand school district academic accountability because Texas students' results show significant room for improvement.

Percent of Texas Students Who Met Grade Level on the 2018 STAAR

2018 STAAR Test	Students Who Met Grade Level	Economically Disadvantaged Students Who Met Grade Level
Reading 3rd	42%	30%
Reading 5th	51%	40%
Reading 8th	46%	34%
English I	44%	33%

46th

in the U.S. in 4th-grade reading  
(40th in 2015)

16%

receive a college-ready  
ACT/SAT score

42nd

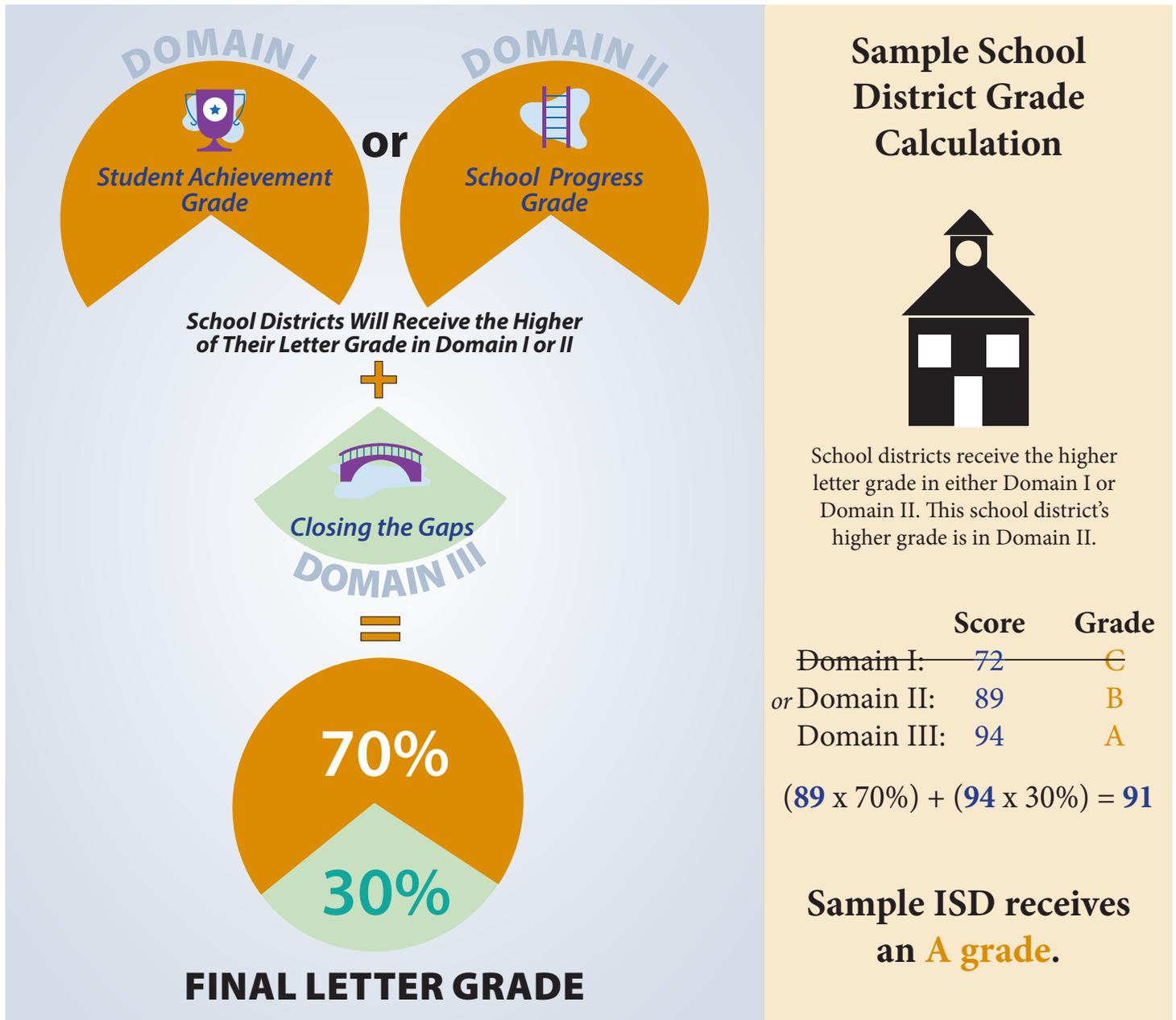
in the U.S. in 8th-grade reading  
(39th in 2015)

The most critical obligation of our schools is to ensure that all Texas students—regardless of their background or neighborhood—are learning at grade level or above each year, especially in reading and math.

On August 15, 2018, in accordance with HB 22 (85th Legislature), Texas' new A-F Academic Accountability System will give communities, school boards, educators, taxpayers, and parents invaluable and independent information on whether our children are growing academically each year by assigning a meaningful letter grade to each school district.

# HOW INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT LETTER GRADES ARE CALCULATED

Starting on August 15, 2018, each school district\* will be given its first ever letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F from a combination of the school district's individual letter grades in each of three "domains." Grades will be based on clearly communicated student achievement goals that will not change for at least five years (absent legislative action). Therefore, as student results improve over time, letter grades can go from D and F to A and B. There is no forced bell curve. Then, next year, on August 15, 2019, school districts and individual schools will be given individual letter grades. A similar A-F academic accountability system in Florida is associated with improved student results.



## WHAT DO THE LETTER GRADES MEAN?

- |                                   |               |                                     |              |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>A</b> = Exemplary Performance  | <b>90-100</b> | <b>D</b> = In Need of Improvement   | <b>60-69</b> |
| <b>B</b> = Recognized Performance | <b>80-89</b>  | <b>F</b> = Unacceptable Performance | <b>0-59</b>  |
| <b>C</b> = Acceptable Performance | <b>70-79</b>  |                                     |              |

For detailed information about how your school district's letter grade is calculated, visit [TXschools.org](http://TXschools.org).

\*Certain districts—including some affected by Hurricane Harvey—may not be given a letter grade in 2018.



## Student Achievement

### STAAR Passage

	All Students
<b>Total Tests</b>	<b>3,212</b>
# Approaches Grade Level or Above*	2,977
# Meets Grade Level or Above*	1,945
# Masters Grade Level	878
<b>% Approaches Grade Level or Above</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>% Meets Grade Level or Above</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>% Masters Grade Level</b>	<b>27%</b>

Average of 3

$$93 + 61 + 27 / 3 = 60$$

**A**

Student Achievement Score

Note: A value score of 60 converts to a scaled score of 90.

The Domain I grade is based on STAAR passage information. In high school, the grade will also be based on the number of students who are college, career, or military ready and on graduation rates. Districts receive credit for students who—

- Approach grade level by showing some knowledge of the material, but do not understand important parts.
- Meet grade level by showing good understanding of the material.
- Master grade level by showing strong understanding of the material.

By giving higher grades to school districts when their students move from approaching to meeting to mastering grade level, Domain I focuses school districts on continuously improving all student results, and not just on students who still need to pass the STAAR assessment.



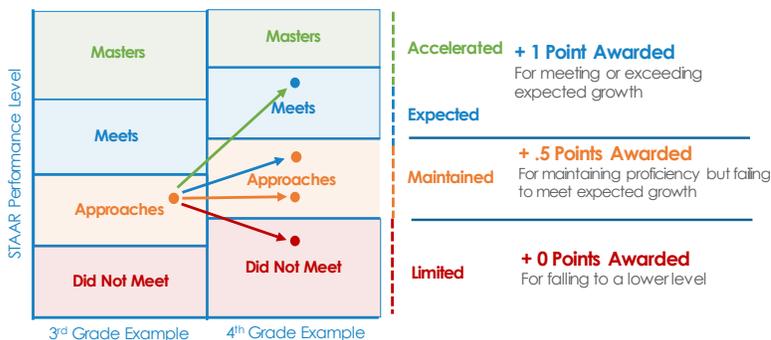
## School Progress

The Domain II letter grade has two components: Academic Growth and Relative Performance. Domain II does not depend on how many students pass the STAAR assessment. Instead, it looks to student growth during the school year, and how the school is doing compared to other school districts with similar levels of economically disadvantaged students. Therefore, even if students do not pass the STAAR (for instance, because the students started behind grade level) as long as the students are making academic progress, the school district can still earn a high grade.

Part A: Academic Growth uses certain STAAR assessments that can measure student growth year over year. School districts earn points if students maintain proficiency or are growing during the school year.

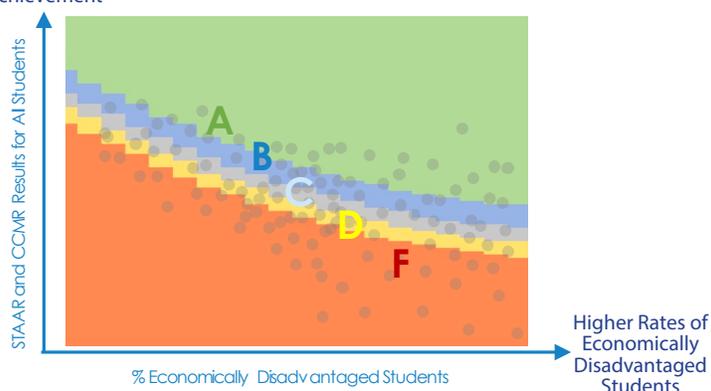
Part B: Relative Performance evaluates the achievement of all school district students relative to school districts with students with similar socioeconomic status.

### Part A: Academic Growth



Higher Levels of Student Achievement

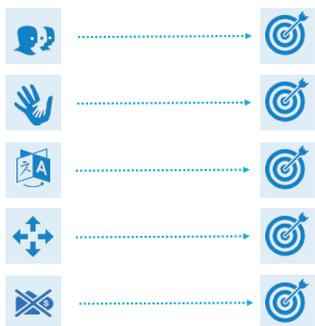
### Part B: Relative Performance



## Closing the Gaps

Student Group

Achievement Target



% of Student Groups that Meet Target

**Overall Domain Grade**

The Domain III letter grade is based on whether the school district is meeting academic achievement “targets” for certain groups which have historically lagged in education attainment, including Hispanic, African American, special education, economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners. The goal is to ensure school districts are focused on closing achievement gaps.

# How is Texas' new A-F accountability system better than previous systems, and how will it improve student results?

## Uses Easy-to-Understand Letter Grades

**Texas' Old Academic Accountability System:** Texas has historically used highly confusing labels in its academic accountability systems, making it difficult to understand how a school district was actually performing. For example, right now, Texas gives nearly all school districts a near meaningless “met standard” rating. This “met standard” rating fails to tell Texans if their school districts are getting better or worse over time. Further, it is not possible to differentiate school district performance.

**Texas' New Academic Accountability System:** By using familiar A, B, C, D, and F letter grades, the new system makes it much easier for all Texans to determine if school districts are getting better or worse over time and to differentiate school district performance; “A” grade level school districts can be identified and best practices replicated.

## Accurately Recognizes School Districts Where Disadvantaged Children Are Learning

**Texas' Old Academic Accountability System:** Previous Texas academic accountability systems failed to recognize that many economically disadvantaged students come to school performing well below their grade level. As a result, even if these students were making progress each year, they still might not pass the STAAR assessment, and therefore, under the old system, their school district would not receive a high accountability rating.

**Texas' New Academic Accountability System:** Texas' new system recognizes that many students come to school well behind grade level and school districts that help these students progress should receive higher letter grades. Under the new system, as long as students are progressing each year, the school district can still get a good grade, regardless of actual STAAR passage rates. This is in part because school districts will receive the higher of their Student Achievement or School Progress letter grades.

## Provides Actionable Steps for School Districts to Improve Letter Grades

**Texas' Old Academic Accountability System:** Historically, it has not been easy for Texans to determine how their school district ratings were calculated and what was needed to improve. This was in part because accountability data and calculations were not made easily accessible and student achievement goals necessary to improve ratings were often changed from year to year. In addition, school districts, teachers, parents, and students could not review STAAR questions, answers, and campus, district and state results, nor easily determine how STAAR questions aligned to Texas' curriculum standards.

**Texas' New Academic Accountability System:** With the new system, TEA is required to provide transparent information about how each school district letter grade is determined. Further, TEA is dedicated to providing online tools that make it more simple for school districts to identify what changes would be required to improve a school district's letter grades in each Domain. More importantly, student achievement goals will remain the same for five years (absent legislative action), and there is no forced bell curve. As a result, as student results improve year-over-year, so will a school district's letter grade.

TEA is also making all STAAR questions and answers available to teachers and parents, including how the questions align with Texas curriculum standards. See [TXschools.org](http://TXschools.org) for more information about the STAAR assessment and how it can improve classroom instruction.

In addition, the new system will help all Texans recognize our best school districts so that best practices can be replicated. Some Texas school districts are doing a remarkable job, and achieving high student outcomes, even with low tax rates and high numbers of economically disadvantaged students. For the first time, it will be easy to identify these school districts to disseminate best practices across the state.

## Focuses on Continuously Improving the Results of All Students

**Texas' Old Academic Accountability System:** Under the old system, school districts could only obtain one of two labels, “needs improvement” or “met standard.” That meant even if student results were improving or more students were mastering grade level, the school district would receive the very same label of “met standard” each year. As a result, educators may have been motivated to focus largely on the students most at risk of failing the STAAR assessment, potentially at the expense of working to improve the performance of all students, including those who are already performing at a high level.

**Texas' New Academic Accountability System:** The new system focuses school districts on the need to go from letter D or F to letter A or B grades, thereby, encouraging schools to improve all student outcomes. Specifically, school districts will be incented in both Domains I and II to grow all their students from approaching grade level, to meeting grade level, to mastering grade level. In this way, the new system will encourage school districts to help all students achieve more—and not just those at risk of failing the STAAR assessment. In sum, school districts will have incentives to improve all student results so that all students go from good to better to best.

