



How Are Schools Graded?

A LOOK AT NEW MEXICO'S SCHOOL
ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM



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Overview

In 2011, New Mexico adopted an A–F grading system for schools similar to how students are graded in the classroom. All school districts, traditional public schools and public charter schools receive an annual school grade.¹ Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), all states must enact accountability systems to measure progress towards state and local goals. New Mexico is one of 12 states that will use A–F grading to meet this requirement per ESSA plans.²

Determining Schools' Grades

In New Mexico, the overall grade a school earns is determined by several factors, the largest of which is student growth on the end-of-year standardized assessment. According to a recent report from Education Commission of the States, New Mexico has one of the most robust accountability systems in the country and uses more distinct factors to rate its K–12 schools than any other state's school rating system.³

The assessment that counts towards a school's grade is dependent on the age groups served by the school. Students in grades K–2 participate in Istation, while grades 3–11 participate in PARCC. Also included are assessments for English-language learners and students with disabilities. To determine a final grade, the state evaluates each school based on student growth over time and overall performance. To make the grading process fair for schools of different sizes and student demographics, New Mexico uses Value-Added Modeling (VAM) to create a holistic picture of each school's impact on student achievement relative to the performance of other similar students and schools.

For **elementary and middle schools**, the points are allotted and determined as follows:⁴

CRITERIA	POINT VALUE (OUT OF 100)	DESCRIPTION
CURRENT STANDING	40	How did students perform in the most recent school year? Students are tested on their proficiency, or how well they met targets for their grade level.
SCHOOL GROWTH	10	In the past three years, did the school increase overall student performance?
GROWTH OF HIGHER PERFORMING STUDENTS	20	How well did the school help individual students improve? The highest-performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the top three quarters (75 percent) of their school.
GROWTH OF LOWEST PERFORMING STUDENTS	20	How well did the school help individual students improve? The lowest-performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the bottom quarter (25 percent) of their school.
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN	10	Does the school foster an environment that facilitates learning? Are teachers using recognized instructional methods, and do students want to come to school? This is measured based on student attendance and a classroom/parent survey.

For **high school**, the points are allotted and determined as follows:

CRITERIA	POINT VALUE (OUT OF 100)	DESCRIPTION
CURRENT STANDING	30	How did students perform in the most recent school year? Students are tested on their proficiency, or how well they met targets for their grade level.
SCHOOL GROWTH	10	In the past three years, did the school increase overall student performance?
GROWTH OF HIGHER PERFORMING STUDENTS	10	How well did the school help individual students improve? The highest-performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the top three quarters (75 percent) of their school.
GROWTH OF LOWEST PERFORMING STUDENTS	10	How well did the school help individual students improve? The lowest-performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the bottom quarter (25 percent) of their school.
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN	8	Does the school foster an environment that facilitates learning? Are teachers using recognized instructional methods, and do students want to come to school? This is measured based on student attendance and a classroom/parent survey.
GRADUATION	17	How does the school contribute to on-time graduation? “On time” means within four years, and to a lesser extent, within five and six years for students who require longer.
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS	15	Are students prepared for what lies ahead after high school? Schools receive credit when students participate in college entrance exams and coursework leading to dual credit and vocational certification. The school receives additional credit when students meet success goals.

Additional Resources

- *New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), School Grades Website*
<http://aae.ped.state.nm.us/>
- *Education Commission of the States, Accountability and Reporting: State Profile—New Mexico*
<http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbstprofile?Rep=ARPI7&st=New%20Mexico>

1 *New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), “A-F School Grading, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)”*. Accessed May 3, 2018. <http://aae.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolGradingLinks/1617/Technical%20Assistance%20for%20Educators/School%20Grading%20FAQs.pdf>

2 The Every Student Succeeds ACT (ESSA) requires all states to submit a plan for their school accountability systems to the US Department of Education, who provides final approval. September 2017 was the deadline for states to submit their plans and all statistics used in this brief are

based on those state-submitted plans as of October 2017.

3 *Education Commission of the States, “Accountability and Reporting: ESSA Plans”*. Accessed June 8, 2018. <http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbQuest5E?rep=SA172>

4 *New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), “New Mexico A-F School Grading Technical Guide”*. Accessed May 4, 2018. <http://aae.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolGradingLinks/1617/Technical%20Assistance%20for%20Educators/Technical%20Guide%202017.pdf>