



# A-F School Accountability Letter Grade System

## Q&A

### ***Q: When and Why Was the A-F Accountability System Created?***

A: Governor Brewer signed SB 1286 into law in 2010, after it was passed by the Arizona state legislature. The new A-F Accountability Letter Grade System was created to provide clear, easy-to-understand information to parents so that they could base their educational decisions on the best information available about the overall academic performance of schools and school districts.

### ***Q: What is the Difference Between the Existing AZ LEARNS and the New A-F Accountability Letter Grade System?***

A: The existing AZ LEARNS System uses student scores on the AIMS tests to determine a school's AZ LEARNS label. Under the AZ LEARNS Accountability System, a "performing" label is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest ranking out of 5. The result? Over 90 percent of Arizona's schools receive a "performing" or better label. Clearly, this labeling system does not present intuitive and meaningful descriptions to parents and educators; that is why it is being phased out.

The new A-F letter grade system better informs parents on how different schools measure-up on total academic performance because it evaluates *both* academic outcomes and academic growth. Including student academic growth in an accountability system is particularly important because it takes into account the unique student demographics of each school, and the different challenges those raise. For example, the challenges facing suburban, inner-city and rural schools are quite different from one another. Overall, the A-F letter grade system provides a clearer picture of school performance to parents and compares schools on a fairer, more equitable basis.

### ***Q: How Were the New A-F Accountability Letter Grades Developed? What do they mean?***

A: The Arizona State Board of Education adopted the new formula, in which both academic outcomes and academic growth are weighted the same. The letter grade descriptions (below) are similar to what you would expect to find on a student report card:

**"A"** schools demonstrate an **excellent** level of performance.

**"B"** schools demonstrate an **above average** level of performance.

**"C"** schools demonstrate an **average** level of performance.

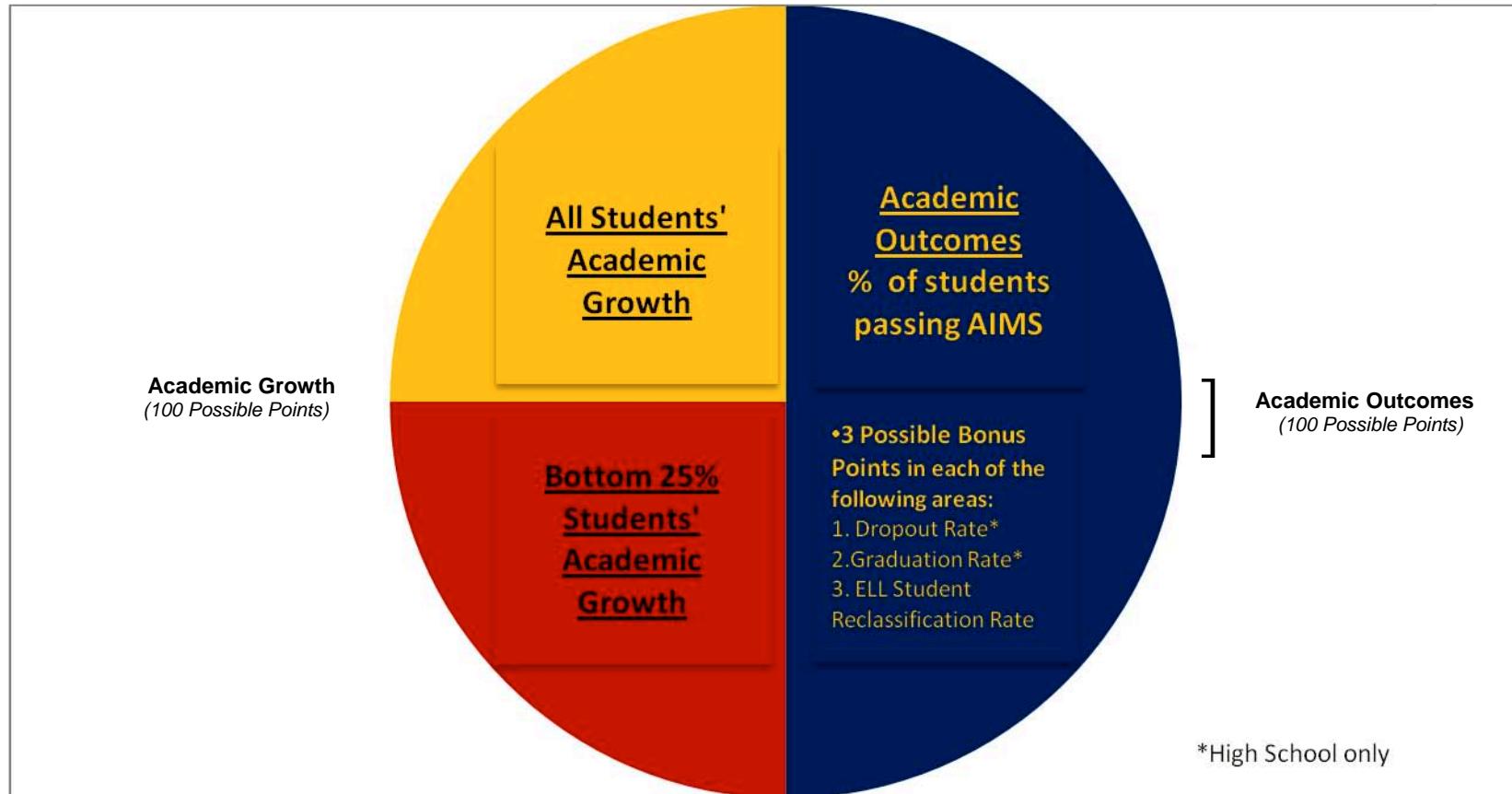
**"D"** schools demonstrate a **below average** level of performance.

**"F"** schools are those that rank as a "D" school for three consecutive years. "F" schools are placed under the school improvement process by the Arizona Department of Education so that they can receive extra support and resources.



# How A-F School Accountability Points are Calculated

$$\begin{matrix} \text{Academic Growth}^1 \text{ Points} & + & \text{Academic Outcomes Points} & = & \text{School's A-F Letter Grade Score} \\ (100 \text{ possible}) & & (100 \text{ possible}) & & (200 \text{ total possible points}) \end{matrix}$$



<sup>1</sup>Academic growth is determined by comparing the change in AIMS test scores from one year to the next for similarly achieving students across the state. This is done to evaluate how well a school is growing its students, academically, as they advance from one grade to the next.



## A-F Accountability Letter Grade Scores\*

Grade	Total Score
A	140-200
B	120-139
C	100-119
D	0-99

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**A-F Formula:** Academic Growth + Academic Outcomes = **A-F Accountability Score**  
(100 points possible)      (100 points possible)      (200 total possible points)

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*\*These scores were approved by the AZ State Board of Education.*

