

WHY DO WE HAVE A SCHOOL REPORT CARD?

The Oklahoma School Report Card shares critical information about school performance with schools, families and communities. The report cards are intended to provide important information to stimulate conversations about school successes and areas in need of improvement.

Additionally, both state and federal law require aggregating and disaggregating of specific indicators. The school report card highlights achievement gaps in new, clear ways so that specific interventions can be applied that improve outcomes for all students.

WHAT INFORMATION ON THE REPORT CARD IS REQUIRED BY LAW?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – the predominant federal education law – requires school report cards to include measurements in the following areas: academic achievement, a second academic measure for elementary and middle schools, English language proficiency, graduation rates for high schools and a measure of school quality/student success. ESSA also requires meaningful differentiation of schools, meaning schools must be grouped in at least three categories of performance. Oklahoma law requires those categories to be letter grades.

WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS INCLUDED?

The school report card dashboard will include basic information about schools, including enrollment, principal, district and physical location. Additionally, it will display information about student demographics, including the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged (i.e., qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches), are English learners or have a disability. The dashboard will also include school offerings, per-pupil expenditure and recognition for Programs of Excellence. Not all contextual information will be available upon the initial release of the dashboard but will be added incrementally.

HOW WAS THE REPORT CARD DEVELOPED?

In spring 2016, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) convened an Assessment and Accountability Task Force that, in conjunction with a team of technical experts, was tasked with developing new assessment and accountability systems to meet requirements under state and federal law. The 95-member task force – consisting of educators, parents, business and community leaders, tribal leaders and lawmakers – made a number of recommendations. Subsequently, more than 5,000 individual pieces of stakeholder feedback were gathered and considered in development of the report card. The resulting system is a multi-measures approach to accountability with multiple indicators in order to meaningfully differentiate schools, support struggling schools and help ensure that all students meet a goal of graduating high school ready for postsecondary success.



WHAT ARE “PROGRAMS OF EXCELLENCE”?

The Oklahoma Champions of Excellence Program is designed to augment the school report card by providing schools the opportunity to celebrate aspects of their academic or extracurricular offerings. Programs such as fine arts, civics, STEM and world languages are key components of a well-rounded education. Schools can be recognized on the dashboard for having Gold-, Silver- or Bronze-level programs in fine arts, mathematics (with an emphasis on improving quality of and access to coursework beyond Algebra 2), science (with an emphasis on grades PK-5), social studies and civics, world languages and safe and healthy schools.

Schools will be recognized for these programs on the fall 2019 report card.

HOW DOES THIS YEAR’S REPORT CARD COMPARE WITH PREVIOUS YEARS?

The school report card to be released in February 2019 is completely different from the Oklahoma report cards of the past. The new accountability system is based on the guiding principle that all students can grow and all schools can improve. Because it is based on a true growth model, the report card is no longer hyper-focused on proficiency rates.

The material presented in the report card will be displayed in a user-friendly dashboard format. Additional information will be included alongside the indicators to help provide context.

HOW ARE THESE GRADES CALCULATED?

Grades are calculated based on a number of academic and nonacademic indicators. For elementary and middle schools, the indicators include academic achievement, student growth, English language proficiency assessment (ELPA) progress and chronic absenteeism. For high schools, the indicators are academic achievement, ELPA progress, graduation rate, chronic absenteeism and postsecondary opportunities. Each indicator is assigned a number of points and given an individual letter grade. All of the points are combined for a maximum of 90 available points – depending on which indicators apply – to produce an overall grade.

WHY DOES THE REPORT CARD USE LETTER GRADES, AND WHY IS THERE AN OVERALL LETTER GRADE?

A school report card is meant to provide information to schools, families and communities about school performance in context, without focusing on a single score or letter grade. Nevertheless, federal law requires that schools be grouped in at least three overall categories. Oklahoma has chosen to use five categories to allow for greater differentiation among schools.

Oklahoma has adopted a report card that gives schools letter grades – A, B, C, D or F – for each indicator, as well as an overall grade. It is vital for families and communities to have accurate and easily comprehensible information about their school’s performance; letter grades are a universally understood measure – even by parents who may not speak English. It is important, however, that these grades be viewed in the context of the school as a whole. As a result, the report card dashboard will feature a number of relevant data points, including student demographics, program offerings, ability to compare similar schools and financial information.



HOW WERE GRADES DISTRIBUTED THIS YEAR? WILL THIS CHANGE NEXT YEAR? IF SO, HOW?

Grades for the first school report card will be distributed based on a bell curve. There are a number of reasons why this is important in the initial year. Federal law requires that the bottom 5 percent of schools – a total of approximately 90 – be designated for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), meaning they will receive intensive supports, interventions and funding to promote rapid improvement. Because the availability of resources to support struggling schools is limited, it is important to use these funds as effectively as possible. Similarly, a bell curve ensures that at least 5 percent of schools receive the highest overall grades.

HOW WILL THE OSDE SUPPORT STRUGGLING SCHOOLS?

Through the Office of School Support, the OSDE will deploy comprehensive strategies, interventions and resources to help struggling schools. Schools receiving a CSI designation will work with a specialist to conduct a needs assessment that identifies specific areas for potential improvement in academic performance, learning environment and leadership. Schools will continue to receive intensive support for three years to help them lift academic outcomes.

HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY ENGAGE TO SUPPORT OUR SCHOOL?

The purpose of the school report card is to provide information that can lead to sound decisions. The report card will identify areas of success and struggle for each school regardless of their indicator grades. Communities should engage their local schools and school district to partner in filling any identified gaps. For example, communities can engage in mentorship programs for students, and nonprofit and community action agencies can provide wraparound services to help meet student needs.