# A-F Overview

The 84th Legislature passed **HB 2804**, changing the Texas school accountability system so that every campus and district is to be given one of five ratings from A-F. Much like students receive grades in individual subjects and those are combined for a GPA, the law requires schools and districts to be issued grades based on five different areas of performance or "domains," and those five grades must be combined into a single overall rating.

The ratings will be issued for the first time in August 2018. But the law requires a preliminary work-in-progress report noting potential grades by domain to be issued to the legislature no later than January 1, 2017. Given the limitations of data available, this report will feature possible grades for four of the five domains, and will not include an overall rating for any campus or district. That being said, the agency has a preliminary approach for how the overall grade may eventually be calculated from the five domains. Given the agency's current work-in-progress, the domains would be combined as follows:

In this way, the A-F rating for any campus would be based on the best of student achievement or growth, combined with how well a school performs relative to its level of poverty, how well kids are prepared for college, career, or the military, and how the local school system grades itself. **The system reflects a commitment to recognizing high achievement, but also recognizing the impact of highly effective educators.**

It is important to note that the current work-in-progress A-F system attempts to support a focus on continuous improvement of student outcomes by following two guiding principles:

Current Work-In-Progress Model: Overall Grade Calculation
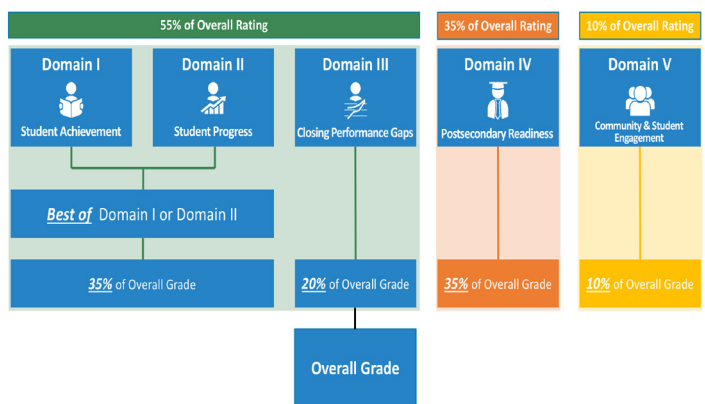
1. The system should not be built on a forced distribution so that some set percentage of campuses must get an A or an F. It should be based on criteria meaningful to ensure our students are prepared for success, and it should be mathematically possible that all campuses achieve an A rating.

2. Rather than facing a constantly changing goal post that makes it harder and harder to demonstrate improvement each year, the ratings should be based on stable criteria, so you can make apples-to-apples performance comparisons from year to year.

Detailed descriptions of the calculation methods used for each domain are available separately. But the following overview attached to this memo is intended to provide some background.

Domain I: Student Achievement

To determine an appropriate goal for high student achievement, the agency tried to identify an appropriate bench-mark based on what would best position our students for success. The state's **60X30TX** plan provides that bench-mark and is aligned both to work being done in colleges throughout Texas and to the needs of the workforce. The goal of the plan is straightforward: by the year 2030, 60% of Texans aged 25-34 should possess some form of post-secondary credential. To align with this plan, the bar for high student achievement – performance at an "A" rating in Domain I – **is set at 60%** of students being on pace for likely success in a post-secondary setting, be it a trade school, community college, or four-year university. The STAAR provides a valid method of identifying this.

The STAAR test was built and validated by actual student performance so that achieving a Final Level II proficien-cy rate is indicative of a student who, if that proficiency level is maintained through high school, has a better than 60% chance of passing freshman college level math & English courses. The Advanced Level III proficiency rate is indicative of a student who has a better than 75% chance of passing those courses. (This latter standard is used by SAT & ACT). The Phase-in Level II rate is about 1 standard deviation below Final Level II, and as such works to indicate a student who has not quite reached grade level proficiency.

In an attempt to add clarity, the agency is proposing to change these terms. You can see the changes to the right:

As part of the guiding principles for A-F, the agency is also proposing to lock in the formerly Phase-in Level II rate at its current rate of rigor. So rather than constantly raising the bar, the newly named Approach-ing standard will remain a constant proficiency level, allowing for easier year over year comparisons.

Domain I: Proposal To Measure Proficiency

Current PLD	Current Public Label	New PLD/Public Label
Level 1	Unsatisfactory	**Does Not Meet**
Phase-In Level 2	Satisfactory	**Approaches**
Final Level 2	Postsecondary Ready*	**Meets**
Level 3	Advanced	**Masters**

* This label has not been featured on Confidential Student Reports for parents.

Domain II: Student Progress

The current proposal for Domain II examines each child's scale score on STAAR this year versus last year. Students who gain enough scale score points to maintain the same level of proficiency as the year before are designated as having met expected growth. Students who gain enough scale score points to gain a proficiency level (ex: from Meets grade level to Masters grade level) are designated as having accelerated growth. In the current approach, points are tallied for each student who reaches expected growth (one point) or accelerated

Domain II: How Growth Is Currently Calculated

growth (two points), and points are added up for all students and for various sub populations. The agency has begun examining several alternative approaches to ensure we have the most effective method for recognizing student growth, but at present, no changes have been proposed.
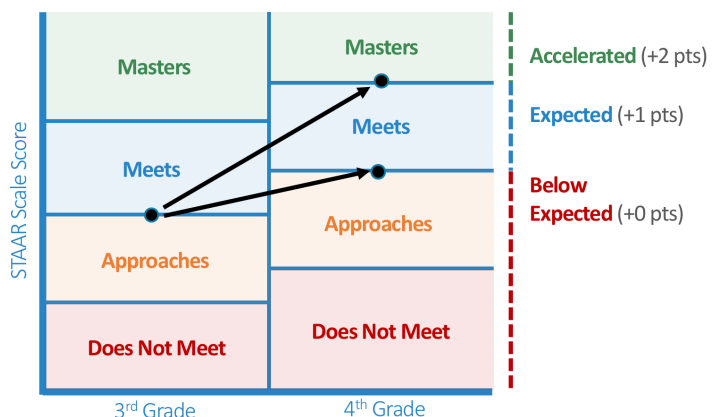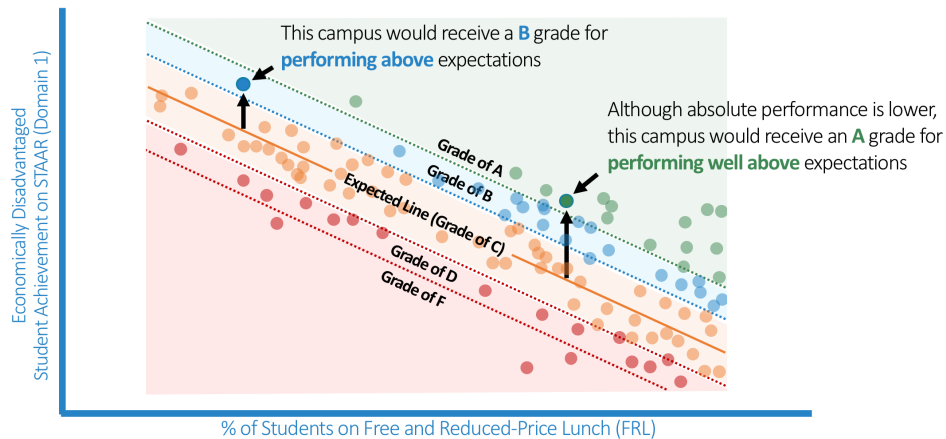
Domain III: Closing the Gaps

There are many ways to determine how effectively campuses are closing achievement gaps.   The proposed approach examines how well campuses throughout Texas are doing today in terms of student achievement for their economically disadvantaged students given how many economically disadvantaged students they have. This chart to the right illustrates the approach. Schools that perform well above the expected line appear to be closing achievement gaps, and would be given an A rating. A benchmark cut point would be set based on the 2016-2017 school year, and those cut points would remain fixed over time, to ensure all campuses have an opportunity to improve to an A over time.

Domain III: Proposal To Calculate Closing the Gaps

This campus would receive a **B** grade for **performing above** expectations

Although absolute performance is lower, this campus would receive an **A** grade for **performing well above** expectations

Grade of A
Grade of B
Expected Line (Grade of C)
Grade of D
Grade of F

Economically Disadvantaged Student Achievement on STAAR (Domain 1)

% of Students on Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL)

Domain IV: Postsecondary Readiness

Domain IV, which is 35% of a campus's overall grade, relies on indicators other than STAAR.

At the elementary and middle school level, this will involve the use chronic absenteeism. Middle school will also incorporate the middle school drop-out rate. The agency engaged in extensive stakeholder conversations to determine whether additional indicators could be used in elementary and middle school, but no suitable additional indicators could be found.

At high school, Domain IV will be based partially on the graduation rate and partially on the percentage of students graduating with a higher level graduation plan. But it will also examine the percentage of students who graduate ready for college, career, or the military, as evidenced by SAT/ACT/AP/IB/dual credit, an industry credential or appropriate CTE course sequence, or military enlistment. Ratings in this domain will be built so that schools will receive the same level of recognition for students who enter the military as they do for students who achieve industry-recognized credentials and as they do for students who achieve high SAT/ACT scores.

Domain IV: Calculating Domain IV Score

Elementary Schools

All 35%
Chronic Absenteeism Rate

Middle Schools

Half of 35%
Chronic Absenteeism Rate

Half of 35%
7-8 Annual Dropout Rate

High Schools

10 of 35%
Graduation Rate

5 of 35%
Graduation Plan Rate

20 of 35%
Annual Graduates Who:

Completed a CTE-Coherent Sequence of Courses

Completed 12 or More Hours of Postsecondary Credit

Completed One or More AP/IB Courses

Met the TSI Benchmark on TSIA, SAT, or ACT