

How do the school ratings work?

The Tennessee Department of Education has provided data about schools and districts on its state report card for many years. Now, a new federal law requires states to provide more information about schools' performance.

We think this is an important opportunity to make sure all community members understand how their school is doing on a variety of metrics that encompass student success – and we have spent the past two years working with families, educators, school and district leaders, community organizations, and state leaders to identify a rating system that provides helpful and well-rounded context. This year, the department is using a numerical system to provide a rating on up to six metrics for each school. Starting in 2019, a Tennessee state law will require the department to assign each school a letter grade.

Each of the metrics or indicators on the report card are presented like a dashboard. Just like the dashboard in a car, each indicator looks at a different aspect of a school, and users can decide that indicator's importance to them. A school receives a rating on each indicator ranging from 0.0 to 4.0, like a GPA scale, with 4.0 being the highest. Additional information underlies each rating, and the department encourages users to click through and learn more. The six indicators are:

- **Academic achievement** (whether students are performing on grade level or above based on state tests)
- **Student academic growth** (whether students are making progress from year to year, regardless of whether they are on grade level yet)
- **Chronically out of school** (students who miss at least 10% of school days, or about 18 days if enrolled the full year)
- **Progress on English language proficiency** (whether English learners are making progress in their understanding of the English language)
- **Ready graduate** (the percentage of students who graduate and earn at least a 21 on the ACT or 1060 on the SAT, demonstrating readiness for college and careers; *this is for high schools only*)
- **Graduation rate** (percentage of students graduating from high school; *this is for high schools only*)

How were schools rated in 2017-18?

- **Academic achievement:** 43% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Student growth:** 50% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Chronically out of school:** 71% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **English language proficiency:** 59% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Ready graduate:** 67% of schools earned higher than a 2.0
- **Graduation rate:** 84% of schools earned higher than a 2.0

When possible, ratings are based either on **how well the school is doing** on that metric OR **how much the school improved** in the past year. The school gets the higher rating between the two. Every school can earn a high score on each indicator, either by showing excellent performance or by showing exceptional improvement.

The rating system also reflects the belief that every student's success matters. Within each indicator, the performance of the full student population is weighted at 60% of the rating, and the performance of students who are part of a student group – black, Hispanic, or Native American students, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities – is 40%. Ratings for each group are on the indicator's page.

The information and ratings on the report card are intended to be a catalyst for conversation, not a defining characteristic. Ultimately, a quality education is more than a score, and these ratings provide one perspective on how a school is performing. If you have questions or want to learn more about a specific school, we encourage you to reach out to the principal or district leader.