

Q: *What is an “accountability system,” and why do we need one?*

Maryland began looking at school and system performance in 1993, and in 2002 federal legislation required that school performance be gathered and reported in every state. An accountability system helps to ensure that all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, home language, disability status, or where they live, get the education they need and deserve. It is also designed to ensure that all schools, regardless of where they are located and which students they serve, provide that education. Another goal is to identify schools that need support and take prompt action to improve them in a way that is understandable, transparent, and uniform. Accountability systems measure a variety of aspects of school performance--the same aspects at every school, for all students--and report the results to the public.

Q: *How did Maryland develop its new accountability system?*

Based on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), each state was required to submit a plan detailing how the law will be implemented in their state. The law requires some measures, while also allowing states to choose components that are important to its students and stakeholders.

Maryland created its accountability system over 18 months with assistance from superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, community leaders, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders around the state. The state plan was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in early 2018.

Q: *What are the components of the MD accountability system?*

The accountability system has two parts: academic indicators, which make up 65 possible points, and measures of school quality and student success, which make up 35 possible points.

For **elementary and middle schools**, the academic indicators are:

- **Academic Achievement:** A combination of the percent of students scoring “proficient” or higher on state standardized tests in math and English Language Arts, and the average Performance Level of students on state standardized tests.
- **Academic Progress:** A combination of (1) how each student’s performance has grown compared to the previous year on state standardized tests in English Language Arts and math, and (2) the percent of fifth or eighth grade students earning credit in core coursework. (In the future, this indicator will also include student performance on state Science and Social Studies tests).
- **Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency:** The percentage of a school’s English language learner population who are on track toward achieving proficiency in the English language.
- **School Quality and Student Success:** The percent of students at the school who (1) are not chronically absent (miss more than 10%), and (2) enrolled in a well-rounded curriculum (Fine

Arts, PE, Health, Computer Science (MS), Science (ES), Social Studies (ES)). (In upcoming years, this indicator will also include a school climate survey.)

At the **high school level**, the academic indicators are:

- **Academic Achievement:** A combination of the percent of students scoring “proficient” or higher on state standardized tests in math and English Language Arts, and the average Performance Level of students on state standardized tests.
- **Graduation Rate:** The percent of students who earn a Maryland High School Diploma.
- **Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency:** The percent of a school’s English language learner population who are on track toward achieving proficiency in the English language.
- **Readiness for Postsecondary Success:** The percent of students who (1) in ninth grade have earned at least four credits in core academic coursework, and (2) upon graduation the percent of students meeting a variety of standards beyond their required coursework.
- **School Quality and Student Success:** The percent of students at the school who (1) are not chronically absent (miss 10% or more), and (2) upon graduation have participated in a variety of learning opportunities beyond their required core academic coursework. In upcoming years, this indicator will also include a school climate survey.

A school earns points on the components of the accountability system based on its performance in each area.

Q: *What is my school’s “final score”?*

Each school’s “final score” is the result of its performance on the entire accountability system. For each component, a school can earn points based on the way that the school is achieving in that area. The School Report Card presents each school’s “final score” in three ways:

- Total Earned Points Percent is the total number of points earned by the school, divided by the total possible points. For example, a school that earned 55 points out of a possible 85 would receive a “total earned points percent” of 55/85 or 65%.
- A “star rating,” which is a convenient way of expressing the “total earned points percent.” The star breakdown is shown in the chart below.

Total Earned Points Percent	Star Rating
75-100%	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
60-74%	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
45-59%	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
30-44%	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
0-29%	★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

- A percentile rank, which describes how that school performed in comparison to other schools. For example, an elementary school in the 80th percentile means the school performed equal to or higher than 80 percent of other Maryland elementary schools on the indicators in the school accountability system.

Q: *Why did my school not receive a final score, percentile rank, or star rating?*

To receive a final score, a school must have 45 or more possible points. Some schools may not have possible points for every measure or indicator. (For example, if a school does not have at least ten English language learner students, then the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator is not included for that school. There would be no possible points for this indicator). For schools with fewer than 45 possible points, data for the measures and indicators that do apply will still be reported. However, the school will not receive a final score in any of its forms.

Q: *Why does the report card include groups of students by race/ethnicity and those receiving special services?*

Federal law requires that we report performance of all students as a group, and that we break out the performance of specific groups of students. Student group performance is critical information for schools, teachers, parents, and students that helps ensure every student's educational needs are met. There are seven race/ethnicity student groups: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino of Any Race, White, and Two or More Races. There are three groups of students receiving special services: Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learner, and Students with Disabilities.

Q: *Where can I get more information?*

The Maryland State Department of Education's web site is available for parents and community members to dig deeper and explore the data for their schools. This information can be found at mdreportcard.org.

