

Currently in Louisiana, an “A” school is one in which the average performance is a minimum of “basic” or level three out of five on the LEAP assessments. However, data show that true college- and career-readiness is achieved by those students scoring “mastery” or level four out of five on our assessments. Thus, for our students to truly be ready for the opportunities of tomorrow, we will gradually raise our proficiency expectations – on assessments, as well as school and district accountability – such that by 2025 an “A” school is one where the average student is performing at “mastery” or level four.

Raising the Standard: Three Phases

Phase 1: Time to Learn

Louisiana educators and students will spend the next two years – 2013-14 and 2014-15 – learning the new, more rigorous expectations, as well as implementing higher quality assessments (Common Core-aligned LEAP in 2013-14 and PARCC in grades 3 to 8 in 2014-15). Letter grades in 2014 and 2015 will be based on the same distribution as in 2013. There will be the same number of A ratings, B ratings, and so on, in each year. This will ensure fairness before the bar is raised.

Phase 2: Setting the Baseline

This “curved” distribution of letter grades will form a new starting point or “baseline” of school and district performance.

Phase 3: Gradually Achieving Our 2025 Vision

After setting the baseline in 2015, BESE will slowly raise the bar, year over year, for what is needed in order to be an “A” school (or “B” school and so on), until 2025, when an “A” school will be one where the average student is performing at “mastery” or level four.

How Will Letter Grades Be Determined During the Learning Phase?

In order to establish a fair school and district letter grade baseline in 2015, letter grades will be curved for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.

Schools will receive a school performance score (SPS) using the indices from 2012-13. However, rather than assigning a letter grade based on the 2012-13 scale (e.g., 100+ = “A”, below 50 = F), letter grades will be assigned using a curve based on the 2012-13 results. For example, if 15 percent of schools were an “A” in 2012-13, then 15 percent of schools will earn an “A” in 2013-14 and 2014-15, regardless of school performance score. Moreover, during the two-year transition, any school or district that maintained or improved its annual performance score may not experience a decrease in its current letter grade.

Next Steps

The accountability commission will advise the Department and BESE on the specifics of implementing these policies including, but not limited to:

- Whether to use the overall 2012-13 curve to assign letter grades or whether to curve K-8 schools based on K-8 results from 2012-13, high schools based on high school results from 2012-13 and combination schools based on combination results from 2012-13
- How to identify “Top Gains” schools during the transition
- How to incorporate transitional ninth grade students in the dropout/credit accumulation index