



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
<http://www.ped.state.nm.us>

CHRISTOPHER N. RUSZKOWSKI
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

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December 31, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents & Charter School Leaders

FROM: Christopher N. Ruszkowski, Secretary of Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "C.R.", enclosed in a hand-drawn oval.

RE: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): 2019 School Grades (Transition Reports)

New Mexico's State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has been highlighted as one of the best in the country by several independent groups including the Collaborative for Student Success, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and Results for America—in many cases with a full slate of bipartisan and independent reviewers. Our collective commitment to school accountability and our commitment to greater transparency and family-friendly reporting (NMSchoolGrades.com) are big reasons why.

The accolades the New Mexico State Plan has received would not have been earned without your hard work and insight, as well as input from hundreds of stakeholders as we crisscrossed the state over the past two years. The next phase of the work—the full implementation of 2018-19 School Grades—has been in process for much of 2018, with additional stakeholder engagement occurring this summer.

As part of this implementation, the State of New Mexico and the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) committed to, and has now conducted, preliminary calculations for School Grades 2019. As you know, we do not yet have student performance data for the 2018-19 school year. Transition School Grades information reflects the weightings and indicators that will be incorporated into School Grades for 2018-19. Although NMPED utilized 2017-18 student achievement data (where available) to calculate these transition School Grades, they have no accountability implications.

Transition 2019 School Grade information is now available in spreadsheet format in the Secure Online Assessment Portal (SOAP) at <https://soap.ped.state.nm.us>. Once you have logged in, choose **2017-2018** from the "Select School Year" dropdown box. You can access the transition school grading spreadsheet by

selecting the “REPORTS” button. There are two accompanying files available in the Document Library you can access by selecting the “DOCS” button: 1) A document with the indicator-level cut scores for each section and 2) A data dictionary explaining each element in the school grading file. For the pledges made by the State of New Mexico, please consult Section 4 of the State’s Plan.

For SOAP login credentials or password recovery, please contact your district’s SOAP Manager.

Earlier today, NMPED launched the 2019 *Whole School Survey*, which is an essential component of school accountability, based upon your input and feedback. By the end of January, NMPED will publish an updated 2019 School Grades Technical Guide with methodological details about each school performance indicator. By the middle of March, there will be additional updated resources available on NMPED’s website. Please do not hesitate to ask questions during this time period.

New Mexico’s ESSA-aligned School Grades 2019 include the following indicators:

- **Student Proficiency** includes English Language Arts/Reading and Mathematics student performance on the following statewide assessments: the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Careers (PARCC), the Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) in Spanish Reading, the New Mexico Alternate Performance Assessment (NMAPA), and IStation (English and Spanish). *There is no longer a student achievement growth component WITHIN the Student Proficiency indicator (formerly referred to as “Current Standing”).*
- **Student Growth** has been a critical component of New Mexico’s approach to School Grades and will continue to be, based upon your input. Student achievement growth is weighted more than any other indicator. While student growth previously focused on two indicators: Q1 (the historically lowest-performing 25 percent of students) and Q3 (the historically higher-performing 75 percent of students), the 2019 model includes three separate indicators. Student achievement growth will therefore be calculated for Q1 (the lowest-performing 25 percent), Q2/Q3 (the middle 50 percent of students), and Q4 (the highest-performing 25 percent). This iteration was based upon consistent feedback heard from parents and families in the field.
- **Chronic Absenteeism** replaces the student attendance rate in 2019 School Grades. A student is chronically absent when they miss 10 percent or more of the days in which they were enrolled. Absenteeism represents lost instructional time, whether excused or not, and has a strong relationship with student achievement and high school graduation. As early as pre-kindergarten, students who are chronically absent are less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade and more likely to be retained in later grades. Absenteeism further serves as an early warning system that is relevant to all grades and is considered an important metric in school accountability.
- Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, the **New Mexico Whole School Survey** will replace the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) survey. Over the past two years, New Mexico has identified a set of items to measure school climate, rigorous expectations, teacher-student relationships, student belonging, and school safety. Woven throughout the survey are questions focusing on the whole child: academic learning, social-emotional learning, school culture, and engagement of families. Given that spring 2019 is the first administration, this data was not calculated into today’s reports.
- **English Learner Progress (ELP)**, required by federal law, is a new indicator that measures the progress toward English language proficiency for students who are English Learners (ELs). Student growth targets are based on the student’s grade level and proficiency level on the *ACCESS for ELLs*

2.0 assessment during the year of initial identification as an EL. Student growth targets are aligned with the expectation that an EL will become proficient in English within five years after the year of initial identification, based upon research. NMPED applied a minimum *n* of five to this indicator—thus many schools do not have it. *Performance on the Alternate ACCESS assessment was not included in this indicator for transition school grades to allow more time to develop growth targets for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities.*

- **College and Career Readiness (CCR)** will continue to be measured under a shared accountability system so that all high schools are held accountable for their students' college and career readiness regardless of the school's grade configuration or student mobility. Points are earned for participation in college and career readiness opportunities (e.g., AP, ACT, SAT, Dual Credit), success in meeting benchmarks in those opportunities, student enrollment in institutions of higher education, and persistence toward a college diploma. This indicator has evolved based upon input from the field and the pledge made within New Mexico's State Plan.
- The high school **Graduation Rate** indicator continues to include the four-year rate, the five-year rate, the six-year rate, and growth in the four-year rate. Like the College and Career Readiness indicator, the calculation of high school graduation rates follows a shared accountability model.

All schools will be required to meet the 95 percent student assessment participation rate requirement. A school that fails to meet the minimum of 95 percent in both English Language Arts and Mathematics will continue to have their letter grade reduced by one letter. For transition school grades, NMPED re-applied the participation rates used when determining 2018 School Grades.

Please note that the designation of Supplemental Accountability Model (SAM) schools for these transition reports is based upon the updated criteria included in state regulation (6.19.8 NMAC) that is effective today. A school qualifies for SAM status if 30 percent or more of the student population is age 19 or older, if 30 percent or more of the student population is non-gifted students who qualify for level C or level D special education, *or* if 30 percent or more of the student population is pregnant/parenting teens.

School Improvement and Bonus Points are no longer part of New Mexico's School Grades. The importance of these activities and services are now captured within the state's accountability model.

For questions, please contact me directly at brian.laurent@state.nm.us or (505) 827-6508.

cc: SOAP Managers