

School Ratings and Rankings

As you look into schools, you may notice different school ranking or rating systems. These methods vary in method and approach. The intention is to try to give you a snapshot of the school and how it may compare to other schools. Ratings are done by both the State of Arizona and outside organizations that attempt to help families locate and review schools.

STATE OF ARIZONA SCHOOL LETTER GRADES

The State of Arizona is required by Federal and State Law to measure school performance each year. Arizona uses a A-F Letter Grade System to evaluate school performance. All Arizona public schools (district schools and charter schools) will receive a letter grade.

The Arizona A-F Letter Grade System is based on quantitative data collected by each school. The State of Arizona uses a standardized test to measure progress and growth from year to year. The letter grades that schools receive from year to year from the State's Office of Accountability are largely based on results of the AzMerit standardized tests.

The results of the school letter grades can provide an indication to public school leaders what areas need improvement. The A-F Letter Grade is certainly the State's leaders' best attempt to create a fair standard measurement to provide school leaders with areas for growth as well as a system to allow parents to see results in a simple and understandable process.

While "A-F Letter Grades" do help to simplify for parents the complexities of accountability for public schools, it can be difficult to include and quantitatively measure ALL components of a school. One needs to remember that the A-F letter grades (while well intended and well thought through), do not tell the "entire story" or capture the whole picture of a school.

You can see the State of Arizona letter grades for all public schools online.

[AZ Dept. of Ed. K-12 School Report Cards \(State Letter Grades A-F\)](#)
[FAQ on Arizona A-F Letter Grades](#)

WHAT ARE THE A-F LETTER GRADES USED FOR?

- Allow for school administrators to see areas that need improvement.
- Provide a yearly gauge AND yardstick for parents and school leaders.
- Measure proficiency and growth of students (via standardized tests).
- Allows for a simpler and more understandable process for parents to compare school performance.
- For successful (A+ schools), this can be a strong marketing tool.
- Allows for closure of charter schools that repeatedly earn low marks.

WHAT DO THE A-F LETTER GRADES MEASURE EXACTLY?

There are two different grading rubrics for elementary/middle schools and high schools.

HOW ARIZONA ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS ARE GRADED

- **30% based on Student Performance (from AzMERIT test)** 30 percent of the grade will

depend on how well students perform on the AzMERIT (the State's standardized test). Elementary students will earn their schools at least partial "points" if they score in any of the test's three highest performance levels: Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Highly Proficient.

- **50% based on Student Growth and Improvement** 50 percent of the grade will be tied to how students improve on AzMERIT. Half of this will be calculated by how a student improves compared to their peers. The other half will be calculated by how the student improves on AzMERIT against an expected-growth target.
- **10% based on English Language Learners Performance** 10 percent of the grade will be determined by how well a school's English-language learners perform and improve on a specialized test, AZELLA.
- **10% based on Readiness** 10 percent of elementary school grades will be based on a pool of "acceleration and readiness" measures. This will be partly determined by chronic absenteeism rates and how many third-grade students a school moves out of the lowest performance level (minimally proficient) on the reading portion of AzMERIT.

HOW ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOLS ARE GRADED

- **30% based on Student Performance (from AzMERIT test)** 30 percent of the grade will depend on how well students perform on the AzMERIT (the State's standardized test). Elementary students will earn their schools at least partial "points" if they score in any of the test's three highest performance levels: Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Highly Proficient.
- **20% based on Student Growth and Improvement** 20 percent of the grade will be tied to how students improve on AzMERIT (which is administered in grades 9-11). Half of this will be calculated by how a student improves compared to their peers. The other half will be calculated by how the student improves on AzMERIT against an expected-growth target.
- **10% based on English Language Learners Performance** 10 percent of the grade will be determined by how well a school's English-language learners perform and improve on a specialized test, AZELLA.
- **20% based on Readiness** 20 percent of a school's grade will be calculated through new "college and career readiness indicators." As the name suggests, schools will earn points in this category if students meet some of more than a dozen items aimed toward going to college or into a vocational program. This includes passing an Advanced Placement test, the ACT or SAT, or earning an industry-recognized certificate.
- **20% based on Graduation Rates** 20 percent of high-school grades will be determined through graduation rates.

OTHER OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS RATING AND RANKING SYSTEMS

Other school search or school locator organizations (such as [greatschools.org](https://www.greatschools.org) and [niche.com](https://www.niche.com)) have established their own ranking or rating system for schools. On the one hand, rating systems simplify the research process and give parents a yardstick to compare schools. However, it may not give the "whole picture" of a school. Many things about a school's culture and climate could be left out. At the end of the day, rankings should be one of MANY tools parents use when searching schools.