

Utah School Grade Accountability System

Recommendation Summary

Introduction

During the 2011 General Legislative Session, Senator Wayne Niederhauser sponsored SB 59, a bill that required the USOE to develop a system to grade schools. It was passed into law (53A-1-1101 - 1113). The law requires that every school receive a grade of A, B, C, D or F. The grade is determined by:

1. Student proficiency in the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) or adaptive tests in language arts, math and science
2. Student proficiency in the Direct Writing Assessment (DWA)
3. Student learning gains in the CRTs or adaptive tests.
4. Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness indicators for high school

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE), assisted by the Center for Assessment, has been working with a committee of education leaders and stakeholders from across the state to develop an accountability model that meets the legislative requirement. In the process, the committee identified a set of key design principles that include:

1. Meeting standards (proficiency) and improving academic achievement (growth) are BOTH valued
2. All schools, including those that serve traditionally low performing students, should have an opportunity to demonstrate success
3. The design of the system should include strong incentives for schools to improve achievement for the lowest performing students
4. Growth expectations for non-proficient students should be linked to attaining proficiency
5. Growth expectations for all students, including students above proficiency, should be appropriately challenging and meaningful

The resulting model provides a straightforward determination of school performance expressed as a letter grade and supports the design principles by valuing performance on state tests, prioritizing individual student growth toward meaningful achievement targets, promoting equity for low performing students, and incentivizing attainment of graduation and college/career readiness.

Components

The proposed accountability system is centered on three components: achievement, growth, and readiness. The structure of the proposed system and points allocated to each component are depicted in figure 1 for elementary and middle schools and figure 2 for high schools.

Figure 1: Structure of Elementary and Middle School Accountability Model

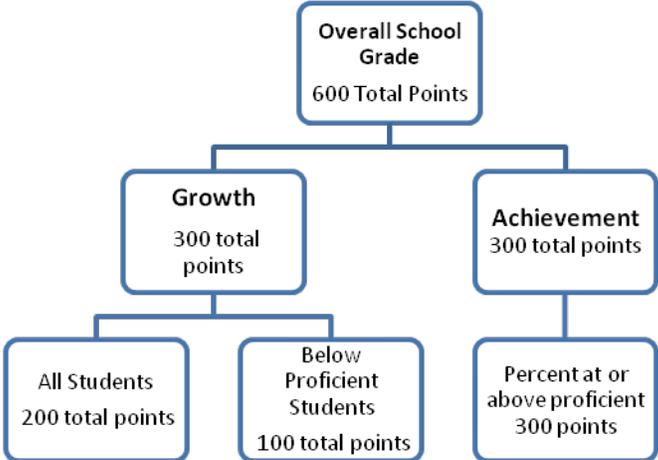
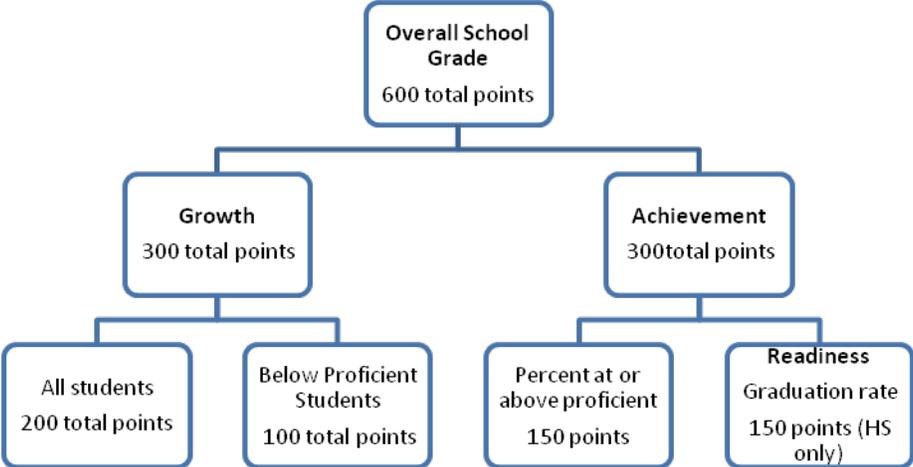


Figure 2: Structure of High School Accountability Model



Achievement

Achievement is measured as the percent of students scoring at or above proficient for all English language arts, mathematics, and science Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) and the direct writing assessment (DWA) in applicable grades. In grades with no DWA each content area is weighted equally (one third). When the DWA is included, it counts for one half of the weight of one CRT content area (approximately 28% for each CRT and 14% for the DWA). The weighted percent proficient is scaled such that a maximum of 300 points is attainable.

Readiness accounts for 150 of the 300 points for high schools in the achievement component. It is calculated by multiplying the graduation rate with completers by 150 (e.g. .70 x 150= 105).

Growth

The Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) model has been selected by the committee as the growth indicator. This growth model, sometimes called The Colorado Growth Model, has been adopted by many states. Student growth is determined by comparing each student’s progress with that of other students in the state with the same prior achievement pattern. SGPs provide a familiar basis to interpret performance, the percentile, which indicates the probability of an outcome given the student’s starting point and can be used to gauge whether the student’s growth was atypically high or low.

To evaluate growth for a school, the median of all individual SGPs is calculated and evaluated against a rubric as depicted in table 1. This rubric provides higher points for a rate of growth that is associated with attaining or maintaining proficiency. This process is completed twice – once for all students at the school and once for only those students who are non-proficient. By so doing, the schools have an extra incentive to promote achievement of the lowest performing students.

Table 1: Growth Rubric for All Student and Non-Proficient Students

Median SGP Achieved	All Students (Maximum 200 points)	Non-Proficient Students (Maximum 100 points)
0-34	50	25
35-49	100	50
50-59	150	75
60 and above	200	100

The overall outcome for growth is a whole-school score with a maximum value of 200 and a non-proficient student score with a maximum value of 100, for a total of 300 growth points available.

Outcomes

Performance in achievement and growth are summed for each component to produce a final grade. The minimum points for each grade are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Grade Thresholds for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Elementary and Middle Schools				
Grade	Achievement <i>out of 300</i>	Growth <i>out of 300</i>	Total <i>out of 600</i>	
A	255	225	391	
B	225	150	296	
C	195	125	251	
D	135	100	191	
High Schools				
Grade	Achievement <i>out of 150</i>	Readiness <i>out of 150</i>	Growth <i>out of 300</i>	Total <i>out of 600</i>
A	120	128	225	390
B	105	113	150	295
C	90	98	125	250
D	60	68	100	185

To provide an indication of the likely impact of the model, data from the 2010/11 school year, using data from three prior years to model growth, were used to produce outcomes based on the model specifications described in this document. Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of grades for elementary, middle, and high schools.

Figure 3: Elementary and Middle School Grades

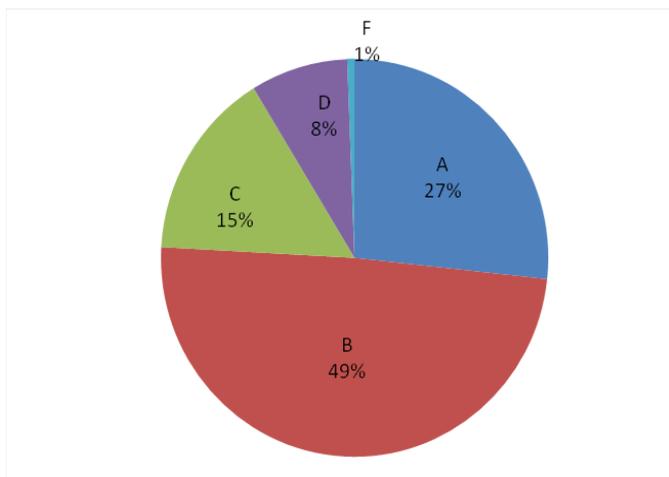


Figure 4: High School Grades

