

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Iowa School Report Card?

The Iowa School Report Card is a new system to show how each public school in the state is performing on certain educational measures. The Iowa Department of Education developed the rating system in response to a 2013 legislative requirement (House File 215) which mandated a web-based system for evaluating and rating schools..

Schools receive a score for each measure and then the scores are combined into an overall score. Based on the overall score, one of the following rankings is assigned to each school: Exceptional, High-Performing, Commendable, Acceptable, Needs Improvement, and Priority.

What are the categories my school is graded on, and how were they chosen?

The legislation required a set of measures that are represented in the Iowa School Report Card as follows:

- **Proficiency:** The percentage of students scoring proficient or better on reading and mathematics assessments.
- **College and Career-Ready Growth:** The percentage of students who are making the year-to-year growth necessary to be ready for college and career training by the end of high school.
- **Annual Expected Growth:** The percentage of students making a year of academic growth in a year's time on reading and mathematics assessments.
- **Closing Achievement Gap:** A measure that reflects a statewide goal of narrowing the gap in achievement for students with disabilities, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, and English Language Learners.
- **College and Career Readiness:** The percentage of students who score at or above a level of performance on reading and mathematics assessments that predicts a higher probability of postsecondary success. (Middle/high schools only.)
- **Graduation Rate:** The percentage of ninth-grade students who finished high school within five years. (High schools only.)
- **Attendance:** The average daily attendance of students, which is the total number of days students were enrolled and present divided by the total number of possible attendance days.
- **Staff Retention:** The percentage of teachers, school administrators and other licensed staff members who remained employed in a school over consecutive school years.

*Two other required measures, parent involvement and community activities/involvement, will be defined and included in the Iowa School Report Card at a later date.

Where do the data come from?

- The data come from multiple sources. Assessment results are received from the state's assessment vendor, Iowa Testing Programs at the University of Iowa. Graduation rates and attendance rates are reported to the Department by school districts through the Student Reporting in Iowa collection system. Lastly, staff retention data are reported by districts in the Fall Basic Educational Data Survey Staff collection.

How is a school's overall rating calculated?

- School ratings represent a combination of scores on up to eight educational measures. Each measure has a value from 1 to 100, which is multiplied by the weight to create a score for each measure. The weighting is the value each indicator contributes to the overall score. The score for each measure is determined, and then all measures are added together to create an overall score. The overall score determines which performance rating the school is assigned. Each measure is based on data from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.

Why does the Iowa School Report Card compare only two years of data? Why not look further back?

- The Iowa School Report Card draws from the two most recent school years. Two years of data strike a balance between providing some stability in performance ratings and giving schools the ability to show incremental improvement over a relatively short period of time.

Which of the eight educational measures will have the greatest weighting in a school's rating?

- The Proficiency, Closing Achievement Gap, and Growth measures are weighted equally, at about 20 percent (for a total of 60 percent). The Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness measures are weighted at 10 percent each (for a total of 20 percent), and the final 20 percent is distributed across the remaining measures – Attendance and Staff Retention.
- It's important to note that not all measures apply to every school. For example, graduation rate does not apply to an elementary school. Therefore, the weightings and their values are adjusted appropriately to each school level.

What's the difference between the two measures that focus on college and career readiness? (College and Career-Ready Growth and College and Career Readiness)

- One goal shared throughout Iowa's education system is that all students will graduate from high school prepared for college and career training. As such, it's important to measure how students are progressing toward this goal, starting early in a child's education. The Iowa Department of Education developed two college/career readiness measures that work hand in hand: 1. The College and Career-Ready Growth measure shows the percentage of students who are meeting annual growth targets that indicate they will leave high school prepared for postsecondary training. 2. The College and Career Readiness measure reports the percentage of students performing at or above the benchmark that predicts a higher probability of postsecondary success.

My school received the lowest rating, “Priority.” Does this mean my child is getting a poor education?

- Just as students are not test scores, schools are not labels or data points. Iowa School Report Card ratings do not represent a complete picture of a school. The Iowa School Report Card is one tool to help Iowans understand how their schools are doing. Schools can use it to identify strengths and challenges, as well as strategies to address those challenges. Parents and community members can use it to celebrate areas of growth and ask questions, such as how a school is addressing a particular challenge and what they can do to help.

My school’s report card shows “Unable to Rate.” What does this mean?

- Schools must have at least 70 percent of the educational measures to have a rating through the Iowa School Report Card. There are generally three reasons a school would not have enough data to be rated:
 1. A school has too few students (fewer than 20) in certain categories to meet minimum group size requirements for reporting student data. These requirements are in place to protect the personally identifiable information of individuals under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The minimum threshold of 10 is used for staff.
 2. A school is new and lacks the multiple years of data needed to compile a rating.
 3. The school’s grade configuration is such that it cannot be measured by the Iowa School Report Card (an early childhood center, for example).

Is there a way to look at high-poverty schools in a way that factors in the challenges their students face?

- The Iowa School Report Card does not make adjustments for schools with high percentages of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Stakeholders should consider that schools have local contexts and challenges, but those circumstances do not prevent a school from improving.

Why does the Iowa School Report Card measure five-year graduation rates?

- Graduation rates follow classes of students to determine how many complete high school in four years or five years. The five-year graduation rate reflects students who were part of a graduating class but took an extra year to finish high school. They include students with disabilities and students in at-risk programs. While the vast majority of Iowa students graduate from high school on time, within four years, school districts also work hard to help struggling students finish high school even if it takes longer. The Iowa School Report Card takes those efforts into account.

Why does the Iowa School Report Card rely so heavily on Iowa Assessments results?

- Iowa Assessments results represent a significant part of the eight educational measures, but not all. The Graduation Rate and Staff Retention measures are based on other data, as will the Parent Involvement and Community Activities/Involvement measures when they are added at a later time.

What happens when schools administer a new state test?

- That's unclear at this time. Once a new state assessment is in place, the state has a few options, including a bridging study or other method of interpreting test scores from a new assessment. Fall 2017 is the earliest that results from a new test would be reflected in the Iowa School Report Card data.

Did schools give any input on this system?

- Yes. Development of the Iowa School Report Card included ongoing feedback from stakeholders representing school districts, area education agencies, and education associations. This feedback led to some adjustments, including the way growth is calculated and determination of the minimum length of time a student must be enrolled in a school to be counted in the Iowa School Report Card results.

