

**WORKING DRAFT:  
A MODEL SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM UNDER THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)**

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**I. Introduction**

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), many states must revise their school accountability systems to bring them into compliance with the new law. The Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcellinEd) has adapted its signature A-F school grading model to meet the new requirements for federal school accountability.

A-F school grading, pioneered in Florida, has been adopted by sixteen other states in law or rule, and several more states have A-F school grading legislation or policy pending that has a chance passage in the current or next school year.

A-F has been a popular and effective accountability tool for two main reasons. First, the rigorous model uses sophisticated, valid, and reliable indicators that are based on student learning outcomes and focused on the performance of the lowest achieving students in each school. Second, and just as importantly, these indicators are aggregated into a rigorous A-F grading scale. The easy-to-understand A-F labels are crucial for promoting transparency and establishing effective incentives for schools. Not surprisingly, these labels have been incredibly popular with parents. In a national poll, 84 percent of parents supported assigning schools a letter grade based on how well they educate their students (McLaughlin & Associates, 2014).

States will have a number of options when modernizing their accountability systems. States that have committed to the simplicity, transparency and rigor of A-F schools grading ought to be able to continue their commitment to those principles under ESSA.

The school accountability model described below complies with the requirements of ESSA. But the law includes a number of significant ambiguities, especially around the school rating system provisions in section 1111(c). The goal of sharing this model with the United States Department of Education is to ensure that the Department's rulemaking clarifies these ambiguities in a way that ensures a state would have the flexibility to adopt this model school accountability system.

## II. Design Priorities

The purpose of school accountability is to measure how well schools are preparing students for college and careers and to provide that information in transparent, objective, and easily understood ways.

A state's school accountability system should:

- Set clear goals for teachers, communities, and businesses to rally around. Goals should be meaningful, ambitious, and achievable and reflect what we expect of students in order to prepare for the challenges of higher education, the workforce, and civic life.
- Provide information to parents, educators, and community members about schools, including broad performance measures, attendance rates, student demographics, school climate, and finances, and other measures. This is done through state issued school report cards, parent assessment reports, and more.
- Identify struggling schools for comprehensive and targeted support using a narrow set of valid, reliable data on student outcomes to help students improve academically.

The purpose of this paper is not to dive into the specifics of standards and assessments or enumerate all the indicators and data points that should be included on school report cards. Instead, the paper focuses on the system that will identify low-performing schools. That system should adhere to the following fundamental principles:

1. Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D, and F
2. Emphasize objective, concise student learning outcome measures
3. Balance measures of student performance and progress
4. Calculate student progress toward grade level and advanced achievement
5. Focus attention on the progress of the lowest performing students in each school
6. Report results in a timely manner as close to the end of the school year as possible
7. Communicate clearly to parents
8. Establish rigorous criteria, with automatic increases to the grading scale, in order to earn A, B, C, D, or F grades
9. Use grades to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support

To ensure our model accountability system satisfies these fundamental principles, we have built it around three design priorities:

- Center on student learning outcome measures. The purpose of federal and state school accountability is to ensure that students are learning. The process and methods schools use to ensure students learn, such as school culture, student engagement, and access to courses, are extremely important and should be reported publicly, primarily through parent-friendly school report cards. But that information, should be used by local decision makers to improve the educational environment, not included in the portion of statewide accountability systems that identifies schools needing support and interventions.
- Focus on the lowest performing students. Low performing students come from all races and ethnicities, all income levels and all curricular backgrounds, and they are found in all schools. Focusing on these lowest performing students ensures the 'right' kids in every school are getting the extra attention and resources needed to catch up with their peers.

- Create an elegance and transparency in measuring, calculating, reporting and understanding. Limiting the number of measures, focusing those measures on the most important student learning outcomes, and using simple calculations to determine a school's effectiveness enhances transparency in reporting and makes information easily understandable to parents, educators, policymakers, and the public.

### III. School Grading Model

ESSA requires states to “establish a system of meaningfully differentiating, on an annual basis, all public schools in the State, which shall be based on all indicators in the State’s accountability system...for all students and for each of subgroup of students.” The system must give “substantial” weight to each indicator and “in the aggregate much greater weight” to the academic indicators (1-3 below) compared to the additional indicator of school quality or student success (4).

1. Academic achievement
2. Another academic indicator (for elementary/middle schools, growth or another indicator; for high schools, graduation rate)
3. English language proficiency
4. Additional indicator(s) of school quality or student success

Our model accountability system would hold schools accountable for the performance of all students and all subgroups on each of these indicators (with the exception of number 3, which would be relevant only for English language learners (ELLs)) but would place a particular emphasis on underperforming students.

Table 1 demonstrates how the school grading framework meets the ESSA requirements that the four indicators – Academic Achievement, Another Academic Indicator, English Language Proficiency, and Additional Indicator of School Quality or Student Success – each individually count for a “substantial” weight, and that the first three “in the aggregate” are afforded “much greater weight” than the fourth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In its ESSA rulemaking, the U.S. Department of Education should not dictate or set parameters around the weights state assign to the required indicators in its rulemaking. Such a step would conflict with the law (which prohibits the Secretary from “prescrib[ing] the weight of any . . . indicator”), tie the hands of states pursuing innovative approaches to accountability, and have the perverse effect of the Department dictating that an indicator cannot exceed 20 percent of the total then having most states weight that indicator at 20 percent.

School quality or student success indicators that are based on student learning outcomes should be more heavily weighted than a non-academic indicator, which should be assigned a much smaller weight or used only for reporting.

**Table 1. Model Accountability System: Relative Weights of Each Required Indicator (by School Level)**

<b>ESSA Components</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b> (with growth)*	<b>High</b> (without growth)
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	300 43% of points	400 50% of points	400 40% of points	400 67% of points
<i>Another Academic Indicator</i>	200 29% of points	200 25% of points	300 30% of points	100 17% of points
<i>English Language Proficiency</i>	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
<i>Student Success</i>	200 29% of points	200 25% of points	300 30% of points	100 17% of points
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>600</b>

\*Under ESSA, inclusion of growth at the high school level is optional.

To differentiate performance, all schools would earn one of the following classifications: A, B, C, D, and F. A-F descriptors are easily consumable by the general public and draw a heightened amount of interest. Using clear and transparent grades, rather than vague categorical descriptors or a dashboard of indicators, ensures that everyone understands how schools are doing. All parents will know that A and B schools are good, D and F are not good, and C means there is room for improvement.

The calculation must be as simple and transparent as possible to ensure teachers, administrators, parents and the public understand what a school must accomplish to earn an A or a B. Table 2 further breaks out the information in Table 1 to show that each of the school grade components gives a school up to 100 possible points. Schools will earn one point for each percentage of students meeting the component's requirements. For example, if 56 percent of students are proficient in reading, the school will earn 56 points toward the school grade for reading proficiency. An overall A, B, C, D, or F school grade will be assigned based on the total percentage of points earned.

**Table 2. Model Accountability System: Breaking out the Indicators into Their Components (by School Level)**

<b>School Grade Component</b>	<b>Weight in Overall Elem School Grade</b>	<b>Weight in Overall Middle School Grade</b>	<b>Weight in Overall High School Grade (with growth)*</b>	<b>Weight in Overall High School Grade (without growth)</b>
<b>Academic Achievement:</b> Reading Proficiency	100	100	100	100
<b>Academic Achievement:</b> Math Proficiency	100	100	100	100
<b>Academic Achievement:</b> Science Proficiency*	100	100	100	100
<b>Academic Achievement:</b> Social Studies Proficiency*	-	100	100	100
<b>Another Academic Indicator:</b> Reading Growth of All Students	100	100	100	-
<b>Another Academic Indicator:</b> Math Growth of All Students	100	100	100	-
<b>Another Academic Indicator:</b> Graduation Rate Four-Year	-	-	100	100
<b>Student Success:</b> Reading Growth of Lowest performing students	100	100	100	-
<b>Student Success:</b> Math Growth of Lowest Performing Students	100	100	100	-
<b>Student Success:</b> College & Career Ready	-	-	100	100
<b>English Language Proficiency:</b> Proficiency and Progress	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
<b>Participation Rate</b>	<95% lower grade <90% F grade	<95% lower grade <90% F grade	<95% lower grade <90% F grade	<95% lower grade <90% F grade
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>600</b>

\*ESSA considers the inclusion of science proficiency, social studies proficiency, and growth at the high school level as optional.

### 1. Indicator of Academic Achievement

Under ESSA, state accountability systems must include an indicator of Academic Achievement that is “based on the long-term goals” and “as measured by proficiency on the annual assessments” for all students and for each subgroup (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and English language learners). The indicator may be measured by the percentage of students achieving Reading and Math proficiency and may include measures for the percentage of students achieving Science and Social Studies proficiency.

One interpretation of this legislative language is that the academic achievement indicator must measure whether each individual subgroup in a school has met its individual proficiency goals. For example, the

system would award points (or assign a “yes” or “no”) based on whether students with disabilities met their goals, whether Hispanic students met their goals, and so on for each subgroup in each subject. The result would be a massive matrix of questions akin to the ones schools struggled with under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Requiring every state to adopt this approach to calculating its Academic Achievement indicator is problematic for a several of reasons. First, experience has shown that it leads to gaming through N size. Under NCLB (before ESEA waivers), 80 percent of states had an N size of 30 or greater. As a result, schools in these states were not held accountable for the performance of tens of thousands of students – very often from the traditionally underserved subgroups that tend to need the most attention from their schools.

Second, an academic achievement indicator that requires a massive matrix of questions is overly complicated for parents, teachers, and school leaders. It fails to create clear, strong incentives for educators about what they need to do to improve their school’s performance and no clear data for policymakers; the approach also fails to provide understandable information to parents.

ExcelinEd’s model addresses these challenges using a weighted average approach adopted by a number of states – and approved by the Department – under the ESEA waiver program. The model would calculate the academic achievement indicator for each subject as follows:

- Determine the percent proficient for each subgroup on an assessment;
- Take a weighted average of the percent proficient in each subgroups counting each student only once (i.e., using mutually exclusive race subgroups);
- Translate the total percentage into a score out of 100 points;
- Report the percent proficient for all subgroups (that meet the minimum N size).

#### *Why percent proficient?*

Under our model, states would hold schools accountable for the percent of students performing at or above proficient on the annual state assessments. Using a calculation that measures student achievement on valid and reliable assessments in a transparent, easy-to-understand way keeps the focus on the important goal of helping every student to achieve proficiency. It also limits the possibility that student performance will be masked by complicated indices that award points for performance above and below proficiency or by values from a regression model that require context and extensive explanations for most stakeholders.

#### *Why a Weighted Average?*

To ensure our model includes all subgroups while maintaining the simplicity that makes it an effective and transparent accountability tool, we recommend that states base the proficiency calculation on a weighted average of subgroups and that states count each student only once.

Table 3 represents a sample calculation for a school’s reading percent proficient component within the Academic Achievement indicator and illustrates why weighted averages have been popular under ESEA waivers. Using a weighted average is a simple way to achieve the equity goal at the heart of the ESSA. It holds schools accountable for the performance of all students, regardless of N size; “gaming” of N size – and the resulting exclusion of students – would no longer be possible. Weighted averages factor all

students into the percent proficient calculation and appropriately weight them according to their size. Data on percent proficient is then displayed by subgroup, which highlights the performance of each subgroup and makes achievement gap comparisons easy. Of course, only subgroups that meet the minimum N size will have their data displayed. This approach creates a level playing field by ensuring every school is held accountable for the performance of each subgroup.

In contrast, a school rating system that asked whether each subgroup met its goals would return states to the days of NCLB, its unwieldy matrix of questions, and the resulting confusion for parents and educators. It would also exclude smaller subgroups from school accountability. In the Table 3 example, if the state had an N size of 30, the following subgroups would be excluded: White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, 2+ races/other/not rpt, free and reduced price lunch (FRL), and students with disabilities (SWDs). With a weighted average, all of these students are included in the school accountability calculation.

**Table 3: Academic Achievement Indicator Reading Percent Proficient Component  
(100 points out of 700 total points)<sup>i</sup>**

Subgroup	# student	Actual # Reading Proficient	Actual % Reading Proficient	Equal Weight in reading component	Duplicate Weight in overall grade	Duplicate Weight in reading component	Unique Weight in overall grade	Unique Weight in reading component
All Unique Students	368	212	57.61%	100%	14%	100%	14%	100%
White	29	17	58.62%	9%	0.80%	5.60%	1.13%	7.88%
Black	300	165	55.00%	9%	8.27%	57.92%	11.65%	81.52%
Hispanic	25	19	76.00%	9%	0.69%	4.83%	0.97%	6.79%
Asian	8	6	75.00%	9%	0.22%	1.54%	0.31%	2.17%
Native Am	2	2	100.00%	9%	0.06%	0.39%	0.08%	0.54%
2+ races, not rpt	4	3	75.00%	9%	0.11%	0.77%	0.16%	1.09%
ELL	21	4	19.05%	9%	0.58%	4.05%	Reported, accountable in race groups	Reported, accountable in race groups
SWD	19	4	21.05%	9%	0.52%	3.67%	Reported, accountable in race groups	Reported, accountable in race groups
FRL	110	59	53.64%	9%	3.03%	21.24%	Reported, accountable in race groups	Reported, accountable in race groups
Total Duplicate Students	518	279	53.86%					
Equal Weight	518	279		73.27%				



### *Why Count Each Student Only Once?*

We recommend that states count each student only once when calculating weighted averages. While proficiency rates would be reported for all subgroups, the weighted proficiency average would be based only on the mutually exclusive racial subgroups. This is an approach that a number of states have adopted – and the Department has approved – under ESEA waivers. For example, **Florida** has been calculating academic achievement for reading, math, science and writing by assigning points based on the unique count of students scoring at or above proficiency (p. 48-49). Similarly, **Utah** has been calculating achievement based on a weighted average method that counts each student only once (note that a subgroup of non-proficient students is double weighed in the state’s growth indicator) (p. 41-44). **Mississippi** (p. 61-64) and **New Mexico** (p. 54-59) have also been using the unique weight approach under their waivers.

As Table 3 shows, if states calculate a weighted average using the ELL, SWD, and FRL subgroups in addition to the racial subgroups, students in the ELL, SWD and FRL subgroup will each be counted twice (if not more) because the racial subgroups are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. This double (or even triple and quadruple) counting has several significant drawbacks:

- Could place the emphasis on the wrong students. By double/triple/quadruple counting certain students, a state increases the weight given to those students and decreases the weight given to the students who are counted only once. There is nothing inherently wrong with double counting certain students to incent schools to give them some extra attention. But states ought to be able to make sure they are double counting the right students – i.e., the lowest performing students in the school, regardless of what subgroup they fall into.
- Reduces transparency. Some students will be double/triple/quadruple counted in the denominator and/or numerator; as a result, the total percent proficient would not be the actual percent of unique kids who are proficient. This would make it harder for parents and the public to understand what the numbers mean. It would also fail to send clear signals to educators about what they need to do to improve their school’s score.

Under our model, we recommend that states give extra weight to the lowest performing 25 percent in each school. This aspect of our model is detailed in section 3.

### *Proposed Calculation of the **Academic Achievement** Indicator for Each Subject:*

- Percent of all students scoring at or above proficient on the state’s annual reading/ELA assessment
  - As measured by a weighted average of the percent of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and not reported/two or more races/other non-white students and reported for economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, and English Learners
- Percent of all students scoring at or above proficient on the state’s annual math assessment
  - As measured by a weighted average of the percent of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and not reported/two or more races/other non-white students and reported for economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, and English Learners



- Percent of all students scoring at or above proficient on the state’s annual science assessment
  - As measured by a weighted average of the percent of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and not reported/two or more races/other non-white students and reported for economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, and English Learners
- Percent of all students scoring at or above proficient on the state’s annual social studies assessment
  - As measured by a weighted average of the percent of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and not reported/two or more races/other non-white students and reported for economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, and English Learners

*Numerator: Weighted number of unique students scoring at or above proficient*

*Denominator: Weighted number of tested, or 95% of, unique students, which ever number is greater*

## 2. Indicator of Student Growth (or Alternative)

State accountability systems must include “a measure of student growth, if determined appropriate by the State; or another valid and reliable statewide academic indicator that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance.”

Under our model accountability system, states would include annual, individual student growth toward proficient and advanced achievement for all students in reading and math. This criterion-based growth model would require that each student demonstrate growth each year by (a) moving up from one achievement level to a higher one, or (b) improving his/her relative position within a proficient achievement level or advanced achievement level.

*Numerator: Number of students making growth*

*Denominator: Number of students with current and prior year test scores*

As with the Academic Achievement indicator, states should place equal weight on reading and math and should calculate the total score for this indicator using a weighted student average in which each student is counted only once (i.e., using mutually exclusive race subgroups).

## 3. Indicator of School Quality or Student Success

ESSA requires that state accountability systems must include “not less than one indicator of school quality or student success that allows for meaningful differentiation in school performance” and “is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide.” This text give states a tremendous amount of freedom to select their own indicator, as long as it is valid, reliable, comparable, and statewide.

States should be permitted to use growth of the lowest performing 25 percent of students, as identified by the prior year test score, in each school as the indicator of School Quality or Student Success. Such a measure is clearly an indicator of “student success”; it can be disaggregated by subgroup; and it is valid,

reliable, comparable and statewide. Furthermore, in light of the breadth of the language in section 1111(c)(4)(B)(v) stating that measures of school quality or student success “may include . . . any other indicator the state chooses”, it is clear that Congress did not intend to prevent states from choosing an indicator that is academic in nature.

Inclusion of this lowest quartile indicator can also strengthen state accountability systems in the following ways:

- Motivates schools to focus on the students who are struggling the most academically, regardless of their demographic or curricular subgroup.
- Cannot be gamed; every school has a lowest performing 25 percent.
- Includes more students in the accountability system by including all students, not just subgroups that meet the minimum N size.

Nearly one-third of states already use the approach of focusing on the lowest performing students which has withstood the test of peer reviews and the U.S. Department of Education’s approval through ESEA waivers.

**Table 3: Student Success Indicator Percent of the Lowest Performing Students Making Reading Growth Component (100 points out of 700 total points)**

Subgroup	# student	Actual # Reading Proficient	Actual % Reading Proficient	# Identified In lowest performing	% Identified in lowest performing	# Making growth in lowest performing	% Making growth in lowest performing
<b>All Unique Students</b>	368	212	<b>57.61%</b>	92	25%	47	51%
White	29	17	58.62%	4	14%	1	25%
Black	300	165	55.00%	87	29%	52	60%
Hispanic	25	19	76.00%	1	4%	1	100%
Asian	8	6	75.00%	0	0%	-	-
Native Am	2	2	100.00%	0	0%	-	-
2+ races, not rpt	4	3	75.00%	0	0%	-	-
ELL	21	4	19.05%	16	76%	9	56%
SWD	19	4	21.05%	12	63%	7	58%
FRL	110	59	53.64%	41	37%	21	51%
<b>Total Duplicate Students</b>	518	279	<b>53.86%</b>	161	31%	91	57%

At the high school level, in addition to growth of the lowest performing 25 percent of students, states should include a measure of college and career readiness, such as student success in Advanced

Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, dual enrollment courses, and earning industry-recognized certifications. To get the most accurate representation of student outcomes, measures of college and career readiness should include all students from the ninth grade graduation cohort – not just those students who participated in AP or IB opportunities. A measure of earning college credit while in high school that includes only students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, rather than all students, overstates the actual percent of students actually earning college credits.

#### 4. Indicator of Progress Toward English Language Proficiency

State accountability systems must measure “progress in achieving English language proficiency, as defined by the State.”

English language acquisition has traditionally been a district-level indicator under Title III. As a result, very little data is available for the number of students participating in English Language Proficiency assessments at the school level. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the proportion of students in limited-English proficiency programs is relatively small in most states, even those who are traditionally thought to have large ELL populations: 8.7 percent in Florida; 7.0 percent in Arizona; and 14.9 percent in Texas. In more homogenous states like Utah it is 5.6 percent; Georgia is at 4.9 percent; Mississippi is at 1.2 percent; and West Virginia is at 0.6 percent. Given the limited information and the relatively small populations in a majority of states, most schools will not have students in limited-English proficiency programs, or will have too few students to meet the minimum N size.

In light of this lack of school-level data on English Language Proficiency and how its inclusion in accountability systems will be impacted by yet-to-be-determined N sizes, the Department should give states the flexibility to incorporate the English Language Proficiency indicator as follows:

- Does the school have (N size) English learners taking the English language acquisition exam?
- If no, do not make any changes to the school grade.
- If yes, did the school meet the English learner English language acquisition target?
  - If yes, add a plus to the school grade.
  - If no, add a minus to the school grade.

*Numerator: Number of English learners making growth or scoring at or above Proficient on the English language acquisition exam*

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*Denominator: Number of English learners taking the English language acquisition exam*

The +/- added to a school's grade will provide transparency for parents and the public to know if the school has a large enough English language learner subgroup and, if so, whether the school helped that group meet its annual target. In addition, as described in Section IV on Interventions, a “minus” will indicate that a school should be flagged for additional review by the state to determine if the school should be added to the list of Targeted Support schools.

## 5. Establishing the School Grading Scale

The goal is for all schools to earn an A and to make progress towards that goal each year. Under ESSA, states must “establish a system of meaningfully differentiating, on an annual basis, all public schools in the State.” Our school accountability model satisfies that requirement by recommending that states set a rigorous grading scale that takes into account the state’s relative standing on nationally comparable measures such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), ACT and SAT, trends in state graduation and dropout rates, the state’s long-term goals and interim progress targets, and the federal requirement that states identify the lowest performing 5 percent of their Title I schools, among other state-specific considerations.

For example, if the state is ranked at the bottom of the states on NAEP reading and math measures, then an accurate grading scale would result in more D and F schools than A and B schools that first year. However, if the state was in the top 10 on NAEP measures, a system that produced more D and F schools than A and B schools would suggest that the grading scale was too high.

Even if a state initially sets a high bar for grades that results in a large number of D and F schools, history proves that it will not remain this way for long. Schools will rise to the challenge and work to improve student performance and their school grade. Therefore states should establish in law thoughtful automatic increases in the scale as schools are ready. For example, a state could ensure the grading scale will increase by five percentage points when 65 percent or more schools (elementary, middle or high schools) earn an A or B in a given year.

## 6. Participation

Under ESSA, states must annually test no less than 95 percent of students overall and within each subgroup, and states must provide a clear explanation of how the state will factor this requirement into its accountability system.

The Department should give states flexibility to incorporate this requirement as follows:

- Did the school meet the participation requirement by testing 95 percent of all students and all subgroups in each subject?
  - If yes, then do not change the school’s grade.
  - If no, lower the school’s grade by one letter.
  - If participation was lower than 90 percent, school grade is an F.

$$\frac{\text{Numerator: Number of students with assessment scores (by subject)}}{\text{Denominator: Number of students enrolled during testing time}}$$

The report card will clearly communicate that the school letter grade was reduced as a result to the low participation rates to maintain transparency.

#### IV. Identifying Schools

ESSA also requires states to “establish a State-determined methodology to identify” the following categories of schools “[b]ased on the state’s system of meaningful differentiation.”

- *Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools*: This category includes the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools and all high schools with graduation rates below 67 percent.
- *Targeted Support and Improvement Schools*: These are schools where one or more groups of students are “consistently underperforming,” as determined by the state.
- *Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools*: These are schools that have one or more groups of students who are performing as poorly as the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools.

Because of the many benefits of having a unitary system of federal and state accountability, the school grading system will be the primary mechanism for identifying schools for support and improvement. However, high schools may also qualify based on graduation rates.

Schools meeting the following criteria will be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement:

- Schools with an F letter grade. F schools are the lowest performing schools in that they have the lowest percent of students proficient in each subgroup and the lowest percent of students in each subgroup making growth. States currently using A-F school grading have identified more than 5 percent of Title I schools as F school.
- High schools that have graduation rates below 67 percent.

Schools meeting the following criteria will be identified for Targeted Support and Improvement:

- Schools with a D letter grade. D schools exhibit larger achievement and growth gaps than higher performing schools (i.e., subgroups that are “consistently underperforming.”)
- A, B and C schools if they have subgroups performing as poorly as the bottom 5 percent of Title I schools.
- A, B and C schools if they have subgroups performing as poorly as the subgroups in D schools.
- A, B and C schools with a “minus” on their English language proficiency indicator will be flagged for additional review to determine if they should be added to the list.

Schools that improve a letter grade from the prior year or earn an A, and are not identified as a Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement School, will be recognized as reward schools. Recognition can include financial awards, but may also include publicity and certificates of recognition.

<sup>i</sup> Column 1 - Subgroup: The first column in the chart represents the subgroups included in the school accountability system.

- In this example there are 368 students represented in nine different subgroups.
  - Six of the subgroups represent a race/ethnicity.
    - These subgroups are mutually exclusive, each of the 368 students is represented in only one of these subgroups.
  - There are three additional subgroups, ELL, SWD, and FRL.
    - In addition to each of the 368 students represented in one of the race subgroups, many students are also represented in one of these three subgroups resulting in 518 student records, meaning many (approximately one-third) of the students are being double, triple, or quadruple counted.
- “Unique Students” is the total number of individual students with reading scores: 368.
- “Duplicate Students” in this column is the total number of times students are counted in one of the nine subgroups. Many of the 368 students are counted in the ELL, SWD, and/or the FRL subgroups, in addition to the race/ethnicity subgroups resulting in 518 total reading scores (i.e., at least 150 scores are being counted more than once).

Column 2 - Number of Students: The second column represents the actual number of students in each subgroup with reading assessment scores.

Column 3 – Actual Number Reading Proficient: The third column represents the actual number of students in each subgroup with proficient reading assessment scores.

Column 4 - Percent Proficient: The third column represents the actual percent of students scoring proficient on the reading assessment within each subgroup.

- This is simply the number of students achieving proficiency on the reading assessment divided by the number of students with reading assessment scores.

Column 5 - Equal Weight in Reading Component: The fifth column represents the weight each subgroup would carry in the reading component of the school grading calculation if each subgroup were weighted equally in the Reading Percent Proficient Component.

- The Reading Percent Proficient Component represents 100 of the 700 points, or 14 percent, of the overall school grade.
- If weighted equally, each subgroups’ reading percent proficient would represent 9% of the weight in the reading component (and 1.6% weight in the overall school grade) meaning that the performance of the 29 white students would impact the school grade in exactly the same way as the 300 black students.
- ExcelinEd would NOT recommend this approach because:
  - It is inequitable. Approximately 82 percent of the students are in one subgroup (the black race/ethnicity subgroup). That subgroup should not receive the same weight as a much smaller group of students (e.g., the 29 white students).
  - Using equal weight misrepresents the actual percent proficient. In this example, using equal weight severely overstates the percent of students reading proficiency in the school at 73 percent when the actual percent proficient is approximately 58 percent.



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**Column 6 - Duplicate Weight in Overall Grade:** The sixth column represents the weight each subgroup carries in the overall school grading calculation if students are double/triple/quadruple counted based on their membership in multiple subgroups.

- The Reading Percent Proficient Component represents 100 of the 700 points, or 14 percent, of the overall school grade.
- If weighted based on the number of student reading scores in the duplicative subgroups, each subgroups' reading percent proficient would be represented in the overall school grade based on the number of student reading records, rather than the actual number of students.
- ExcelinEd would NOT recommend this approach because:
  - Duplicate counting certain students increases the weight given to those students and decreases the weight given to the students who are counted only once. In this example, the Black students subgroup's reading results are weighted at 11.65 percent of the overall grade if each student is counted only once (see column 6). When students are double/triple/quadruple counted, the weight given to the black students subgroup decreases to 8.3 percent of the overall grade (see column 5), meaning that certain black students would receive less weight than other students under the duplicate count approach regardless of whether those black students were high performers or low performers.
  - Using duplicate counts misrepresents the actual percent proficient. In this example, using duplicate weight understates the percent of students reading proficiently in the school at 54 percent when the actual percent proficient is approximately 58 percent.

**Column 7 - Duplicate Weight in Reading Component:** The seventh column represents the weight each subgroup carries in the reading component of the school grading calculation if students are double/triple/quadruple counted based on their membership in multiple subgroups.

- The Reading Percent Proficient Component represents 100 of the 700 points, or 14 percent, of the overall school grade.
- If weighted based on the number of student reading scores in the duplicative subgroups, each subgroups' reading percent proficient would be represented in the overall school grade based on the number of student reading records, rather than the actual number of students.
- ExcelinEd would NOT recommend this approach because:
  - Duplicate counting certain students increases the weight given to those students and decreases the weight given to the students who are counted only once. In this example, the Black students subgroup's reading results are weighted at 81.52 percent of the reading component if each student is counted only once (see column 9). When students are double/triple/quadruple counted, the weight given to the black students subgroup decreases to 57.92 percent of the overall grade (see column 7), meaning that certain black students would receive less weight than other students under the duplicate count approach regardless of whether those black students were high performers or low performers.
  - Using duplicate counts misrepresents the actual percent proficient. In this example, using duplicate weight understates the percent of students reading proficiently in the school at 54 percent when the actual percent proficient is approximately 58 percent.



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**Column 8 - Unique Weight in Overall Grade:** The second to last column represents the weight each subgroup carries in the overall school grading calculation if students are only counted once.

- The Reading Percent Proficient Component represents 100 of the 700 points, or 14 percent, of the overall school grade.
  - Under this approach the white subgroup with 29 students would contribute 1.1 percent, and the black students subgroup would contribute a proportional 11.7 percent. None of the students will be double counted.
- ExcelinEd recommends this approach because:
  - Using unique weight allows a state to ensure that their grading calculation emphasizes the right students. A student should not be double (or triple or quadruple counted) simply because that student appears in multiple subgroups. Rather, as our model recommends, only the lowest performing students should receive extra weight (and, hopefully, extra attention from their schools).
  - Using unique weight accurately represents the percent of students reading proficiently at approximately 58 percent.

**Column 9 - Unique Weight in the Reading Component:** The last column represents the weight each subgroup carries in the overall school grading calculation if students are only counted once.

- The Reading Percent Proficient Component represents 100 of the 700 points, or 14 percent, of the overall school grade.
  - Under this approach the white subgroup with 29 students would contribute 7.88 percent, and the black student subgroup would contribute a proportional 81.52 percent. None of the students will be double counted.
- ExcelinEd recommends this approach because:
  - Using unique weight allows a state to ensure that their grading calculation emphasizes the right students. A student should not be double (or triple or quadruple counted) simply because that student appears in multiple subgroups. Rather, as our model recommends, only the lowest performing students should receive extra weight (and, hopefully, extra attention from their schools).
  - Using unique weight accurately represents the percent of students reading proficiently at approximately 58 percent.