

An Open Letter to the Communities of Red River County
Concerning the Preliminary A-F Rating System

Texas public schools currently have an accountability system that will be used through the 2016-2017 school year that labels all campuses and districts as “Met Standard” or “Improvement Required” and has “Distinction Earned” for exceptional results in certain areas. However, during the last legislative session, a law was passed requiring the Texas Commissioner of Education to develop a new accountability system that would give each campus and district in the State of Texas a grade of A, B, C, D, or F in five different domains and an overall rating for each campus and district.

Although this new A-F accountability system is still being developed, the Texas Commissioner of Education must send an “unofficial” A-F rating report, based on last year’s school data, to the state legislature. This “what if” rating, as it is called, is based on incomplete data and is being formulated from calculations and systems that are not finalized at this point. Also, although it is not required by statute, these unofficial “what if” ratings are also going to be public on Friday, January 6, 2017 on the TEA website.

School report cards were made available to Texas school districts on December 8, 2016. The purpose of these report cards is to “inform parents and guardians about a campus’s individual characteristics and academic performance”. However, as of January 6, 2017, another report card using an unofficial “what if” A-F rating was released to the public. If campuses received a met standard rating in December and now receive an “F” in some domains, what is the public supposed to believe? How does a campus move from highly rated to failing in one month?

It is very disappointing that this “trial run” to assign grades to all schools is being made public when it has not yet been completely developed. It is our concern that all schools will be unfairly “labeled” and unfairly identified because of this information.

The staff and students of Red River County schools work very hard, face many challenges on a daily basis, and are all very proud of their schools. Comparing districts without understanding the challenges and barriers each independent district must overcome is simply not fair. It is just another attempt to mislabel public education as a failure and mislead the public with false data.

Red River County Superintendents agree that accountability is important, but we feel this A-F rating system is not a true representation of our schools, students, teachers, staff or communities. Ultimately, this new rating causes confusion and harm to all Texas public schools and our communities.

Kelly Burns

Superintendent, Avery ISD

Dr. Pam Bryant

Superintendent, Clarksville ISD

Brian Howie

Superintendent, Detroit ISD

Stanley Jessee

Superintendent, Rivercrest ISD