

## A TO F GRADES, RANKINGS, AND DESIGNATIONS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**House Bill 5526 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Tim Kelly**  
**Committee: Education Reform**  
**Complete to 2-7-18**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### BRIEF SUMMARY:

House Bill 5526 would create an Education Accountability Policy Commission (“the commission”), which would develop a school grading system that assigns each public school in Michigan a letter grade between A and F based on its achievement in six specified indicators. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) would administer the system and begin assigning school grades based on achievement by September 1, 2019 and yearly thereafter. MDE would also assign rankings based on how the school relates to comparable schools, and how subgroups of students at the school compare to those subgroups statewide. Finally, MDE would designate high and low performing public schools based on their grades and rankings. MDE would report schools’ grades and rankings as prescribed by the commission.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal K-12 education law passed in December of 2015, required that every state submit plans for a statewide school accountability program. Michigan’s initial submission on April 17, 2017 included three proposed assessment programs—two based on the A to F model and one with a dashboard which would be instituted in lieu of guidance from the legislature. When the legislature did not act in 2017, Michigan’s final ESSA submission on November 15, 2017 included the parent dashboard,<sup>1</sup> which was made public January 9, 2018.

### DETAILED SUMMARY:

#### **A to F public school grades**

The bill would require the commission to develop a statewide system of accountability measurements by September 1, 2018. Based on those measurements, beginning September 1, 2019 and yearly thereafter, MDE would assign letter grades to each public school in the state based on the following six indicators:

- Student *proficiency* in mathematics and English language arts, as measured by the percentage of all pupils who achieve proficiency on the applicable state assessments, as determined by the commission.
- Percentage of all students who achieve adequate *growth* in mathematics and English language arts on the applicable state assessment. Adequate growth would be based on at least all of the following, as determined by the commission:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mischooldata.org/ParentDashboard>

- Student growth from fall to spring of the same school year or spring of one school year to spring of the next, as appropriate based on the timing of state assessments.
- Students who scored proficient on the immediately preceding applicable state assessment and who at least maintained a proficient score on the most recent state assessment.
- Students who scored less than proficient on the immediately preceding state assessment and who demonstrate growth sufficient to reach proficiency in 3 school years.
- Percentage of students who are *English-language learners* and who achieve adequate growth toward proficiency in the English language as determined by the commission and required under ESSA.
- **Graduation rate** of students enrolled in high school, as applicable and as defined by and reported to the Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI).
- Rate of students who are *chronically absent* as defined by and reported to CEPI.
- **Participation rate** for each applicable state assessment, based on students who are assigned to take that assessment.

#### **Ranking public schools in relation to comparable schools and student subgroups**

In addition to assigning each public school a letter grade, the bill would require MDE to assign a ranking to each public school beginning no later than September 1, 2019. MDE would assign a ranking of significantly above average, above average, average, below average, or significantly below average to each public school based on its academic performance in relation to comparable schools and its student subgroup performance in relation to the same subgroup statewide (for example, how African-American students at that school compare to the statewide average for that group).

#### **Designations of high and low performing public schools based on grades and rankings**

Under the bill, the commission would develop standards for identifying public schools as falling into categories of performance and adequate achievement.

One set of standards would identify the lowest achieving public schools as *comprehensive support and improvement schools*, as required under ESSA. The schools under this designation may not exceed 5% of the number of public schools statewide, and may meet any of the following criteria:

- Is a high school that graduates fewer than 2/3 of its students.
- Receives an “F” grade in student growth and proficiency and a ranking of “significantly below average” in relation to comparable schools.
- Meets any other criteria for a comprehensive support and improvement school under ESSA, as determined by the commission.

The commission would also develop a set of standards to identify high achieving public schools as *reward schools*. These schools may meet any of the following criteria:

- Is a high school that graduates at least 99% of its students.

- Receives an “A” grade in student growth or proficiency or a ranking of “significantly above average” in relation to comparable schools.
- Meets any other criteria for identification as a reward school, as determined by the commission.

Finally, the commission would develop standards for all of the following:

- Identifying public schools in which one or more groups of students are consistently underperforming as *targeted support and improvement schools*, as described in ESSA.
- Identifying public schools in which the performance of one or more groups of students would place those students in the bottom 5% of Title I schools. (Title I of ESSA targets “disadvantaged” students, with a goal of “provid[ing] all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and to close educational achievement gaps.”<sup>2</sup>)

The superintendent of public instruction would publish a list of comprehensive support and improvement schools and reward schools by September 1, 2019 and every third year thereafter. (Section 1280c of the Revised School Code would also require the superintendent of public instruction to publish the list of comprehensive support and improvement schools yearly).

#### **Implementation and monitoring of accountability measures**

The bill would charge MDE with implementing and administering the statewide system of accountability measures developed by the commission beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.

The commission would monitor the effectiveness of the system and make changes as it deems necessary to make the system more effective and to ensure compliance with the bill’s requirements. As part of this process, the commission must develop and implement processes for receiving public comment.

#### **Public schools exempted from grades and rankings**

MDE would designate a public school as an *alternative education campus* and not assign grades or rankings if the school meets one of the following:

- Is a center program.
- Is a strict discipline academy.
- Is a program for adjudicated youth.
- Serves any other specialized student population with special needs, as determined by MDE.

However, beginning September 1, 2019, and annually thereafter, MDE would issue a summary status for each public school designated as an alternative education campus. The summary would indicate whether the school is in compliance with applicable law and

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<sup>2</sup> The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA):  
<https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Elementary%20And%20Secondary%20Education%20Act%20Of%201965.pdf>

whether students enrolled in the public school are making meaningful, measurable academic progress toward educational goals established by the governing body of the public school and approved by the superintendent of public instruction.

### **Education Accountability Policy Commission**

The commission, created in MDE, would consist of 13 members, including the superintendent of public instruction or his or her designee, 3 members appointed by the governor, 1 appointed by the Senate majority leader, 1 appointed by the Speaker of the House, and 7 appointed by the superintendent (2 representing public school academies, 2 representing districts, 2 representing intermediate school districts, and 1 representing urban school districts). The members would elect a chairperson and other officers as appropriate.

Initial commission members would be appointed by July 1, 2018 and serve staggered two- or four-year terms. Thereafter, terms would be four years. The governor may remove a member for incompetence, dereliction of duty, malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or any other good cause.

Members would serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

MCL 380.1280c and proposed 380.1280g and 380.1280h

### **BACKGROUND:**

MDE's initial ESSA submission included two A to F school report card options.<sup>3</sup> One proposed report card would have weighted the following factors as follows:

- Student proficiency on state tests: 29%
- Student growth on state tests: 34%
- Graduation rate: 10%
- English learner progress: 10%
- School quality/student success: 14%
  - Measures to determine success would include: chronic absenteeism; teacher and school administrator longevity; advanced coursework by 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders; and time spent in fine arts, music, and physical education.
- Participation in state assessments: 3%

That option would have included those weighted indicators in a summative grade of A to F. This is the option that was released for public comment and developed by the ESSA Accountability Action Team at the request of the superintendent. The other proposed option would have included the same indicators, but without a summative grade.

However, in lieu of guidance from the legislature, and following conversations with parents, teachers, and other stakeholders, MDE's final ESSA state plan incorporated a

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<sup>3</sup> MDE's initial ESSA submission (submitted 4/17/17, last accessed 2/7/18):  
[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Michigan-ESSA-Consolidated-Plan-Overview\\_558371\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Michigan-ESSA-Consolidated-Plan-Overview_558371_7.pdf)

“transparency dashboard” rather than an A to F grading system.<sup>4</sup> According to the ESSA submission, the dashboard is better aligned to the state’s specific education goals and represents a “more appropriate and holistic way to hold schools accountable for student outcomes in a well-rounded education.”

The dashboard covers largely the same components, but presents all six without assigning different weights and combining them into a single letter grade. They are as follows:

- Participation (composed of participation in the content areas assessments and participation in the English language proficiency assessment)
- Proficiency
- Growth
- Graduation rate
- English learner progress
- Additional indicator of school quality/student success
  - For schools with 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, this would be measured by chronic absenteeism, 11-12 advanced coursework (AP/IB/dual enrollment/career and technical education), and postsecondary enrollment.
  - For schools without 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, this would be measured by chronic absenteeism, access to arts/physical education, and access to a librarian/media specialist.

According to the Education Commission of the States, state ESSA plans indicate the following breakdown for accountability programs:

- 13 states plan to use an A to F rating system
- 11 states plan to use a descriptive rating system (Needs Improvement, Average, Good, Great, Excellent)
- 9 states plan to use an index rating system (1-100 or 1-10)
- 8 states plan to use a tier-of-support system (Comprehensive support and improvement, targeted support and improvement, none)
- 4 states and the District of Columbia plan to use a 1-5 stars system

### **Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD)**

Public Act 192 of 2016 (House Bill 5384)<sup>5</sup> required the State School Reform/Redesign Officer to implement an A to F accountability system for the Detroit Public Schools Community District “beginning with the second full school year that starts after the transfer date.” The transfer date—the date when the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) split into DPSCD, the entity that would operate the schools in Detroit, and the Qualifying School District, the entity that would discharge the district’s debt—was July 1, 2016. The second school year to begin after that date is the 2018-2019 school year. To date, an A to F accountability system has not been implemented.

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<sup>4</sup> MDE’s explanation of the transparency dashboard (6/7/17, last accessed 2/7/18): [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE\\_Policy\\_Statement\\_on\\_Transparency\\_Dashboard\\_-\\_FINAL\\_TT\\_575834\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE_Policy_Statement_on_Transparency_Dashboard_-_FINAL_TT_575834_7.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Public Act 192 of 2016 (HB 5384): <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2016-HB-5384>

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

House Bill 5526 would increase costs for the state and could increase costs for school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (PSAs).

The bill would increase costs for MDE to administer the statewide school A-F grading system and academic performance ranking system. MDE would incur additional costs for the following activities: assigning and reporting an A-F grade and academic performance rank for each school; administering the statewide system of accountability measurements; publishing the list of comprehensive support and improvement schools and reward schools; and designating alternative education campuses and approving their progress goals.

MDE's school accountability dashboard system presents data on individual characteristics rather than what is required by the A-F grading system and academic performance ranking system, which require a composite score for grade or ranking. MDE would incur cost increases where new data collection is needed and data aggregation/composite scores are created. Also, MDE would incur additional cost increases to oversee districts supplying data and verifying data integrity.

The bill permits reimbursements for the Education Accountability Policy Commission's expenses incurred in the performance of official duties, which include the following activities: prescribing for how MDE would report A-F grades and academic performance rankings; developing standards for identifying comprehensive support and improvement schools and reward schools; identifying school categorizations required under ESSA; and monitoring and taking input on the accountability system.

The bill also could create additional data reporting requirement costs for school districts, ISDs, and PSAs. It is difficult to determine whether all of the data required for MDE are provided in the form and manner to create the A-F grading system and academic performance ranking system, so the bill could increase data reporting requirements to fill those needs.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.