

Opposition to House Bill 4166

The Michigan School Grades system provides a clear, reliable and consistent assessment of school performance. It assigns letter grades to schools based on annual, key performance indicators. Eliminating this letter grade system would reduce school transparency and accountability for academic outcomes.

The Michigan Department of Education claims the letter grade system oversimplifies school performance and duplicates the Index System and Parent Dashboard for School Transparency, the state's other school assessment tools. However, a school's public-facing assessment tool should be simple and readily interpreted by all its stakeholders if it is to improve school accountability.

The Index System's purpose is not to simplify school performance indicators for the public. Instead, the index provides school officials with complex data to use in developing improvement and evaluation plans for underperforming schools. A school's index score, which falls between 1 and 100, is calculated based on several performance indicators. While the score may be useful for trained administrators to develop appropriate interventions, it is an arbitrary point value to parents desiring to understand a school's progress. For this reason, the Index System is not an adequate replacement for the letter grade system.

Similarly, the Parent Dashboard for School Transparency is an inadequate substitution for the state's letter grade system. While the purpose of the Parent Dashboard is to elucidate a school's progress by displaying metrics and graphs for each performance indicator, it falls short at doing so. The rationale for the metrics used and data illustrated is not readily provided, and this challenges parents to meaningfully interpret a school's overall performance. Conversely, the user-friendly letter grade system provides a clear and simple assessment of school performance that parents can instantly understand.

With students still struggling to recover learning losses incurred during pandemic-era school closures, this is not the time to reduce school accountability and transparency. The Michigan School Grades system is a consistent and reliable assessment tool that parents and other stakeholders can easily comprehend and use to support their students' learning gains. Repealing this important accountability system will only make it easier for schools to fall further behind.

Molly Macek
Mackinac Center for Public Policy
mackinac.org