



What letter grades are assigned to schools?

A school's grade is calculated based upon a point system, as follows:¹

Letter Grade	Point Range	Description
"A"	525 or more points	School making excellent progress
"B"	495-524 points	School making above average progress
"C"	435-494 points	School making satisfactory progress
"D"	395-434 points	School making less than satisfactory progress
"F"	Less than 395 points	School failing to make adequate progress

What criteria are used to grade elementary and middle schools?

An elementary or middle school's grade is calculated based upon points earned as a result of the school's student scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Writing.² Points are earned as follows:³

Achievement scores:⁴

- ❖ One point for each percent of students who score at achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in FCAT Reading;
- ❖ One point for each percent of students who score at achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in FCAT Mathematics;
- ❖ One point for each percent of students who score at achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in FCAT Science; and
- ❖ One point for the average of the percent of students scoring 3.0 or above and the percent of students scoring 4.0 and above in FCAT Writing.⁵

Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, the aggregate scores of all eligible middle school students assessed on the required statewide, standardized middle school civics end-of-course assessment will be made a part of a middle school's grade calculation.⁶

¹ Section 1008.34(2), F.S.; rule 6A-1.09981(8)(c), F.A.C.; see also Florida Department of Education, *Florida School Grades and Adequate Yearly Progress*, Aug. 2010, at 2, available at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/0910/SchoolGradesPressPacket.pdf> [hereinafter *2009-10 School Grades*].

² Section 1008.34(3)(b), F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

³ Rule 6A-1.09981(6), F.A.C.

⁴ Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.a., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. Achievement scores are reported by five achievement levels; level 1 represents the lowest achievement level and level 5 represents the highest. Section 1008.22(3)(c)5., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; rule 6A-1.09422(5), F.A.C.

⁵ Rule 6A-1.09981(5)(a), (6)(a)-(c) and (8)(a), F.A.C.; see also *2009-10 School Grades*, *supra* note 1, at 3. If less than 30 students are tested in writing, the district average in writing is substituted. Rule 6A-1.09981(6), F.A.C. (flush-left provisions at the end of the subsection).

Annual learning gains:⁷

- ❖ One point for each percent of students making learning gains in reading; and
- ❖ One point for each percent of students making learning gains in mathematics.⁸

Adequate progress of students in the lowest quartile (25 percent) in FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics:⁹

- ❖ One point for each percent of the school's lowest quartile who make learning gains in reading;¹⁰ and
- ❖ One point for each percent of the school's lowest quartile who make learning gains in mathematics.^{11,12}

If a school's lowest quartile does not make "adequate progress" in reading and mathematics compared to the prior year, an "A" is reduced by one letter grade. If the lowest quartile does not make adequate progress during the prior 2 years, the school's "B" or "C" is reduced by one letter grade.¹³

A school makes "adequate progress" if:

- ❖ Fifty percent or more of the school's lowest quartile make learning gains in reading and mathematics;
- ❖ At least 40 percent (but less than 50 percent) of the school's lowest quartile make learning gains in reading and mathematics and the proportion of the lowest quartile who make learning gains increases by at least 1 percent compared to the prior year; or
- ❖ Less than 40 percent of the school's lowest quartile make learning gains in reading and mathematics and the proportion of the lowest quartile who make learning gains increases by at least 5 percent compared to the prior year.¹⁴

Percentage tested:

⁶ Section 1008.34(3)(c)1., F.S., as amended by s. 5, ch. 2010-48, L.O.F.; see also the Middle Grades Promotion Fact Sheet.

⁷ Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.b., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

⁸ Rule 6A-1.09981(6)(d) and (e), F.A.C.

⁹ Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.c. and (c)2., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. ; see also the flush-left provisions at the end of s. 1008.34(3), F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. A student is not counted in the lowest 25 percent unless the student scores at achievement levels 1, 2, or 3. Rule 6A-1.09981(5)(c) and (8)(b), F.A.C.

¹⁰ Rule 6A-1.09981(6)(f), F.A.C.

¹¹ Rule 6A-1.09981(8)(b), F.A.C.

¹² If less than 30 students in the lowest quartile are tested, points are awarded based on the lowest performing 30 students who score at achievement levels 1, 2, or 3. Rule 6A-1.09981(6) & (8)(b)2., F.A.C. (flush-left provisions at the end of subsection (6)). If a school does not have at least 30 students in the lowest quartile who score at achievement levels 1, 2, or 3, points are awarded based upon the learning gains of all of the school's students. *Id.*

¹³ 2009-10 School Grades, *supra* note 1, at 3.

¹⁴ Rule 6A-1.09981(1)(a)3. and (8)(b)1., F.A.C.

To earn an “A,” at least 95 percent of eligible students must take the FCAT. To earn a “B,” “C,” or “D,” at least 90 percent of the eligible students must take the FCAT.¹⁵ If less than 90 percent of the eligible students take the FCAT, an “I” (Incomplete) is assigned.¹⁶

Minimum sample size:¹⁷

A school does not receive a grade unless it has at least 30 students with valid FCAT scores in reading for the current and previous years and at least 30 students with valid FCAT scores in mathematics for the current and previous years.¹⁸

What are annual learning gains?

An “annual learning gain” is an increase in a student’s learning compared to the prior year, as measured by the FCAT.¹⁹ A student makes a learning gain if one of the following three criteria is met:

- ❖ Improved FCAT achievement level compared to the prior year (*e.g.*, from level 1 to level 2);
- ❖ Maintained FCAT achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 compared to the prior year; or
- ❖ Maintained FCAT achievement levels 1 or 2 and demonstrated more than 1 year’s growth according to FCAT developmental scale scores, which establish by grade level the anticipated increase in a student’s FCAT scale scores compared to the prior year.²⁰ A retained student’s increase in developmental scale scores for repeated grade levels is not used to calculate learning gains.²¹

A student is not included in the calculation of learning gains if the student’s FCAT achievement level declines compared to the prior year, even if the lower score is at or above grade level.²²

What criteria are used for high school grades?

Beginning in the 2009-10 academic year, one-half of a high school’s grade will continue to be based upon student achievement and annual learning gains, as described above except that when the ninth and tenth grade FCAT Mathematics and eleventh grade FCAT Science are phased out and the Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology 1 end-of-course (EOC) assessments are phased in, achievement levels will then be based upon student performance on those EOCs and learning

¹⁵ Rule 6A-1.09981(1)(a)4., F.A.C.

¹⁶ Rule 6A-1.09981(9)(b), F.A.C.; *see also* 2009-10 School Grades, *supra* note 1, at 2.

¹⁷ Section 1008.34(3)(a)1., F.S.

¹⁸ Rule 6A-1.09981(4), F.A.C.

¹⁹ Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.b., F.S., *as amended by* s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; rule 6A-1.09981(1)(a)1.b., F.A.C.

²⁰ Rule 6A-1.09981(5)(b), F.A.C.; *see also* Statewide Assessment Program Fact Sheet.

²¹ Rule 6A-1.09981(5)(b), F.A.C. The calculation of annual learning gains is based upon students who take a higher grade level test in the current year than the previous year. *Id.* (flush-left provisions at the end of the paragraph).

²² *Id.*

gains in Mathematics will be calculated using student performance on the Algebra 1 and Geometry EOC assessments.²³ The other half is based upon the:

- ❖ High school's graduation rate;
- ❖ High school's graduation rate of at-risk students scoring at achievement level 1 or 2 in reading and mathematics on the grade 8 FCAT;
- ❖ Performance and participation of the school's students in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment, and Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) courses (as valid data becomes available);²⁴
- ❖ Achievement by the school's students of the industry certification in a career and professional academy;²⁵
- ❖ Postsecondary readiness of the school's students, as measured by the SAT, ACT, or the Common Placement Test;²⁶
- ❖ Performance of the school's students on statewide standardized EOC assessments approved by the commissioner, that are administered, for example, in AP, IB, and AICE courses²⁷ and on EOCs in English/Language Arts II, Algebra II, Chemistry, Physics, Earth/Space Science/ U.S. History, and World History if and when those EOCs are developed and administered; and
- ❖ Growth or decline in these components.²⁸

In addition, beginning with the 2009-10 academic year, a high school may not receive an "A" unless its at-risk students (scoring at achievement level 1 or 2 in reading and mathematics on the grade 8 FCAT) make adequate progress.²⁹ High schools are eligible for ten bonus points, added to their total school grade points, if at least 50 percent of 11th and 12th grade students retaking the reading and mathematics grade 10 FCAT pass.³⁰

²³ Section 1008.34, F.S., *as amended by* s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. Rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C. (Implementation of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability) has not yet been amended to reflect statutory changes made by chs. 2010-22 and 2010-48 (Middle School Civics), L.O.F.

²⁴ See ss. 1007.27 and 1007.271, F.S. (articulated acceleration mechanisms, dual enrollment); College Board, *Advanced Placement Program*, <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html> (last visited July 27, 2010); International Baccalaureate, <http://www.ibo.org> (last visited July 27, 2010); University of Cambridge, *International Examinations, Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Diploma*, <http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/aice> (last visited July 27, 2010).

²⁵ See s. 1003.493, F.S.

²⁶ See s. 1008.30, F.S. (common placement test assesses the basic computation and communication skills of students who intend to enter a degree program at any public postsecondary educational institution); *College Board, SAT*, <http://www.collegeboard.com/home> (last visited July 27, 2010); ACT, Inc., *The ACT Test*, <http://www.act.org/aap> (last visited July 27, 2010).

²⁷ To date, no such assessments have been approved.

²⁸ Section 1008.34(3)(b)2. and (c)4., F.S., *as amended by* s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

²⁹ Section 1008.34(3), F.S., *as amended by* s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. (flush-left provisions at the end of the subsection).

³⁰ Rule 6A-1.09981(8)(d), F.A.C. This rule has not yet been amended to reflect the elimination of grade 10 FCAT Mathematics in the 2011-12 academic year.

Which students' FCAT scores are counted toward a school's grade?

The FCAT scores of students in a standard curriculum, including speech impaired, gifted, hospital homebound, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for more than 2 years, are included in school grade calculations.³¹ All students, regardless of disability³² or limited English proficiency classification, with assessment scores in reading and mathematics in both the current year and the previous are included in the learning gains components of school grades, but are excluded from the achievement score components in reading, mathematics, science, and writing.³³

Which schools are graded?

All public schools, including charter schools, which have at least 30 students with valid FCAT scores in reading for the current and prior years and at least 30 students with valid FCAT scores in mathematics for the current and prior years are assigned a school grade.³⁴ Department of Juvenile Justice schools are not graded, and alternative schools that provide dropout prevention and academic intervention services have the option of earning a school grade or a school improvement rating. If an alternative school chooses to receive a school improvement rating, the performance of the students at the alternative school are included in the rating and the school grade of the students' home school.³⁵

May a school earn a high grade by focusing only on its highest achieving students?

No. A school's grade is based upon how well all of the school's eligible students score on the statewide, standardized assessments³⁶ and whether the school's lowest 25 percent of students make adequate progress in reading and mathematics.³⁷ Thus, to achieve a higher grade, a school must also focus on improving the scores of its lowest performing students.

What are school improvement ratings?

School improvement ratings are indicators of whether an alternative school's performance has improved, remained the same, or declined compared to the prior year based on student statewide,

³¹ Rule 6A-1.09981(3)(a), F.A.C.

³² Students with disabilities who are required to take the FCAT do not include students whose individual education plan (IEP) team determines that the FCAT is inappropriate. Sections 1008.22(3)(c)8. and 1008.25(4)(a), F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; rule 6A-1.0943(1)(a), F.A.C.

³³ See rule 6A-1.09981(3)(b), F.A.C.; see also English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Fact Sheets.

³⁴ Section 1008.34(3)(a)1., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; rule 6A-1.09981(4), F.A.C.

³⁵ Section 1008.34(3)(a)2. and (c)3., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

³⁶ For high school students, a determination of progress in mathematics will include their performance on end-of-course (EOC) assessments in Algebra 1 and Geometry.

³⁷ Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.a. and c., and (c)1. and 2., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

standardized assessment scores.³⁸ An alternative school that earns a school improvement rating receives one of the following:

- ❖ “Improving” – schools with students making more academic progress than when served in their home schools;
- ❖ “Maintaining” – schools with students making progress equivalent to academic progress made when served in their home schools; or
- ❖ “Declining” – schools with students making less academic progress than when served in their home schools.³⁹

Are there rewards for schools earning high grades?

Yes. Under the Florida School Recognition Program, a school is eligible for recognition if it:

- ❖ Earns a school grade of “A”;
- ❖ Improves at least one letter grade; or
- ❖ Improves two or more letter grades and maintains the improved grade the following school year.⁴⁰

Alternative schools maintaining an “Improving” rating or improving at least one level are also eligible for recognition.⁴¹ Eligible schools in FY 2010-11 may receive financial awards of up to \$75 per student.⁴² An ungraded school serving one or more grades K to 3 can qualify for an award if the school sends at least 60% of its matriculating students to a graded school that itself qualifies for School Recognition.⁴⁴

In addition, if a school district is classified as academically high performing, then that district is exempt from certain provisions in chapters 1000-1013,⁴³ and applicable implementing rules, which pertain to school districts provided the district continues to meet all eligibility criteria.⁴⁴

What assistance is available for “D” and “F” schools?

Supplemental Academic Instruction. For FY 2010-11, the Legislature appropriated \$639,315,534 to school districts for “Supplemental Academic Instruction” (SAI).⁴⁵ The primary purpose of SAI funding is to provide supplemental intensive instruction, including summer school and intensive English immersion instruction, for students in grades 3 and 10 who scored at achievement level 1 in FCAT Reading or FCAT Mathematics.⁴⁶ Supplemental instruction strategies may include modified curriculum, reading instruction, after-school instruction, tutoring, mentoring, class-size reduction, extended school year, intensive skills development in

³⁸ Section 1008.341(2), F.S., *as amended by* s. 12, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; *see also* rule 6A-1.099822, F.A.C.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Section 1008.36(2), F.S.; *see* School Recognition Fact Sheet.

⁴¹ Section 1008.341(2), F.S. (flush-left provisions at the end of the subsection).

⁴² Specific Appropriation 8, s. 1, ch. 2010-152, L.O.F.

⁴⁴ Section 1008.34(3)(a)3., F.S.

⁴³ Chapters 1000 through 1013 are known as the “Florida K-20 Education Code.” Section 1000.01(1), F.S.

⁴⁴ Section 1003.621, F.S. Certain exceptions apply. *Id.*

⁴⁵ Specific Appropriation 78, s. 2, ch. 2010-152, L.O.F.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

summer school, and other methods for improving student achievement. School districts must prioritize the use of SAI appropriations, to the extent possible, for the improvement of student performance in “D” and “F” schools.⁴⁷

School Improvement Plans. District school boards are required to annually approve and require implementation of a school improvement plan for each school in the district.⁴⁸ School districts must provide funds to schools for developing and implementing school improvement plans.⁴⁹

Additional State Assistance. The Department of Education (DOE) trains a cadre of state and district educators to serve as facilitators for school improvement.⁵⁰ The facilitators assist schools and districts in conducting needs assessments and developing and implementing school improvement plans.⁵¹ Upon request, DOE provides technical assistance and training to any school, school advisory council, district, or district school board for conducting needs assessments, developing and implementing school improvement plans, developing and implementing assistance and intervention plans, or implementing other components of school improvement and accountability. Priority for these services is given to “D” and “F” schools and school districts in rural counties.⁵²

In addition, DOE is directed to give priority to “D” and “F” schools by providing school improvement assistance and resources.⁵³ For example, the Commissioner of Education is authorized to give preference to “D” and “F” schools in awarding federal and state grants designed to improve student achievement.⁵⁴

How do parents learn about school grades?

DOE annually publishes school grades and school improvement ratings.⁵⁵ To assist parents in understanding school grades, the department issues an easy-to-read report card for each school, which is provided to each parent and published on DOE’s website.⁵⁶

How many schools earned each letter grade?⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Sections 1011.62(1)(f)2., and 1001.42(18)(c)4., F.S.

⁴⁸ Section 1001.42(18)(a), F.S.

⁴⁹ Section 1001.42(18)(f), F.S.

⁵⁰ Section 1008.345(6)(a), F.S.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² Section 1008.345(6)(b), F.S.

⁵³ Rule 6A-1.09981(11)(b), F.A.C.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ Sections 1008.34(5) and 1008.341(5), F.S.

⁵⁶ *Id.*; see Florida Department of Education, *Florida School Grades*, <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org> (last visited Aug. 31, 2010).

⁵⁷ *2009-2010 School Grades*, *supra* note 1.

Year	A	B	C	D	F
1998-99	202	313	1,230	601	76
1999-00	579	266	1,165	397	4
2000-01	592	412	1,122	307	0
2001-02	894	553	725	185	64
2002-03	1,242	567	536	138	35
2003-04	1,262	540	615	184	49
2004-05	1,255	589	619	230	78
2005-06	1,467	610	570	122	21
2006-07	1,483	469	587	216	83
2007-08	1,583	542	565	154	45
2008-09	1,822	495	420	173	44
2009-10 ⁵⁸	1,529	671	554	154	55

Where can I get additional information?**Florida Department of Education**

Bureau of Research and Evaluation
(850) 245-0411
<http://www.fldoe.org/evaluation>

Florida Department of Education

Office of Assessment and School Performance
(850) 245-0513
<http://www.fldoe.org/asp>

Florida Department of Education

Bureau of School Improvement
(850) 245-0426
<http://www.flbsi.org>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee
(850) 488-7451
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

Florida House of Representatives

Appropriations Committee
(850) 488-6204
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

⁵⁸ 2009-10 School Grades, *supra* note 1, at 10; Florida Department of Education, *Florida School Grades for High Schools*, Dec. 2010, at 11, available at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/0910/HighSchoolGradesPressPacket.pdf>.

