

Anticipated Questions & Answers

The new Maryland Report Card website is much different from the former site. The following Question and Answer guide may be useful in providing further insight into the exciting updates that have taken place.

Q: Why do we have the Maryland Report Card website and School Report Cards? Why now?

The School Report Cards provide an easily understandable way to report the performance and progress of Maryland schools and districts on the state's new accountability system. They can be found on the Maryland Report Card website (MdReportCard.org), along with even more information about each school. Together, they allow for transparent, open, and data-driven dialogue between educators, parents, students, and community stakeholders on how well each school is serving its students. The redesign reflects the changes to Maryland's accountability system made in response to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, which was signed into law in 2016. The U.S. Department of Education approved Maryland's plan in early 2018.

Q: What is my school's "final score"?

Each school's "final score" is the result of its performance on the entire accountability system. The system contains a number of components, including measurements of academic performance and school quality. For each component, a school can earn points based on the way that the school is achieving in that area. The School Report Card presents each school's "final score" in three ways. First, the "total earned points percent" is the total number of points earned by the school, divided by the total possible points. For example, a school that earned 55 points out of a possible 85 would receive a "total earned points percent" of 55/85 or 65%. Second, a school will get a "star rating," which is a convenient way of expressing the "total earned points percent." A school that earned 65% of its possible points would have four stars. Third, a school will be given a percentile rank, which describes how that school performed in comparison to other schools. For example, an elementary school in the 80th percentile means the school performed equal to or higher than 80 percent of other Maryland elementary schools on the indicators in the school accountability system.

Q: What does the final score mean?

The final score will tell you how a school is performing on the Maryland accountability system. It should spark conversation and help educators and others search for opportunities for improvement. The percentile rank tells you how the school is doing in comparison to others in the state, and the total earned points percent and star rating show performance on an "absolute" scale. Starting next year, you can also look at the final score over time to track a school's progress. While the final score is a simple way to look at how a school is doing on the accountability system, it's only one part of the picture of school quality. First, the Maryland Report Card website (MdReportCard.org) has even more details about school performance, including detailed breakdowns of the components of the accountability system. Second, there are many factors that influence the quality of a school that are not captured by the Report Card. Not only should one look at all the available data to determine how a school fared, but also at other aspects of the school that are important to the school community but not captured in the data.

Q: Does a poor star rating mean my school is bad?

There are many factors that influence the quality of a school. The star rating is a snapshot of how a school or school system performed during the previous year on a handful of factors. The grades are to be used to identify areas that are performing strongly or areas that are in need of improvement.

For example in, <Name of System/School> we are <insert programs you have to affect student achievement>.

Q: What are the components of the accountability system? How can a school earn points?

The accountability system has two parts: academic indicators, which make up 65 possible points in the system, and measures of school quality and student success, which are 35 possible points. For elementary and middle schools, the academic indicators are:

- **Academic Achievement:** A combination of the percent of students scoring “proficient” or higher on state standardized tests in math and English Language Arts, and the average Performance Level of students on state standardized tests.
- **Academic Progress:** A combination of (1) how each student’s performance has grown compared to previous years on state standardized tests in English Language Arts and math, and (2) the percent of fifth or eighth grade students earning credit in core coursework. (In upcoming years, this indicator will also include student performance on state science and social studies tests.)
- **Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency:** The percentage of a school’s English language learner population who are on track toward achieving proficiency in the English language.

The measures of school quality and student success are the percent of students at the school who (1) are not chronically absent, and (2) enrolled in a well-rounded curriculum. (In upcoming years, this indicator will also include a school climate survey.)

At the high school level, the academic indicators are:

- **Academic Achievement:** A combination of the percent of students scoring “proficient” or higher on state standardized tests in math and English Language Arts, and the average Performance Level of students on state standardized tests.
- **Graduation Rate:** The percent of students who earn a Maryland High School Diploma.
- **Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency:** The percent of a school’s English language learner population who are on track toward achieving proficiency in the English language.
- **Readiness for Postsecondary Success:** The percent of students who (1) at ninth grade have earned at least four credits in core academic coursework, and (2) upon graduation the percent of students meeting a variety of standards beyond their required coursework.

The measures of school quality and student success are the percent of students at the school who (1) are not chronically absent, and (2) upon graduation have participated in a variety of learning opportunities beyond their required core academic coursework. In upcoming years, this indicator will also include a school climate survey.

A school earns points on the component of the accountability system based on its performance in each area.

Q: Why did my school not receive a final score, percentile rank, or star rating?

To receive a final score, a school must have 45 or more possible points. Some schools may not have possible points for every measure or indicator. (For example, if a school does not have at least ten English language learner students, then the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator is not included for that school. There would be no possible points for this indicator.) For schools with fewer than 45 possible points, data for the measures and indicators that do apply will still be reported. However, the school will not receive a final score, in any of its forms (total earned points percent, stars, or percentile rank).

Q: How do other states report school performance?

The Every Student Succeeds Act requires states to, at the minimum, report school performance for each of the indicators. However, the majority of states (including Maryland) are reporting “final scores” as well. Most have systems similar to Maryland, with a combination of some type of summative score (in our case, the total earned points percent) and a rating system (in our case, the stars).

Q: How do we explain differences between a school’s score on the Maryland Report Card and other third-party evaluations?

Third-party evaluations (such as GreatSchools or SchoolDigger) are not based on the Maryland accountability system. Some use a simple user survey, while others choose a small number of factors like student test scores. In comparison, the Maryland accountability system measures school performance using a variety of ways, and presents the information in the same way for all schools across the state.

Q: Why does the report card include groups of students by race/ethnicity, and those receiving special services?

Federal law requires that we report performance of all students as a group, and that we break out the performance of specific groups of students. Student group performance is critical information for schools, teachers, parents and students that helps ensure every student’s educational needs are met. There are seven race/ethnicity student groups: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino of Any Race, White, and Two or More Races. There are three groups of students receiving special services: Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learner, and Students with Disabilities.

Q: How can I use the School Report Card and Maryland Report Card website to better understand how my school is doing?

The Report Card is the most comprehensive collection of public school data that Maryland has collected and made available in one place. The School Report Card is an easy-to-use overview of school performance. The website is interactive and detailed. Together, they give both accessible and comprehensive information about school performance. For more tips and specifics, see the “How to Use Maryland School Report Card Data to Support and Improve Schools” section of this toolkit.

Q: How can we use the Report Card to improve our school?

The Maryland Report Card can be used to highlight strengths and to identify those areas in which improvement is needed. This is essential to developing a plan for improvement. For more tips and specifics, see the “How to Use Maryland School Report Card Data to Support and Improve Schools” section of this toolkit.

Q: Where can I find more information?

Additional data and details about the factors used to determine final scores are available on the Maryland State Department of Education website, MarylandPublicSchools.org and Maryland Report Card website, MdReportCard.org.