

February 27, 2017

State Board President Reginald Ballantyne
State Board of Education Members

Mr. President and Members,

Designing the A-F school rating system has required hundreds of hours of dedicated work, discussion, debate, and statistical modeling. The undersigned entities are grateful to the commitment from the Board, Ad Hoc members, Department and Board staff, impacted entities, and the public. This work has helped to isolate issues that must be resolved to develop a formula that is rigorous yet fair.

State statute requires the A-F rating system measure the *impact* of a school; we believe this has not been fully realized in the work to date. Though we understand the good intentions, the Conceptual Framework and the design of the indicators within the Framework have turned out to be a limiting factor in reaching consensus and in developing a formula that recognizes *impact of a school* on the students in its charge.

As shared at the Ad Hoc meeting on February 22, 2017 many Arizona organizations - including the statewide education community, business community and members of the not-for-profit-community - are concerned with the A-F Conceptual Framework and some of the specific methodologies being considered. **Given these concerns, we, the undersigned, cannot support the A-F Conceptual Framework at this time.**

This is due in no small part to our collective belief that the data and information exist to design a model that can be universally accepted, but has yet to be fully considered by the Ad Hoc or the Board. Specifically, we recommend the following:

1. Reconsider the current proposed weighting of indicators for K-8 and high school. A clear and accurate view of the impact of schools requires a new way of thinking of outcome data. Proficiency and growth are the building blocks of a strong A-F system, but how they work together has not been fully explored by the Ad Hoc or the Board due to the limitation of the framework.
2. Provide more flexibility to the technical working group to model additional scenarios and share their impact data at the school level to see how schools that are successful with students will fare. We recommend sharing these scenarios by the technical working group with the public during the public comment period or with Ad Hoc members.
3. Consider alternative scenarios and methodologies that were not contemplated in the Board's original Conceptual Framework. We jointly ask the Board to allow the technical working group to develop, and forward to the Board for consideration, what we refer to as the *School Impact Framework*. The essential purpose of the School Impact Framework is as follows:
 - To ensure the letter grade reflect the impact of the school, not the zip code of its students; it is critical that schools growing students academically at a high level are rewarded, not punished.
 - To ensure that schools serving large numbers of students who start school below grade level, but rapidly catch up to proficiency, receive maximum credit. Otherwise, the A-F system will always discriminate against schools closing the Achievement Gap and give them less credit for their work than schools whose students show up *already* at grade level.

- To ensure that schools serving large numbers of students who start the year at grade level keep them there *and* grow their learning beyond proficiency while recognizing their window for individual growth may be smaller.
- To ensure that schools with students who fall behind or who achieve little to no growth are quickly identified in the A-F Rating System.
- To ensure that the high school model encourages college and career-readiness activities for all students according to the student's own preference, and does not discriminate against any high school, i.e., small, rural or magnet/choice.

This inclusive approach allows the collaborative work to date to go to the public, but in combination with other options that will have strong support in our communities. Thank you for your ongoing support of comprehensive input and dialogue on our A-F rating system.

Sincerely,

A for Arizona
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Arizona Charter Schools Association
Arizona School Administrators
Arizona School Boards Association
Center for the Future of Arizona
Stand for Children