



WINFREE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS

Success tomorrow starts today...

Date: January 6, 2017
To: ALL STAFF
From: Superintendent, Brandy Schott
Subject: *A-F Accountability System – REPEAL*

Internal Memorandum

Dear Staff,

The Texas Education Agency will release a set of provisional ratings today, based on the new A–F accountability system, as passed by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015. This new system is based on pre-determined formulas in each of the 5 domains, which manipulate STAAR test results to assign a performance rating. This performance rating consists of letter grades – A, B, C, D or F in each domain as well as for overall performance of the campus or district. Videos providing an overview of the [A-F system](#) and the individual [domains](#) are available

Texas Education Commissioner, Mike Morath, states of this new A–F accountability system, “it is very much a work-in-progress report”. Final rules for this new system are set to be adopted in the spring 2018, with the first official A–F results released in August 2018. No cumulative grade will be given to campuses and districts in the provisional report, and Morath further states, “the domain grades should not be used to predict an overall letter grade”.

This “work-in-progress report”, or, “what if” report will be released today, eight months before this new accountability rating system was legally scheduled to begin, regardless of the work and development still left to be completed before spring 2018.

Opponents of this new A-F rating system argue that a “one-size fits all” rating is counterproductive to the service of thousands of educators in Texas supporting a multitude of educational differences. The question of equity comes in to play when considering that these letter grades are given based on the scores of an already flawed assessment system.

Research of other states and systems, which have applied letter grades to schools, demonstrates that the grades will systematically align with the level of wealth and poverty of the districts. So those schools with the highest poverty levels may suffer by receiving the lowest grades, while those schools with a higher economic status will continue receiving the highest grades. This inequitable methodology minimalizes the educational gaps that occur on campuses and within districts that serve a high number of economically disadvantaged children.

Winfrey Academy Charter Schools

As a dropout recovery charter school system supporting a population of 97.1% at-risk, and 62.77% economically disadvantaged, we join the consensus of more than 150 Texas school boards who oppose this new A-F accountability system, which is based predominantly on the results of the notably deficient STAAR test. ***The preliminary “what if” report and ratings for Winfree Academy Charter Schools will represent the performance of only 23% of all learners served during the 2015-16 school year.*** While these will not be official ratings, the letter grades given to Winfree Academy will discredit the progress we are making to graduate an underserved population of at-promise learners.

These unofficial ratings will not consider the unique nature of our mission, nor account for the support programs and services we provide to learners who struggle with addiction, who may be homeless, or who are pregnant or parents. Moreover, they do not paint an accurate picture of the progress made by our learners who come to us so significantly behind that it takes lengths of time to close pre-existing academic gaps.

While we know that no accountability system will ever accurately account for the hard work and achievements of the specialized population that we serve, the proposed A-F system is not the answer to communicate school and learner progress to our communities. Please take a few moments to review the [videos](#) regarding the A-F system, our current school accountability ratings, and our proposed A-F ratings attached below.

As the 85th legislative session opens next week, we must take our concerns regarding this arbitrary assignment of a letter grade to define the performance of our system, to our local legislators and SPEAK OUT. Elected officials and their staffers are already in Austin and available to take your comments. To find out who represents you, visit the [Texas Legislature website](#). Using your home address, this link will generate the names and contact information for your state senator and representative. Additionally, links to their personal legislative pages are provided which will provide you with their e-mail addresses. Phone calls are a good first line of communication and emails are a great follow-up as your voice can be preserved for posterity.

The distinguished Margaret Mead said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”* This holds true for the need of the Texas Legislature for the 85th session to hear the voices of our exemplary staff in an outcry against this unfitting, inconsistent, and inequitable rating system. We must urge them to repeal A-F, and create a system that considers the diverse make-up of not only all learners in Texas, but also the unique and disparate make up of Texas public school systems and districts.

I appeal to your purpose and choice for working with at-risk learners at Winfree Academy Charter Schools, and ask that you not allow this assignment to define your work, nor define the learners we serve, but instead to ignite a spark of support for the exclusive mission of our schools to your local legislator(s). I am so proud of the work we have accomplished this year for the almost 2,000 learners we have served, and I refuse to allow the performance from a broken system of 23% of our population to be used to label the tireless work of our educators every day, nor the future of Winfree Academy Charter Schools.

Join me.

Repeal A-F

Brandy Schott
Superintendent

**2015-2016 Accountability Ratings
(Actual)**

	Accountability Rating	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Index 4
		Score	Score	Score	Score
Winfree Academy Charter Schools	Met Alternative Standard	47	10	22	86
Winfree Academy – Irving	Met Alternative Standard	42	21	22	80
Winfree Academy – Lewisville	Met Alternative Standard	59	---	29	93
Winfree Academy – Richardson	Met Alternative Standard	48	13	27	92
Winfree Academy – Grand Prairie	Met Alternative Standard	47	14	27	89
Winfree Academy – North Richland Hills	Met Alternative Standard	56	25	23	81
Winfree Academy - Dallas	Improvement Required	32	---	17	82

**2015-16 A-F RATINGS
(Proposed)**

	Domain I		Domain II		Domain III		Domain IV	
	Score	Letter Grade	Score	Letter Grade	Score	Letter Grade	Score	Letter Grade
Winfree Academy Charter Schools	21	C	10	F	-5.6	D	71	B
Winfree Academy – Irving	18	D	21	C	-4.0	D	69	B
Winfree Academy – Lewisville	27	C	---	---	0.1	C	75	A
Winfree Academy – Richardson	23	C	13	D	-2.7	D	77	A
Winfree Academy – Grand Prairie	21	C	14	D	-1.0	C	65	B
Winfree Academy – North Richland Hills	25	C	25	C	-4.1	D	69	B
Winfree Academy - Dallas	12	F	---	---	-10.7	D	75	A