



Floresville Independent School District

Preparing You for a Prosperous Life

December 20, 2016

Dear Floresville ISD Parents and Community,

The state accountability system has been a moving target since the roll out of the STAAR in 2013, with not one year being the same and, unfortunately, there is another change ahead of us. Beginning in August 2018, every school and district in Texas will receive a grade of A, B, C, D, or F based primarily on students' performance on one test, the STAAR. To prepare for the implementation of these ratings, this coming January, the state will issue "mock" A-F ratings based on 2016 testing data to show schools and districts what their grades would be if the ratings were implemented this year.

The primary argument supporting the use of A-F ratings is that it is a simple way to explain school quality. But it isn't simple. Ratings are based on a complex set of rules and calculations, which combine a large number of different measures into a single letter grade that cannot be supported with a simple explanation. For example, campuses could have the same number of students making progress but because the cut scores for A-F are different, one campus could earn an A and another a C. Sixteen other states have implemented an A-F rating system, and there is no evidence that it has improved student or school performance, and, in fact, two states have repealed the law requiring the A-F system. The system is useless for providing feedback that could be used for improvement, and usually aligns with the wealth or poverty of the students in the school. A letter grade based on one test does not tell our community the complete story about our schools or our students.

Even though some may be quick to celebrate or criticize schools based on their A-F ratings, I strongly recommend against that practice. School quality is made up of more than a single letter grade. FISD is committed to being accountable to our parents and community, but the research is clear: A-F school rating systems fail as an indicator of school quality. Because our staff is focused on continuous improvement for every student, we don't support a system of school ratings that doesn't find value in that improvement. Floresville ISD will review the "mock" ratings when we receive them in January, and will reflect on them, along with existing state and local data, to continue the hard but rewarding work we do every day; educating the leaders of tomorrow. After all, a strong, quality public education is critical to our democracy.

As we work together to provide a quality education to FISD students, I felt it was important for you to have information on the A-F system. I encourage you to contact your legislators and ask them to repeal the A-F letter-grade school rating system that was part of House Bill 2804, passed by the Legislature in 2015. We are hopeful that the Legislature will see that no single letter rating will ever be able to adequately capture the actual effort and effectiveness of a school. Senator Zaffirini can be reached at judith.zaffirini@senate.state.tx.us and Representative John Kuempel can be reached at Thomas.Flanders@house.texas.gov.

I want to assure you that the FISD staff is committed to the success of each one of our students and is working tirelessly to ensure they are prepared for a prosperous life. Thank you for your continued support of Floresville ISD students, teachers and staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sherri Bays
Superintendent of Schools