

GPISD statement regarding state-mandated provisional A-F rating system.

Accountability is important.

*Likewise, the Grand Prairie ISD appreciates the concept of public accountability. In fact, we encourage it. But perhaps we should follow the example of our nation's medical schools and adhere to a principle of **primum non nocere** or "**first, do no harm.**" We believe this system could both mislead the public about its schools and, at worst, hurt children.*

A ratings system purporting to hold school districts accountable for the education of our youth should be accurate and meaningful. The proposed A-F rating system is not, and we encourage TEA to revisit and rewrite this system before it becomes final.

*For example, Domain One weights the number of students who passed state assessments, the number of students who achieved a higher score, **AND** the number of students who achieved the equivalent of an "A" on the assessments as mathematically equal. In other words, 33% of that domain's score is based on students who passed, while 66% is based on students who scored at the highest levels. So, theoretically, schools where most if not all students passed state assessments could still receive an "F" or a "D" grade simply because not enough of the student body scored an "A." But passing isn't*

failing, is it? According to this new system it is.

Take another example, Domain Four scores “chronic absenteeism” for elementary and middle schools. Research clearly shows that students coming from poverty and challenging home environments miss school more than those coming from stable, middle-class homes. Home life generally has more to do with attendance than school life. Schools can’t make kids come. Parents have to make kids go. Yet the state, through this system, is punishing schools with bad grades for parental decisions – ironically, not long after weakening truancy laws.

The State of Texas is constitutionally charged with the responsibility to provide for the “support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.” Thus, the government should hold itself accountable, and the government should hold ISDs accountable. But that accountability must also be meaningful. It should reflect starting points, achievement, and progress. It shouldn’t be used to support platform rhetoric of “change.” It shouldn’t be used to punish public schools for parental decisions. And it most certainly shouldn’t be used to reinforce and foster the notions of class-based segregation according to household income.

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