

Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions about the new school report card

1. What is the school report card?

The school report card is a new way of measuring overall performance of individual public schools in Wisconsin. It will be issued each year. It will show which of five accountability ratings the school has achieved based on analysis of student test scores, student growth as measured by year-to-year achievement improvement, and other factors.

2. Why are there so many priority areas?

Accurately measuring a school's performance is a complex task that takes into account as many of the factors influencing student achievement as possible. In addition to comparing students' level of knowledge and academic skills against state academic standards, the card measures year to year student achievement improvement, gaps in achievement among students of various ethnic groups and income levels and students with disabilities, and how likely students are to achieve post-secondary success.

3. What is an accountability score?

Each year, a school's report card will show which of five accountability ratings it has received based on its accountability score. The score is calculated by an analysis of data in the four priority areas and whether or not the school has met three student engagement indicators. The scores range from 0 to 100. The rating areas are: fails to meet expectations (0 to 52.9); meets few expectations (53 to 62.9); meets expectations (63 to 72.9); exceeds expectations (73 to 82.9); and significantly exceeds expectations (83 to 100).

4. What is a student engagement indicator?

These are measures of three key factors that are critical to understanding a school's true performance. The indicators are test participation, or what percentage of all students take an individual test; absenteeism or how many students are there whose absences exceed a level associated with poor academic performance; and dropouts, or how many students drop out of school before graduating.

5. How will this information make my school better?

Because the report card provides so much data on various accountability measures, it will provide valuable insights into a school's weaknesses and strengths and give school administrators, teachers and board members information that can be used for school improvement efforts. It also gives parents and other members of the school community a clear picture of a school's performance.

6. How will this information help my child succeed?

Giving schools this valuable tool for tracking performance and making improvements is part of a comprehensive effort to raise educational standards in Wisconsin and make sure that all students are ready for college and careers in today's rapidly changing global society and economy.

Report Card Vocabulary Guide

Because Wisconsin's new accountability system is so different than what was in place before, there are many new words and definitions to learn. Here is a list of some of the most critical terms to know.

Accountability System – A way to measure student and school performance. In 2012-13, Wisconsin is launching a new accountability system that uses several different kinds of measurements to provide balanced and accurate information about the performance of all public schools in the state. That data is compiled on the school report card.

Accountability Score – A number from 0 to 100 that measures how well an individual school performs based on multiple measures. The score is listed on the annual report card issued for each public school in Wisconsin.

Accountability Rating – One of five ratings that measure overall school performance based on the school's accountability score. The ratings are: fails to meet expectations; meets few expectations; meets expectations; exceeds expectations; and significantly exceeds expectations.

Priority Areas – Four measures of an individual school's annual performance that are used to calculate a base accountability score on the school report card. The areas are: student achievement, student improvement, closing gaps and on-track and postsecondary readiness.

Student Growth – A priority area on the school report card that measures how quickly students are gaining knowledge and skills from year to year.

Closing Gaps – A priority area on the school report card that measures how well a school is doing in reducing the achievement gaps that often separate students from different racial and ethnic groups and ability levels.

On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness – A priority area on the school report card that measures how well a school is doing in preparing its students to succeed in careers and post secondary education.

Student Engagement Indicators – Three factors that influence a school's overall performance. The indicators are test participation, absenteeism and dropouts. They are used to calculate a school's accountability score on the school report card.

Growing Toward Higher Level – The highest level in the student growth area of the school report card that measures how many students are on track to gain at least one performance level over the next three years.

Declining Below Proficient – The lowest level in the student growth area of the school report card that measures how many students are on track to decline to the minimal performance or basic level within the next year.