

Accountability Rating Levels and Labels

The state accountability system developed under House Bill 3 (81st Texas Legislature, 2009) will require a different approach to assigning rating labels because of the following changes.

- The number of rating levels and campus and district accountability rating labels were removed from statute. Although the labels from the previous state accountability system (unacceptable, acceptable, recognized, exemplary) are used as a placeholder in the following discussion, the expectation is that different labels will be used with the new accountability system.
- Acknowledgment of higher performance levels was moved from the basic accountability ratings process to a separate distinction designation program. The distinction designation program was aligned with the ratings process by requiring that the distinction designations be released at the same time as the accountability ratings, elevating the importance of the distinction designations in relation to the basic accountability ratings.
- The performance index framework used to meet the HB 3 accountability requirements is designed to offer multiple views of campus and district performance – student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness.
- In addition to the basic accountability ratings, districts are eligible for one distinction designation, for exemplary or recognized performance. When the accountability system is fully implemented, campuses are eligible for a total of eleven distinction designations, which are listed in the table on the following page.

Policy decisions about the assignment of rating labels must address a range of issues.

- I. Relationship Between Accountability Ratings and Distinction Designations.
- II. Assignment of Rating Labels.
 1. Application of labels to individual indexes as well as overall performance – whether the labels assigned for overall performance can also be applied to performance on each index.
 2. Relationship between accountability rating labels, state sanctions and interventions, and campus improvement planning requirements.
 3. Terminology used to describe performance
 - generic terms (commonly used outside field of education) versus terms associated with education or terms that describe performance in relation to accountability targets
 - symbols versus words
 4. Designation for unacceptable performance that communicates a sense of alarm or conveys a need for improvement.
 5. Relationship between state accountability labels and new federal accountability designations for priority, focus, and reward campuses.

The table on the next page shows the areas of performance that will receive a label under the state accountability system. The following pages provide additional background information, illustrated with examples of accountability labels used currently and recently by other states. This information is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion.

Accountability Ratings and Distinction Designations	Year Label Implemented	
	Campus	District
Overall acceptable and unacceptable performance	2013	2013
Exemplary performance distinction	2014	2014
Recognized performance distinction	2014	2014
Top 25% in student progress distinction	2014	NA
Top 25% in closing achievement gaps distinction	2014	NA
Academic achievement in reading/ELA distinction	2013	NA
Academic achievement in mathematics distinction	2013	NA
Academic achievement in science distinction	2014	NA
Academic achievement in social studies distinction	2014	NA
21 st Century Workforce Development distinction	2014	NA
Fine arts distinction	TBD	NA
Physical education distinction	TBD	NA
Second language acquisition program distinction	TBD	NA

I. Relationship Between Accountability Ratings and Distinction Designations

- *Acceptable/Unacceptable District and Campus Ratings.* To meet state statutory requirements, the accountability system must identify acceptable and unacceptable campuses and districts and describe conditions that trigger state monitoring and interventions.
- *Recognized and Exemplary Ratings.* According to statutory changes made by House Bill 3 (81st Texas Legislature, 2009), the assignment of exemplary and recognized accountability ratings (to be assigned in 2014) can proceed in one of two ways.

- 1) Comprehensive Distinction Designation System. The recognized and exemplary distinction designations can be implemented as part of a comprehensive distinction designation system that also includes up to ten additional campus distinction designations shown on the table on page 2.

Accountability Rating: Districts and Campuses	Distinctions
acceptable	<p style="text-align: center;">Districts: Exemplary Distinction (2014) Recognized Distinction (2014)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Campuses: Exemplary Distinction (2014) Recognized Distinction (2014) Top 25%: Closing Achievement Gaps (2014) Top 25%: Student Progress (2014) Academic Achievement: Reading/ELA Academic Achievement: Mathematics 21st Century Workforce Development (2014) Academic Achievement: Science (2014) Academic Achievement: Social Studies (2014) Fine Arts (TBD) Physical Education (TBD) Second Language Acquisition (TBD)</p>
unacceptable	N/A

Characteristics of this approach:

- The recognized and exemplary distinction designation ratings are implemented as a component of the distinction designation system.
- The distinction designation system is used to discriminate among campuses and districts that meet accountability targets for acceptable performance, rather than using multiple rating levels to discriminate among acceptable campuses and districts.
- The distinction designation system is elevated in importance to a position more equal to the accountability ratings because distinction designations are released on the same date as the ratings and are the only means to discriminate among acceptable campuses and districts.
- Each distinction designation is equivalent to the others. 21st Century Workforce Development carries the same weight as Academic Achievement in Mathematics, for example.
- The criteria for the recognized and exemplary distinction designations can be more focused, e.g. meeting targets on Level III performance in Index 4, because they are part of a comprehensive distinction designation system.

- 2) Comprehensive Rating System. The recognized and exemplary distinction designations can be incorporated into the basic rating system as higher accountability ratings.

Accountability Rating: Districts and Campuses	Distinctions
exemplary	<p style="text-align: center;">Campuses:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Top 25%: Closing Achievement Gaps (2014) Top 25%: Student Progress (2014) Academic Achievement: Reading/ELA Academic Achievement: Mathematics 21st Century Workforce Development (2014) Academic Achievement: Science (2014) Academic Achievement: Social Studies (2014) Fine Arts (TBD) Physical Education (TBD) Second Language Acquisition (TBD)</p>
recognized	
acceptable	
unacceptable	N/A

Characteristics of this approach:

- The recognized and exemplary distinction designations are implemented as part of the accountability rating system rather than as components of the distinction designation system.
- The basic rating system discriminates among campuses and districts that meet accountability targets for acceptable performance, but the basic rating system is not limited to four rating levels.
- The remaining campus distinction designations are not the primary means of discriminating among acceptable campuses. Consequently the remaining campus distinction designations serve as additional acknowledgments more similar to the former Gold Performance Acknowledgments. Although they are released on the same date as the ratings, they are secondary to the ratings.
- The criteria for the recognized and exemplary distinction designation ratings may need to be based on a broader set of indicators, e.g. meeting targets on all four performance indexes, because they are the primary means of discriminating among districts and campuses that meet accountability targets for acceptable performance.

Note that additional options are possible for the acceptable ratings assigned to campuses and districts. The following table illustrates how the Comprehensive Rating System could include additional stratifications of the acceptable rating using the terminology from the state of Colorado that will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

Accountability Rating: Districts and Campuses	Distinctions
exemplary	<p style="text-align: center;">Campuses:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Top 25%: Closing Achievement Gaps (2014) Top 25%: Student Progress (2014) Academic Achievement: Reading/ELA Academic Achievement: Mathematics 21st Century Workforce Development (2014) Academic Achievement: Science (2014) Academic Achievement: Social Studies (2014) Fine Arts (TBD) Physical Education (TBD) Second Language Acquisition (TBD)</p>
recognized	
acceptable: performance plan	
acceptable: improvement plan	
acceptable: priority improvement plan	
unacceptable	N/A

I. Assignment of Rating Labels

1. Application of labels to individual indexes as well as overall performance

- South Carolina assigned two rating labels, one for performance and one for growth, using the same labels:

PERFORMANCE	GROWTH
Excellent	Excellent
Good	Good
Average	Average
Below Average	Below Average
At Risk	At Risk

- Louisiana assigned two rating labels, one for performance and one for growth, using different labels:

PERFORMANCE	GROWTH
Five Stars	Exemplary Academic Growth
Four Stars	Recognized Academic Growth
Three Stars	Minimal Academic Growth
Two Stars	No Growth
One Star	School in Decline
Academically Unacceptable	

- Ohio used a system that evaluated performance across multiple components to assign a single label that did not apply to the separate components but only to overall performance. The initial designation was based on meeting performance targets on either the first or second component of the system. That initial designation could be raised or lowered based on performance on the third [AYP] and fourth component.

Excellent with Distinction [meet performance targets for either component one or component two, and component three]
Excellent
Effective
Continuous Improvement
Academic Watch
Academic Emergency [miss performance targets for all four components]

2. Relationship between accountability rating labels, state sanctions and interventions, and campus improvement planning requirements

- Example of Colorado labels that describe the type of campus plan the school must produce for the following school year:

Performance Plan
Improvement Plan
Priority Improvement Plan
Turnaround Plan
Restructuring

- Example of former Texas state accountability labels that do not describe actions but there is a one-to-one correspondence between the labels and action taken by the state or required by the district or campus:

Exemplary
Recognized
Academically Acceptable
Academically Unacceptable (subject to state sanctions and interventions)

- Example of federal AYP system, where there is not a direct relationship between accountability labels and sanctions/interventions. Accountability designations of Meets AYP/Missed AYP are based on current year performance on all indicators but sanctions/interventions are based on multiple consecutive years of poor performance on the same indicator. Consequently, campuses/districts in any stage of intervention could receive

a current year designations of Meets AYP, and campuses/districts could consistently receive the designation Missed AYP but never be subject to interventions.

3. Terminology Used to Describe Performance

- Example of Oregon state accountability labels that describe higher and lower performance in generic terms (terms that are commonly used outside the field of education):
 - Outstanding
 - Satisfactory
 - In Need of Improvement
- Example of Kentucky state accountability generic labels:
 - Distinguished
 - Proficient
 - Progressing
 - Needs Improvement
- Example of Georgia state accountability recognition labels:
 - Platinum
 - Gold
 - Silver
 - Bronze
- Example of letter grades used by Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee:
 - A
 - B
 - C
 - D
 - F
- Example of North Carolina labels that include the word “schools”:
 - Honor Schools of Excellence
 - Schools of Excellence
 - Schools of Distinction
 - Schools of Progress
 - Priority Schools
 - Low Performing Schools
- Example of Delaware labels that include the word “academic”:
 - Superior
 - Commendable
 - Academic Review
 - Academic Progress
 - Academic Watch

- Example of Colorado labels assigned to each indicator that describe performance in relation to state accountability targets:
 - Exceeded Expectations
 - Met Expectations
 - Approached Expectations
 - Did Not Meet Expectations
- Example of Connecticut state labels that use another approach to describing performance in relation to state accountability targets:
 - Excelling
 - Progressing
 - Transitioning
 - Review
 - Turnaround
- Louisiana uses symbols instead of words, assigning one to five stars to campuses that meet the acceptable performance standard

Five Stars	*****
Four Stars	****
Three Stars	***
Two Stars	**
One Star	*
Academically Unacceptable	

4. Labels for unacceptable performance can communicate a sense of alarm or a need for improvement.
- F, Failing, Academic Emergency
 - Academically Unacceptable, School in Decline
 - Academic Watch, At Risk, Low Performing
 - Did Not Meet Expectations
 - Priority Schools, Turnaround
 - Needs Improvement, In Need of Improvement

5. Relationship between state accountability labels and new federal accountability designations for priority, focus, and reward schools.

- Some states use federal Title I accountability labels for all campuses under state accountability system. States receiving ESEA flexibility waivers from USDE are required to assign specific labels to Title I campuses. Some states use the same labels for non-Title I campuses.

Reward

[no label for campuses that are not designated for either rewards or interventions]

Focus

Priority

- Example of New York labels that describe state action or requirements and incorporate federal ESEA waiver labels:

Reward

Recognition

In Good Standing

Local Assistance Plan

Focus

Priority

- Example of Florida state labels that align with federal designations:

STATE

FEDERAL

A

Reward Schools

B

C

D

Focus Schools

F

Priority Schools