



School Accountability and Performance Grades

Key Takeaways

2019



SPEAKER

✉ **Dr. Christy Hovanetz**, Senior Policy Fellow, ExcelinEd

PANELISTS

✉ **Dr. Janet Mason**, 2018 North Carolina Superintendent of the Year

✉ **Freebird McKinney**, 2018 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Carolina Teacher of the Year

✉ **Tabari Wallace**, 2018 Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Statewide school accountability systems, which are required by federal law, serve two main functions: to define and measure what matters, and to communicate information about schools to parents and policymakers.
- **Forty-five states** have adopted an accountability system that includes a summative rating, which is a single rating for a school based on the measures in the system.
 - Fifteen of those 45 states, including North Carolina, **use an A-F ranking system** for their summative rating.
- Dr. Hovanetz noted that North Carolina's summative rating system is rigorous and has an appropriate focus on student learning outcomes.
- Panelists emphasized the importance of **framing communication about school ratings** in a positive way in order to avoid stigmatizing schools in need of improvement.
 - Negative perceptions of a school's rating can affect families' decisions about whether they want to live in the surrounding community, impacting the ability of a community to attract businesses and workers.
 - School ratings can also have detrimental effects on the self-confidence of the students attending that school.
- The weighted balance of growth metrics versus proficiency metrics in North Carolina's accountability system was brought up by panelists, who suggested that **growth could be weighted more heavily**.
- Panelists also urged legislators to consider proposals that would assign two separate summative rating scores to each school – one for student achievement, and another for student growth.
- Regarding equitable distribution of teachers within districts, panelists offered that superintendent-directed teacher placement (rather than each principal hiring their own staff) can ensure that **high-need schools have high-performing teachers**.

ACTION STEPS

- Consider ways in which summative ratings can be shared and reported that includes sufficient context, highlighting promising practices.
- Consider making the following changes to the state's school accountability system:
 - Use a criterion-based growth measure instead of a normative growth model – this change would compare the progress of an individual student to a standard instead of to their peers.
 - Add an equity growth metric that measures growth of the lowest-performing 25 percent of students.

KEY RESOURCES

- **[School Accountability: Reforming Education Starting with A, B, C, D, and F School Letter Grades](#)** – this slide deck was used by Dr. Hovanetz during her remarks and contains information on North Carolina's accountability system as well as best practices from other states and policy recommendations.
- The Hunt Institute **[School Accountability and Performance Grades Issue Brief](#)**.