**Texas School Public Relations Association
A-F Rankings Talking Points**

* House Bill 2804, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015, made significant changes to the state public school accountability system, including the creation of A-F rating labels for district and campus performance.

	+ These labels won’t be formally applied to campuses until the 2017-2018 school year, but the education commissioner [must submit a report to the Legislature by Jan. 1, 2017](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Indicators_for_A-F_Academic_Accountability_System/), showing what grade each district and campus would have received for the first four indicator domains, as well as correlations between those ratings and the number of students reported as economically disadvantaged or English-language learners.
* The 2018 ratings will be in the form of A-F letter grades assigned for each district and campus in five domains, which include:
	+ I: Meeting standards at satisfactory and college readiness levels on STAAR
	+ II: STAAR annual improvement at satisfactory and college readiness levels
	+ III: Reducing “academic achievement differentials” from different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds; that is, closing the distance to a predetermined target for specific student groups
	+ IV: Academic attainments (other than STAAR) that differ by campus level, including drop out and graduation rates, CTE sequence completion, AP course completion, TSI benchmarks and more for high schools; attendance, dropout rates and high school, college and career preparatory instruction for middle schools; and attendance for elementary schools.
	+ V: Three self-selected categories of the Community and Student Engagement ratings.
* The “what if?” ratings shared with legislators in January 2017 are based on incomplete data in Domain IV and do not include Domain V at all. The domain-level ratings are based on data from the 2015-2016 school year, and the state is **not** preparing an overall rating for each school or district – although the law requires overall ratings in 2018. For a full list of differences between the indicator data used to prepare the “what if?” domain ratings and the actual 2017-2018 ratings, please [visit TEA’s website to download a PDF chart of the indicators by clicking the link at the bottom of the page.](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Indicators_for_A-F_Academic_Accountability_System/)
* Like all the other measures used to evaluate schools, the A-F ratings offer only a portion of the total picture of a school or district. The various domains are weighted as follows in the original HB 2804:
	+ 55 percent of the A-F rating will be based on the first three domains, which are drawn from the results on STAAR exams and recognized substitutes for STAAR end-of-course tests.
	+ 35 percent will be based on post-secondary readiness measures represented by Domain IV; cohort graduation rates (when applicable) account for 10 percent of the final rating.
	+ 10 percent will be based on the locally determined engagement ratings in Domain V.
* [TASA](http://www.tasanet.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=925), [Raise Your Hand Texas](http://blog.chron.com/chronopinion/2015/05/another-voice-rating-performance-or-punishing-poverty/), and [TCTA](https://tcta.org/politics_government/updates_from_the_capitol/14003-tcta_opposes_major_bills_in_senate_education) have all spoken out against A-F ratings, citing the incomplete picture represented and the high correlation between a school or district’s ratings and poverty levels.
	+ In North Carolina, to take one example, nearly 90 percent of schools rated “A” had fewer than 50 percent of their students living in poverty, while 98 percent of “D”-rated campuses and 100 percent of those who received an “F” had poverty levels greater than 50 percent. The TASA link above has more examples from other states.

*TSPRA would like to thank Maria Whitsett at Moak, Casey & Associates for reviewing these talking points.*