

Introduction

In 2015, state legislation—[2015 Wisconsin Act 55](#) (the biennial budget)—altered the accountability landscape for Wisconsin schools. This document addresses frequently asked questions (FAQs) about Wisconsin accountability, with specific emphasis on School and District Report Cards and their significant changes for the 2015-16 school year. There were several statutorily-required changes to the 2015-16 report cards – new assessments, variable growth weighting, and use of value-added for growth calculations. These requirements may, for some districts and schools, result in significant changes in report card scores from prior years.

Choice School Report Cards

Will choice schools receive a School Report Card for 2015-16?

Yes. Per state law (2015 Act 55), DPI will produce annual Choice Pupil Report Cards for private schools with at least 20 students participating in the [choice program](#). Both the Public School Report Cards and the Choice Pupil Report Cards will report the same data based on the exact same calculations. However, because 2015-16 is the first time that choice schools have reported accountability data to DPI, there will be some differences in which data are available this year.

How are choice school report cards similar to or different than public school report cards?

Choice schools are participating in a new data collection system for the first time in 2015-16. As a result, we have only a single year of data for choice students, impacting the report cards which rely on multiple years of data. Given these data limitations and the core value of treating all schools the same, the Choice Pupil Report Cards for 2015-16 will not report:

- Priority area or overall scores nor ratings. This is because calculations require at least two years of assessment data. All choice schools will be “Not Rated” for their first year of report cards.
- Attendance or absenteeism rates because those rates lag by one year for public schools and DPI does not have student-level attendance data for 2014-15 from choice schools.
- Graduation rates because these rates require four years of data to calculate.

Do choice schools have the option to receive a School Report Card for all students in the private school?

Per state law, all choice schools with at least 20 voucher students will receive a Choice Pupil Report Card. These schools also have the option to report data for all students in the school. As such, report cards for private schools participating in a choice program will reflect one of two scenarios:

- a) If the school submits data for only those students attending under the choice program, the school’s report card will be based solely on those students – the *Choice Pupil Report Card*.
- b) If the school submits data for all students at the school (those attending under the choice program and those attending privately), the school will receive two report cards: a *Choice Pupil Report Card*—which includes only choice students—and a *Private School Report Card*—which includes all

students in the private school. DPI anticipates producing the first Private School Report Cards following the 2016-17 school year, when DPI should have sufficient (at least two) years of data.

In 2015-16, only Choice Pupil Report Cards will be produced and the percentage of choice students enrolled in the school will not be available.

Variable Weighting for Poverty

How are the priority areas weighted for poverty?

As of the 2015-16 report cards, a new weighting formula will be in effect, which adjusts the weighting of the Student Achievement and Student Growth priority areas to account for the percentage of economically disadvantaged (ECD) students in the school or district. Generally, the higher the proportion of ECD students, the greater the weight assigned to Growth and the lesser to Achievement, and vice versa.

You can see how the variable weighting adjusts based on the percent ECD by using the weighting calculator located here (https://yc-dpi.shinyapps.io/Variable_ECD_Weighting/).

What effect will variable weighting have on my school's score?

There are a variety of reasons why report card scores may change, but generally speaking, schools with ECD rates above 35% that have higher growth than achievement scores will likely have higher overall scores, compared to when calculations weighted growth and achievement equally. Schools with ECD above 35% that have higher achievement scores than growth scores will likely see a lower overall score, compared to when calculations weighted growth and achievement equally.

Student Growth

How has the Student Growth calculation changed?

As of the 2015-16 report cards, the Student Growth Priority Area calculation is based on a value-added model, produced by the Value-Added Research Center (VARC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Student Growth is no longer based on Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), which were calculated from student-level growth scores. Instead, it is now a school-based growth measure based on value-added scores. What remains the same is that regardless of which model used, growth calculations measure how rapidly students are gaining knowledge and skills from year to year, focusing on the pace of improvement in student performance. Specifically, value-added calculations are designed to identify and measure the difference between expected growth and actual growth for a group of students.

How is Student Growth calculated across different state tests?

Multiple years of assessment data are used in the report cards. For 2015-16, this means that Student Growth scores include data from Badger and Forward exams. Value-added models are designed to work with data from different tests; they do not require the same test instrument year-to-year.

State Assessments

Which assessments are used in the report cards?

As in the past, the report cards calculations will include multiple years of data. For the 2015-16 report card, this means test participation and performance data will be included from the following assessments: Forward, Badger, WKCE, ACT plus Writing, DLM, and WAA-SwD.

How are the high school assessments – the ACT, WorkKeys, ACT Aspire – used in the report cards?

Since the ACT plus Writing is now a statewide assessment, it is used in the Student Achievement priority area, and removed from the On-Track priority area. WorkKeys and ACT Aspire results are not factored into the priority area scores in 2015-16.

If a student takes the ACT a second time, and scores better, do you factor their best score or the score from the statewide administration into the report card?

The score obtained from the statewide administration is used. This is the case because report cards reflect performance measured at a point in time and need to be standardized across the state; and DPI does not have access to scores for 11th grade students following the statewide administration.

Test Participation Calculations and Opt-outs

Have the Test Participation calculations changed?

No. The goal for test participation rate remains 100% for all students and each subgroup with at least 20 students. The report cards include two test participation calculations: one is based only on current-year test participation data and the other based on up to three years of data. Schools that fall below a 95% test participation rate for all students or for any subgroup for both the current-year and three-year rate receive a five-point deduction from their overall score. Schools that fall below an 85% test participation rate for all students or for any subgroup for both the current-year and three-year rate receive a ten-point deduction. A student may be exempt from participating in a test for the following two reasons: the student has experienced a medical emergency or the student is a recently arrived English learner (defined as having attended schools in the U.S. for 12 months or less). A student with a medical emergency may be eligible for exclusion from all tests. A recently arrived English learner is exempt from his/her first year English language arts exam only.

Non-tested students, whether or not they are exempt from testing, are not included in any achievement-based calculations. In other words, non-tested students (who are not exempt) don't count "against" points-based proficiency rates, but they do count against participation rates.

How do opt-outs affect test participation calculations?

Students who are excluded from testing due to parental opt-out are treated as having not tested and therefore count against a school and district's test participation rate. As described above, these students have no impact on a school or district's points-based proficiency rates for the year in which they opted-out, but students' scores from prior years as well as attendance and graduation data will continue to be incorporated in report card calculations.

Absenteeism and Attendance Calculations

Do excused absences count against a student's attendance rate?

Report card attendance rates are based upon [ISES](#) data collections. ISES does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. However, students who participate in district-supervised educational services off school grounds (such as field trips) should be counted in actual attendance time. A student who misses school for an excused reason, such as illness, should be considered absent *unless* that student is receiving district-supervised educational services while out of school. The district is responsible for recording and reporting accurate attendance data that conform to state and local laws. For guidance on how to properly code excused and unexcused absences, see the Attendance Data Collection and Reporting page (<http://dpi.wi.gov/cst/data-collections/student/ises/data-collection/cd-ye-child-count-data-elements/attendance>) and the Answers to Frequently Asked Compulsory School Attendance Questions (<http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/schlattendqa.pdf>).

How is absenteeism rate calculated?

The absenteeism rate is the percent of students in a school or district that are chronically absent. A student is considered chronically absent when his or her attendance rate is 84.0% or less. DPI looks at the individual attendance rate of any student who is enrolled in the school or district for at least 45 days at any time during the school year. The 45 days do not have to be consecutive. The number of chronically absent students divided by the total number of students enrolled for 45 or more days during the year determines the school or district absenteeism rate. Starting in 2012-2013, the absenteeism deduction is based upon both a one-year rate and a three-year rate. If one or both of the rates meet the goal of a school or district absenteeism rate being below 13%, then no points are deducted. If the goal is not met, five points are deducted from the overall accountability score.

How are students who enroll multiple times in the same school year counted in attendance and absenteeism calculations?

Report card calculations are based on a student's total enrollment so each student is counted only once. For example, if a student enrolled in Example School at the start of the 2015-16 school year, exited the district and then enrolled again in the same Example School two months later, that student's attendance rate (days attended divided by their total days enrolled) and absenteeism rate would be calculated based on the sum of the student's two enrollment periods during the 2015-16 school year at Example School.

Graduation Calculations

How are graduation rates used in Report Card calculations?

Graduation rates are used in two priority areas: On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness and Closing Gaps. Both the 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate and the 6-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate are used. The cohort rates are defined as the percentage of students starting high school in the same year who graduate within four or six years, respectively.

- For the **On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness** priority area, the graduation score is an average of the 4-Year Cohort Rate and the 6-Year Cohort Rate.
- In the **Closing Gaps** priority area, as of the 2015-16 report cards, the graduation gaps calculation is an average of the 4-year and 6-year Closing Graduation Gap cohort scores.

Dropout Calculations

Are expelled students counted as dropouts in the dropout rate calculation?

Yes, expelled students will be considered dropouts, like other exited students, when they are not receiving services. This can happen in two situations:

1. After permanent expulsion; and
2. After a temporary expulsion when a student does not return to school when eligible to do so.

Ratings and Scores

Why aren't the priority area scores averaged or added up to get the overall score?

By design, priority area scores may not add up or average to the overall score. In order for the Accountability Index to be fair to all schools, the weighting method is more complicated than simply averaging priority area scores. Not all schools have all four priority areas. Not all schools have every

component within the four priority areas. For example, the third grade reading and eighth grade mathematics measures in the On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness priority area apply only to schools with those grades. As such, the weighting method is designed to account for differences in what we can measure in different schools, and at the same time, report an Overall Accountability Score that is comparable, as much as possible, across all schools. The weighting method is described in detail in the Interpretive and Technical Guides (<http://dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards>).

There is an ‘NA’ for one or more priority area scores. Is this a data error? Does this lower the overall accountability score?

No. NAs do not represent data errors nor do they lower overall scores. An NA is shown when a school does not have data for a priority area or a component of a priority area. For example, K-5 elementary schools will never have graduation rates or 8th Grade Mathematics Achievement, so they will always receive an NA in these areas. Additionally, NAs are displayed when a school or district does not have enough students in total or in a subgroup to make a calculation. Calculations are only made when the group size of 20 is met; this ensures accuracy and stability in our calculations as very small subgroups are subject to fluctuations in scores that do not necessarily accurately reflect change in performance. All schools and districts receive a report card. The weighting and scoring in the Accountability Index are designed to account for schools or districts that do not have every component or priority area. That is, lacking one part does not inherently advantage or disadvantage a school or district. This design acknowledges that not all schools or districts will have all data for every priority area.

There is an asterisk (*) for one or more priority areas scores on the report card. Is this a data error? Does this lower the overall score?

No. Asterisks do not represent data errors nor do they lower overall scores; asterisks represent redacted data. In order to protect student privacy and to assure stability in our publically reported measures, we only report metrics that meet a minimum group (or cell) size—20 students—in public reports. If metrics do not meet cell size, the data are redacted and an asterisk (*) is displayed for public reports.

Can I apply the Overall Accountability Ratings to individual priority area scores?

No. The Overall Accountability Rating Categories are specific to the Overall Accountability Score only. In order to establish the cut points for the accountability rating categories, a process called a standard setting was held. That process evaluated only the Overall Accountability Scores. As a result, it is inappropriate to use the rating categories as descriptors of individual priority areas since a separate standard setting was not conducted for each priority area.

To inform local conversations, state comparison scores are shown to provide context to individual priority area and component scores; they represent the state average for the stated grade configuration. Schools can compare their priority area scores to those state averages but should not compare individual priority area scores to the Overall Accountability Ratings.

Are the state comparison scores used to determine the overall score?

No. State comparison scores are not used to determine the overall score. State comparisons are shown only to provide context and do not factor into a school’s accountability score or category. The Report Card provides a state comparison. Comparisons are based on one of six broad grade bands: K-5, K-8, K-12, 6-8, 6-12, and 9-12. Schools or districts are assigned to the most similar grade band for comparison. The comparison scores given for a grade band treat all Wisconsin students within those grades as if they were one giant school; data for these statewide sets of students are used to calculate the comparison scores. Every priority area and component that applies to a particular grade band is shown for the comparison, even if the school or district itself does not have a score for it.

Data

Public school data for report cards come from [ISES](#) submissions. Starting with the 2016-17 school year, the data will be collected through [WISEdata](#) instead of ISES. Choice school report cards are based upon data from WISEdata as of the 2015-16 school year.

Why do the race/ethnicity categories look different?

As of 2015-16, report cards include seven groups in the race/ethnicity category (previously there were five groups). These groups are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White, and Two or More Races.

The change to seven groups will affect calculations in the Closing Gaps and On-Track (attendance rate only) priority areas as well as the Student Engagement Indicators. Additionally, data provided for information only disaggregated by race/ethnicity will be provided for the Student Achievement, Student Growth, and On-Track (graduation rate) priority areas. For more information see <http://dpi.wi.gov/cst/data-collections/student/ises/data-collection/cd-ye-child-count-data-elements/race-ethnicity-faq>.

How can I access the data displayed in the report cards?

Files that contain the data from the first page of the School and District Report Cards are provided. These files are available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards>.

Where does the data used in report cards come from?

For public schools and districts, the scores and supplemental data provided in the School and District Report Cards are based upon certified Individual Student Enrollment System (ISES) data and Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) results, both of which have been verified by districts prior to report card calculations. DPI relies on accurate data collection and reporting from schools and districts in order to accurately calculate accountability scores and ratings. Districts that discover that their ISES or WSAS data are incorrect may submit an errata letter; contact oeamail@dpi.wi.gov for details on that process.

Choice school report cards are based upon 2015-16 data submitted through the WISEdata collection system as well as WSAS results.

I noticed that the data on my report card was incorrectly reported to DPI. Can I submit the correct data to DPI and have my report card updated to reflect the new data?

The secure report cards released to districts via SAFE (the Secure Access File Exchange) are preliminary. The release of the secure School and District Report Cards initiates a review and inquiry process to address possible data errors that schools or districts identify.

Schools or districts that identify possible errors in their report card should complete an Inquiry Form (found on the Report Card homepage: <http://dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards>) and, upon request, provide supporting evidence for the change. The inquiry form and the opportunity to make corrections are only available during the report card inquiry process window during the secure release of preliminary report cards and before report cards are released publicly.

- Any data corrections made during the inquiry processes will not result in a change to ISES, WISEdata, or WSAS databases, as they are locked. While report card data may change if warranted, ISES, WISEdata, and WSAS data that are reported in WISEdash or on other DPI public reporting pages will not change, regardless of the evidence submitted during the inquiry process.

- Districts have multiple opportunities during the ISES data collection timeline and assessment window to verify and make corrections to their data. Choice schools have similar opportunities in WISEdata. Please check with your ISES or WISEdata Coordinator to ensure that all data are correctly collected, verified, and submitted in accordance with DPI guidelines going forward.

Are only Full Academic Year (FAY) students' data included in calculations?

Student Achievement, Student Growth, Closing Gaps, On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness 3rd Grade Reading Achievement and On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness 8th Grade Mathematics Achievement calculations include only students who were enrolled for the [Full Academic Year](#) (FAY) in the school or district. FAY status is not considered for any other report card calculations. FAY for the school is used for school report cards and FAY for the district is used for district report cards.

Data Not Matching

Why don't the data on the School Report Card match WISEdash?

There are three reasons why report card data will not match WISEdash:

1. The report card uses demographic variables associated with [WSAS testing](#). Districts have the opportunity to update WSAS demographics during the assessment window. WISEdash is a dynamic platform which updates its demographics with new data when it becomes available. This means WISEdash demographics are updated with ISES Year End data when it becomes available and may not match the report card demographics.
2. Report card data may have been adjusted through an inquiry process.
3. WISEdash data continually evolve to update student records and resolve cases in which a student has been mistakenly assigned multiple state student IDs (WSN).

Why doesn't our School Report Card match our grade configuration this year?

Current grade configurations may not match the School Report Card, which is based on the 2015-16 configuration reported to DPI. Please note that in accordance with federal policy, new schools are those that change four or more grades. For more information, see <http://dpi.wi.gov/cst/data-collections/school-directory/directory-data/school-definition>.

Why doesn't our current School Report Card match our prior School Report Card?

The 2015-16 report cards incorporate some calculation changes. Score differences between prior report cards and this year may be due to calculation changes, not due to actual change in student performance. When reporting multiple years of data, results are recalculated according to the updated methodology in the current report card. Report cards from prior years are not recalculated. As such, results in prior report cards may not match this year's. Information about calculation changes to 2015-16 report cards is available in this document: [10 Things to Know about 2015-16 Accountability](#).

District Report Cards

Why are the scores on the District Report Card different than the School Report Card scores for schools within the same district?

District scores are calculated for an aggregated group of all students in the district, essentially treating the district as a big school. They are not based on individual school-level scores. Therefore, a district score may be based on a different, larger group of students than the school scores are. Specifically, two factors may

alter the group of students represented on the District Report Card (from those on the School Report Cards) affecting the district priority areas and overall scores.

- **Cell Size.** More subgroups may meet cell size at the district level than at the school level warranting their inclusion in the District Report Card calculations.
- **FAY-D but not FAY-S.** Students who were not Full Academic Year (FAY) in the school and thus excluded from school-level calculations that use WSAS results may be FAY within the district and are included in the district calculations. Full Academic Year is equal to 9.25 months of continuous enrollment.

Starting in 2015-16, per state law, if a district includes a virtual school with a population that is more than 50% open enrolled, no students in the virtual school are to be included in the district report card calculations. In other words, virtual schools are excluded from district report card calculations if the virtual school's population is more than 50% open enrolled.

How are district deductions calculated?

The district is considered one big school, and the calculations for the Student Engagement Indicators, and possible deductions, follow the same rules as is done in the School Report Cards. Students attending schools participating in the [alternate accountability process](#) are also included in district report card calculations, and their data may affect district-wide scores, ratings, and deductions.

Starting in 2015-16, per state law, if a district includes a virtual school with a population that is more than 50% open enrolled, no students in the virtual school are to be included in the district report card calculations. In other words, virtual schools are excluded from district report card calculations if the virtual school's population is more than 50% open enrolled.

Will the detention school within my district be included in the scores on my District Report Card?

Certain schools educate students who are in the justice system and are being held in county jails and juvenile detention centers. Those schools are held accountable for their entire student population including those students who are temporarily in their school due to involvement in the justice system. Please note, however, that some priority areas using WSAS results, are based solely on students who have been enrolled for a Full Academic Year while others are not. As such, while students currently in the justice system are required to participate in state testing, their results would not be included in school or district calculations unless the student was enrolled in the school or district for the full academic year.

Some districts have schools whose entire populations are involved in the justice system. Districts are accountable for these student populations, which will be in the district calculations. Again, note that some priority area measures, those using WSAS results, are based solely on students who have been enrolled for a Full Academic Year while others are not.

Districts and schools are not accountable for students in correctional facilities run by the Department of Corrections.

Virtual Charter Schools District Report Card Exemption

How does data from virtual charter schools factor into District Report Cards?

Per state law (2015 Act 55), data for all students in virtual charter schools in which at least 50% of the students are attending under full-time open enrollment are excluded from District Report Card calculations. For virtual charter schools with less than 50% open enrollees, data from the school will be used for District

Report Card calculations. This provision does not affect School Report Cards, which the virtual charter schools will continue to receive.

Alternate Accountability

Which schools participate in Alternate Accountability?

Schools that do not have the data necessary to calculate standard report card scores must use a district-supervised self-evaluation process called [Alternate Accountability](#):

- Schools with fewer than 20 full academic year (FAY) students enrolled in tested grades (3-8, and 11)
- Schools without tested grades (including K-2 schools)
- Schools exclusively serving at-risk students (must also complete [At-Risk Designation Form](#))
- New schools

Will Alternate Accountability schools receive a report card? Do you report their ratings publicly?

Yes. Schools that do not have enough data to calculate a regular report card score participate in the Alternate Accountability process, a district supervised self-assessment using local data. These schools will still receive a report card with an Alternate Rating of either “*Alternate Rating – Satisfactory Progress*” or “*Alternate Rating – Needs Improvement*.” Due to data timelines, some schools participating in 2015-16 alternate accountability may have a rating of “Not Rated” at the time of the public report card release. These ratings will be updated as the alternate accountability process is completed.

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

What happened to the AMOs?

Under the former federal education law—No Child Left Behind—the US Department of Education required states to establish AMOs in reading and mathematics proficiency as well as in graduation and attendance rates, and to publicly report performance on the AMOs. The passage of ESSA, the reauthorized federal education law, removed AMOs from the accountability system starting in 2015-16. AMOs are reported on the last page of 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 report cards.

School Support

What specific supports or interventions will be required of schools or districts that are rated as Meets Few Expectations or Fails to Meet Expectations?

At this time the School and District Report Cards are a public report of school or district performance. With one exception, described below, state legislation does not dictate specific supports or interventions for schools. Schools and districts in search of resources to support local improvement efforts may access a variety of existing supports through their [CESAs](#), the [Wisconsin Rtl Center](#), and the [Department of Public Instruction](#).

The sole instance of mandated intervention is for certain districts in the Fails to Meet Expectations (one star) rating category. This currently affects schools in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) that are also rated as Fails to Meet Expectations on the School Report Card. The Opportunity Schools and Partnership Program, created in [2015 Act 55](#), requires that a subgroup of schools that falls into the lowest report card category be removed from MPS and placed within the jurisdiction of another governing body. This governing body will oversee supports and interventions for the removed schools.

Some Title I schools have been designated as Focus or Priority Schools under a separate, federally mandated formula. These schools are receiving supports and interventions through the 2016-17 school year from the Title I and School Support Team at the Department of Public Instruction. Information about Title I Focus and Priority Schools may be found here: <http://dpi.wi.gov/tss>.

Evolving Accountability System

How will the report cards change in the future?

In light of reauthorization of the federal education law, [ESSA](#), Wisconsin's accountability system will continue to evolve. DPI is committed to a multiple measures system that honors multiple pathways. When DPI has quality data on students' college and career readiness – from sources other than the state assessments – we will consider how to include those measures in the accountability system. We look forward to partnering with our stakeholders in the design of the next iteration of the accountability system. Please contact us with any questions at oeamail@dpi.wi.gov.

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