



Accountability Scorecards and Rankings 2013 District to Parent Template Communication

Everybody understands what the colors green, yellow and red represent.

Or do we?

In our day-to-day lives, we are conditioned to have a preconceived idea of what red, yellow and green colors represent - **think traffic signals**. And now, these are just a few of the colors the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is using to report the status of our state's public schools.

As a parent, we want you to have all of the information that you need in order to understand school accountability in Michigan and particularly at your child's school. We hope that the following guidance is helpful in building that understanding.

Previously, school accountability results were reported to the public through a report card containing a letter grade for each school and district. This year, there were changes in the legislation which impact how the state scores and ranks the performance of public schools based on state level tests.

Using newly adopted **College and Career Readiness** cut scores, MDE has developed a five-color code system for district and building-level Scorecards. In addition, MDE has also ranked schools on a Top-to-Bottom list, which may result in a specific school designation of Reward, Focus, or Priority.

The **Scorecard** color – which includes green, lime, yellow, orange and red – is intended to represent how students are performing on assessments by combining the percentage of students who score “proficient” in five tested subjects (reading, writing, math, science and social studies). The overall color is based on the proficiency of all students, plus the proficiency of each subgroup (any group of 30 or more students who share economic, ethnic, gender, or other characteristics).

Yellow scorecards are extremely common across the state, due to the number of additional factors that prevent a school from receiving a Green or Lime designation. As a common example, if a single subgroup is not on track to reach 85 percent proficiency or did not test over 95 percent of the population, then that one single subset of students will prevent a school or district from receiving a color higher than yellow.

In addition to a color designation, schools who test at least 30 full-year students also receive a percentile ranking on a **Top to Bottom list**. The ranking is based on student achievement, academic growth of all students and the gap between the highest and lowest scoring students in the school. The Scorecard color and the Top to Bottom Ranking are two separate measures that do not depend on each other.

Rankings compare public schools to every other public school in the state, according to a percentile. The percentile is not to be confused with a percent correct or a letter grade. For example, a school who ranks at the 65th percentile has out-scored 65% of the schools across the state.

The metrics used to determine the Top to Bottom Rankings are also used to determine Reward, Focus, and Priority schools. The simplest explanation of these three designations is that the top 5 percent of schools ranked are labeled “Reward” whereas the bottom 5 percent of schools ranked are labeled “Priority.”

The “Focus” school designation is a bit more complicated.

To help you better understand, [click here](#) (or visit www...) for a sample scenario of a theoretical school district and some of its school buildings. It’s important to consider all of the ways our schools are measuring student achievement when evaluating their effectiveness.

Understanding Michigan’s school accountability indicators can be confusing. If you would like a more detailed explanation, please contact _____ or plan to attend the following information night on _____.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to a great school year in 2013-2014.

Sample School District:

School Building A: Ranked 42nd, No Label, Green Scorecard

Building A is a small building with very few students, maybe one teacher per grade level. They are ranked 42nd on the Top to Bottom list of schools statewide, which means that they are considered slightly below average since average would be the 50th percentile. This school also received a Green designation on the Scorecard indicating that their students seem to be on track to reach 85 percent Career and College Ready. They do not have enough students in any subgroup to have subgroups impact their results. Like the majority of the schools across the state, this school did not receive an additional label of Reward, Focus or Priority.

School Building B: Ranked 45th, Reward School, Yellow Scorecard

Building B is a larger building in the same district, perhaps 4 teachers per grade level, and ranks in the 45th percentile, but received a Yellow designation on the Scorecard and has been labeled a Reward school. This building is considered not on track to move the bottom, most at risk students to 85 percent Career and College Ready.

Ironically, even if this school had 85 percent of all students proficient (or considered on track for Career and College Readiness), the 15 percent who are not considered proficient makes up half of the bottom subgroup. Since this bottom subgroup may not be on track in one year to demonstrate the required amount of growth, the bottom subgroup receives a Red cell. **Any school building in the state who has a single Red cell automatically receives a Yellow designation or below on their Scorecard.**

The Reward label is based on a different system than the Scorecard. There are three ways to become a Reward school and the most common would be to rank at the 95th percentile or above. Since this school ranks at the 45th percentile, it would likely be a Reward school for demonstrating exceptional improvement from the previous four years, or by receiving the best ranking of schools that are comparable in size, setting, poverty and other demographics. This particular school happens to be in the top 5 percent of schools for improving all students.

School Building C: Ranked 89th, Focus School, Yellow Scorecard

Building C is about the same size as the previous building in the same district and happens to have the highest ranking and the lowest poverty rates. This building, like Building B, has a Yellow designation on its scorecard, yet ranks in the 89th percentile. Two of the three labels schools can receive (Reward and Priority) deal with being ranked in the top 5 percent or the bottom 5 percent, however, the third label (Focus) compares the school to itself.

Even though the school is high achieving (89th percentile), it still may receive a Focus label. Basically, the top students are compared to the bottom students to determine an inner-school achievement gap. For example, the top students might average 90 percent on the state level test and the bottom students average 60 percent on the same test, therefore, there exists a 30 percent achievement gap.

This gap is then compared to everyone else's gap in the state and approximately 350 schools with the largest gap are labeled a Focus school. Building C now needs to work on how to raise the level of achievement for the bottom students and to educate the community that a Focus label is not necessarily bad. Another school on the other side of the state only has a 25 percent gap between the top and the bottom students, so they are not a Focus school. However, we discover that the gap is caused by the top students averaging 75 percent and the bottom students averaging 50 percent. The Focus school clearly has all students achieving at a higher rate in this specific instance.

District: Red Scorecard

Finally, the district of these buildings (and possible other buildings) also receives a color designation on a district scorecard. Districts do not receive a ranking and they cannot be labeled Priority, Focus, or Reward. Even though every building in the district received a Green, Lime, or Yellow color designation on the scorecard, this school district received a Red designation on the district scorecard.

Based on the fact districts have a larger population causing more subgroups to be tracked, districts are more likely to receive an Orange or Red color on the scorecard. While this district actually earned 87 percent of all possible points for all five content areas, which usually would earn a Green designation, 95 percent of all students and 95 percent of all subgroups must be tested to maintain a Green color. As a result, this district has received a Red designation based on not meeting 95 percent in three subgroups.

Here's an example of how this could happen: A family missed the testing window while spending a month out of the country on a mission trip, accompanied by their three children. The 3rd grade student missed two tests (reading and math) but the percentage for all subgroups remained above 95 percent. However, the twins in 5th grade missed three tests (reading, math, and science). Since both of these students qualify for Free and Reduced lunch plus they happen to be minority, this impacted two small subgroups.

The building has 30 students of the same minority group, but only tested 28 (93 percent), plus both of these students qualify as economically disadvantaged of which

there are 39 in the district, therefore, 94.87 percent tested. As soon as two subgroups fall below 95 percent tested, the district automatically receives an Orange designation. Since the twins on the mission trip were unable to take the three tests, two subgroups on all three tests were affected and the school fell below 95 percent tested. Any district with three or more subgroups affected by low participation (each receives a Red cell) automatically receives a Red designation on their scorecard.