LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Communicating School Performance Scores Under Grow. Achieve. Thrive.

A toolkit for Louisiana schools and school systems

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A note about this resource: This toolkit is a support resource to help schools and systems plan communications about the release of 2026 school performance scores. Its summary explanations, timelines, and templates are provided as optional resources. They do not create new requirements or change any existing law, policy, or requirement.

If anything in this toolkit appears to differ from state law (La. R.S. 17:10.1) or Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) policy (*Bulletin 111*), follow the law and policy in your communications.

For legal or policy questions, work with your school system leadership and legal counsel. For assessment and accountability questions, contact your system's assessment and accountability team.

SECTION ONE

About the Toolkit

Louisiana releases school performance scores (SPS) under Grow. Achieve. Thrive., the state's revised accountability system, this year. For most school systems, that means explaining a new measurement, a new baseline, and scores that will look different from last year's.

People should hear about the change before they react to the grade. Everything in this toolkit follows from that premise.

Regardless of the various viewpoints on school accountability, the communications work is the same: help people understand how your schools and system performed, what it means, and what you are doing to improve academic outcomes for students.

What this toolkit covers

This toolkit includes a walkthrough of what changed and why, a sequence for the weeks before and after the release, and templates you can use as is or alter to fit your local needs.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) began explaining the revised system to school systems and other stakeholders before it was approved in 2024. This has been done through guidance documents, FAQs, recorded walkthroughs by role, and presentations to system leaders, school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholder groups. You can find many of these resources on the LDOE's accountability webpage.

This toolkit builds on earlier guidance and communications to provide templates, tactics, and timelines to support schools and systems with the release of the first official performance scores under the revised system.

Who built the toolkit

The LDOE supplied the accountability detail and statewide information on the revised system. The Louisiana School Public Relations Association (LASPRA) partnered with the LDOE on the materials that come from a school system or a school rather than from the state. A survey of LASPRA members helped determine what this toolkit includes and how it is organized.

Who this toolkit was built for

Whoever handles communications work in your system, whether that is a communications team or one person carrying several other responsibilities. Nothing here assumes a communications degree or a staff.

The rule this toolkit follows

Explain the measurement. Don't explain away the result.

The measurement did change, and saying so is accurate. When the LDOE applied the revised system to 2025 results, most schools and school systems would have kept the same letter grade as their official 2025 SPS). Some schools declined. Some schools improved. Where the measurement shows a change, explain what that means and why.

The new system is not the whole answer. The results show something real about where students stand academically, and they reflect how schools and systems will be graded from here forward.

BEFORE YOU START

- **Editable templates:** Every template is also available as a Word document, so you can fill in your own information without retyping.
- **Communications questions:** Contact your system's communications lead or ted.beasley@la.gov.
- **Accountability questions:** Contact your system's assessment and accountability team or accountability@la.gov.

When will 2026 scores be released

School performance scores for 2026 will be released to the public on December 1 at 11 a.m. This release comes later than the past two years, when scores were released on November 20. The later release date provides more lead time as you prepare for the first official scores under the revised system.

The LDOE is also preparing two sets of scores for this year's release. In addition to the official scores using the revised system, the LDOE will release legacy scores showing what each school's and school system's 2026 grade would have been under the previous system. The legacy scores are for informational purposes only. The LDOE announced this date to school system leaders on October 30.

The LDOE assessment team will contact school system leaders about when to expect their school and system data, as well as statewide data. For more information about your school's or system's data, please contact your system leader or your system's assessment and accountability team.

All data shared with schools and systems will be embargoed until the public release December 1 at 11 a.m.

SECTION TWO

Understanding the Change

WHERE TO GO DEEPER

This section provides a high-level overview of Grow. Achieve. Thrive. The LDOE has published considerably more on the revised system than this section covers. If you or someone you are supporting is looking for additional details, please contact your system's assessment and accountability team. These links from the LDOE website will also help.

- Grow. Achieve. Thrive. landing page
- 2025-2026 Accountability Model FAQ
- K-2 Accountability Guidance
- Career, College, and Service FAQ
- Recorded walkthroughs by role, for central office staff, teachers, counselors, and elementary, middle, and high school principals
- A detailed walkthrough recorded by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Thomas Lambert

What changed

Louisiana revised how schools are graded. The revised system is called Grow. Achieve. Thrive., named after its three expectations for every student:

- **Grow:** Students should make meaningful academic progress every year.
- **Achieve:** Students should reach proficiency in key subjects.
- **Thrive:** Students should graduate on time and be prepared for a career, college, or service.

This is a new measure and the bar sits higher than it did in previous years. Letter grades may look different at some schools as a result.

Why the state changed the system

Grow. Achieve. Thrive. replaces an outdated formula that had been criticized for being too complex, difficult to explain, and disconnected from Louisiana's long-term goals for student readiness. Three priorities drove the revision:

1. **High expectations:** The system raises expectations so students grow each year and reach proficiency. It sets a clear bar for success and helps schools focus on the learning that matters most.
2. **Simple and transparent measures:** The new system uses straightforward measures that the public can easily understand. Each measure answers one clear question: what percent of students met the expectation?
3. **Career and college readiness:** The system rewards schools for preparing students for life after graduation. It values college credit, high-quality credentials, work-based learning, and service.

State law frames the purpose the same way. The accountability system exists to set clear standards and expectations so that assessment of school effectiveness will be understood, and to provide information that helps schools focus energy and resources on student academic achievement.

Three ways to explain the system's drivers

1. We're raising the bar for student success.
2. We're making it easier for people to understand how our schools are performing.
3. We're reimagining the high school experience so more students graduate ready for a career, college, or service.

What moved in the formula

Elementary schools

Historically, the elementary school formula weighted students reaching Basic proficiency or full proficiency significantly greater than it measured growth, with about a quarter of the school's points being assigned to comparative student growth. The revised formula sets a criterion-based amount of growth for each student and increases the weight of growth to at least half of each school's score. The elementary formula shifts focus toward expecting and recognizing strong growth for every student.

High schools

Historically, the most significant driver of a high school's overall grade was the percent of students who graduated on time. Schools earned little credit for how much progress their students made in English, math, science, and social studies. The revised formula expects students to make meaningful progress in core subjects and to graduate ready for a career, college, or service.

Under the previous system, the graduation rate carried roughly 37 percent of the weight for high schools. It now carries the same 8.3 percent as all other measures. In addition to asking whether a student graduates on time and if they are growing academically and reaching proficiency, the system asks separately whether graduates met a career- or college-ready benchmark and whether they accelerated into a next step.

Graduating students and preparing them are different things, and the previous formula rewarded the first while largely assuming the second.

Credentials with limited value in the job market no longer count. Credentials tied to real employment count for more than before. A signed commitment to military service and acceptance to a military service academy now count in Louisiana's accountability system for the first time. Work-based learning, dual enrollment, and industry credentials are now measured as outcomes rather than as bonus points.

If your high schools have built career pathways, dual enrollment partnerships, or work-based learning programs, tell those stories and show how this focus is benefiting students today, and how it will benefit students and your local community in the future. The Timelines and Templates section has examples.

Other shifts of note

The point tables are gone: The previous assessment index assigned point values by achievement level, gave partial credit to students below proficiency, and extra credit for students above proficiency. This created a metric that was difficult to explain and hid non-proficiency. Each Achieve measure now asks what percent of students reached Mastery or above. The Grow measures now recognize both progress toward proficiency and continued progress for students who are already proficient.

Growth is measured against a fixed expectation: The previous progress index set an individualized target for each student and fell back to a value-added comparison against similar students when that target was missed. Every student now has a clear criteria, not a relative criteria. Growth also carries substantially more weight.

Moving from a 150 to a 100-point scale

The previous accountability system used a 150-point scale to grade schools and systems. Grow. Achieve. Thrive. uses a 100-point scale.

The state set what score each grade requires based on where schools actually performed in 2024. This is not a conventional 100-point grading scale. Some other states with 100-point scales also start below a conventional scale and raise it automatically as schools improve.

In any year in which 50 percent or more of the schools or school systems on a scale earn an A or B, the scale required to earn each grade is raised by five points the following year. Those increases continue until the scale reaches 90 to 100 for an A, 80 to 89 for a B, 70 to 79 for a C, and 60 to 69 for a D.

What to expect in your results

When the state applied the revised measurement to last year's results, would have kept the same letter grade. Most elementary and middle schools held steady or improved. High school is where the shift is more significant.

	Same or better grade	Lower grade
Elementary and middle schools	84 percent	16 percent
High schools	23 percent	77 percent

At the system level, 39 systems kept the same letter grade and 30 declined under the 2025 simulation.

A lower grade does not mean a school stopped doing meaningful work for students. The expectations and measures are different. That explanation belongs in what you say because it is accurate, and it is not the whole answer. These results also show something real about where students stand, the work ahead, and how schools will be graded from here forward.

Reading your scorecard

The scorecard at a glance

Louisiana's accountability scorecard shows how a school or school system performed on a set of academic measures. Every measure asks the same simple question:

What percent of students met the expectation?

Each measure is scored on a 100-point scale. The scores are averaged with equal weight. That average determines a school's letter grade.

Louisiana's Accountability Scorecard

Grow. *Percent of students making meaningful progress*		Achieve. *Percent of students at or above proficiency*		Thrive. *Percent of high school students graduating on time ready for a career, college, or service*	
Math		Math		Graduation Rate	
English		English		Ready based on a nationally recognized exam	
Math Growth for lowest 25% of students		Science		Accelerated into college coursework, career training, or service	
English Growth for lowest 25% of students		Social Studies			
English Language Acquisition (ELL)					

Who is scored on what: Schools serving grades K–8, traditionally elementary and middle schools, are scored on the nine Grow and Achieve measures. Schools serving grades 9–12, traditionally high schools,

are scored on all 12 measures: the same nine Grow and Achieve measures, plus three Thrive measures that are specific to high school.

Any school with a graduating class is scored on the high school scale.

What changed about the scorecard itself

The previous system used a 150-point scale built from weighted indexes. Different components carried different weights, and the weights differed by school level. Elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools each had their own formula.

Understanding a score required knowing the formula.

The revised scorecard removes the weighting. Every measure counts the same, and every measure is a percentage of students meeting that expectation rather than a point value. A school scoring 45 on math proficiency (Achieve) has 45 percent of its students scoring proficient or better in math.

The scorecard's three columns

GROW

Percent of students growing

What this column asks: What percent of students made meaningful academic growth, no matter where they started?

Students' scores on state assessments earn one of five achievement levels: Unsatisfactory, Approaching Basic, Basic, Mastery, and Advanced. Proficiency in Louisiana means Mastery or above.

Every student is expected to grow academically every year. A student below proficiency shows growth by moving up at least half an achievement level. A student scoring Mastery shows growth by raising their scale score by at least one point. A student scoring Advanced shows growth by scoring Advanced again.

Louisiana divides each achievement level below proficiency into a lower and an upper half. A student at the low end of Approaching Basic shows growth by reaching the high end of Approaching Basic, or by moving to Basic or higher.

Why this column matters: A school serving students who arrive well behind grade level can move those students substantially without any of them reaching proficiency in a single year. Under a system driven mostly by proficiency, that school may look like it failed. Growth measures the work of moving a student ahead academically from one year to the next.

ACHIEVE

Percent of students proficient

What this column asks: What percent of students reached proficiency in core academic subjects?

Students are expected to meet grade-level expectations, or proficiency.

Why this column exists: Growth alone does not answer whether a student is ready. A student can grow academically every year and still graduate without the foundational academic skills that adult life requires, such as reading and doing basic math.

THRIVE

Percent of graduates ready for a career, college, or service
These measures apply only to schools serving grades 9–12

What this column asks: What percent of high school students have the foundational academic skills and postsecondary preparation needed for success after graduation?

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the Board of Regents developed a shared definition of readiness. Students should graduate prepared for employment with the foundational skills to enter a career pathway, or prepared for university, community college, or technical college coursework without needing remediation.

Why this column exists: The previous formula largely treated graduation as the outcome. The revised system asks separately whether students graduated and whether they are ready, because those are different things.

> **A NOTE FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS**
>
> Thrive is scored only on high school scorecards, but it is still important that it is understood by elementary and middle school leaders. The academic foundation behind a high school's Thrive results is built well before ninth grade, as is a student's awareness that credentials, dual enrollment, and service pathways exist. An elementary or middle school cannot earn Thrive points, but it can play a role in determining them for their school system.

The scorecard's twelve measures

GROW: Math

- **What it means:** The percent of students who made meaningful progress in math.
- **What it measures:** Students who moved up at least half an achievement level, improved at least one scale point at Mastery, or maintained Advanced.

GROW: English

- **What it means:** The percent of students who made meaningful progress in reading and writing.
- **What it measures:** Students who moved up at least half an achievement level, improved at least one scale point at Mastery, or maintained Advanced. Literacy screener growth for grades 1 and 2 is included alongside LEAP and LEAP Connect.

GROW: Math growth for lowest 25 percent of students

- **What it means:** The percent of students in the bottom 25 percent of math performance who made meaningful progress.
- **What it measures:** Students from the bottom 25 percent of math performers who moved up at least half an achievement level, improved at least one scale point at Mastery, or maintained Advanced.

GROW: English growth for lowest 25 percent of students

- **What it means:** The percent of students in the bottom 25 percent of reading and writing performance who made meaningful progress.

- **What it measures:** Students from the bottom 25 percent of English performers who moved up at least half an achievement level, improved at least one scale point at Mastery, or maintained Advanced. Results from the K–2 literacy screener are included alongside LEAP and LEAP Connect.

GROW: English language acquisition

- **What it means:** The percent of English learners who are making progress toward, or reaching, English proficiency.
- **What it measures:** Results from the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) or English Language Proficiency Test Connect (ELPT Connect).

ACHIEVE: Math

- **What it means:** The percent of students performing at or above proficiency in math.
- **What it measures:** Students scoring Mastery or above on LEAP, or At Goal or above on LEAP Connect, in math.

ACHIEVE: English

- **What it means:** The percent of students performing at or above proficiency in reading and writing.
- **What it measures:** Students scoring Mastery or above on LEAP ELA
- , At Goal or above on LEAP Connect ELA, and, for kindergarten through second grade, on or above the benchmark on the literacy screener.

ACHIEVE: Science

- **What it means:** The percent of students performing at or above proficiency in science.
- **What it measures:** Students scoring Mastery or above on LEAP or At Goal or above on LEAP Connect in science.

ACHIEVE: Social studies

- **What it means:** The percent of students performing at or above proficiency in social studies.
- **What it measures:** Students scoring Mastery or above on LEAP or At Goal or above on LEAP Connect in social studies.

THRIVE: Graduation rate

- **What it means:** The percent of students who earned a diploma on time.
- **What it measures:** Students in a graduating cohort who received a diploma within four years.

THRIVE: Ready, based on a nationally recognized exam

- **What it means:** The percent of students who reached a career- or college-ready benchmark on a nationally recognized test.
- **What it measures:** A student meets the benchmark with an ACT composite of 20 or higher, an SAT of 1040 or higher, a CLT of 67 or higher, a WorkKeys score of Gold, or an ASVAB AFQT score of 59 or higher. Only members of the graduation cohort are included.

THRIVE: Accelerated into college coursework, career training, or service

- **What it means:** The percent of students who went beyond meeting a benchmark and actually began a next step for a career, college, or service before graduating.

- **What it measures:** A student counts through one of three pathways.
    - **Career:** One of three: two years of a fully aligned Fast Forward registered apprenticeship; an industry-based credential or bundle of credentials that the Louisiana Workforce Commission has determined to be of high value, plus a completed work-based learning experience; or a Certificate of Technical Studies in a high-wage, high-demand industry.
        - When at least 25 percent of a school's career-accelerated students complete a work-based learning experience, the school earns an added 5 percent on this measure, up to 100. That requirement rises by 5 percent each year after the 2026 scores until it reaches 65 percent.
    - **College:** A college-ready score on the ready benchmark, plus one of six: at least six dual enrollment college credits with a C or better; a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement (AP) exam; a 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate (IB) exam; an ACT math subscore of 25 or higher or SAT math score of 590 or higher; an ACT English subscore of 26 or higher or SAT Writing and Language score of 33 or higher; or three College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams with course enrollment and the minimum score the Board of Regents flagship university recognizes for credit.
    - **Service:** A signed letter of commitment to military service, or acceptance to a U.S. military service academy.

The score

- **What it means:** The school performance score is the average of all measures applicable to a school. Every measure counts the same.

SECTION THREE

Timelines and Templates

The countdown

1. Get yourself current

- Talk with your system's assessment and accountability team, read Understanding the Change, and look through resources on the LDOE accountability webpage.

2. Know your own 2025 numbers

- Pull your simulated 2025 scores for every school.
- Sort them: which went up, which held, which dropped.
- Compare simulated 2025 to official 2025.
- Identify your outliers in both directions.
- Find schools that help explain the change in your system.

LDOE DATA

- 2025 Official School Performance Scores
- 2025 Simulated School Performance Scores
- 2025 Official District Performance Scores
- 2025 Simulated District Performance Scores

A NOTE ON THE ORDER OF STEPS

Steps 3, 4, and 5 cover the people who will be asked about your results: your superintendent and cabinet, your board, and your principals and school staff. The order below is not a ranking or the only order. Set the order that fits and brief stakeholders based on your local context.

3. Brief school system leadership

- Walk through your simulated results, school by school.
- Agree on how the system will communicate results.
- Confirm who speaks, and about what topics.

4. Brief your school board

- Board members field questions from constituents as soon as scores are public, and the context and the numbers are more useful to them beforehand.
- Explain what changed and why grades may look different.
- Show them the simulated scores for schools in their districts specifically.
- Tell them what they will likely be asked, and give them information they can use.

5. Brief principals and school staff

- Tell principals your system's plan, what they own, and what you own when it comes to communications.
- Front office staff will field phone calls. Give them information to answer general questions and a place to send callers needing additional information.

6. Start explaining the change publicly

- Publish an explanation on your website. Keep it short and link to more.

- Put a short piece in your newsletter or family email.
- Run two or three informative social posts explaining what changed.
- Use the audiences you already have: events, board meetings, principal newsletters, your messaging platform.
- Consider sharing simulated scores during some of these touchpoints.

7. Give your local reporters a head start

- Offer a background conversation before scores are released.
- Walk them through what changed, what to expect, and why.
- Share information about some of the steps your schools have taken over the past two years to meet this higher bar for student expectations.

8. Stage your release materials

Build these now and finish them when you have your information and data:

- Superintendent statement, drafted to your actual results
- Family letter from superintendent and/or principals
- Social posts and graphics
- Website update
- Updated questions and answers

Two to three weeks out

- Confirm your release-day plan with the superintendent.
- Put the date on every internal calendar that matters: board, principals, cabinet.
- Notify principals with a specific plan for their school if needed.
- Finish the templates you staged.

Two to five days out

- Review every asset with the superintendent.
- Schedule your social posts and website updates so release day is execution rather than writing.
- Make sure principals have their own school's materials in hand and are prepared for release day.
- Reconfirm timing if anything is unclear.

Release day (after embargo is lifted)

- Publish your website update and superintendent statement within the hour.
- Send the family letter and the staff message the same day.
- Post to social media.
- Have principals send their school-level messages.
- Return every media call the same day.

Explaining the change

Communications that can be shared before release day

HOW THE BLANKS WORK

[BRACKETED CAPITALS] are drop-ins. Replace them with your own name, contact, or number and the sentence works.

[Italic instructions in brackets] ask you to write two or three sentences of your own. Those are the parts that make the letter yours.

Family letter, before the release

Subject line options:

- How Louisiana is measuring schools differently this year
- Before school grades come out: what's changing
- A new way of looking at school performance

TEMPLATE · FAMILY LETTER, BEFORE THE RELEASE

Dear **[FAMILIES]**,

School performance scores come out this fall. Before they do, we want you to know what's changed.

Louisiana has revised how it grades schools. The new system is called Grow. Achieve. Thrive., and it measures three things:

- **Grow:** Students should make meaningful academic progress every year.
- **Achieve:** Students should reach proficiency in key subjects.
- **Thrive:** Students should graduate on time and be prepared for a career, college, or service.

What to expect

The bar is higher than it was. The state raised expectations deliberately, and some letter grades across Louisiana will look different as a result. When the state applied the new measurement to last year's results, most schools and school systems would have kept the same letter grade. Some would have earned a higher grade, and some a lower one.

This year's grade can't be compared directly with last year's, because the two were calculated in different ways. Our official 2026 letter grade sets a new baseline to compare scores in future years.

What this means for [SCHOOL OR SYSTEM NAME]

[Write two to four sentences on your own simulated results. Be specific. If some schools improved and others declined, say so here rather than later.]

What this means for your child

The new measures point at things that matter directly for students.

- **Growth every year:** The system asks whether your child made meaningful academic progress this year, whatever their starting point. Schools now earn more credit for moving every student forward, including students who arrived behind.
- **Reading and math skills:** Knowing how to read, write, and do math on grade level is important no matter what your child does after high school. Graduating with foundational academic skills helps students get a job or avoid remedial college courses and the extra time and money those cost.
- **A high school experience connected to a career, college, or service:** The system recognizes students who earn college credit, industry credentials, internships, and work-based learning before they graduate.

What we're doing about each of those

[Name real programs. For example: tutoring and intervention for students below grade level, reading support in the early grades, your dual enrollment partnership, career pathways, internships with local employers, and the credentials students can earn before graduation.]

What you can do

A letter grade is an important measure of a school. If you want to understand how your child and their school are doing, the grade is a good place to start a conversation with your child's teacher or principal.

We'll share our full results when the state releases them December 1. If you have questions, **[CONTACT]**.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Adapting this letter

- **From a school rather than the system:** Cut the systemwide framing and add one specific sentence naming a goal your students are chasing this year.
- **Most important:** Send the letter. Communicating about the system before scores are released does more than any single element inside the letter.

Newsletter and email insert

TEMPLATE · SHORT INSERT FOR A NEWSLETTER OR FAMILY EMAIL

Louisiana is measuring schools differently this year

The state's revised accountability system, Grow. Achieve. Thrive., looks at three things: whether students make meaningful academic progress every year, whether they reach proficiency in key subjects, and whether they graduate on time and prepared for a career, college, or service.

The bar is higher than it was. The state raised expectations deliberately, and some letter grades across Louisiana will look different as a result. Our official 2026 letter grade sets a new baseline to compare scores in future years.

When the state applied the new measurement to last year's results, most schools and school systems would have kept the same letter grade. Some would have earned a higher grade, and some a lower one.

We'll share our full results when the state releases them December 1. If you have questions, **[CONTACT]**.

Website copy

Paste into a page or a post. Add your own results when you have them. You can also link to the Grow. Achieve. Thrive. landing page on the LDOE website.

TEMPLATE · WEBSITE PAGE

How Louisiana grades schools

Louisiana revised its school accountability system beginning with the 2025–2026 school year. The system is called Grow. Achieve. Thrive.

What it measures

Every school is scored on a set of measures, each worth the same share of the total. High schools are scored on 12 measures. Elementary and middle schools are scored on nine.

- **Grow:** The percent of students making meaningful academic progress in math and English, including a separate look at the students who started furthest behind, and progress among students learning English.
- **Achieve:** The percent of students reaching grade level in math, English, science, and social studies.
- **Thrive:** For high schools, the percent of students graduating on time, meeting a career- or college-ready benchmark on a nationally recognized exam, and accelerating into college coursework, career training, or military service.

How the score works

Each measure is scored on a 100-point scale based on the percentage of students who met the expectation. The scores are averaged. That average becomes the school's performance score and letter grade.

What changed

Academic growth carries substantially more weight than it did. Credentials with limited value in the job market no longer count, while credentials tied to real employment count for more. The high school formula was rebuilt to separate whether students graduate from whether they're prepared.

Comparing years

Our official 2026 letter grade sets a new baseline to compare scores in future years. This year's scores were calculated differently than last year's.

Our results

[Insert your results, or link to them.]

Questions

[CONTACT]. For the state's full explanation, visit the Louisiana Department of Education accountability page.

Short-form messages

Explaining the change

Louisiana changed how schools are rated. The new system asks whether students are growing, reaching proficiency, and graduating ready for a career, college, or service. More: **[LINK]**

School letter grades come out December 1 under a new system with a higher bar. Grades across Louisiana may look different. Here's what changed: **[LINK]**

Here is what changed about how Louisiana grades schools. This is a higher bar, one worth meeting. Watch us grow: **[LINK]**

Growth carries more weight than before. A school moving students forward, no matter where they started, earns more credit for that now. **[LINK]**

Setting the baseline

These scores reflect a new benchmark rather than a continuation of the previous system. **[LINK]**

Internal briefings

Leadership briefing outline

1. **What changed:** Three drivers. Higher bar. Every measure weighted equally. High schools changed the most.
2. **Our simulated results, school by school:** Which schools went up, which held, which dropped. Compare simulated 2025 to official 2025 so the room sees the gap that will draw community reaction. Name your outliers in both directions.
3. **What we expect in 2026:** Your best read on official results. What are the wins and the challenges? What are the conversations we need to plan for now?
4. **Decisions we need:**
    a. What programs and initiatives are in place, new or existing, to help students grow, achieve, and thrive?
    b. How do we explain the change in the accountability system and the effect it has had on our system?
    c. Who speaks, and about what?

Staff and front office one-pager

TEMPLATE · STAFF UPDATE

The three-sentence version for anyone who answers a phone

Louisiana changed how schools are graded. The new system looks at whether students grow, whether they reach grade level, and whether graduates are ready for what's next. The bar is higher, so grades across the state look different this year.

If someone asks for more

- This year's scores used a new measure that is different from previous years.
- Our 2026 grade sets a new baseline and is not a continuation of the previous system.

- Every measure counts the same.
- Growth carries much more weight than before. A school moving students forward earns credit for that now, even when those students have not yet reached grade level.

Where to send someone with more questions: [NAME, CONTACT]

NOTES FOR PRINCIPALS

- If your grade dropped, know why, and be able to explain the measurement clearly along with what your school or system has in place to improve in that area. Families will ask, and the wrong answer, or no answer, can damage trust.
- If your grade improved, say so plainly. Nobody will tell that story if you don't.
- Your teachers care about the results, especially those in the tested subjects. Talk to them first.

Release day

Superintendent statement

Written for mixed results

TEMPLATE · SUPERINTENDENT STATEMENT

Louisiana released school performance scores today under a revised accountability system, and our results reflect both real progress and real work ahead.

[NUMBER] of our schools improved or maintained their previous letter grade even with a higher bar for success. ***[Name a school and what it did.]*** That's the kind of progress this new system was built to recognize: students moving forward, including students who started behind.

At the same time, **[NUMBER]** of our schools received lower grades. ***[Name them, or name the pattern. For example: our high schools.]*** That reflects a more rigorous grading system as well as work we need to do.

Here are the steps we are taking: ***[two or three specifics]***.

We'll be talking with families, staff, and our board about these results in the days ahead.

Family letter, release day

TEMPLATE · FAMILY LETTER, RELEASE DAY

Dear **[FAMILIES]**,

Louisiana released school performance scores today. These are the first scores under a system that uses more rigorous measures. Here's what our results show and what they mean.

Our results

[System score and letter grade. School-level results, or a link to them.]

Our 2026 score sets a new baseline we can use to compare future years.

What we're proud of

[Specific. One or two things, with names.]

What we're working on

[Specific. Don't skip this section.]

About the grade itself

Louisiana revised how schools are graded this year. The system looks at whether students grow, whether they reach grade level, and whether graduates are ready for what comes next. The bar is higher than it was, and grades across the state reflect that shift.

This year's grade and last year's were calculated under different systems, so they can't be compared directly. This year's grade sets a new baseline.

What you can do

Ask your child's principal what these results mean for your child specifically. That conversation will tell you more than the grade alone does.

Full results and an explanation of the new system: **[LINK]**

Sincerely,

[NAME]

Principal letter, three variants

TEMPLATE · IF YOUR SCHOOL'S GRADE DROPPED

Dear **[SCHOOL]** Families,

Our school received a **[GRADE]** in today's release of state performance scores. Louisiana revised how schools are scored this year and raised the bar. Our 2026 score sets a baseline we can use to compare future performance.

Under the previous system last year, we received a **[GRADE]**.

The results are telling us something. ***[Be specific: our students are reaching grade level but aren't growing enough year over year / our growth is strong but too few students have reached grade level / a particular subject, grade, or group.]***

Here are the steps we are taking: ***[two or three concrete actions, with timelines]. [This section should be the longest of the three.]***

If you are interested in learning more about this year's performance score, the new way the state is grading schools, and what it means for our school and your student, I'll be at **[EVENT, TIME]** and I'd welcome the conversation.

[PRINCIPAL NAME]

TEMPLATE · IF YOUR SCHOOL'S GRADE IMPROVED

Dear **[SCHOOL]** Families,

Our school received a **[GRADE]** in today's release of state performance scores. Louisiana revised how schools are scored this year and raised the bar. Our 2026 score sets a baseline we can use to compare future performance. Under the previous system last year, we received a **[GRADE]**.

Under Louisiana's revised system, schools get credit for how much students grow, not only for how many have already reached grade level. ***[If applicable: Our growth results were among the strongest in the system. [NUMBER] percent of our students made meaningful progress this year.]***

That matters here because ***[specific to your school. For example: many of our students arrive well behind grade level, and this is the first time our results have shown what our teachers are actually accomplishing.]***

What we're still working on

[Include this. Celebrate your progress, but also share how you are pushing for more.]

[PRINCIPAL NAME]

TEMPLATE · IF YOUR SCHOOL'S RESULTS ARE MIXED

Dear **[SCHOOL]** Families,

Our school received a **[GRADE]** today. Louisiana revised how schools are scored this year and raised the bar. Our 2026 score sets a baseline we can use to compare future performance.

Behind that single letter are separate measures that tell different stories.

Where we're strong: ***[specific measures]***

Where we have to improve: ***[specific measures]***

[Two or three sentences on what you're doing about the second list.]

The full scorecard is available at **[LINK]**

[PRINCIPAL NAME]

Release-day short-form messages

Our 2026 school performance scores are out. **[SYSTEM]** earned a **[GRADE]**. Full results and what they mean: **[LINK]**

[NUMBER] of our schools improved or held their letter grade even with the state's higher bar. **[NUMBER]** received lower grades. Both are part of our story today: **[LINK]**

Congratulations to **[SCHOOL]**, which earned a **[GRADE]**, driven by strong growth among students who started behind. That's exactly what the new system was built to recognize.

After the release

Days one and two

- Read the coverage. Correct factual errors.
- Check in with principals of schools that dropped.
- Track the questions you didn't anticipate.

Week one

- Send a follow-up to school communities with some of the largest concerns.
- Publish a set of questions and answers built from the questions you actually received.
- Brief your board.

Week two

- Tell the growth stories.
- Debrief internally while it's fresh.
- Start the next conversation: what are we doing to drive student outcomes?

Follow-up letter for schools that dropped

TEMPLATE · FOLLOW-UP LETTER, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER THE RELEASE

Dear **[SCHOOL]** Families,

I wrote last week about our school's performance score. I want to follow up to continue the conversation.

Since then I've heard from many of you. The questions I've gotten most often are ***[two or three]***, and here are my answers. ***[Answer them.]***

Here are the specific steps we are taking: ***[concrete actions with timelines]***.

Here's how you'll know whether it's working: ***[something measurable]***.

[Invitation to a meeting, office hours, or a scheduled update.]

[PRINCIPAL NAME]

Telling a growth story

One of the most valuable stories in this release is a school where students grew substantially.

What makes it work

- A specific school with specific numbers
- Honesty about the work to get these students to grade level
- Naming what the school did

Showing the student benefit

What families want to understand is what the change means for their own child. This section turns each part of the revised system into a story you can tell with real students, real teachers, and real programs in your own schools.

Numbers alone do not carry this. People need to see what the change looks like for a student.

These stories do not replace an honest account of your results. Tell both. The results say where students stand. The stories say what the work looks like and who is doing that work.

Four angles follow, each tied to something the revised system now recognizes. Pick the one or two that match what your schools are actually doing. A single specific story lands harder than four general ones.

1. Career credentials and work-based learning

What the system now recognizes: The revised system places more emphasis on high-quality career credentials and work-based learning. Credentials with limited value in the job market no longer count. Credentials tied to real employment count for more than before, and they count only when paired with real work experience.

The story to tell: Introduce your community to the students taking advantage of these opportunities, and to the business and industry partners making them possible.

What this looks like in practice

- A student finishing an internship with a local employer, and the employer explaining what that student can now do.
- A senior who will graduate with a credential and a job offer.
- A registered apprenticeship your system helped build, and the students involved.
- A partnership with a technical college that did not exist three years ago.

Who to talk to: Your career and technical education director will know which students and partners have the strongest stories. Start there.

What makes it work: Make it personal and specific. Name the employer. Name the credential. Name what opportunities this opens up to the student after graduation. Say what the student can do now that they could not do before.

2. Academic growth, year over year

What the system now recognizes: The revised system increases the weight placed on growing a student academically from one year to the next.

The story to tell: Take your community inside the schools where this work is being recognized, so they can meet the educators and students behind the number.

What this looks like in practice

- A teacher describing what a year of real progress looks like for a specific student.
- A school where growth results are strong and proficiency has further to go, and the plan connecting the two.
- A grade level or subject where a change in instruction produced a change in results.

Who to talk to: Your chief academic officer or other instructional leadership team members can help identify schools.

What makes it work: Let the teacher or principal say it in their own words. A quote from a classroom carries more than a paragraph from the central office.

3. Students who started furthest behind

What the system now recognizes: The revised system targets struggling students by rewarding schools for growing students in the bottom 25 percent. Two of the five growth measures look only at those students, which means a school cannot post strong growth numbers by moving only the students already close to grade level.

The story to tell: Spotlight these student success stories, their families, and the educators and programs moving them toward proficiency.

What this looks like in practice

- An intervention program, a tutoring model, or a reading initiative, and the students participating, as long as you have parent permission to include their child in communications.
- A family describing what changed for their child this year.
- A principal, teacher, interventionist, or reading specialist whose work supported the growth.

Who to talk to: Interventionists and reading coaches. Their work is the work this measure was built to capture.

What makes it work: Growth is real and grade level may still be ahead. Saying both is more persuasive than saying one.

4. Growth and proficiency continuing into high school

What the system now recognizes: The revised system continues its emphasis on academic growth and proficiency into high school.

The story to tell: Show what it looks like when a high school takes a student who arrived behind and moves that student forward, and what changes for that student as a result.

What this looks like in practice

- A ninth grader who arrived reading below grade level, and what the school put in place
- A high school building academic support into a schedule that previously had none
- The connection between a student reaching proficiency and that student qualifying for dual enrollment or a credential program

Who to talk to: High school principals and counselors, who see this progression most directly.

What makes it work: This helps answer the question behind the shift in the formula for high schools.