

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) considers charter school extension and renewal each year based on letter grades. Given the Louisiana Department of Education's five-year transition to higher expectations and our state's recent shift to more rigorous standards, the Department and the Recovery School District (RSD) are committed to ensuring schools in an extension and renewal year are held to a fair standard. BESE approved a series of policies to support educator and student learning which ensure that educators are not unfairly impacted by the transition. These same policies ensure that extension and renewal considerations can continue to be made using our state's letter grades. This document intends to address some frequent concerns about the stability and fairness of letter grades for the 2014-15 school year.

Students in grades 3-8 took new and more rigorous ELA and math assessments.

In the 2014-15 school year, students in grades 3-8 took new Common Core aligned PARCC tests in English language arts and math. No changes were made to grades 3-8 science and social studies LEAP/iLEAP tests or to high school end-of-course exams.

Despite this change to more rigorous assessments, Louisiana has put measures in place to ensure stability in the system. The formula for calculating [School Performance Scores](#) (SPS), which are based on student achievement, academic indicators and measures of career and college readiness, will not change. However, the SPS scale used to assign letter grades may be adjusted to ensure consistency in the system and to allow educators time to learn the new expectations.

The distribution of letter grades by school type (elementary, combination, high) in 2014-15 will be the same (or better than) as in 2012-13, before new assessments were implemented.

For example, if 10 percent of elementary schools earned an "A" in 2012-13, at least the top 10 percent of elementary schools would earn an "A" in 2013-14 and in 2014-15, regardless of SPS. Charter schools that improve more—or decline less—than other schools statewide will have the opportunity to improve their letter grade, and those performing on par with the state average can expect their letter grades to remain the same.

Schools will continue to earn up to 10 progress points for making gains with students who are struggling academically.

To earn progress points, students who were non-proficient in the prior school year must exceed their expected score in the current year. The growth needed to earn progress points is defined using a value-added model, meaning students' progress from year to year is compared to the progress of similarly performing students. For more guidance on progress points, see this [K-8 fact sheet](#) or this [high school fact sheet](#).

Beginning in 2014-15, students with disabilities who previously took the alternate assessment LAA2 were required to take the same grade 3-8 assessments as other students.

As part of its assessment transition to higher expectations for all students, Louisiana discontinued the LAA2 assessment. Louisiana was one of only 16 states that historically used this type of exam to assess students with disabilities, and all other states have phased out the test as well. (LAA1—Louisiana's alternate assessment for the 1% of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities—was not impacted.)

Both statewide and in the RSD, the inclusion of students who previously would have been assessed using LAA2 caused a decline of about 2 percentage points in science and social studies LEAP/iLEAP proficiency rates. Because the impact was the same in the RSD as the rest of the state, and because the letter grades are curved, the end of LAA2 testing will not impact BESE-approved charter renewal and extension in 2015-16.

New Orleans schools experienced an influx of new English language learner students, particularly in 9th grade.

From 2013 to 2014, the number of ELL students enrolled in RSD schools doubled—from 500 to nearly 1,000—including over 100 recent immigrants who enrolled in 9th grade in August 2014. BESE policy gives schools time to help students new to the United States adjust and catch up. [BESE Bulletin 111 §515E](#) states "scores shall not be included in school performance score calculations for LEP students who have not been enrolled in a school in the United States for one full school year."

If you have questions about the transition to higher expectations or your schools extension or renewal, please reach out to your Manager of School Performance.