

**Florida Department of Education
Press Release
2001-2002 School Grades Released**

Majority of Florida Schools Show Improvement; Assistance Plus Plan Announced to Help Lower Performing Schools

TALLAHASSEE - Education Commissioner Charlie Crist today announced school grades for the 2001-02 school year. Crist, who was joined by Governor Jeb Bush, Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan and Education Secretary Jim Horne, said that each school will be able to use the more detailed grade report to provide information regarding specific strengths and weaknesses for educators and parents to help their students individually. They also announced the Assistance Plus program that will provide immediate, targeted help and expanded financial assistance to lower performing schools.

“Even as we continue to raise the bar, we have consistently seen that schools across the state have met the challenge of higher expectations,” said Crist. “With that in mind, just as our mission is to leave no child behind, so too is our mission to leave no school behind.”

Learning Gains

For the first time, Florida's grading system now contains the use of annual learning gains. This was an original and integral component of the Bush/Brogan A+ plan and was strongly embraced by educators and parents. Three years of research and development contributed to reaching this goal. After meetings across the state and input from teachers, principals, education groups such as the Florida PTA, the Florida School Board Association, the Florida Superintendents Association, and community leaders, the State Board of Education unanimously approved this approach in December 2001.

This new method bases school grades on the measurement of each student's progress from one year to the next through annual learning gains, higher standards, as well as a stronger focus on reading. With the addition of annual learning gains, educators in each school will understand how to best meet the needs of their students.

“Learning gains are a critical component of the A+ plan and are designed to help individual students make progress, whether that student attends a high performing or lower performing school,” said Bush. “Since students begin each school year with different levels of achievement and knowledge, measuring individual progress will allow schools and teacher to identify specific areas of weakness.”

School Grades and Accountability

2,515 schools received a letter grade this year. Below is a breakdown of grades:

	A	B	C	D	F	I*	N*	TOTAL
Elementary School	580	353	417	116	41	8	66	1581
% Elementary Schools	36.7	22.3	26.4	7.3	2.6	0.5	4.2	100%
Middle School	207	118	117	18	6		10	476
% Middle Schools	43.5	24.8	24.6	3.8	1.3		2.1	100%
High School	48	67	144	35	20	13	13	340
% High Schools	14.1	19.7	42.4	10.3	5.9	3.8	3.8	100%
Combined	26	22	29	4	1	1	35	118
% Combined Schools	22	18.6	24.6	3.4	0.8	0.8	29.7	100%
Total	861	560	707	173	68	22	124	2515
% Total	34.2	22.3	28.1	6.9	2.7	0.9	4.9	100%

I-Incomplete N-Schools graded for the first time

Of the 82 schools that previously received an “F,” only 10 received an “F” for the second time. This is evidence that school improvement efforts and accountability are working and will continue to expand to help schools still in need. Just as the performance bar has been raised for schools, so too has it been raised for assistance measures.

“Real accountability has proven time and again that parents, students, and teachers will rise to higher standards and expectations if called upon to do so,” said Brogan.

Assistance Plus

Parents with children who attended schools that received their second “F” within four years during the 2001-02 school year will have the option of participating in three school choice alternatives. The options available to parents are:

- Keep their child in the school attended during the 2001-02 school year and work with the staff and Assistance Plus team to improve the learning process for students in the school. These parents should contact the school principal or SAC Chairperson.
- Enroll their child in another public school graded “C” or better. These parents should contact their local school district as the district may offer additional school choice options for families.
- Enroll their child in a participating private school using an Opportunity Scholarship. Parents choosing this option must notify DOE of their intention to do so by calling toll-free 1-800-447-1636 by July 1.

The following items are attached to this release:

- An example of school grading;
- School Grades Distribution;
- Three main activities in Assistance Plus;
- A fact sheet on the Assistance Plus program and assistance timeline;
- Web sites and toll-free phone number;
- A graph demonstrating the success of raising standards and increasing accountability;
- A list of schools who have received an “F” this year; and
- Examples of Successful Schools.

[Press packets attachments.](#)