

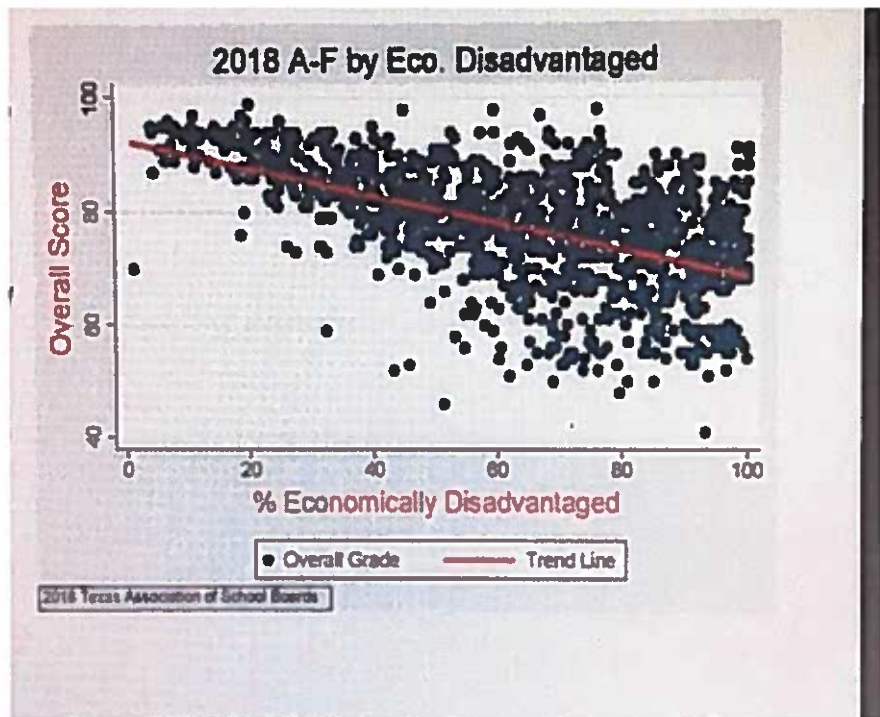
August 27, 2018

Arp Accountability: A-F rankings



Recently the state released their A-F rankings of schools across the state. Before I go any further, please understand that I am a huge fan of the public school system. I believe in being held accountable. Accountability is the driving force behind this great country that we live in. As a public school teacher, I feel that educators should be held to a high standard, for we are entrusted with the most "precious cargo" in the world. That being said, with the help of some cited works and colleagues across the state, I want to give everyone a quick look into our accountability system in Texas and what this means for Arp ISD. I want to specifically thank Dr. Jill Silser, superintendent of Gunter ISD, for allowing me to share some of her insight, along with some of our other colleagues, regarding our current accountability system.

Affluence: One aspect regarding our A-F rankings that is fascinating to me is the illustration that it provides regarding the state of poverty across our state.¹ Dax Gonzalez, Texas Association of School Boards, stated "accountability labels are generally better at tracking economically disadvantaged students than they are at measuring how much our children are learning."² Educators know this. TEA assessors should understand this. Money is often not the issue! As pleasant as the



¹ www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-is-for-Affluent-Issue-Brief-Format.pdf

²

<http://www.tasb.org/About-TASB/News-and-Media/Statements/Statement-from-TASB-on-A-F-School-Accountability-L-en.aspx>

thought might be, it does not necessarily follow that the children of affluent parents or grandparents are highly motivated and independent learners. Schools cannot assume that every more-economically-advantaged child comes to school well-rested, well-fed, well adjusted, and ready to learn. The affluent are not automatically immune to the scourges of chemical addiction, domestic violence, and broken homes. Teachers can tell of lonely, isolated, unhappy students whose home life is spent in their own rooms with their own TV's and their own computers and video games. Never had to share a toy or even a restroom, some haven't developed social skills for a happy school experience. No doubt money is valuable in affording "things" children need. However, critical investments most beneficial to a child's life are time, attention, interest, guidance, and love. Do all parents, wealthy or not, provide these? How can we as school personnel communicate this to parents and guardians? How does TEA assess these needs?

Back to Test Prep: The values of our school community can be found in our mission statement, which states, "The mission of Arp ISD, a community rich in tradition, is not only to educate students in academics but also to provide them with skills for search, research, and discovery to expand their own horizons in life." Many faculty and community members shared their own statements, words, and phrases that encompass our mission. I received no input from anyone that gave me any indication that they want their children or students subjected to a daily regimented test prep rehearsal that focuses solely on one test given on one day during the school year. Now, should we prepare our students for state mandated tests? Yes, we most certainly should, and we most certainly will. Do we need to give them test taking strategies? Yes, we should, and yes we will. Should we, because of one standardized test series, sacrifice developing a culture of learning where kids love and want to read and write and solve equations and develop skills that may lead to a working trade? No, we should not, and we will not. We will teach our kids that assessments are a part of everyday life; therefore, any STAAR test, each time it is administered, will be met by an AUTHENTIC, RESPONSIBLE, AND PREPARED Arp Tiger student!

Confusion: Letter grades at Arp ISD are as follows. A-excellent, B-good, C-average, D-we don't give out...any grade below 70 is considered failing, so a D to us, is failing. Here is how the Texas A-F system grades are defined...A-exemplary performance, B-recognized performance, C-acceptable performance, D-in need of improvement, F-unacceptable performance. How are these ratings determined? These ratings are based on 32 pages of data that includes over 12,000 data points, explained in an accountability manual³ that is almost 200 pages in length. Arp ISD received a C rating (78) for the 2017-2018 school year.

³ <https://tea.texas.gov/2018accountabilitymanual.aspx>

Destructive: Dr. Champion, Klein ISD Superintendent, stated it best - "Just as we would never reduce a student's worth to a single grade, the reduction of our schools and district to a single grade based on such a limited measure devalues the unique qualities and gifts of (our students)."⁴ The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) noted, "The reduction of a campus or district to a single grade dismisses the variance in a school, unfairly reducing every student to the grade assigned to the campus or district."⁵ At Arp we will work diligently to improve our "rating." As we do this, we will not allow this letter grade to undermine or destroy the vision that we have for our school community. Arp ISD Vision-"Where exceptional people lovingly, skillfully, intentionally, and carefully develop great people who will impact the world."

Evidence: We use both formal and informal assessments to determine if our students master any objective we put before them. This process takes days and in some cases, depending on the curriculum, even weeks. As educators we are expected to examine the evidence that we gain from our assessments to ensure a quality education for our students. There is no evidence that suggests that an A-F grading system will help schools or make them even better. In the longest and most researched A-F system in Florida, the number of schools that received an A increased 41%, yet student achievement improved little, as most improvements were attributed to rule changes in the system and not to actual student achievement gains.⁶ There is also substantial evidence from other states that supports the argument that schools receiving letter grades negatively impacted their schools.⁷

Failure: **Udai Yadla**: "Failure is the greatest teacher." The takeaway from this quote in regards to our current A-F system is that true educators recognize that this system is a failure to our "precious cargo." Our students are being failed by this accountability rating. Nonetheless, we will do our best to prepare our students for whatever obstacles they may face. We will not "teach the test" but steadfastly strive to provide our students with skills for search, research, and discovery!

Accountability

⁴ http://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=126&v=E1zDuyddgzs

⁵ <http://www.tasanet.org/cms/lib/TX01923126/Centricity/Domain/393/A-F-talkingpoints-2018.pdf>

⁶ Tanner, J., (2016). The A-F Accountability Mistake. The Texas Accountability Series. Austin, TX: The Texas Association of School Administrators.

www.tasanet.org/cms/lib/TX01923126/Centricity/Domain/393/A-F-Essay.pdf

⁷ The Oklahoma Center for Education Policy and The Center for Educational Research and Evaluation (January 2013). An examination of the Oklahoma State Department of Education's A-F report card. The University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University. <https://okea.org/assets/files/A-F%20Study.pdf>

The late Pat Summitt, highly successful women's basketball coach at the University of Tennessee, was quoted as saying, **"Responsibility equals accountability equals ownership. And a sense of ownership is the most powerful weapon a team or organization can have."**

Arp ISD is an organization that wants to be held accountable. We want to be held accountable for ensuring that our students are safe, loved, responsible, prepared, caring, confident, humble, curious, and respectful! We want to be held accountable for being fiscal stewards for our school community. We want to be held accountable as a team that daily demonstrates proper leadership qualities.

So what type of accountability system works? There is a collective group of districts that are partnering with the Texas Association of School Administrators to form the Texas Public Accountability Consortium (TPAC)⁸. This group of 62 school districts are working together to develop a grass-roots Community Based Accountability System (CBAS) where every child is valued and respected and schools can be evaluated beyond single-day standardized tests. I am currently researching how we can get involved with this group.

Meanwhile I am proud to be an Arp Tiger! We are blessed to have wonderful facilities and wonderful people that engage our students in the classroom, in the band hall, on the ball field, on stage, in academic competitions, in leadership organizations, in robotics, and even in bass fishing!

John S. Arrington
Superintendent of Arp ISD

⁸ <http://www.tasanet.org/Page/995>

ARP ISD

Where exceptional people lovingly, skillfully, intentionally, and carefully develop great people who will impact the world.

an ARP student is

AUTHENTIC

Embraces their potential.

Independent. Courageous. Game changers

RESPONSIBLE

Serves others.

Accountable. Demonstrates integrity.

Builds meaningful relationships.

PREPARED

Invested in their own future.

Strives for excellence. Accomplished and goal oriented.

Has crucial tools to thrive.



THE MISSION OF ARP ISD, A COMMUNITY RICH IN TRADITION, IS NOT ONLY TO EDUCATE STUDENTS IN ACADEMICS BUT ALSO TO PROVIDE THEM SKILLS FOR SEARCH, RESEARCH, AND DISCOVERY TO EXPAND THEIR OWN HORIZONS IN LIFE.

3 Schools

899 Students Enrolled

HOW WELL IS THIS DISTRICT PERFORMING OVERALL?



UNDERSTANDING OVERALL PERFORMANCE



This report card is designed to tell us how well we are helping students reach grade level and how well we are preparing them for success after high school. Much like the grades we give students, we can use these grades to identify ways to help schools improve over time. The overall grade is based on performance in three different areas, or domains, which are noted below.



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



The Student Achievement domain tells us how much students know and are able to do at the end of the school year.



SCHOOL PROGRESS



The School Progress domain shows us how students are performing over time and compares that progress to similar schools.



CLOSING THE GAPS



The Closing the Gaps domain tells us how well different populations of students in a district are performing.

DISTINCTIONS

✗ Foster Family Findings