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Later today, the [State Board of Education](#) will likely vote to approve the release of the [Oklahoma School Report Cards](#) as required by state statute. These new accountability reports are very different than previous versions of A-F Report Cards and are calculated using school data from the 2017-18 school year.

The newly redesigned reports de-emphasize letter grades while spotlighting data that we can use to drive meaningful school improvement. Most notably, this version includes a growth indicator that explores student progress across all score performance levels. This measure will help us look, student-by-student, for ways to improve how we serve all children in Mid-Del.

Another significant change is that we will be focusing on chronic absenteeism, rather than simply attendance percentages. A significant body of research shows that students who are chronically absent also tend to struggle in school academically and are more likely to drop out. While this seems fairly obvious, we also know that chronic absenteeism has root causes that are complex. We are already working with schools to develop strategies to reduce the number of students who are chronically absent.

This is also the first time state accountability reports have included a calculation for the progress of English Learners (EL). Because this is a growing population within our state and community, we are continuously learning how we can more effectively serve our EL students. This includes the way we develop training for all staff to work with students. We also know that once EL students officially become bi-lingual students, they tend to perform at, or above, the academic level of their peers.

These are among the reasons that we see this new version of the state report cards as better than previous ones. As educators, we have an obligation to look at available data to better understand the students we serve. As we see strengths, we will work to reinforce them, or even replicate them. What we will not do is place a higher value on increasing letter grades over doing what is best for students. Ideally, these two goals align. When schools are ranked and then sorted according to a bell curve, however, our focus can change. It shouldn't.

The new accountability reports will inform our path towards continuous improvement. Our professional goals and professional development goals will continue to focus on educating the whole child. This is how we improve student attendance. This is how we integrate individualized student services, such as those for our EL students, into our instructional

vision. This is how we help teachers have instructional resources that are better-aligned to state standards and assessments.

When viewing school accountability, the lens we use matters. We know that no single data point can tell the story of our schools. In future years, the report card website (or dashboard) will also house contextual data to provide a more complete picture. These data include information on exemplary programs and initiatives within the district. Together this information will tell more, but never all, of our story.

The outcome of our work is not a letter grade. It is the students that we see every day. It is the lives they lead once they advance from our classrooms. Our elementary schools prepare our students for middle school. Our middle schools prepare our students for high school. Our high schools prepare our students for careers, college, military service, community involvement, and many other measures of success.

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