

**PRESS Release Related to the Publication of
“An Examination of the Oklahoma State Department of
Education’s A - F Report Card”
Commissioned by OSSBA and CCOSA,
January 2013***

Good morning. Thank you for joining us.

My name is Patrick Forsyth; I am a researcher at the University of Oklahoma. I am joined by co-authors of the report from OU and OSU Curt Adams, Laura Barnes, Gaetane Jean-Marie, Mwarumba Mwavita, and research associates Ellen Dollarhide, Ryan Miskell, and Jordan Ware.

We are keenly aware of the controversy surrounding the School Report Card, yet we hope our report provides opportunity and direction for educational leaders, legislators, and state department of education officials to collaborate in addressing its current limitations. It is not surprising, given time, regulatory, and legislative constraints, that first efforts to develop a comprehensive accountability system would require changes and improvements.

This team of scholars affiliated with the State’s two public research universities began its investigation and analysis of Oklahoma’s A-F Report Card System last November. We were asked by OSSBA and CCOSA to review the system implemented as a result of Oklahoma legislation and the State’s NCLB waiver agreement with the US Department of Education. If we discovered limitations and deficiencies, we were directed to propose recommendations for improving the system. We based our review on two primary sources of authority: 1) knowledge of psychometrics and statistics, and 2) accepted practices related to accountability systems and scientific evaluation.

After a careful examination, we concluded that the A-F framework contains serious threats to validity and reliability and is not salvageable in its current form. We found that the three components upon which grades are based (student achievement, student growth, and whole school performance) were seriously flawed from a psychometric perspective. The convoluted and arbitrary composition of letter grades based on these components makes it meaningless for school improvement purposes.

We make six specific recommendations for moving forward:

- 1) Develop a report card format that uses multiple school indicators that more adequately reflect a school performance profile.
- 2) Rely on trend lines of both process and outcome indicators over the year and multiple years to determine growth in school performance.
- 3) Promote the use of valid and reliable measurement of process variables at the district and school level, to be used by schools in their improvement plans.
- 4) Make explicit the limitations of the accountability system and warn of its inappropriate use for high-stakes decision-making.
- 5) Legitimize the process by embedding assessment throughout the school year.
- 6) Take the time to enlist the services of assessment and evaluation experts who can objectively build an exemplary Oklahoma accountability system directed at incremental and continuous school improvement.

It is the view of the research team that there should be agreement by key stakeholders on a reformulated accountability system for Oklahoma's public schools. An effective school accountability system, aimed at improving schools, is possible only with the consent, support, and cooperation of parents, school professionals, and the State's leadership.

The panel will entertain questions based on our study and analyses. We will avoid speculation on topics outside of our expertise. If you will address your questions to me, I will direct them to an appropriate panelist. Thank you.