



# Resetting school accountability, from the bottom up

*Empowering parents and communities  
to drive real reform in Ohio*

By Aaron Churchill and Chad L. Aldis  
June 2020

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## **Acknowledgments**

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# Executive summary

Ohio is at a crossroads. Over the past year, state policymakers have wrestled with several hotly contested issues in K–12 education—private school vouchers, academic distress commissions (ADCs), and school report cards being among the most controversial. Then, totally unforeseen, a worldwide pandemic swept into Ohio, shuttering school buildings, cancelling state assessments and school report cards, and easing up on graduation requirements for the 2019–20 year.

What’s next? Should Ohio hit the restart button on these key education policies? Should it put state testing and report cards on “pause” once again, even if schools reopen this fall? Or should the state shift gears in light of its fractious education debates and an accountability system that’s already in flux—but in a disorderly, rudderless sort of way?

This brief sketches out a policy roadmap that would systematically alter Ohio’s current accountability course, even as the state continues to navigate toward the destination of readying every one of its young people for success in college and career. We recommend the following policies—here in briefest form—with more detailed explanations beginning on page 8.

For the 2020–21 school year, Ohio should

- Administer state assessments and
- Report assessment results on school report cards but
- Withhold school ratings for 2020–21.

Effective starting in the 2020–21 school year, Ohio should

- Repeal the ADC law,
- Eliminate automatic closure for charters, and
- Undertake an independent review of existing school-improvement efforts.

Effective starting in the 2021–22 school year and continuing thereafter, Ohio should

- Fully implement a revamped school report card;
- Refine—and reduce—performance-based eligibility for EdChoice scholarships;
- Expand eligibility for income-based EdChoice to 300 percent of poverty level;
- Require, subject to capacity, district participation in open enrollment;
- Remove geographic caps on charters;
- Expand eligibility for regulatory exemptions;
- Provide bonus funding to excellent schools; and
- Expand the quality charter school incentive fund.

Taken together, these recommendations produce a school accountability paradigm shift that eases top-down mechanisms in favor of a bottom-up approach premised on greater transparency, more parental choice, and regulatory flexibility.

Some of the recommendations complement one another. For instance, we suggest paring down “performance-based” EdChoice—a program that is too often viewed as punishment for districts because voucher eligibility hinges on state ratings. At the same time, however, Ohio should expand income-based EdChoice to ensure that private school options remain within the reach of families in financial need. Similarly, we suggest rolling back the state’s ineffective and controversial “academic distress” policy while enhancing state report cards and choice options as vital checks on the performance of schools, as well as continuing Ohio’s federally required support efforts for poorly performing schools.

Those familiar with the Fordham Institute’s history in Ohio may be surprised to see us propose any “easing” of accountability. But we haven’t gone soft. Rather, we base our proposals on three convictions. First, nothing’s accomplished by half-hearted, fake measures that have more bark (and bureaucracy) than bite. Having seen the lukewarm state support for ADCs, for example, we doubt that lasting change can be accomplished through this intervention framework.<sup>1</sup> Second, we unwaveringly support rigorous statewide assessment and an honest school report card. In fact, removing sanctions linked to the report card could safeguard its integrity by lessening the impulse to fiddle with measures in an effort to boost ratings. Third, as required under federal law, we urge the state to take an assertive role in supporting turnarounds in the state’s lowest-performing schools (some of which are in ADC districts).

Policy paralysis—putting assessments, report cards, and choice policies on an extended pause—leads to no progress and is not the right path forward for Ohio students and families. Despite the present arguments and disruptions, the need for all students to meet high academic standards is no less urgent than before the pandemic. Parents, thousands of whom have risen to the challenge of at-home education, deserve further empowerment over their children’s education. Taken together, the policies recommended in this paper comprise a cohesive package that would enable Ohio to move forward in the years ahead—and not bog down in old debates. This short paper, of course, cannot touch on every matter of policy importance. But if enacted, this bottom-up approach to education policy—one that parents, taxpayers, and schools alike can embrace—would allow the Buckeye State to turn the page to a new era of real accountability and choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Though we have broadly lent support for the ADC model, we’ve expressed concerns as well; for example, Chad L. Aldis, “Ohio needs a better process for improving poor-performing schools,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 10, 2019, and Aaron Churchill, “How to improve Ohio’s academic distress commissions,” *Ohio Gadfly Daily*, February 27, 2019.

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# How school accountability became contentious

Prior to the pandemic, state policymakers were embroiled in several hot-button debates. At the forefront were school report cards, the state's district-level intervention model known as ADCs, and the EdChoice voucher program. The public health crisis put these debates on hold, but they are sure to reemerge in the coming months. Here's a brief review of the issues.

## School report cards

In 2012–13, Ohio introduced a new school report card. It includes three key features: (1) measures that gauge students' success in early literacy and readiness for college and career; (2) a focus on student growth, or value-added (VA), measures; and (3) a clear A–F rating system for the school itself. Despite these strengths and its vital role in informing the public about school quality, the report card has endured much criticism. Some have argued that the state should ditch what they perceive as punitive ratings, while others allege that the ratings correlate too closely with demographics. The link between ratings and controversial policies such as ADCs and EdChoice eligibility has also put report cards in the line of fire. Based on concerns such as these, the legislature convened a review committee that met throughout fall 2019. Though proposals from traditional education groups and others were put forward, no changes were made based on its review. Lawmakers, however, continue to express misgivings about the current framework and show strong interest in reworking it.

## Academic distress commissions

In 2015, the legislature passed House Bill 70, which aims to strengthen Ohio's district turnaround model. The key provision of the bill is its requirement that the distress commissions—comprised of three state and two local appointees—hire a CEO who is given significant authority to implement a districtwide improvement plan. The new law stirred controversy almost from the start. Though school boards remain intact—albeit with much diminished authority—critics condemned this approach to district reform as an attack on elected boards and democracy. For months, local news in the two districts that have been under ADC oversight longest (Youngstown and Lorain) highlighted friction between the commissions and the school boards.<sup>2</sup> Legislators, sensing that the ADCs had become politically toxic and seeing little evidence of progress, began looking for alternatives. Some urged the repeal of ADCs, while others have sought an overhaul that would establish a lighter-touch intervention model. With no consensus emerging, lawmakers in June 2019 put a moratorium on any new ADCs being named in 2019–20 (and none will be added the following year due to the pause in report cards). However, because legislators have left the existing three ADCs intact, the debate will likely continue.

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<sup>2</sup> Youngstown and Lorain were overseen by an ADC (operating under different rules) prior to the passage of House Bill 70. Halfway through the 2018–19 school year, an ADC was established in a third district, East Cleveland.

## EdChoice vouchers

For more than a decade, Ohio has offered EdChoice scholarships (also known as vouchers) that enable needy children to attend private schools. There are currently two EdChoice programs:<sup>3</sup> One bases voucher eligibility on low ratings of the district schools that students would otherwise attend—what some have called a “failing-schools” model. The second is based on family income. At present, any student from a household earning 200 percent or less of the federal poverty guideline is eligible. Starting in late 2019, districts began to sharply criticize the performance-based EdChoice program as the list of designated schools was set to balloon for 2020–21. Heated debate followed, and legislators sought a compromise that would reduce the number of EdChoice-designated schools while expanding choice via the income-based program. Despite intense negotiation, no agreement was reached. In March, legislators froze the list, putting the debate on hold. However, the list of EdChoice-designated schools is set to expand again for the 2021–22 school year, and legislators are sure to hear the same concerns again.

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<sup>3</sup> Though not discussed in this report, Ohio has three additional voucher programs, one specifically for students living in Cleveland and two programs for students with disabilities.

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# The pandemic and its effects on accountability

Due to the pandemic sweeping the nation, Governor DeWine ordered schools to physically shut from March 17, 2020, through the end of the school year. Though instruction did not entirely cease—many schools and districts strove to maintain it “at a distance”—the disruption led Ohio to waive state assessments, school report cards, and graduation requirements for 2019–20.

The closures and waivers will have downstream effects on school report cards and the policies and programs linked to them. The absence of 2019–20 exam data muddies the calculations of several longitudinal measures in 2020–21. For instance, in order to calculate pupil growth, Ohio will probably have to implement an alternative VA measure that relies on older test data—2018–19 and earlier. The state may not even be able to calculate VA scores for a number of elementary schools, as there will be no fourth-grade (and perhaps no fifth-grade) scores for the year. In addition to these complications, building closures have likely depressed student achievement.<sup>4</sup> As a result, many schools are likely to post lower ratings at the end of 2020–21 compared to 2018–19, the last year in which report-card ratings were last assigned. The appendix table displays in more detail Ohio’s report-card components and the probable effects of the spring 2020 disruptions on the calculations and ratings.

The one-year gap in report cards also affects policies tied to school ratings, whether “sanctions” or “incentives.”<sup>5</sup> Table 1 generally indicates that the one-year pause in testing and report cards freezes the list of districts or schools identified for sanctions. For instance, in regard to ADCs, no additional districts would enter state intervention in 2020–21 (nor would any exit), due to the missing year of ratings. The rightmost column on the table looks further into the future, with the prospect of lower 2020–21 ratings—if assigned—in view. Due to the projected dip in ratings, more districts or schools would likely be identified under the state’s sanctions.

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<sup>4</sup> See Sarah D. Sparks, “Academically speaking, the ‘COVID slide’ could be a lot worse than you think,” *Education Week*, April 9, 2020, and Paul T. von Hippel, “How will the coronavirus crisis affect children’s learning? Unequally,” *Education Next*, April 9, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Not all policies linked to report cards are included in table 1; for instance, it excludes the never-used Columbus “parent trigger” law or conditions upon which charter schools may switch sponsors. For a fuller listing, see Ohio Legislative Service Commission, “Final Analysis of House Bill 197 of the 133rd General Assembly,” April 2020.



**Table 1: Summary of likely effects of school closures on key “sanctions” policies**

Policy	Brief description	Status of policy for 2020–21	Status of policy for 2021–22 and beyond
<b>Academic distress commissions</b>	State intervention when districts receive three consecutive overall F’s.	<b>Frozen.</b> No new districts will be added to the three existing ADCs.	No new ADC districts are possible until 2022–23, when two districts are at risk.
<b>Challenged districts</b>	Startup charters may locate in “challenged” districts that receive low ratings.	<b>Frozen.</b> List stays at 220 districts currently deemed as challenged.	Additional districts may be added in fall 2021 as ratings decline; charters could open in those districts in 2022–23.
<b>Charter automatic closure</b>	Permanent closure when charters have low ratings for three consecutive years.	<b>Frozen.</b> No new schools required to close in summer 2021.	More schools than usual likely identified for closure in fall 2021 and forced to close at the end of 2021–22.
<b>Performance-based EdChoice</b>	Students are eligible for private school vouchers when district schools have low ratings for two out of three years.	<b>Frozen.</b> EdChoice list for the year is the same as 2019–20 (it identifies 517 schools).	The 2021–22 list is currently slated to include 1,227 schools; list may expand further in 2022–23 as ratings are expected to decline.

**Note:** The analyses in tables 1 and 2 assume that Ohio administers state exams in 2020–21 and maintains its current report card policies. It also assumes learning losses stemming from the spring 2020 school closures, leading to lower 2020–21 school ratings.

Though not nearly as controversial as sanctions on low-performing schools, Ohio also has a few policies that link incentives to high performance on report cards. In the sphere of school funding, the state provides relatively modest bonuses to all districts and charter schools based on their third-grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rates. Moreover, in the state budget bill passed in July 2019, legislators enacted a supplemental funding program for high-performing charter schools. Last, the state provides regulatory exemptions to a small number of high-achieving districts that generally serve more prosperous communities. Because these incentive policies are linked to report-card data, they too are affected by the pandemic-related school closures. For example, the list of districts qualifying for regulatory relief would be frozen, with no additional districts added in 2020–21 and fewer likely becoming eligible in the following year due to projected declines in achievement.

**Table 2: Summary of likely effects of school closures on key “incentives” policies**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>Status of policy for 2020–21</b>	<b>Status of policy for 2021–22 and beyond</b>
<b>Bonus funding for districts and charter schools</b>	Modest bonus funding based on four-year graduation and third-grade reading proficiency rates.	<b>Frozen.</b> Bonus funding is based on 2017–18 data due to suspension of the state funding formula used for district allocations in FYs 2020 and 2021.	Third-grade reading bonus may decline, but graduation bonus may increase in 2021–22.
<b>Quality charter funding</b>	Supplemental funding for high-poverty charters generally based on high performance-index (PI) scores and VA ratings.	State will use 2017–18 and 2018–19 data to determine whether additional charters qualify.	No new quality charters would be added in 2021–22 (program also requires budget reappropriation).
<b>Regulatory exemptions</b>	Exempts high-performing districts from certain state requirements, mostly related to teacher qualifications.	<b>Frozen.</b> No additional districts qualify for exemptions.	Fewer districts likely to qualify in 2021–22 as ratings are expected to decline.

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# Policy recommendations

With significant debates still unresolved and key policies suspended or frozen, Ohio policymakers need a clear plan to move forward. This section sketches a roadmap for the 2020–21 school year and beyond. It is grounded on three enduring principles:

1. **Transparency and honesty about school quality are critical.** Parents count on an honest assessment of student achievement in their children’s schools and other schools in their community. Taxpayers, likewise, deserve clear information about local schools to gauge whether resources are being used to deliver desired educational outcomes.
2. **Parents should have more quality choices—not fewer.** To its credit, Ohio has empowered families with more options than ever through its choice programs. Yet many low- and middle-income parents still struggle to access quality schools for their children, whether due to income constraints for private education or limited public school options. State policymakers should continue to unlock educational opportunities for hardworking Ohio families, while also establishing support systems and incentives that encourage the growth of quality schools in all sectors.
3. **Robust choice, paired with transparency on outcomes and proper incentives, drives both improvement and accountability.** In the end, we all want excellent schools that equip students to achieve the American dream. Rather than relying entirely on top-down policies, a bottom-up model—built on parent demand and honesty around pupil outcomes—also drives school improvement and innovation. Regulatory waivers and financial incentives (without strings attached) can also be used to further encourage schools to improve through a flexible, bottom-up approach.

Based on the principles above and mindful of challenges brought on by the pandemic, we envision a comprehensive reform package that contains the recommendations below. The effort should include provisions on state testing and report cards for the 2020–21 school year, as well as permanent changes that would be effective starting in 2020–21 or 2021–22. The following lists and briefly explains the specific policies we recommend.

For the 2020–21 school year, Ohio should do the following:

- **Administer state assessments.** State exams offer a vital annual check on student achievement and growth, and the spring 2020 disruptions have already left worrisome information gaps about student learning. Provided that assessment can occur safely, Ohio should administer its regular state assessment program, enabling parents and educators to understand the academic progress and needs of the students for which they’re responsible.
- **Report assessment results on school report cards.** Ohio should report data in the usual report-card format at the end of 2020–21, including proficiency rates, PI scores, VA scores (which can be computed even with 2020 data missing), graduation rates, and college- and career-readiness rates (for example, industry credentials and remediation-free ACT or SAT scores). This public transparency would enable local communities and school authorities to assess strengths and weaknesses and track trends over time.

- **Withhold school ratings for 2020–21.** Due to the anticipated learning losses and the complications due to the missing 2019–20 data, Ohio should not assign any report-card ratings to schools for the 2020–21 school year. Withholding ratings would also ensure fairness to schools, as they’ve had to adjust their educational delivery due to unforeseen circumstances.

Effective starting in the 2020–21 school year, we recommend the following:

- **Repeal the ADC law.** ADCs were a well-intentioned effort to turn around struggling districts. But hostile opposition to these efforts has led to ineffective implementation, continuing friction, and little real progress. Ohio should dissolve the existing ADCs and eliminate the ADC law.
- **Eliminate automatic closure for charters.** In the mid-2000s, Ohio adopted an automatic-closure law that forced consistently low-performing charters to close. With the advent of the state’s more sophisticated and demanding evaluation system for charter sponsors, however, we’ve seen sponsors become more quality conscious and close dozens of weak charters in recent years. Provided that Ohio maintains a rigorous sponsor-evaluation framework, the closure law can be repealed.
- **Undertake an independent review of existing school-improvement efforts.** Under federal law, Ohio must intervene in the lowest 5 percent of schools, schools with low graduation rates, and schools with low-performing subgroups. The state already has improvement systems to support interventions, but little is known about their effectiveness and whether schools have the help and resources needed for change. To shine a light, a one-time, independent review of these improvement efforts should be conducted to see if it’s necessary to increase the state’s capacity to support struggling schools, both those that federal law requires and others that may benefit from such support.

Effective starting in 2021–22, we recommend the following:

- **Fully implement a revamped report card.** To ensure strong accountability—even in the absence of formal penalties such as ADCs and automatic closure—Ohio must maintain a robust school report card. We recommend that the state revamp its report card, building on the strengths of the current version (clear rating system, multiple measures) while simplifying the framework (fewer ratings) and evaluating schools in a fairer way (with more emphasis on student growth).<sup>6</sup> Because the new report card would be based on largely similar measures—for example, state exam results, graduation rates, and indicators of college and career readiness—the state should implement the full report card at the end of 2021–22, including component and overall ratings presented in a user-friendly form.
- **Reduce the number of schools on the performance-based EdChoice designation list.** To determine scholarship eligibility for the 2021–22 school year and thereafter, Ohio should move away from its existing framework that uses the state report card to designate district schools in which

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<sup>6</sup> This paper does not cover the revisions to the report card that we recommend. However, our suggestions for an improved report card can be found in our report *Back to the Basics: A plan to simplify and balance Ohio’s school report cards* (December 2017) and “Testimony Given before the Ohio Report Card Study Committee,” *Ohio Gadfly Daily*, November 13, 2019.

students are eligible for performance-based vouchers. As possible alternatives, the state should consider basing eligibility on federal ESSA interventions or living within identified opportunity zones.<sup>7</sup> These scholarships would continue to be funded via deductions from districts' state aid.

- **Expand eligibility for income-based EdChoice to 300 percent of the federal poverty level.**

Ohio should expand its income-based EdChoice program. Rather than funding these vouchers via deduction from districts' state aid, however, the state should fund them through deductions from the state foundation funding—*not*, as is current practice, via a standalone line-item appropriation that is more susceptible to budget cuts and even to a line-item veto. These changes to the income-based model would give more working-class Ohioans access to private schools, ensure a stable funding source, and remove the bulk of vouchers from the controversial practice of district deduction. As the state expands its private-school-choice options, Ohio should consider making private schools' academic-achievement data more accessible to families.<sup>8</sup>

- **Require, subject to capacity, district participation in open enrollment.** Although most Ohio districts allow nonresident students to open enroll in their schools, a number of high-performing districts encircling the state's large cities have refused to participate, thus denying quality school options to children who need them most. Subject to school capacity, requiring statewide open enrollment, as states such as Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and Minnesota do, would expand public school opportunities, especially to families living in urban centers.

- **Remove geographic caps on charters.** Under state law, brick-and-mortar charters may locate only in designated school districts and are thus concentrated in the state's major cities. Ohio should remove this restriction and allow new start-ups in all areas of the state. Lifting this geographic cap will expand public school options while also allowing Ohio to eliminate a sanction that designates certain districts as "challenged."

- **Expand eligibility for regulatory exemptions.** Ohio law provides automatic waivers from state regulations that largely pertain to inputs such as teacher qualifications. However, these exemptions are restricted to a small number of districts with high student achievement. To give less-advantaged districts additional freedom to innovate, Ohio should expand eligibility to all that improve their overall report-card ratings.

- **Provide bonus funding to excellent schools.** In recent years, Ohio has provided modest bonus funds based on district and charter schools' third-grade reading-proficiency rates and graduation rates. However, these limited dollars are spread too thinly across all districts to motivate higher performance. To recognize and reward excellence, Ohio should repurpose these funds and allocate them to individual schools (district and charter) that achieve a top overall rating or demonstrate an improved overall rating.

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<sup>7</sup> The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to identify schools for "comprehensive" and "targeted" support and improvement. Ohio currently identifies 148 district schools in comprehensive status based on being in the lowest 5 percent in overall ratings or having four-year graduation rates of less than 67 percent. An additional 451 district schools are in targeted status for having low-performing subgroups. Opportunity zones are economically distressed areas identified under federal guidelines. For more, see the Ohio Development Services Agency's webpage "Ohio Opportunity Zones": [https://www.development.ohio.gov/bs/bs\\_censustracts.htm](https://www.development.ohio.gov/bs/bs_censustracts.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Ohio requires private schools to administer assessments, either state or normed-referenced tests, to students receiving vouchers, and the state reports proficiency rates. Those test results, however, are not presently reported in a user-friendly format.

- **Expand the quality charter school incentive fund.** In 2019, Ohio created a supplemental funding program that enables high-performing, high-poverty charter schools to receive additional state funding to help them expand and serve more students. In the next biennial budget, the state should make this valuable program part of permanent law.

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## Conclusion

We at Fordham have long held that standards and choice are the two pillars of education reform.<sup>9</sup> They work hand in hand: Academic standards ensure that schools have clear direction on what students are supposed to know and be able to do at the end of each grade, while transparency around outcomes gives parents and the public a sense of whether students are meeting, or are on-pace to meet, these standards. The choice pillar, meanwhile, empowers families who aren't satisfied with the offerings of their local schools or the achievement of their children by giving them alternatives that better match their expectations and their children's needs. Schools, therefore, must both account publicly for their success in helping students achieve state standards as well as recognize their obligation to satisfy parents who, in a choice-rich environment, can take their children to schools they feel better meet their needs.

For two decades, Ohio has pursued both reform strategies. But the state hasn't always stayed the course. On the standards side, state policymakers have had difficulty upholding rigorous assessments and well-designed report cards in the face of political pressure to weaken them. In the realm of choice, Ohio has left incomplete its otherwise praiseworthy policies. Middle-income Ohioans, for instance, still remain locked out of the state's voucher programs, leaving them unable to afford private school tuition. Families in small towns and inner-ring suburbs have fewer public school options, as start-up charters have been outlawed there, while urban families are denied quality district options when open enrollment is forbidden.

Through a robust, bottom-up approach, the package of recommendations laid out in this report would strengthen both reform pillars in Ohio. By putting more faith in families to make good decisions in light of transparent information about quality, Ohio can emerge from the pandemic and all its disruptions and march into a new era of accountability, one that relies more on families and local communities than on state mandates.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Petrilli and Chester E. Finn, Jr., "The two tracks of reform," *National Review*, April 1, 2014.

# Appendix

**Table A1: Summary of likely effects of spring 2020 school closures on 2020–21 state report cards**

Report-card component	Brief description	Calculated in normal way?	Likely effect on ratings (relative to 2018–19)
<b>Achievement</b>	Achievement on state exams, as indicated by proficiency rates and PI scores, a composite measure on state exams. <sup>10</sup>	<b>Yes.</b> Normal proficiency and PI calculations apply.	<b>Significantly down.</b> Lost learning time results in lower proficiency rates and PI scores in 2020–21. Steeper declines more likely in high-poverty schools.
<b>Progress</b>	Student growth on state exams, using a VA model. Overall VA score, plus three subgroup VA scores, are included in component rating (lowest 20 percent in achievement, special-education, and gifted students).	<b>Modified calculations.</b> Lack of 2019–20 data likely requires use of different VA model. No fourth-grade and possibly no fifth-grade VA results. <sup>11</sup>	<b>Neutral.</b> 2020–21 VA scores possibly lower but offset by new grading scale that boosts ratings. <sup>12</sup> Though average VA rating statewide may not change significantly, individual districts and schools may see large changes in ratings (“swings” from, for example, A to F and <i>vice versa</i> ).
<b>Graduation</b>	High school graduation within four and five years after entering ninth grade.	<b>Yes.</b> No use of prior-year data. Normal four- and five-year graduation-rate calculations apply.	<b>Significantly up.</b> Local flexibility in awarding diplomas to class of 2020 increases four-year graduation rates. Five-year graduation rates for class of 2019 also slightly up.

<sup>10</sup> Within the achievement component, there are nonexam measures based on chronic absenteeism and gifted identification and service rates. Those data, however, carry little weight in the component.

<sup>11</sup> When state exams are given in nonconsecutive grades (for example, science), SAS, the analytics firm that calculates VA scores, relies on a different VA model than the one used when testing occurs in consecutive grades (that is, grades 3–8, math and reading). For an overview of the two models, see “Value-Added Analysis—A Comparison of the URM and MRM Approaches Using the SAS EVS Model” (Columbus, OH: Battelle for Kids, 2010), [http://static.battelleforkids.org/images/Ohio/8-11-10\\_VA\\_Comparison\\_SOAR-Ohio.pdf](http://static.battelleforkids.org/images/Ohio/8-11-10_VA_Comparison_SOAR-Ohio.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> The new grading scale was enacted in July 2019 via House Bill 166.

Report-card component	Brief description	Calculated in normal way?	Likely effect on ratings (relative to 2018–19)
<b>Gap closing</b>	Subgroup performance on math and ELA state exams, four-year graduation rates, and English-language learner (ELL) progress on state alternative exams. Generally, schools receive full credit when subgroups meet PI or VA targets or partial credit for year-to-year improvement.	<b>Modified calculations.</b> Lack of 2019–20 data mean year-to-year changes likely rely on 2018–19 scores as baseline.	<b>Slightly to significantly down.</b> Schools less likely to meet subgroup PI targets and to receive “partial credit” for year-to-year improvement in PI and ELL scores. Higher graduation rates somewhat offset lower scores on ELA, math, and ELL dimensions.
<b>Prepared for success</b>	Gauges student readiness based on ACT/SAT remediation-free scores, industry-recognized credentials, honors diplomas, AP or IB exams, and dual-enrollment credit.	<b>Yes.</b> There is no use of prior-year data, so normal calculations apply.	<b>Slightly down.</b> Based on data from the classes of 2019 and 2020. Closures likely reduce readiness rates as some seniors miss chances to meet targets (for example, lower participation in AP or credentialing exams).
<b>K–3 literacy</b>	Generally, looks at whether students deemed “off track” on fall diagnostic reading tests move to “on-track” status on the next fall’s diagnostics.	<b>Yes.</b> Though there is extensive use of prior-year data, normal calculations are possible because fall diagnostic test data are used. Late start to 2020–21 could eliminate fall testing, however.	<b>Significantly down.</b> Rates of progress decline. For instance, more off-track first graders in fall 2019 are likely to remain off track in fall 2020 as second graders.



Report-card component	Brief description	Calculated in normal way?	Likely effect on ratings (relative to 2018–19)
<b>Overall</b>	Composite that combines ratings across the report-card components.	<b>Yes, but relies on some modified measures.</b> The calculation of an overall score and rating is unaffected as data across all components would likely be available. However, measures within the progress and gap-closing components are calculated in a modified way.	<b>Slightly to significantly down.</b> Except for graduation, component ratings likely neutral to down, resulting in lower overall ratings.

**Note:** The analysis in this table assumes that Ohio administers state exams in 2020–21 and maintains its current report-card policies. It also assumes that there have been learning losses associated with the spring 2020 school closures. For more details on the various components, see the Ohio Department of Education’s “Report Card Resources” webpage.