

School Quality Reports

Frequently Asked Questions for Educators

1. What changes are being made to the NYCDOE's accountability system?

The NYCDOE believes that its accountability system must be dedicated to the following core objectives: helping schools understand their strengths and weaknesses, supporting efforts at school improvement, holding schools accountable based on multiple measures of school quality, and providing school communities and families with accurate and user-friendly information on school quality.

To achieve these objectives, the NYCDOE is implementing the following changes to its accountability system:

- Schools no longer receive overall letter grades— new reports instead include information on multiple measures of school quality that will reveal strengths and areas of need.
- The reports combine qualitative information, community feedback, and progress and achievement measures to provide a fuller picture of school quality in a more user-friendly format.

2. How are these changes being implemented?

To maintain a level of stability in the information provided about schools and to allow for a measured, thoughtful approach to implementing these changes, the NYCDOE will take a multi-year approach to implementing changes to the accountability system:

- The 2013–14 School Quality Reports (released during the 2014–15 school year) use sections and metrics very similar to the Quality Review and Progress Report that schools are already familiar with but present them in a new way.
- For the 2014–15 School Quality Reports (released during the 2015–16 school year) and beyond, the NYCDOE will continue work to integrate the research-driven, evidence-based school Capacity Framework into the school quality reports. More information about the Framework can be found [here](#).

3. What does this mean in terms of how accountability results are presented?

The NYCDOE has created two new School Quality Reports, each of which combine qualitative information from the Quality Review, school community feedback collected through the NYC School Survey, and student achievement and progress data from the Progress Report:

- **School Quality Snapshot:** This report is intended for families, and provides a concise and user-friendly snapshot of each school. The reports will be available on the NYCDOE's website.
- **School Quality Guide:** This report provides a more robust set of information about each school. It includes section ratings and more complete qualitative and quantitative information about the school, including multiple years of data to show trends over time. Also available on the NYCDOE website, this report includes areas of strength and areas for improvement (known as areas of celebration and focus, respectively) from the Quality Review, including specific evidence of school practices.

Quality Review reports and NYC School Survey reports will continue to be released separately; however, a standalone Progress Report will no longer be released.

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4. What ratings are included in the new accountability system, and do schools receive an overall grade?

Schools do not receive an overall grade or rating in either of these reports. There is no ranking of schools and the section ratings are not combined in a weighted average. In the *School Quality Guide*, Schools will receive section ratings that indicate how well the school is meeting realistic and rigorous targets each year on various aspects of school quality.

The 2013–14 School Quality Reports will be organized in the following sections:

- Quality Review
- Student Progress
- Student Achievement
- School Environment
- College & Career Readiness (high schools only)
- Closing the Achievement Gap

5. Why is the NYCDOE making these changes to its accountability tools and no longer providing an overall grade?

The NYCDOE has eliminated the overall grade to avoid painting an oversimplified picture of school quality. By sharing a combination of qualitative and quantitative data along multiple measures, the NYCDOE hopes to provide families and school communities with richer, more complete information about schools' strengths, weaknesses, performance, and quality.

6. What school types does this plan cover?

The initial production of the 2013–14 School Quality Reports covers the largest four school types – elementary, middle, K-8, and high school – and includes both charter and non-charter schools. Afterward the initial release, the NYCDOE will work to expand to other school types including transfer high schools, K-3/K-2 schools, district 75 programs, YABC programs, high school equivalency programs, and youth justice programs. In the past, principals of those schools types have been particularly unsatisfied with the Progress Report because they believed that it was too similar to the Progress Report for the large school types. We plan to consult more with stakeholders and perform more research to determine how to provide a report that adequately addresses the special nature of these other school types.

Schools with grades K-12 received two sets of reports: one for K-8, and one for high school. Schools with grades 6-12 also receive two sets of reports: one for middle school and one for high school.

7. Since charter schools do not have Quality Reviews, what appears in that section for charter schools?

That section contains information about the evaluative visits performed by the charter authorizers and links to the detailed qualitative reports written by the authorizers.

8. Are the reports translated into other languages?

Within a month of the release, the NYCDOE will provide translated templates for the *School Quality Snapshot* in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu.

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9. For schools that have never had a Quality Review or have not had a Quality Review in more than four years, what appears in the Quality Review section in their reports?

Only Quality Reviews that were conducted in the 2010–11 school year or later are included in these reports and the reports include only five indicators:

- Quality of the curriculum
- Effectiveness of the teaching
- Effective assessments of student learning
- High expectations
- Teacher Collaboration

The School Quality Reports for schools that have never had a Quality Review (such as first- and second-year schools) as well as schools that were reviewed before the 2010-11 school year include an explanatory note in that section. For charter schools, we will include a link to their authorizer’s website where information about their charter can be acquired.

10. Will the new School Quality Reports be updated as soon as new Quality Review reports are ready?

No. The School Quality Reports will be updated annually, and will include the latest Quality Review at the time of the release. There will not be mid-year updates to the school quality reports once new Quality Reviews are completed.

11. What are the different section ratings?

For 2013–14, each section—Quality Review, Student Progress, Student Achievement, School Environment, College & Career Readiness (high schools only), and Closing the Achievement Gap—include a rating in the *School Quality Guide* based on a 4-level rating scale. The Quality Review section uses rating levels of Well Developed, Proficient, Developing, and Underdeveloped. The other sections use rating levels of Exceeding Target, Meeting Target, Approaching Target, and Not Meeting Target.

12. How are the section ratings calculated?

For the 2013–14 Reports, the Quality Review rating reflects the school’s most recent Quality Review rating from 2010-11 or later. The ratings for the other sections are calculated based on scoring rules set forth in the [Elementary/Middle Educator Guide](#) and the [High School Educator Guide](#), and reflect how the school performed relative to rigorous yet realistic targets that are based on the historical performance of schools with similar populations and the city as a whole. Targets used in the ratings found in the 2014-15 School Quality Guides are provided in each school’s 2013-14 *School Quality Guide*.

13. Is there a fixed distribution for these new section ratings?

In response to principal feedback, the *School Quality Guide* includes unique targets for each school that connect to how a school is rated the following school year. These targets, found on the last page of the School Quality Guide, are based on the historical performance of each school’s unique group of similar schools and all schools citywide. Because the targets are set in advance, schools will no longer be competing for ratings. If more students in the city do well in a particular year, there will be more schools with positive ratings.

School Quality Reports

Frequently Asked Questions for Educators

14. What are the different metric comparisons?

For metrics that have an interpretable number, like the graduation rate, the *School Quality Snapshot* includes the city average as a point of comparison. For elementary, middle, and K-8 schools, the district average is also included. For high schools, the borough average is included in addition to the city average. For metrics that do not have an interpretable number, a four bar rating is provided for context.

The *School Quality Guide* reflects a school's performance on each metric relative to rigorous and realistic targets that are based on a comparison to schools with similar populations (75%) and on a comparison to schools citywide (25%). Starting with the 2014–15 reports, the targets will have been set in advance.

15. Are schools competing against each other for a pre-determined number of high and low ratings?

No. School ratings are based on comparisons against the historical performance of schools with similar populations and city schools. If, for example, all schools performed much better than these historical levels, then all schools would receive high ratings. These changes to the rating system are intended to promote a collaborative effort to improve all schools rather than an atmosphere of competition.

16. Do the reports and ratings still use peer groups of similar schools?

Peer group comparisons are provided in the *School Quality Guide* because they are needed in order to determine realistic and rigorous year-to-year targets for each school. If all schools had the same targets regardless of student population the targets would be unrealistic for many schools and non-rigorous for others. We understand that there are concerns about our current peering methodology, and we have received a great deal of feedback from principals about ways it could be improved. As we continue to work to improve our school quality reports for future school years, we are exploring alternate methodologies to address these concerns.

In our discussions with parents and families, we have also heard that many do not find the peer comparison valuable because it compares schools to other schools in faraway neighborhoods in the city. Instead, they suggested that schools be compared to other schools in the same district (or borough for high schools). Because of this feedback, on the *School Quality Snapshot*, school results are put in the context that matters most to families.