



# LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

April 20, 2017

Mr. Herb Bassett  
Grayson, LA  
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Dear Mr. Bassett:

Thank you for your email regarding Louisiana's ESSA state plan. This letter serves as a response to your questions.

## I. K-8 Growth Index

The draft models of the Growth Index methodology show that, though students in middle school generated fewer points than lower elementary students in Step 1, they generated significantly more points in Step 2 – nearly closing the gap in percent of students generating 150 points and fully closing the gap of students generating an "A" for growth in Steps 1 and 2. Additionally, though students moving from third to fourth are more likely to be on track, per question 1, fewer than 5% of schools statewide serve only grades 4 and below.

Student Grade in Prior Year	% Advanced	% Continued Growth	Step 1: % On Track to Mastery	Step 2: % Top Two VAM Quintiles	Total % "A" Level
3	3%	8%	33%	8%	52%
4	2%	7%	24%	11%	44%
5	1%	4%	27%	13%	46%
6	2%	1%	17%	23%	43%
7	2%	0%	16%	26%	44%
All Students	2%	4%	24%	16%	46%

Educators have expressed a strong desire for a simple growth model to accompany Louisiana's more complex value-added model. Like many states that measure "growth to standard," step one of Louisiana's growth model will consider the binary question – are nonproficient students on track to proficiency or not? It is a simple growth model that asks ambitious outcomes and progress of all children, irrespective of background.

Louisiana's assessment does not include a vertical scale. Though small differences may exist in specific scaled scores across years, the growth targets are only used for the simple binary decision described above and they are supplemented by the more nuanced, relative measure in

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step 2 (VAM) where a wider variety of points are possible. Furthermore, the achievement level cut scores for Mastery and below remain consistent. After consultation with national experts, practitioners and parents, the Department believes a transparent reporting of growth-to-standard is important as Louisiana continues to raise the bar.

## **II. Clarifications regarding BESE’s March 29 motion**

Item 3:

1. Dr. Boffy’s motion at the March 29, 2017 meeting directs the Department to lower the thresholds for A, B, and C school letter grades but not D.
2. LEAP and EOC scores of Basic, ACT scores of 18, and WorkKeys scores of Silver will be awarded 70 points in the relevant index calculations.

Item 2:

1. The minimum score required for an A, B, or C grade will be lowered by 10 points. In 2022, the scales will partially increase by five points each, and by 2025 the scale will return to its current ranges (e.g., 100+ = “A”).
2. All students in grades five and above are transitioning from paper assessments to online assessments, as have been used in high school for a decade. Some districts have already made the shift to online testing in elementary/middle school grades without a significant impact on results. Additionally, all districts have had many years to prepare for the transition. Thus, no major impact on results is expected.

Ultimately, the Department’s objective is not to create a particular distribution of results, but rather to build a fair and honest accountability system that holds students and schools to the same high expectations as anywhere else in the country. A core component of that system is expecting students to use computers, as is required for all adults and children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

3. As has always been true under Louisiana’s school accountability system, the grading scale will be consistent across elementary/middle, combination, and high schools. The new, higher standards across each index are consistently rigorous, providing all school types a fair opportunity to earn an “A” letter grade.

## **III. Growth Results by Letter Grade**

The purpose of the referenced chart is to illustrate how adding a growth index into the SPS calculation would impact school results. Therefore, the chart compares 2016 letter grades to 2016 growth results. However, using 2016 letter grades as the comparison point does not bias the results, as the table below illustrates.

Letter Grade	2015 Letter Grade		2016 Letter Grade	
	VAM-Only Growth Index Avg.	VAM-Only Growth Index Range	VAM-Only Growth Index Avg.	VAM-Only Growth Index Range
A	75.8	49.3 - 109.4	80	55.0 - 109.4
B	74.1	38.5 - 110.0	75.7	50.9 - 110.0
C	74.3	38.2 - 109	75.1	38.9 - 108.2
D	75.2	46.7 - 102.1	74.2	38.2 - 109.4
F	70.4	47.8 - 98.4	67.4	47.8 - 87.1

I appreciate your inquiry and look forward to working with you and other stakeholders as we support Louisiana's school children.

Sincerely,



John White  
State Superintendent of Education

Cc: Members of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)