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PENNY SCHWINN
COMMISSIONER

August 24, 2022

Good afternoon,

This letter serves as an update to accountability reporting for Tennessee public schools and districts this year.

Inherently, accountability systems are intended to report on the performance and progress of our state's public schools – providing accurate, understandable and transparent information to families and communities. Tennessee has put in place important accountability measures to provide this transparency to families, including the state's A-F letter grading system for schools. This A-F letter grading accountability system should always reflect consistent and trustworthy information to families, and especially so in the inaugural year.

However, accountability systems are not designed for the level of learning disruption seen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. After reviewing the current accountability data in addition to feedback received from districts related to learning disruptions in 2021, **the department will pause the release of school letter grades, but will release school designations and all data, as outlined in the timeline below.**

The statewide administration of the TCAP assessment was strong, the data quality is good, and the accountability system was run accurately. However, the 2020-21 TCAP assessment administration reflected significant inconsistencies across the state. For example, almost 25% of schools eligible for accountability did not meet the standard 95% TCAP participation rate upon which many accountability calculations heavily rely. That resulted in a data set that reflected disparate and inconsistent information across the state, which became clear as the department completed our accountability protocols this week.

It is important that families know and understand the information provided to them. It is not possible to issue letter grades that fairly and transparently communicate the performance and progress of schools at this time. That said, the state remains committed to accountability and we will continue to celebrate our high-progress and high-performing schools, as well as supporting and intervening in our low-performing schools.

Districts can expect information on the following adjusted timetable:

- **August 24:** School designations and data is available to districts in the Accountability Application for the annual 10-day appeals window, as required in state policy
- **September 7:** The appeals window closes
- **September 9:** School designation letters are sent to districts, under embargo until September 12
- **September 12:** Data are publicly posted on the Data Downloads page, school designations are publicly posted on the "School Accountability" and "District Accountability" webpages, and the embargo on school designations is lifted
- **Late November:** State Report Card released

We deeply appreciate the incredible efforts of our teachers, school staff and district personnel who continue to work hard on behalf of students. As a state, we must continue to accelerate student achievement and push forward on behalf of the children we serve. I remain very proud of the coherence and thoughtfulness of the strategies and implementation I see across the state. Thank you for your tireless efforts and the outcomes they produce on behalf of students we all have a collective responsibility, and the great privilege, to serve.

Respectfully,

Penny Schwinn, PhD
Commissioner of Education