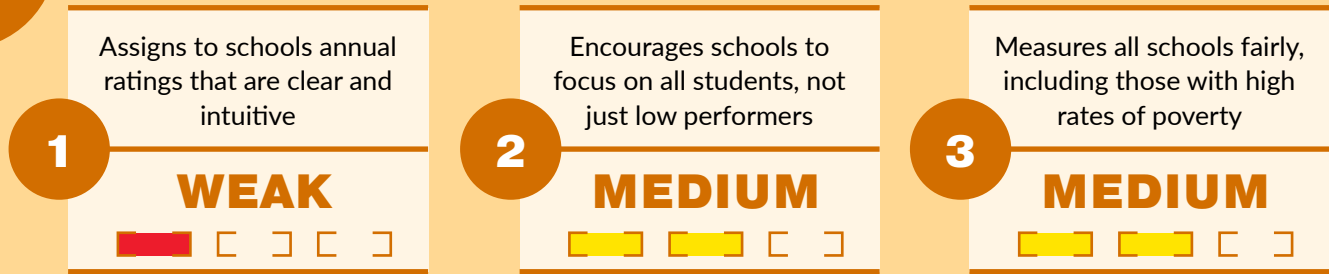


OREGON



ESSA grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than did NCLB. Three of the most important improvements states can make are to: (1) assign to schools annual ratings that are clear and intuitive for parents, educators, and the public; (2) encourage schools to focus on all students, not just their low performers; and (3) measure and judge all schools fairly, including those with high rates of poverty.

To determine whether Oregon's proposed ESSA accountability system accomplishes these three objectives, this analysis evaluates its state plan, as submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on May 3, 2017,⁶⁸ as explained below.

1 Are the labels or ratings for schools clear and intuitive for parents, educators, and the public?

Oregon's plan is **weak** on this point because will only assign annual labels to very-low-performing schools that are in need of support, forgoing labels entirely for all other schools. This is a mistake. For more than two decades, school ratings have been at the heart of state accountability systems—and for good reason. Easy-to-understand labels, such as A–F letter grades, provide clear signals to parents, citizens, and educators about the quality of a school and can nudge systems toward improvement.

2 Does the rating system encourage schools to focus on all students?

There are two primary ways for state accountability systems to encourage schools to focus on all students: (1) use a performance index or scale scores in place of proficiency rates when measuring achievement and (2) measure the growth of all students. Oregon receives a **medium** because—despite measuring achievement with proficiency rates, which might encourage schools to focus on pupils near the proficiency cutoff—a measure of growth for all students constitutes 44 percent of the state's accountability system, which should at least partially encourage schools to heed the educational needs of every child.

3 Is the rating system fair to all schools, including those with high rates of poverty?

Oregon is **medium** here because it assigns academic growth a weight of 44 percent. Growth measures gauge changes in pupil achievement over time, independent of prior achievement, and are therefore less correlated with poverty—thus affording high-poverty schools the opportunity to earn positive ratings.