

Alachua County Public Schools earns 'A' grade from the state; number of local schools earning grades below 'C' cut in half

Alachua County Public Schools has earned an 'A' grade based on the achievement of its students, up from a 'B' in 2018. Significant achievement gains among their lowest-scoring students has also helped boost the grades of four local schools that earned 'D's' in 2018.



The Florida Department of Education released the 2019 school grades earlier today, and they show that the district is one of 24 statewide to earn an 'A' grade. They also show that the number of local schools earning a grade below a C grade has dropped from six to three.

The district's two 'turnaround' schools both raised their grades this year. (Turnaround schools are those that must earn at least a 'C' grade within a specific time frame or face consequences imposed by the state, up to and including closure.) Metcalfe Elementary raised its grade from a 'D' to a 'B,' with exceptionally strong gains among its lowest-performing students. Terwilliger Elementary boosted its grade up to a 'C,' and was just six points away from earning a 'B' grade on a 700 point scale. Like Metcalfe, Terwilliger showed particularly strong improvements in the performance of its lowest-scoring students.

Besides Terwilliger and Metcalfe, four other local schools were labeled as Differentiated Accountability, or 'DA' schools during the past year. That's the state designation for any school earning below a 'C' grade. Of those four, Alachua and Rawlings elementary schools also boosted their grades to a 'C' in 2019, up from 'D' grades in 2018.

"We're so proud of everyone who worked so hard to bring those grades up this year," said Superintendent Karen Clarke. "This represents a monumental effort by principals, faculty and staff to raise achievement, with assistance from the district, the Department of Education and help from volunteers in the community."

Of the two remaining 'DA' schools in 2018-19, Idlywild Elementary earned another 'D' grade, but the gains the school made this year put it just 14 points away from a 'C' on the state's 700 point scale. Lake Forest also received a 'D' again this year.

"We are committed to ensuring that during the upcoming year both schools will make the kinds of gains we saw in other DA schools this year," said Clarke.

School grades are based on a complex formula that varies based on the grade levels at the school. At elementary schools, the grades are based entirely on the scores of 3rd through 5th-grade students on the Florida Standards Assessment. The scores of those students who are the lowest-performing students at the school are weighted heavily in the formula.

Additional factors are included for middle and high schools, including the number of students passing advanced courses, earning career certifications and graduating on time.

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