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**Subject:** Florida A-F Bill Passes on Anniversary of Historic A+ Reforms

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Today marks 15 years since Florida's A+ Plan was passed by the Florida Legislature. The bill reversed a generation of decline in student achievement and has ignited student-centered reform throughout the nation. And today, the Florida Legislature passed a bill that simplifies A-F school grading – one of the A+ Plan's hallmark principles – into a transparent, back-to-basics calculation. The following press release was sent earlier from the Foundation for Florida's Future.

## **A-F Bill Passes on Anniversary of Historic A+ Reforms**

*Legislature Passes Simple, Transparent, Back-to-basics School Grading Changes*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Fifteen years ago, Florida's A+ Plan for education passed from the Florida Legislature, creating a pathway for student-centered policies that led to education achievements surging upward in the years that followed. Today, the Florida Legislature once again demonstrated its commitment to providing every Florida student with a quality education by passing Senate Bill 1642 to improve Florida's accountability system. Lawmakers voted to restore focus, clarity and confidence to one of the A+ Plan's hallmark principles, A-F school grading.

In addition to holding schools accountable for results through A-F school grading, the A+ Plan included setting high expectations, rewarding success, attracting talent to the classroom and offering parents an unprecedented array of educational choices. The plan remains the foundation of Florida's education system. Leaders have modified policies, improved programs, and added new reforms, but the heart of the plan – student-centered education – continues to inspire innovative ways to improve education.

"In 1999, Florida leaders made the decision to embark on a path of education reforms to hold adults accountable for making sure every child receives one of the most precious gifts we can provide: a quality education," said Governor Jeb Bush, Chairman of the Foundation for Florida's Future ([@AFloridaPromise](#)). "Today, with 15 years of proven results, I could not be more proud of the outstanding improvement our students and teachers have achieved."

The A+ Plan, passed in 1999, put an end to acceptance of the status quo and acted on the belief that all students can and should learn at least a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time. Before reform, nearly half of Florida's fourth graders were functionally illiterate and Florida's graduation rate was at 60 percent.

*Fifteen years later, Florida has reversed a generation of decline in education:*

- Florida is now [a top-10 state among multiple rankings](#).
- Since 1998, the [graduation rate has gone up by more than 25 percent](#) amid more rigorous standards.
- More than [300 percent more Florida students are taking and passing AP exams](#).
- Florida is a national leader in narrowing the achievement gap, as evident on the [Nation's Report Card](#).

"Florida should celebrate its teachers, students and schools," said former Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings, who presided over the Florida Senate during the passage of the A+ Plan and is a former fifth-grade teacher. "We should give credit to their hard work by acknowledging their results. Student-centered reforms are working. Florida has further to go, but we are headed in the right direction and must continue on a path that fundamentally puts student learning above all else."

To take student learning further, Florida is moving to higher English Language Arts and math standards and a new assessment to measure whether students are meeting the standards. The A-F changes passed today, built on recommendations from Education Commissioner Pam Stewart, give students and teachers a chance to adjust during this period of transition.

"There is more work to do to ensure every Florida child has the promise of a quality education," said Foundation for Florida's Future Executive Director Patricia Levesque. "Fifteen years ago, A-F school grading shined a light on the state of education in Florida's schools, engaged parents and community leaders and ensured struggling students did not fall through the cracks. The increases in student learning prove what gets measured gets done, but in recent years, the grading calculation has lost its focus on what matters most: students learning and mastering fundamental skills. I thank the Florida Legislature and the Department of Education for their commitment to improving education and their attention to this."

To learn more about student-centered policies in Florida, visit [afloridapromise.org](http://afloridapromise.org). For information on the state's move to higher standards, visit ExcelinEd's [fl.learnmoregofurther.org](http://fl.learnmoregofurther.org).

***Help share Florida's good news via social media:***

- Celebrating the Results of the A+ Plan: Student Success <http://bit.ly/1koUIMm>
- Celebrating 15 years of student-centered education policies! <http://bit.ly/1koUIMm>
- Legislature Passes School Grading Changes at 15-year Mark for "Bill that Started it All" <http://bit.ly/1koUIMm>

***Spread the word using the A+ infographic below!***

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Read this release [online](#).

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