Designing Accountability: Options for School Classification
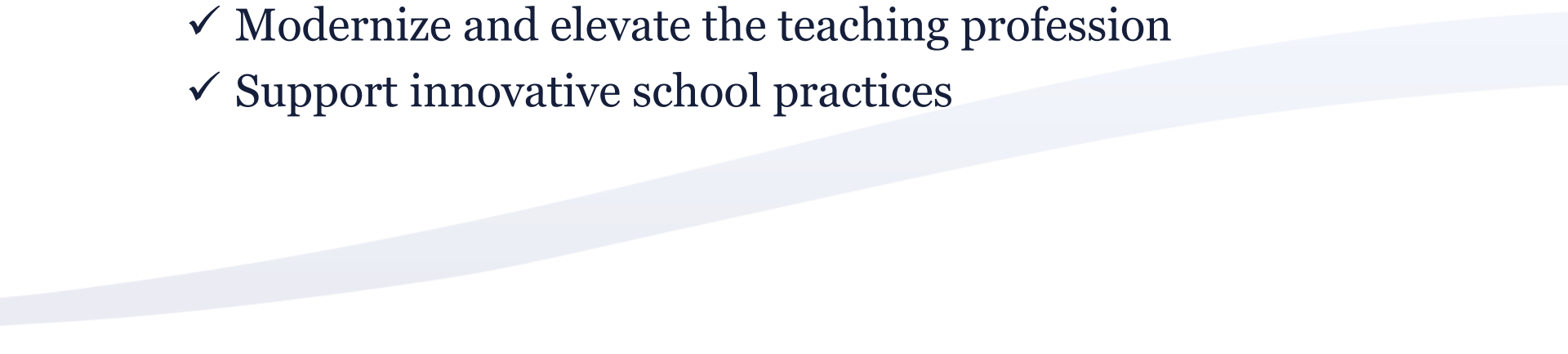
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What is the Center for American Progress?

- ✓ An independent nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through bold, progressive ideas, as well as strong leadership and concerted action

What are the K-12 team goals?

- ✓ Promote strong standards and accountability systems
- ✓ Modernize and elevate the teaching profession
- ✓ Support innovative school practices

Goals of Today's Discussion

1. Broad vision for accountability
2. Multiple options for school classifications
   - Index
   - Matrix
   - Decision rules
3. Pros and cons of classification models
4. Additional considerations for system design

A Broader Vision for Accountability

FIGURE 1

ESSA's components of a school accountability system

ESSA requires the collection of key student performance data to inform public reporting, the identification of low-performing schools, and school improvement efforts
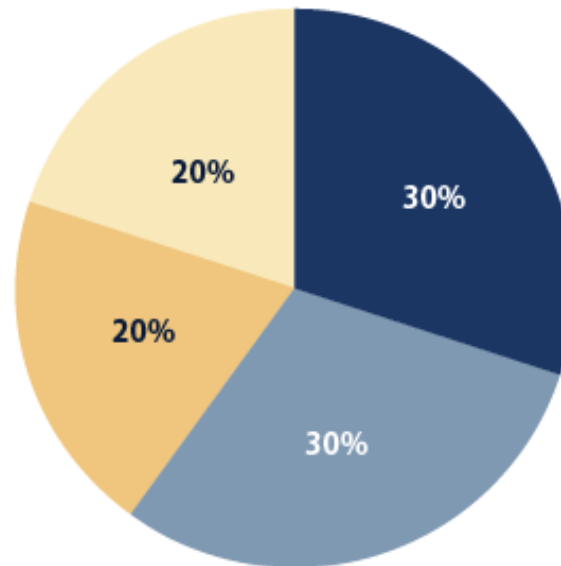

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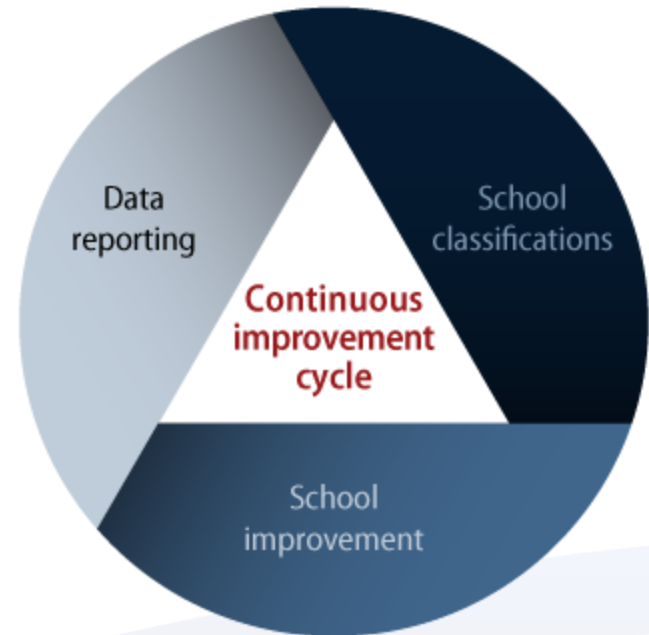
Performance Index Design

FIGURE 1

How elementary and middle school student outcomes contribute to a school's annual rating

Sample indicator weighting for school performance index for elementary and middle schools

- ■ Achievement in math and reading
- ■ Academic growth
- ■ English language proficiency
- ■ Culture and climate

30% — 30% — 20% — 20%

Performance Index Design: Pros and Cons

+ Can emphasize indicators of interest

+ Final classification simple to understand

+ Supports easy comparisons

- Can both exaggerate and mask differences across schools

- High performance on an indicator offsets low performance on another

- Can be complicated to explain inner workings of classification

Performance Index Design: Examples
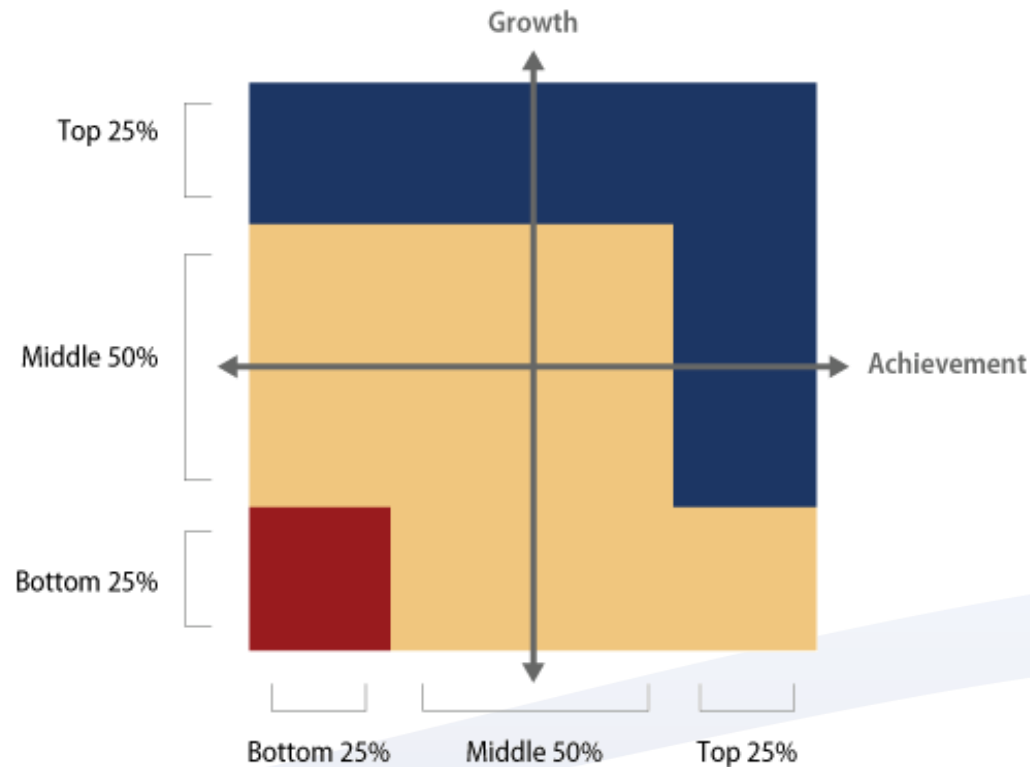
Louisiana: A-F grades

Massachusetts: 5 levels

Delaware: 1-5 star rating

Matrix Design

FIGURE 3
Sample matrix design for growth and achievement

Matrix Design: Pros and Cons

+ May use multiple dimensions of a single indicator (e.g., status and change)

+ Avoids question of "weights"

+ Shows performance on each indicator separately

- Not as familiar as an index

- May require greater engagement to understand

- May require multiple steps to reach classifications

Matrix Design: Examples

FIGURE 2
The Massachusetts evaluation framework

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Quick Reference Guide: Educator Plans" (2014), available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-EducatorPlans.pdf.

Matrix Design: Examples, cont'd

Non-Academic Indicators	Academic Indicators		
	Red	**Yellow**	**Blue**
Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Blue
Yellow	Red	Yellow	Blue
Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow

Decision Rules Design

TABLE 2

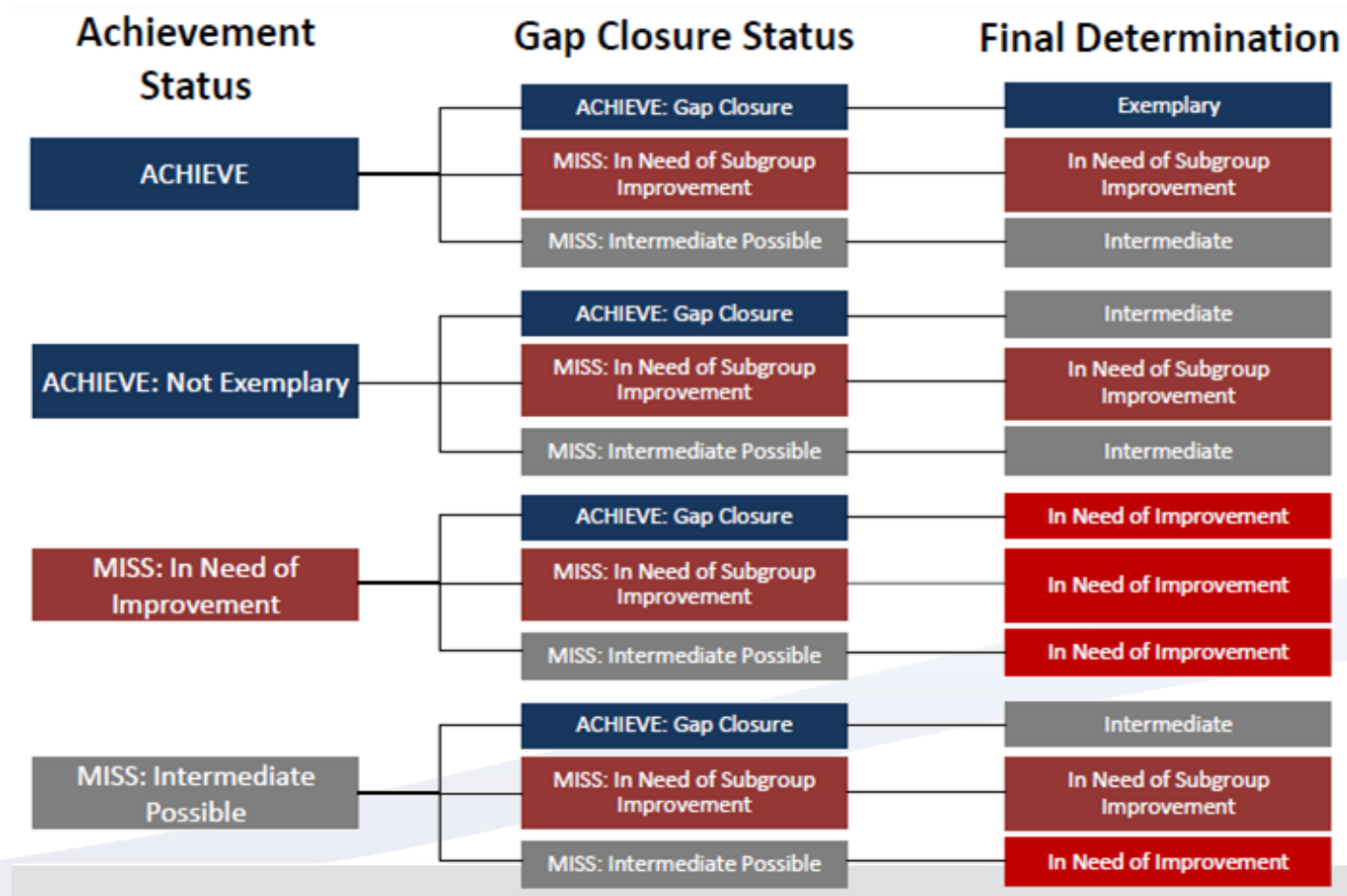## Sample school classification system using the decision rules design

Indicators	High-performing schools		Average-performing schools		Needs-Improvement schools	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Academic achievement	✓			✓		✓
Student growth	✓		✓			✓
English language proficiency	✓			✓		✓
Culture and climate	✓		✓			✓

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Decision Rules Design: Pros and Cons

+ No need to combine indicators

+ Simpler view of how schools get into each category

+ Can set clear expectations for performance on each indicator

- Requires several steps

- Can be more difficult to follow in complicated systems

- More challenging with more classification categories

Decision Rules Design: Examples

Tennessee district accountability (2015)

Additional Considerations

- Hybrid system designs
- Using multiple years of data
- Comprehensive data dashboard
- Factoring in 95 percent assessment participation
- Including subgroup performance
- Aligning school classification system with school identification system for low-performing schools

Thank you!

Questions?

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