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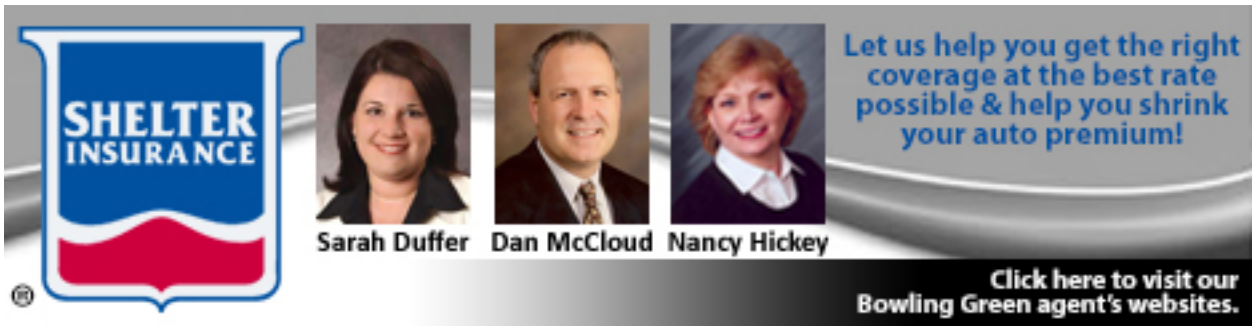
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Panel developing 5-star school rating system will meet this week

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Aug 31, 2019

Gary Houchens

Submitted

Kentucky's new 5-star school accountability system will soon make its debut with the release of state testing results for the 2018-19 school year in either late September or early October.

On Wednesday and Thursday, a group of education stakeholders and policymakers will take the next major step when they meet to continue developing performance standards that will help shape the system.

Gary Houchens, a Western Kentucky University professor and Kentucky Board of Education member, is one of 25 panelists working to achieve that goal.

"We're really hopeful that the stakeholders involved in the process this year ... will help us keep people informed about how this is developing," he told the Daily News.

Using data from the 2018-19 school year, the system will evaluate school success by providing overall ratings from one to five stars for each school, school district and the state as a whole.

The star rating and other assessment data will be available on the Kentucky School Report Card, available online at kyschoolreportcard.com.

That rating will be informed by school performance on several indicators, such as student proficiency in reading and math, students' academic growth and graduation rate for high schools, among other measures.

The system will also hone in on disparities in academic achievement between student groups, such as if a school's African American students are not performing as well as their white peers. A school or district that would have received a 5- or 4-star rating will instead by docked one star if it has one or more statistically significant achievement gaps, according to the Kentucky Department of Education.

On Aug. 23, the panel held its first meeting.

Houchens said the group, which contains several school district superintendents, teacher representatives and business and community stakeholders, discussed draft descriptions for each star rating, along with what performance levels for the individual indicators should look like.

When the group meets again later this week, Houchens said members anticipate being able to use a database of 2018-19 testing data.

The data, which will be decoupled from the school's name and identifying information, will allow the group to see how many schools would fall into each of the performance categories for the individual indicators and overall star ratings as the group has defined them.

All this will lead the panel to ultimately recommend specific scores to Education Commissioner Wayne Lewis for an overall star rating and for each indicator, according to the Kentucky Department of Education.

Overall, Houchens said the panel's goal is to offer schools clear descriptions of the criteria they need to hit to reach a desired performance level.

Although he acknowledged that many parents and community stakeholders likely take a school's star rating at face value, Houchens hopes people "dig deeply into your own school's data." A school's rating should be a starting point for future growth, not "how did we do relative to somebody else," he said.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

MORE INFORMATION



State to roll out 5-star school rating system next month

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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