



Don't Worry, We're All Confused

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You know a good report card when you see it, and the recently released annual performance reports (APR) for Missouri schools aren't even close to good. The irony is that if the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) received a grade for its report card, it'd be a failing one.

DESE's newest version of APR, the state's school and district evaluation method, shows no improvement in presenting information to parents. It's something I've [written](#) about before, and I'm not the only one to notice how confusing these report cards can be. When the new report cards came out last week, there were quite a few articles pointing out how opaque and cryptic the information is.

[KCUR's](#) article title is pretty self-explanatory: "Missouri Parents Just Got More School Data But They Might Need A Textbook To Figure It Out."

The [Kansas City Star](#) editorial board wrote about the new report cards, saying: "Sadly, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education gets a D for its report this year — not because the results are good or bad, necessarily, but because the results are nearly indecipherable."

When explaining how to read the report, the editorial board asks "Confused? Almost certainly."

The system seems designed to befuddle even the most committed parents.”

Another *Kansas City Star* [article](#) shows that even districts are confused: “In fact, Kansas City Public Schools and Hickman Mills still don’t know if they scored well enough on the Annual Performance Report to regain full state accreditation.” The article also pointed out that “the new format comes with a guide, but it’s 77 pages long.”

[KSHB](#) wrote: “The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its Annual Performance Report Thursday morning, though it may have left school districts with more questions than answers.”

[St. Louis public radio](#) had an article appropriately titled “Missouri Redesigned School Report Cards - And It’s A Lot To Digest.” One of the authors even posted a [nine-step tutorial](#) on her Twitter account explaining how to access the report page.

The new report cards shouldn’t leave this many people confused. The onslaught of disdain should cause DESE to rethink its design and build school report cards that are actually useful.

About the Author



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Abigail Burrola graduated from Azusa Pacific University with a bachelor’s degree in political science in 2018.

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