

**Music Adjudication Report:  
Performance Outcomes by FARMS Tier  
Middle and High School Ensembles  
SY 2023–2024**

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**Summary of Findings**

Music adjudication results from the 2023–2024 school year were analyzed to examine performance patterns across schools with varying Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) services. Data was collected from middle and high school ensembles including band, orchestra, emerging, and jazz. Performances were rated in two categories: prepared selections and sight-reading. Judges assigned letter grades such as A+, A, and A– using standardized rubrics. Each performance received a final rating of Superior, Excellent, Good, or Fair. For this analysis, grades were grouped into four letter-grade bands: A (A+, A, A–), B (B+, B, B–), C (C+, C, C–), and D (D+, D, D–).

To examine trends, schools were grouped into four tiers based on the percentage of students receiving FARMS: low (0 to 20.50%), low-moderate (20.51 to 40.50%), moderate (40.51 to 60.50%), and moderate-high/high (60.51 to 100%).

Results showed that ensembles in the low and low-moderate FARMS tiers received higher performance ratings. In both middle and high school groups, ensembles in the low and low-moderate FARMS tiers most frequently received A-range ratings and Superior overall ratings. B and C ratings were observed more frequently in the moderate and moderate high/high FARMS tiers.

Jazz ensembles results followed similar trends. In the low FARMS tier, 92.1% of ratings were in the A range, and 100% of the performances received Superior ratings. A-range ratings decreased to 73.9% in the low-moderate FARMS tier and continued to decrease to 52.9% in the moderate FARMS tier.

**Introduction**

Music adjudication in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the formal process used to evaluate ensemble performance in middle and high school programs. Ensembles are assessed in both prepared and sight-reading categories using detailed rubrics that measure technical skill, musical interpretation, and ensemble cohesion. Judges assign letter grades and provide written feedback on performance quality. The current analysis examines adjudication results by the percentage of students in middle and high schools receiving FARMS services.

**Background**

MCPS ensembles participate in districtwide adjudications that assess both prepared and sight-reading components of performance. Prepared selections are rehearsed pieces evaluated on tone quality, intonation, technique, balance, interpretation, and overall musical effect. Sight-reading evaluates how well ensembles interpret and perform unfamiliar music with little to no preparation, based on technical accuracy, flexibility, interpretation, musical effect, and general comments. These evaluations present an overview of ensemble performance and provide insight into patterns of musical achievement across the district.

**Methodology**

Adjudication data were collected during the 2023-2024 school year from middle and high school ensembles including band, orchestra, emerging, and jazz. Ensembles were rated in two categories: prepared selections and sight-reading. Judges assigned letter grades (e.g., A+, A, A-, B+, etc.) using standardized rubrics designed to evaluate components of ensemble performance. Each performance received a final rating of Superior, Excellent, Good, or Fair. Table 1 presents letter-grade bands used in this report. For this analysis, grades were grouped into four letter-grade bands: A (A+, A, A-), B (B+, B, B-), C (C+, C, C-), and D (D+, D, D-).

To examine trends, schools were grouped into four tiers according to the percentage of students receiving FARMS services: low (0-20.50%), low-moderate (20.51-40.50%), moderate (40.51-60.50%), and moderate high/high (60.51-100%). Within each tier, descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated for each performance rating in both assessment categories. Final overall adjudication ratings were also calculated for a total of 36 middle schools and 24 high schools in MCPS.

**Table 1.** Letter-Grade Bands and Included Letters

| Letter Grade Band | Letters   |
|-------------------|-----------|
| A Range           | A+, A, A- |
| B Range           | B+, B, B- |
| C Range           | C+, C, C- |
| D Range           | D+, D, D- |

## Results

### Middle School Adjudication Results by FARMS Tier

The results section presents an analysis of ensemble ratings from prepared and sight-reading performances in the MCPS music adjudication process, disaggregated by FARMS tiers. Performance outcomes are reported separately for each tier, including individual ensembles ratings and overall adjudication ratings. Table 2 shows the FARMS tier, FARMS eligibility range, and the percentage of middle schools within the specific FARMS tier.

**Table 2.** Middle Schools by FARMS Tier Ranges

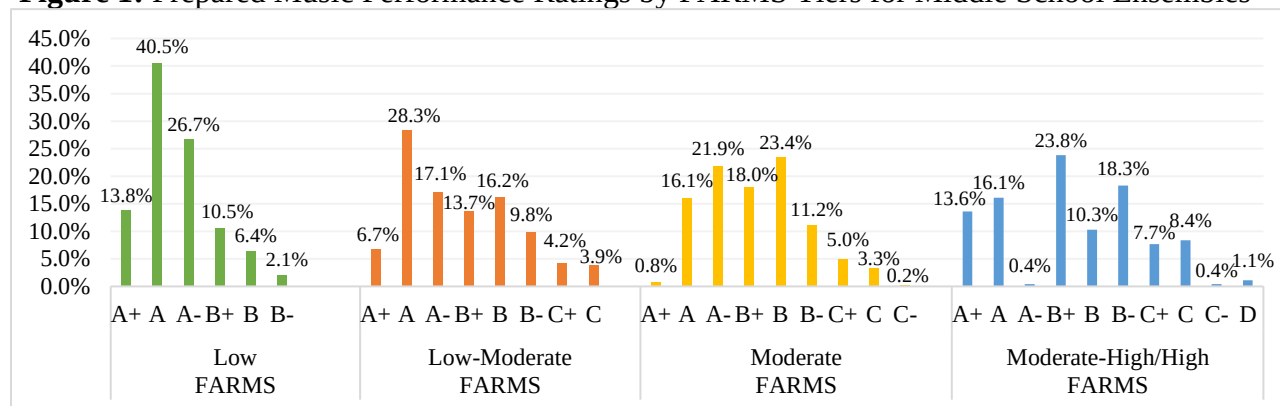
| <b>FARMS Tiers</b>        | <b>FARMS Eligibility Range</b> | <b>Percentage of Middle Schools</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Low</b>                | 0% to 18.70%                   | 22.2                                |
| <b>Low-Moderate</b>       | 20.94% to 38.65%               | 22.2                                |
| <b>Moderate</b>           | 41.7% to 60.4%                 | 30.6                                |
| <b>Moderate-High/High</b> | 61.8% to 100%                  | 25.0                                |

### Prepared Selection Performances for Middle School Ensembles

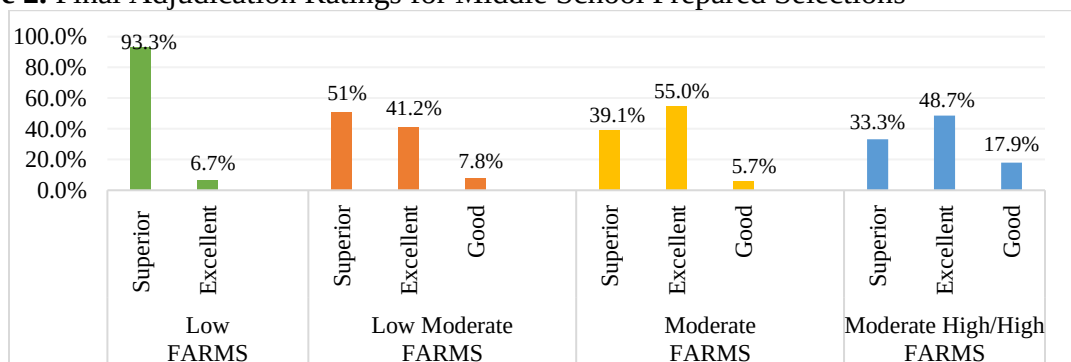
Prepared selection ratings, in Figure 1, followed a trend by FARMS tier, with the highest ratings observed in the low FARMS tier. Within the low FARMS tier (n = 420), 81.0% of ensembles received ratings in the A range (A+, A, A–), with 40.5% receiving an A, 13.8% receiving an A+, and 26.7% receiving an A–. A total of 19.0% of ratings were in the B range, with B+ (10.5%) being the most frequent.

Among performances in the low-moderate FARMS tier (n = 357), 52.1% of ratings were in the A range, with 28.3% receiving an A, 17.1% receiving an A–, and 6.7% receiving an A+. B-range ratings totaled 39.7%, including 16.2% at B, 13.7% at B+, and 9.8% at B–.

Within the moderate FARMS tier (n = 483), B-range ratings were the most frequent at 52.6%, with 23.4% at B, 18.0% at B+, and 11.2% at B–. In the moderate-high/high tier (n = 273), B-range ratings were the most frequent at 52.4%, with 23.8% at B+, 18.3% at B–, and 10.3% at B. In this tier, C-range ratings (16.5%) represented the highest percentage observed across all FARMS tiers and included the only D rating reported.

**Figure 1: Prepared Music Performance Ratings by FARMS Tiers for Middle School Ensembles****Prepared Selections: Final Adjudication Ratings for Middle School Ensembles**

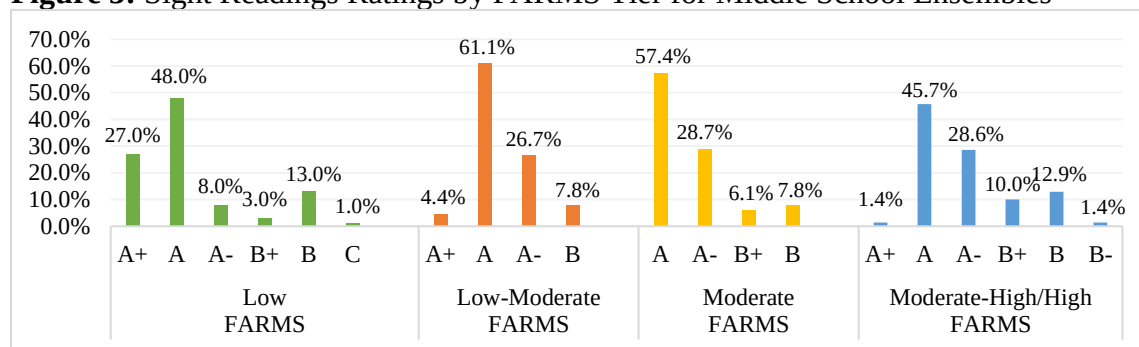
Final adjudication ratings showed a pattern across FARMS tiers, with the low FARMS tier receiving more Superior ratings. As shown in Figure 2, 93.3% of performances in the low FARMS tier received a Superior rating, while 6.7% were rated Excellent. Across ensembles with higher FARMS tiers, the percentage of Superior ratings declined with 51.0% in the low-moderate FARMS tier, 39.1% in the moderate FARMS tier, and 33.3% in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier. The percentage of Excellent ratings increased from 6.7% in the low FARMS tier to 48.7% in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier. Good ratings were observed more frequently, increasing from 7.8% in the low-moderate tier to 17.9% in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier.

**Figure 2. Final Adjudication Ratings for Middle School Prepared Selections****Sight Reading Performances for Middle School Ensembles**

Sight-reading ratings for middle school ensembles showed the highest increase in A-range ratings in the low FARMS tier compared to other tiers. Figure 3 shows that, in the low FARMS tier (n = 100), 83.0% of ensembles earned ratings in the A range, with almost half (48.0%) receiving a rating of A. The low-moderate FARMS tier (n = 90) had the highest frequency of A-range ratings at 92.2% with 61.1% at A, 26.7% at A-, and 4.4% at A+. For the moderate FARMS tier (n = 115), A-range ratings declined to 86.1%, with 57.4% at A and 28.7% at A-. The moderate-high/high

FARMS tier (n = 70) had the lowest A-range ratings at 75.7%, with 45.7% at A, 28.6% at A–, and 1.4% at A+. In this tier, B-range ratings (24.3%) was the highest compared to other tiers.

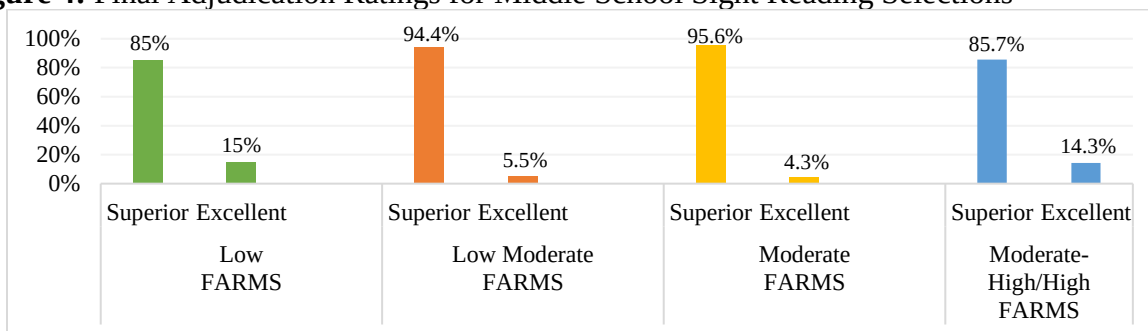
**Figure 3: Sight Readings Ratings by FARMS Tier for Middle School Ensembles**



### Sight Readings: Middle School Final Adjudication Ratings

Across all FARMS tiers, middle school ensembles received only Superior and Excellent ratings as shown in Figure 4. The moderate FARMS tier had the highest percentage of Superior ratings at 95.6%, followed by the low-moderate FARMS tier at 94.4%. Both the low (85.0%) and moderate-high/high (85.7%) FARMS tiers received Superior ratings. Excellent ratings were most frequently observed in the low FARMS tier at 15%, followed by the moderate high/high FARMS tier at 14.3%.

**Figure 4: Final Adjudication Ratings for Middle School Sight Reading Selections**



### High School Adjudication Results by FARMS Tier

The results section presents an analysis of ensemble ratings in the prepared and sight-reading performances of the MCPS music adjudication, disaggregated by FARMS tiers for high schools. Performance outcomes are reported separately for each tier, including individual ensembles ratings and overall adjudication ratings. Table 3 highlights the FARMS Tier, FARMS eligibility range, and the percentage of high schools within the specific FARMS tier.

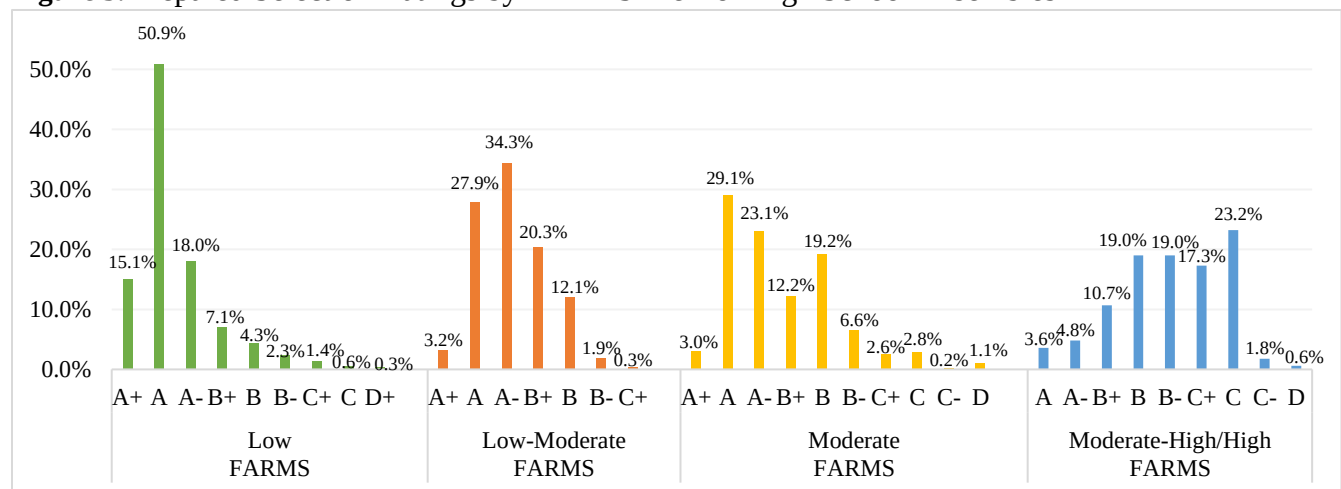
**Table 3.** High Schools by FARMS Tier Ranges

| FARMS Tier         | FARMS Eligibility Range | Percentage of High Schools |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Low                | 6.96% to 20.09          | 20.8                       |
| Low-Moderate       | 24.20% to 38.19         | 25                         |
| Moderate           | 43.1% to 59.5%          | 37.5                       |
| Moderate-High/High | 60.9% to 70.7%          | 16.7                       |

**Prepared Selection Performances for High School Ensembles**

Prepared selection ratings showed an increase in A-range ratings in the low FARMS tiers. For the low FARMS tier (n = 420), 84.0% of the ratings were in the A range, with 50.9% at A, 18% at A-, and 15.1% at A+. The low-moderate FARMS tier (n = 315) showed a decrease, with 65.4% of ratings in the A range: 34.3% at A-, 27.9% at A, and 3.2% at A+. B-range ratings increased to 34.3% in the low-moderate FARMS tier compared to 13.7% in the low FARMS tier.

Among the moderate FARMS tier (n = 532), A-range ratings continued to decrease to 55.2%, while B-range ratings increased to 38.0%. The moderate-high/high FARMS tier (n = 168) had the lowest frequency of A-range ratings, totaling 8.4%. In this tier, B-range ratings totaled 48.7% while C-range were the highest among all FARMS tiers at 42.3%.

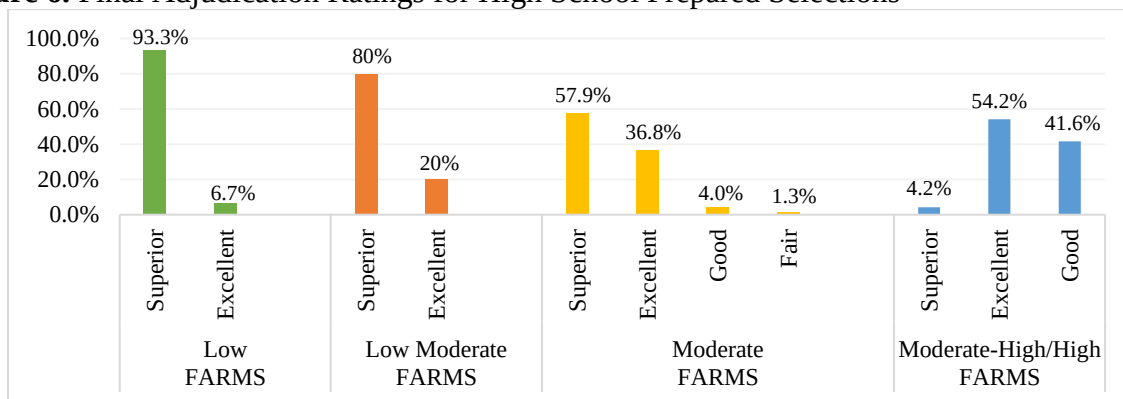
**Figure 5.** Prepared Selection Ratings by FARMS Tier for High School Ensembles**Prepared Selection: High School Final Adjudication Ratings**

Final adjudication ratings for prepared selections showed that all high school ensembles received Superior or Excellent ratings; however, Good or Fair ratings were only observed among ensembles in the moderate and moderate-high/high tiers. For the low FARMS tier, 93.3% of ensembles received a Superior rating, compared to 80.0% in the low-moderate FARMS tier, 57.9% in the moderate FARMS tier, and 4.2% in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier. As shown in Figure 6, Excellent ratings increased across FARMS categories, rising from 6.7% in the low FARMS tier

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to 54.2 in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier. Good ratings were observed in the moderate (4.0%) and moderate-high/high (41.6%) FARMS tiers, while the moderate FARMS tier had the only Fair rating (1.3%).

**Figure 6. Final Adjudication Ratings for High School Prepared Selections**



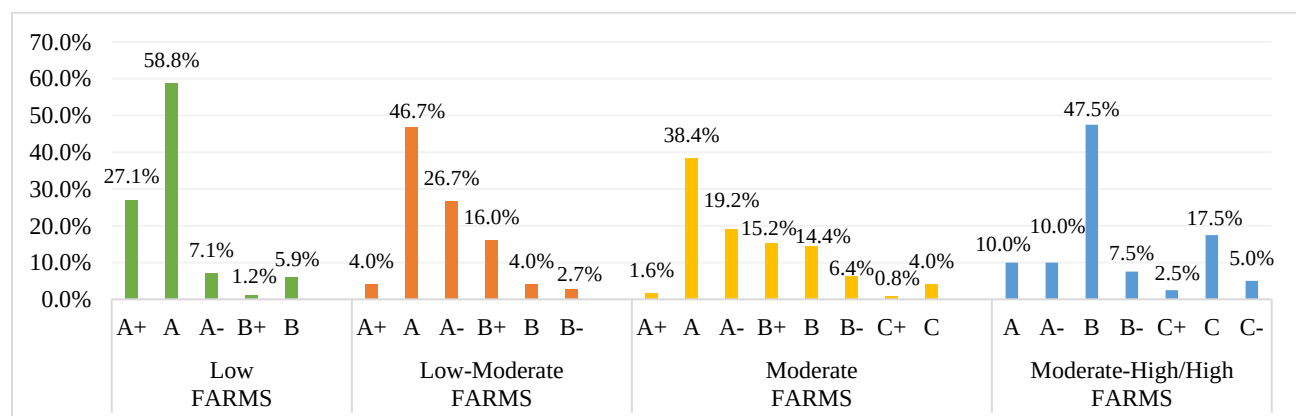
### Sight Reading Performances for High School Ensembles

Sight-reading performance varied by FARMS tier, with A-range ratings observed most frequently in the low FARM tier and less frequent in the moderate-high/high tier. As illustrated in Figure 7, 93.0% of performances in the low FARMS tier (n=85) received ratings in the A range, including 58.8% rated A, 27.1% rated A+, and 7.1% rated A-.

For the low-moderate FARMS tier (n = 75), A-range ratings decreased to 77.4%, with 46.7% at A, 26.7% at A-, and 4.0% at A+. In the moderate FARMS tier (n = 125), 59.2% of performances were rated in the A range, with 38.4% at A, 19.2% at A-, and 1.6% at A+. B-range ratings increased to 36.0%, and C-range ratings appeared in this tier at 4.8%.

Among the moderate-high/high FARMS tier (n = 40), A-range ratings decreased to 20.0%. B-range ratings were the most frequent at 47.5%. Ratings below B- increased to 25%, with 17.5% at C, 5.0% at C-, and 2.5% at C+.

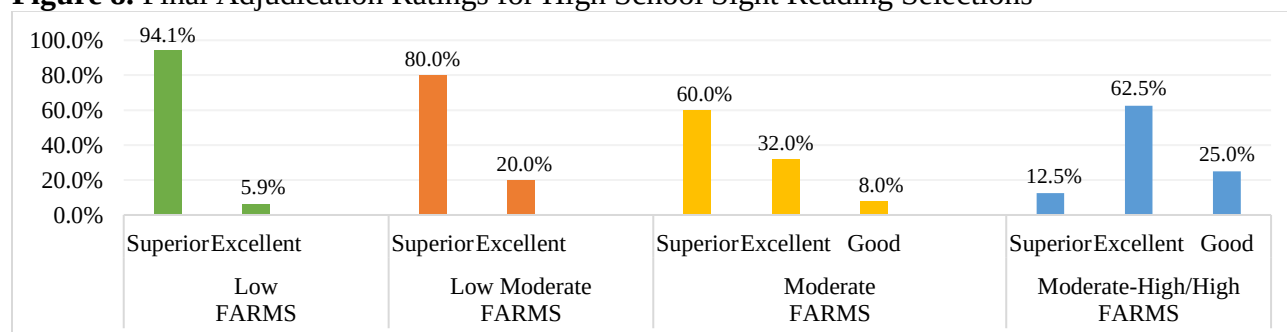
**Figure 7. Sight Reading Ratings by FARMS Tier for High School Ensembles**



### Sight Reading: High School Final Adjudication Ratings

Final adjudication ratings for sight-reading showed that the most frequent ratings were Superior and Excellent. In the low FARMS tier, 94.1% of ensembles received a Superior rating, compared to 80.0% in the low-moderate FARMS tier, 60.0% in the moderate FARMS tier, and 12.5% in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier. Excellent ratings showed the opposite trend, with the highest percentage in the moderate-high/high FARMS tier at 62.5%, followed by 32.0% in the moderate FARMS tier, 20.0% in low-moderate FARMS tier, and 5.9% in the low FARMS tier.

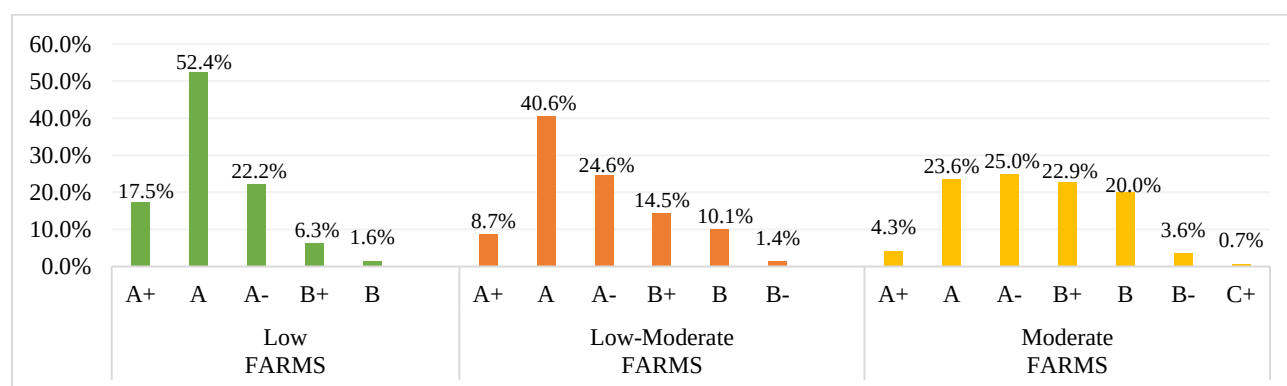
**Figure 8.** Final Adjudication Ratings for High School Sight Reading Selections



### Jazz Ensemble High School Adjudication Results

A total of fourteen high schools participated in the MCPS Jazz Ensemble adjudication process. Each ensemble was evaluated based on a comprehensive set of musical criteria, including tone, intonation, technique, rhythm, balance, interpretation, style, musical effect, improvisation, and additional performance factors. Both final and overall ratings were reported. Figure 9 shows the percentage of letter grades earned by jazz ensembles, disaggregated by FARM tier.

**Figure 9.** Performance Ratings by FARMS Tier for Jazz Ensembles



Jazz ensemble performances showed fewer A-range ratings in the moderate FARMS tier compared to the low FARMS tier. In the low FARMS tier, 92.1% of performances received ratings in the A range, with 52.4% at A, 22.2% at A–, and 17.5% at A+. For the low-moderate FARMS tier, A-range ratings decreased to 73.9%, with A being the most frequent (40.6%), followed by A– (24.6%) and A+ (8.7%). B-range ratings in the low-moderate FARMS tier increased to 26.0%,

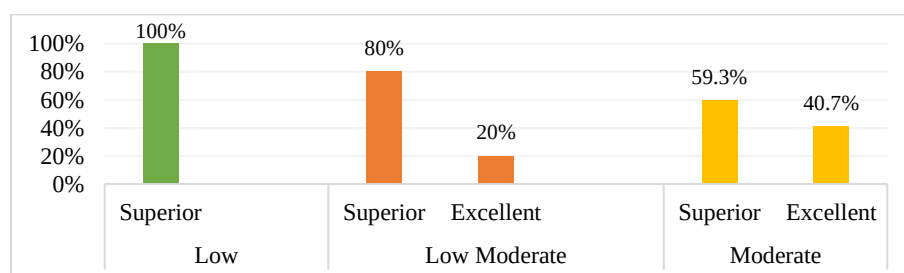


with 14.5% at B+, 10.1% at B, and 1.4% at B-. In the moderate FARMS tier, A-range ratings totaled 52.9%, and B-range ratings totaled 46.5%. This tier also received the only C+ rating (0.7%).

### Sight Reading: Final Adjudication Ratings

Adjudication results for jazz ensemble performances showed higher Superior ratings in the low FARMS tier than in the moderate FARMS tier. In the low FARMS tier, 100% of performances received a Superior rating. The percentage of Superior ratings decreased to 80% in the low-moderate FARMS tier and 59.3% in the moderate FARMS tier.

**Figure 10.** Final Adjudication Ratings for Jazz Ensembles



### Conclusion

Music adjudication data from 36 middle schools and 24 high schools in MCPS were analyzed, with results disaggregated by students receiving FARMS. Ensembles evaluated included concert band, orchestra, emerging, and jazz groups.

### Middle Schools

Low and low-moderate FARMS middle schools had the highest performance results. Over 80% of adjudication ratings were in the A range, and over than 90% of ensembles received overall Superior ratings in both prepared and sight-reading categories. Moderate and moderate-high/high FARMS tiers showed lower frequencies of A-range ratings and higher frequencies in B and C ratings, specifically for prepared selections.

### High Schools

High school adjudication results showed similar trends to those at the middle school level. Low and low-moderate FARMS tiers had the highest frequencies of A-range ratings and Superior final ratings in both prepared and sight-reading performances. In contrast, ensembles in the moderate and moderate-high/high FARMS tiers showed higher frequencies of B and C ratings and lower overall percentages of Superior ratings.

Jazz ensemble adjudication ratings also showed similar patterns to those observed in both middle and high school results. Performances in the low FARMS tier had the highest frequency of A-range ratings across all FARMS tiers, with 92.1% of the ratings in the A range and 100% of performances rated as Superior. For the low-moderate tier, A-range ratings decreased to 73.9%, with A as the most frequent (40.6%). In the moderate FARMS tier, A-range ratings totaled 52.9% and was the only tier to receive a C+ rating (0.7%).

Across middle school, high school, and jazz ensembles, schools in the low and low-moderate FARMS tiers received more A-range ratings and Superior overall ratings. In contrast, schools in the moderate and moderate-high/high tiers frequently received B and C ratings.