

## Technical Assistance Paper

# 2004 Legislative Changes Regarding Alternative Assessment Options for Meeting Grade 10 FCAT Graduation Requirement

### BACKGROUND

The 2004 Legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill (CS/SB) 364 that amended several requirements for high school graduation, including the provision of additional opportunities and alternatives for students to meet certain high school graduation requirements. The law directed the Commissioner of Education to approve the use of the SAT and ACT tests as alternative assessments to the grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for students graduating in the 2003-2004 school year.

### THE STATUTORY CHANGES

CS/SB 364 amended Section 1008.22(9), Florida Statutes (Student assessment program for public schools.--). The amendments require the following:

- The Commissioner of Education shall approve the use of the SAT and ACT tests as alternative assessments to the grade 10 FCAT for the 2003-2004 school year. Students who attain scores on the SAT or ACT which equate to the passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT for purposes of high school graduation shall satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma.
- Students must take the grade 10 FCAT a total of three times without earning a passing score in order to use the scores on an alternative assessment. This requirement shall not apply to a student who transferred into the Florida public school system in the twelfth grade.

The Legislature also passed CS/CS/SB 1604 to create Section 1008.221, Florida Statutes (Dependent children of military personnel transferring to Florida schools; equivalencies for standardized tests.--), to provide that a dependent child of a member of the armed forces who transfers to a Florida public school during his or her senior year can satisfy the FCAT requirement for graduation by attaining a score on the SAT or ACT concordant to a passing score on the grade 10 FCAT. This provision is not limited to military-dependent students scheduled to graduate in 2004. Technical assistance related to this provision will be provided in the near future.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

During 2002-2003, the Department conducted an analysis of the concordance of the SAT and ACT with the FCAT and found that these tests generally measure the same curriculum areas contained in the Sunshine State Standards part of the Grade 10 FCAT. In addition, these tests are widely accepted measures of college preparation by public and private colleges and universities. The Department's concordance studies were the basis for determining the score relationship between the FCAT and the SAT and ACT and were based on Florida students who had taken the FCAT in the spring of 2000 and 2001 and had also taken one of the two standardized national tests. The studies involved matching score reports for more than 71,000 students who had taken both the FCAT and the SAT and more than 47,000 students who had taken both the FCAT and the ACT.

The analyses resulted in the concordant scores used for students scheduled to graduate in 2002-2003 and the scores shown below for students scheduled to graduate in 2003-2004. Twelfth grade students scheduled to graduate in the 2003-2004 school year who have attained the SAT or ACT scores concordant with the FCAT passing scores shown below shall satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma as provided by Florida law: Sections 1003.43(5)(a) (General requirements for high school graduation.--) and 1003.429(6)(a) (Accelerated high school graduation options.--), Florida Statutes. Please note that CS/SB 364 also requires a student to take the grade 10 FCAT a total of three times without earning a passing score in order to use the scores on an alternative assessment to meet graduation requirements. However, the requirement to take the FCAT three times prior to using alternative assessment scores to satisfy graduation requirements shall not apply to a student who transferred into the Florida public school system in the twelfth grade.

The grade 10 FCAT passing scores of 300 in reading and mathematics are required for all seniors graduating in the 2003-2004 school year.

Concordant Scores for 2003-2004			
Reading		Mathematics	
FCAT	300	FCAT	300
SAT	410	SAT	370
ACT	15	ACT	15

School districts are responsible for identifying students who are eligible to use concordant scores on the SAT or ACT to satisfy the assessment requirement for graduation. Districts must document that students using this option have met all other graduation requirements pursuant to Sections 1003.43 and 1003.429, Florida Statutes, and provide a process for documenting the concordant SAT and ACT scores. Students who meet all graduation requirements except passing the FCAT and use the SAT or ACT to meet that requirement must be reported in Survey 5 using one of the following withdrawal codes:

- **WFT** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment
- **WFA** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit college preparatory graduation option and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment
- **WFB** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit career preparatory graduation option and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment.

The 2004 Legislature authorized the use of concordant standardized test scores as an option only for seniors scheduled to graduate in 2003-2004. This option will not be in effect for students graduating in future school years unless the Legislature authorizes the continued use of an alternative assessment for meeting high school graduation requirements.

## Questions and Answers

### General

1. **Do the 2003-2004 concordant scores apply to last year's seniors who met all graduation requirements with the exception of the testing component?**

No, the students who were scheduled to graduate in 2002-2003 school year are required to attain the concordant scores specified for the 2002-2003 school year. Students scheduled to graduate in 2003-2004 must meet the concordant scores provided in this technical assistance paper.

2. **Is a student required to have participated in an SAT or ACT test administration prior to the end of the school year in order to use the alternative assessment to meet graduation requirements?**

No, the opportunity to meet the FCAT requirement for high school graduation using an alternative assessment follows a student into perpetuity. Students who were scheduled to graduate in 2003 or 2004 and met all requirements for graduation except earning passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT are eligible to return to the school district months or years later, provide documentation of meeting the concordant scores on an alternative assessment, and be awarded a standard high school diploma.

### Assessment

3. **Can students use one score from the FCAT and one score from the ACT to meet the graduation requirement?**

Yes, students may satisfy this requirement using various combinations of tests. For example, if a student has passed FCAT mathematics but not FCAT reading, a satisfactory score on either the ACT or SAT could be used. Additionally, a student could attain a satisfactory reading score on the ACT and a satisfactory mathematics score on the SAT and use this alternate score combination to meet the graduation requirement.

4. **Does the requirement to take FCAT three times apply to the reading and mathematics tests separately?**

Yes, if a student has taken the reading test three times but the mathematics test only two times, then the alternate score may be used only for reading.

5. **What constitutes three valid attempts to take FCAT?**

Students must do more than show up to take the test and randomly bubble or "christmas tree" their answer sheets. A student must attain a score higher than 100

to have a valid attempt because a score of 100 is assigned when only a limited number of questions are answered or when an indeterminable pattern of answers (a christmas tree pattern, for example) is provided. In addition, if it is determined that a student has cheated and the test is invalidated, this will not constitute a valid attempt.

**6. Are students who transferred into Florida as eleventh graders after the March FCAT administration but prior to the end of the school year required to take the FCAT three times?**

Yes, these students would have three opportunities to satisfy this requirement by taking the FCAT in June following eleventh grade and in October and March of the twelfth grade. If students did not avail themselves of these opportunities, they must continue taking FCAT until three valid attempts to pass Florida's standards-based test have been accomplished.

### **Reporting Requirements**

**7. How should students who graduate using an alternative assessment be reported?**

Students who meet all graduation requirements except passing the FCAT and use the SAT or ACT to meet that requirement must be reported in Survey 5 using one of the following Withdrawal Codes:

- **WFT** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment
- **WFA** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit college preparatory graduation option and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment
- **WFB** – any student who graduated from school with a standard diploma based on an 18-credit career preparatory graduation option and satisfied the graduation test requirement through an alternate assessment.

**8. What school year must be reported for students who return to the school district several years after they were scheduled to graduate and document concordant scores on an alternative assessment in order to earn a standard diploma?**

Students who are eligible to use an alternative assessment to earn passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT in order to graduate and return to school at a later date with documentation of meeting the concordant scores for the appropriate school year, must be enrolled in the school district and then withdrawn using the appropriate withdrawal code (WFT, WFA, or WFB). It is recommended that the student be reported in the school year in which he or she was awarded the diploma, not the year in which the student was scheduled to graduate.

This option is only available for students expected to graduate in 2002-2003 or 2003-2004 who met all graduation requirements except earning passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT.