

**Technical Assistance Paper**

312213

**Implementation of House Bill 23B—High School Graduation****Background**

The 2003 Florida Legislature enacted House Bill 23B to provide learning opportunities to help certain students to meet high school graduation requirements and to authorize an alternate assessment in place of the Grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for students in the graduating class of 2002-2003. Florida Department of Education staff developed and disseminated information related to this legislation via DPS Memo #04-023, dated August 29, 2003. Clarification on policy issues related to community college admissions was provided by Chancellor Armstrong to the community college presidents via DCC memo #03-27, dated July 18, 2003. The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide more specific information and address issues and concerns identified by school district staff.

**Legislation**

This legislation created Section 1003.433, Florida Statutes (Learning opportunities for out-of-state and out-of-country transfer students and students needing additional instruction to meet high school graduation requirements.—), which provides that

- students who enter a Florida public school in the eleventh or twelfth grade from out of state or from a foreign country shall not be required to spend additional time in a Florida public school in order to meet the high school course requirements if the student has met all requirements of the school district, state, or country from which he or she is transferring
- students who are not proficient in English should receive immediate and intensive instruction in English language acquisition
- a transfer student must earn a 2.0 grade point average and pass the Grade 10 FCAT as required in Section 1008.22(3), Florida Statutes, or an alternate assessment as described in Section 1008.22(9), Florida Statutes, in order to receive a standard high school diploma.

This legislation requires that students who have met all requirements for the standard high school diploma except for earning passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT or an approved alternate assessment by the end of twelfth grade be provided the following learning opportunities:

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- the opportunity to participate in an accelerated high school equivalency diploma preparation program during the summer
- on receipt of a certificate of completion, be allowed to take the Common Placement Test (CPT) and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a state community college, as appropriate (CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion)
- the opportunity to participate in an adult general education program for such time as needed to master English, reading, mathematics, or any other subject required for high school graduation (Students attending an adult general education program shall have the opportunity to take the Grade 10 FCAT an unlimited number of times in order to receive a standard high school diploma.)
- if enrolled in an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) program for less than two school years and if meeting all requirements for the standard high school diploma except for passage of the Grade 10 FCAT or approved alternate assessment, the student may receive immersion English language instruction during the summer following their senior year. (Students receiving such instruction are eligible to take the Grade 10 FCAT or an approved alternate assessment and receive a standard high school diploma on passage of the Grade 10 FCAT or the alternate assessment.)

The following questions and answers are intended to assist school guidance counselors, other school and school district staff, community college personnel, and others in the consistent implementation of this legislation.

## **Questions and Answers**

### ***Out-of-State and Out-of-Country Transfer Students***

1. If a student transfers to a Florida public school in the eleventh or twelfth grade from another state or from a foreign country, will he or she be required to meet all of the Florida high school course requirements?

No. If the student has met all course requirements of the school district, state, or country from which he or she is transferring, the student will not be required to meet additional Florida course requirements. If a copy of the sending school's graduation requirements is not included with the official transcript, school staff at the receiving school must provide a follow-up request for this information or communicate directly with the previous school. It is recommended that the principal or principal's designee document that the student has been promoted to the eleventh or twelfth grade and is on track for graduation from the sending school as evidenced by receipt of the official transcript in the cumulative record. If the student is from a foreign country, the principal or principal's designee may need to interview the student and the parent(s) to determine whether the student has been promoted to the eleventh or twelfth grade and is on track for graduation.

2. Is a student who transfers to a Florida public school in the eleventh or twelfth grade from another state or from a foreign country required to pass the Grade 10 FCAT and meet the cumulative 2.0 grade point average (GPA) requirement?

Yes. A transfer student must earn a 2.0 GPA and pass the Grade 10 FCAT as required in Section 1008.22(3), Florida Statutes.

3. What type of assistance is required for a student who transfers to a Florida public school at the eleventh or twelfth grade from another state or from a foreign country and is not proficient in English?

A student who transfers to a Florida public school in the eleventh or twelfth grade from another state or from a foreign country and is not proficient in English must receive immediate and intensive instruction in English language acquisition.

4. What learning opportunities must school districts provide to students who have met all requirements for the standard high school diploma except for earning passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT by the end of twelfth grade?

These students must be provided the following learning opportunities:

- participation in an accelerated high school equivalency diploma preparation program during the summer
- upon receipt of a certificate of completion, be allowed to take the Common Placement Test and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a state community college, as appropriate (CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion)
- participation in an adult general education program for such time as the student requires to master English, reading, mathematics, or any other subject required for high school graduation (Note: A student attending an adult general education program shall have the opportunity to take the Grade 10 FCAT an unlimited number of times in order to receive a standard high school diploma.)

5. How should a school district determine a student's eligibility to participate in immersion English language instruction?

The student must have participated in an ESOL program for two years or less. The two years are calculated from the date of entry into the ESOL program with one full year equating to two full time equivalency (FTE) reporting periods, not necessarily consecutive.

### ***The New Common Placement Test (CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion)***

6. What is the difference between the regular Certificate of Completion (W08) and the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion (W8A)?

A student who completes the minimum number of credits and the district-specified courses but who is unable to satisfy the other requirements for a standard high school diploma (additional district school board requirements, passing the Grade 10 FCAT, or earning the 2.0 grade point average) shall be awarded a certificate of completion.

Students who meet all of the requirements for a standard high school diploma except earning passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT are eligible to receive the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion.

7. Does the new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion apply to all students regardless of their chosen graduation program?

No. The new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion applies only to students who select the 24-credit traditional high school graduation program. Students selecting one of the three-year graduation programs are not eligible for the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion.

8. Is the new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion available only to those students who transfer from other states or from a foreign country?

The CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion is available to all students who meet all requirements to graduate with a standard diploma via the 24-credit traditional high school graduation program except earning passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT.

9. When will the new code and designation be effective?

The CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion withdrawal code (W8A) is effective for students in the 2002-2003 graduating class and thereafter. Students should be encouraged to request that a copy of their high school transcript be sent to the community college. College admissions officers may also request a letter from the high school to verify that the student meets the CPT-eligible requirements.

### *Postsecondary Access*

10. Will students who receive the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion be eligible to enroll in college?

Yes. Students who receive a CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion may enroll directly into Florida community colleges. These students will be allowed to take the CPT and be admitted to remedial or credit courses based on their CPT scores. Students may enroll in college credit courses if they pass the CPT with scores that meet the cutoff for admission into college credit courses. Students who do not earn the required scores on the CPT will be able to enroll in remedial courses at the community college. Students will not be able to enroll directly into state universities without a standard high school diploma or equivalent.

11. Will students who receive the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion be eligible to enroll in postsecondary career and technical education programs at technical centers and community colleges?

Yes. Students who receive a CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion may enroll directly into postsecondary career and technical education programs offered at the school district technical centers and at the community colleges. The current rules regarding basic skills testing would apply to these students.

12. Will students who receive the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion be eligible to enroll in college credit courses without a standard high school diploma?

Yes. Students may enroll in college credit courses if they pass the CPT with scores that meet the cutoff for admission into college credit courses.

13. How are students with the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion classified when the CPT scores indicate placement in remedial coursework?

Students with the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion who require remediation should be classified as “degree seeking” students. These students must meet the same college preparatory requirements (Section 1008.30(4)(a), Florida Statutes) as students with the standard high school diploma.

14. Are students who earn the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion eligible to enroll in applied technology diploma (ATD) programs, Associate of Arts (AA) degree programs, and Associate of Science (AS) degree programs?

Currently, Rule 6A-10.024(7)(a), FAC, states, “Students must have a high school diploma or its equivalent to be admitted to an applied technology diploma program.” However, since students who earn a CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion are eligible to enroll in a degree program, these students would also be eligible to enter selected ATD programs. Students may enroll in the general AA degree programs and selected AS degree programs. Students will not be eligible to enroll in programs to train for careers that require professional licensure since the prerequisite for licensure is a standard high school diploma or equivalent. See community college program definitions in the FACT Book glossary at <http://www.dcc.firn.edu/MIS/factbook/fb2003/Fact%20Book%202003%20-%20Web.pdf>.

15. What are examples of programs at the community colleges in which students with the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion will not be eligible to enroll?

Students will not be allowed to enroll in community college programs that provide training for police officers, correctional officers, nurses, and classroom teachers. Furthermore, students who do not have a standard high school diploma or equivalent may not serve in the United States military.

16. Can these students continue to pursue a standard high school diploma while enrolled in a community college?

Yes. Students will have unlimited opportunities to retake and pass the Grade 10 FCAT in order to earn a standard high school diploma. They may also choose to earn a State of Florida high school diploma by passing the General Educational Development Test while attending the community college.

17. Who is responsible for administering the Grade 10 FCAT to enrolled college students who wish to continue pursuing the standard high school diploma by earning passing scores on the Grade 10 FCAT?

The local public school district is responsible for providing opportunities for students to retake the Grade 10 FCAT. Some school districts that offer adult education and career and

technical education programs at a community college use these locations as test sites for the Grade 10 FCAT.

18. Will students who enroll in the community college be allowed to transfer to the state universities before completing the Associate in Arts (AA) degree?

No. Students who plan to transfer to a Florida state university and have not earned an AA degree would be required to meet admissions requirements for first-time-in-college students, which include a standard diploma or its equivalent. To view Florida state university admissions requirements for first-time-in-college students and for undergraduate students transferring without having an AA degree from a Florida public community college in the *2004 Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook*, please visit [www.FACTs.org](http://www.FACTs.org) and select Academic Reference Resources.

19. Will these students be able to articulate to the state universities after completing the AA degree?

Yes. Students who complete an AA degree at a Florida public community college are guaranteed admission to a state university within the state university system.

20. Will students who enroll in community colleges after receiving the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion be eligible to receive financial aid?

Students who accept the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion in lieu of a standard diploma must be informed by the school district regarding the potential ineligibility for financial assistance at postsecondary educational institutions. However, students who do not have a diploma or equivalent and were not home-schooled may still qualify to receive federal student aid by passing an approved “ability to benefit” test. See <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/sfahandbooks/attachments/0304Vol1Ch1.pdf>.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

For the purpose of the following questions, “students with disabilities” refers to those students served through exceptional student education (ESE) programs according to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and who have an individual educational plan (IEP).

21. Is a student with a disability who is enrolled in ESE courses leading to a special diploma as the desired graduation credential (identified on the Transition IEP) eligible for the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion?

No. Students enrolled in exceptional student education courses leading to a special diploma are not eligible for the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion. One of the requirements for the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion is passing all required coursework for the 24-credit traditional high school graduation program and all other district course requirements for a standard high school diploma.

22. If a student with a disability earned a special diploma, a regular certificate of completion, or a special certificate of completion and exited school but has not yet reached age 22 may the student re-enroll in high school to work toward completing the requirements for the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion?

Yes. The regulations implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), (34 CFR 300.122), require school districts to provide a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities who have not reached age 22 and who have not earned a standard diploma. At the student's option, the school district shall serve the student through age 21 (i.e., the student's 22nd birthday). School districts may choose to serve students through the end of the school year in which the student turns age 22. A student with a disability who has not earned a standard diploma or its equivalent (i.e., GED) is not considered a "graduate" under the provisions of IDEA and would therefore be eligible to return to high school to work toward a standard diploma or otherwise continue his or her education.

23. If a student with disabilities who was working toward a standard diploma changes his or her diploma option prior to graduation, opting for a special diploma instead, could the student be eligible for the new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion?

Yes. The IEP team must review the student's transcript to determine whether or not the student meets eligibility criteria for the new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion, including passing all required coursework for the 24-credit general program and all other district course requirements for a standard high school diploma. If the student meets all eligibility criteria, based on the student's or family's request, the school would reconvene the student's IEP team and identify the new CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion as the desired graduation credential. Receiving this credential would expand the student's options in his or her transition to postsecondary education and employment.

24. What is the difference between the FCAT waiver, created by HB 1739, and the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion?

Both of these options provide eligible students with disabilities increased opportunities for postsecondary education and employment. The FCAT waiver, pursuant to the Enhanced New Needed Opportunity for Better Life and Education for Students with Disabilities (EN-NOBLES) Act, provides an opportunity for certain eligible students with disabilities who meet specific criteria to earn a standard diploma without earning a passing score on the Grade 10 FCAT. Students who earn the standard diploma may enroll directly in Florida community colleges and state universities.

Students with disabilities who earn the CPT-Eligible Certificate of Completion may enroll directly in Florida community colleges, take the CPT, and be admitted to remedial or credit courses based on their CPT scores. However, these students will not be able to enroll directly into a state university without earning a standard high school diploma or equivalent.