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Commissioner of Education



May 22, 2006

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: John L. Winn
Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: Implementation of Alternative School Grading and Feeder Pattern Provisions in A++ Legislation (House Bill 7087, Sections 46 and 47)

Earlier this month, the Florida Legislature passed the A++ legislation, House Bill 7087, which impacts school accountability as described in the current A+ Plan, Florida Statute 1008.34. The A++ legislation allows for alternative schools in Florida to earn a school improvement rating in lieu of a school grade beginning in the 2005-06 school year. The A++ legislation also allows for feeder schools to be eligible for school recognition.

The legislation gives alternative schools an option to receive a traditional school grade rather than a school improvement rating. For alternative schools to take advantage of the new school improvement rating, the FCAT scores of their students must be included in the school grade calculations of the students' home schools from which the students were referred. The alternative school rating will be based on a comparison of student performance data for the current year and previous year and will identify schools as having one of the following ratings defined according to rules of the State Board of Education:

- (a) "Improving" means schools with students making more academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.
- (b) "Maintaining" means schools with students making progress equivalent to the progress made when the students were served in their home schools.
- (c) "Declining" means schools with students making less academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.

In order to comply with the new law for the 2005-06 school year and meet the reporting timelines for 2006 school grades and Adequate Yearly Progress, the Florida Department of Education will be awarding a "Points Only" calculation to alternative schools that have selected to earn a school improvement rating in the future. The alternative school will have school grade points calculated and reported, but no school grade will be assigned to the school. Beginning in

the 2006-07 school year, after the State Board of Education has defined the school improvement rating process and the Department of Education has collected the appropriate data for students in alternative schools, the alternative schools will be able to earn a school improvement rating and be eligible for school recognition in 2007.

For the 2005-06 School Grade Release, the Florida Department of Education will:

- Define alternative schools as schools with a Master School Identification (MSID) Primary Service Type of "Alternative Education," as reported to the Department of Education by school districts.
- Write a memo to each alternative school asking if the school would like to be graded.
- Grade alternative schools that select to be graded in 2006.
- Provide a "Points Only" calculation to alternative schools that select not to be graded in 2006 but will earn an improvement rating in the future. The school grade points will be posted but no school grade will be awarded. The "Points Only" schools will not be eligible for school recognition in 2006.
- Students attending an alternative school that selected not to be graded shall not have their 2006 FCAT scores attributed back to the home school in 2006.

For the 2006-07 School Grade Release, the Florida Department of Education will:

- Identify feeder pattern schools in the 2006-07 school year for the purpose of awarding school recognition.
- Collect from the districts (via Survey 2 and 3) "home school" information for any student enrolled in an alternative school so they can be included in the home school's grade if the alternative school chooses to receive an improvement rating.
- Collect from the districts (via Survey 2 and 3) information on students in alternative schools that are eligible students for the improvement ratings:
 - (a) Students subject to district school board policies for expulsion for repeated or serious offenses
 - (b) Students who are in dropout-retrieval programs who have officially been designated as dropouts
 - (c) Students who are in programs operated or contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice
- Grade alternative schools that select to be graded and give improvement ratings to schools that select not to be graded.
- Award school recognition money to schools earning an "improving" school improvement rating.

We look forward to working with you as we implement this portion of the A++ legislation. Please let me know if there is anything we can do to assist you in this process.