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CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Samantha Love
Phone: (850) 245-9947
E-mail: Samantha.Love@fldoe.org

Name: Sharon Koon
Phone: (850) 245-0513
E-mail: Sharon.Koon@fldoe.org

Name: Kevin Smith
Phone: (850) 245-5103
E-mail: Kevin.Smith@fldoe.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.
Chancellor
K-12 Public Schools

Hanna Skandera
Deputy Commissioner
Accountability, Research, and Measurement

DATE: October 30, 2006

SUBJECT: Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) Concordant Scores for Meeting High School Graduation Requirements

In support of the Florida Department of Education's commitment to the Strategic Imperative to "Set, Align, and Apply Academic Curricular and Testing Standards," this memorandum is to inform school districts of the current policy related to the use of concordant scores for the FCAT in meeting high school graduation requirements. This information is in response to the amendments to Section 1008.22(9), Florida Statutes (F.S.), approved by the 2006 Legislature, that allow for the use of concordant scores without limiting the implementation to a specific school year. In addition to outlining the current policy, we also are providing information on the anticipated changes to the current policy expected to be released in the upcoming months.

Section 1008.22(9), F.S., now authorizes the Commissioner of Education to adopt concordant scores for FCAT scores when a concordance is supported by an alignment of the content of the assessments as well as a determination of a strong statistical relationship within the data sets. In addition, the section was amended to specify each time that test content or scoring procedures are changed for the FCAT or one of the identified tests, new concordant scores must be determined.

HANNA SKANDERA
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
ACCOUNTABILITY, RESEARCH, AND MEASUREMENT

CHERI PIERSON YECKE, PH.D.
CHANCELLOR
K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The amended statute provides the legislative authority to continue the use of the current concordant scores adopted by the State Board of Education, shown in the table below. These concordant scores were determined in 2003 through a study involving matched scores for over 70,000 students who had taken both the FCAT and the SAT and over 47,000 students who had taken both the FCAT and the ACT. The correlations between the FCAT and the other tests were found to be positive. Although not perfectly aligned, the alignment documents for the SAT and ACT indicated that these tests covered a majority of the Sunshine State Standards content assessed by the FCAT. Therefore, based on the 2003 concordance study, the State Board of Education adopted the concordant scores shown in Table 1 as meeting the assessment graduation requirement for those eligible students meeting the statutory guidelines identified in S. 1008.22(9)(b), F.S.

Table 1

Current Concordant Scores <i>(as of October 2006)</i>			
Reading		Mathematics	
FCAT	1926	FCAT	1889
SAT	410	SAT	370
ACT	15	ACT	15

As you know, the College Board updated the SAT with changes that require the Department to conduct another concordance study to determine the content alignment and the statistical relationship between the FCAT and the new SAT. The Department now has a sufficient number of students who have taken both the FCAT and the new assessment to study score relationships between the assessments.

The scores listed in Table 1 are valid for both the old and new SAT (first administered in March 2005) until the Department completes its study of the new SAT. Once the Department has completed the concordance study of the new SAT, it may be found that the score relationships are different and the concordant scores may need to change. The Department anticipates that students participating in the SAT after new concordant scores are approved will be held accountable for achieving the new concordant scores, following a brief transition period during which both the old and the new concordant scores will be accepted. For example, if new SAT concordant scores are approved by January 1, 2007, students would be able to use either the current (see Table 1) or new concordant scores until July 1, 2007, for the purpose of satisfying the assessment graduation requirement. After July 1, 2007, all students taking the new SAT would be held accountable for achieving the new concordant scores.

Policies Related to the Use of Concordant Scores

Decisions regarding the use of concordant scores in meeting graduation requirements and student progression requirements involve both state and local policies. To facilitate a common understanding of how these policies work together, please note the following:

Graduation Requirements

- 1) Pursuant to S. 1008.22(9)(b), F.S. (Concordant Scores for the FCAT), in order to use a concordant subject area score to satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma, a student must take each subject area of the Grade 10 FCAT a total of three times without earning a passing score. The requirements shall not apply to a new student who enters the Florida public school system in Grade 12, who may either achieve a passing score on the FCAT or use an approved subject area concordant score to fulfill the graduation requirement. Unless otherwise stated in your school district's Student Progression Plan, a new student entering the Florida public school system in Grade 12 is not **required** to take the Grade 10 FCAT if he or she is able to document the approved concordant scores.
- 2) Students who are eligible to use a concordant score, as described above, and have attained the current ACT or SAT scores concordant with the FCAT passing scores shown in Table 1, shall satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma as provided by Florida law [S. 1003.43(5)(a) (General requirements for high school graduation.--) and S. 1003.429(6)(a) (Accelerated high school graduation options.--), F.S.].
- 3) Once a student has met the assessment graduation requirement for a standard high school diploma with a concordant score (and taken and failed the Grade 10 FCAT a total of three times, if applicable), Florida's school code does not require the student to continue retaking the Grade 10 FCAT for the purpose of high school graduation. However, S. 1003.43, F.S., requires district school boards to establish standards for graduation, and these standards must include the completion of all other applicable requirements prescribed in the district's Student Progression Plan pursuant to s. 1008.25. Therefore, the decision to require a student to continue retaking the FCAT beyond meeting the statewide graduation requirement must be based on the district's student progression policies included in the approved Student Progression Plan.

Student Progression in Reading

- 1) Each school district in Florida must address how all students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on FCAT Reading will receive reading intervention through their District K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan. Currently, reading courses must be designed and offered pursuant to the K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan as required by s.1011.62(9), F.S., for all high school students, including students in Grades 11 and 12 who are still in need of intervention.
- 2) Currently, Florida's school code does not require the use of concordant scores for purposes other than high school graduation. The use of concordant scores to exempt students from required intervention would require subsequent approval by the State Board of Education. At this point in time, it is the Department's position that students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on FCAT Reading must continue to receive intervention irrespective of graduation requirements.

Student Progression in Mathematics

- 1) S. 1008.25, F.S., requires each student who scores below Level 3 in mathematics to be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the appropriate strategies for intervention and instruction. As discussed above, Florida's school code does not require the use of concordant scores for purposes other than high school graduation. Therefore, documentation of a concordant score may be used as additional information in the development of mathematics intervention plans, but may not exempt a student from the required intervention strategies stated in your district's Student Progression Plan.

In summary, Florida's school code provides for the specific use of concordant scores for meeting the assessment graduation requirement, under certain conditions. While the concordant scores provide additional information related to student performance, they do not exempt students from the requirements of the K-12 District Comprehensive Reading Plan or the specific student progression requirements stated in your district's approved Student Progression plan. The primary distinction is that concordant scores are able to provide an external measure of whether or not a student has met minimal expectations in reading and mathematics for high school graduation but are not able to serve as a measure of the student's success on Florida's Sunshine State Standards.

Please feel free to contact Samantha Love, Bureau of School Improvement, Samantha.Love@fldoe.org, with questions related to student progression policies, Kevin Smith, Just Read, Florida!, Kevin.Smith@fldoe.org, with questions related to reading plans, and Sharon Koon, Assessment and School Performance, Sharon.Koon@fldoe.org, with your questions related to the Grade 10 FCAT.

HS:sk

cc: Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
High School Principals
Guidance Supervisors
Student Assessment Coordinators
Student Services Directors