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July 8, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Jay J. Pfeiffer, Deputy Commissioner
Accountability, Research, and Measurement

SUBJECT: School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and Adequate Yearly Progress Appeals Process

State Board Rules 6A-1.09981 and 6A-1.099822 – F.A.C., and the No Child Left Behind Act permit a thirty-day period for districts to review the School Grade, Alternative School Improvement Rating, and/or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status assigned to each school. This memorandum provides information on the appeals process for the School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and AYP status. The thirty-day appeals process begins today, July 8, 2008, and ends August 8, 2008.

The School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and AYP accountability calculations rely on the accuracy of the data that districts submit to the Florida Department of Education. During the regular student survey periods, the student data submitted to the Department is certified as correct by the district superintendent. Even after the certification, districts are given several months to amend any district-reported student survey data. In addition, districts have several opportunities to ensure that data used for School Grades, Alternative School Ratings, and AYP are accurate. These opportunities include the following:

- The Department provided reports on Survey 2 and Survey 3 matching to district personnel and allowed more than four weeks to correct and update the data in these surveys. This included correcting student ID numbers in both Survey 2 and Survey 3, school of enrollment, free and reduced-price lunch status, Students with Disabilities status, English Language Learner status, race, gender, and grade level.
- The Department provided each district a copy of all district-reported data used for the School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and AYP calculations. Districts had six weeks to update

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student membership data which may have changed between February 8 (the close of the Survey 3 reporting week) and the time of testing and any grade level changes which occurred after Survey 3 and before testing.

- The Department provided districts all assessment records that did not match a student. Districts had two weeks to update and correct the data.
- The Department provided districts a school type report for School Grade and AYP calculations. The Department also provided districts with a listing of alternative schools. Districts were given an opportunity to review and revise school type assignments and the alternative school listing.
- The Department provided each district a copy of all Survey 2 students who could not be matched to a 2007 FCAT record for purposes of calculating learning gains. Districts had two months to locate FCAT records for these students and report this data to the Department separate from the corrections process which also gathers this data.
- The Department provided each district a copy of all Survey 3 11th and 12th grade students in math and reading that potentially could be included in the denominator for the Retake Bonus Points calculation and with whom a passing score for the FCAT in summer 2007 or fall 2007 could not be matched. Districts had two months to match the students to passing scores on these tests or to indicate that the student was going to use a passing concordant score to satisfy the FCAT graduation requirements. This was processed with the student membership updates because of the relationship the updates had on the retakes population.

Because of the many opportunities for districts to review, update, and correct all the data used for the School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and AYP calculations, the following district-reported data cannot be appealed:

- Incorrect student identification numbers, district numbers, or school numbers on any student or assessment records.
- Changes in student demographic information – race, gender, limited English proficiency, exceptionality, lunch status or grade level.
- Student withdrawals from a school or district.
- 2007 Reading and Math FCAT (prior year) assessment information.
- School type assignment.
- Alternative school status.
- Any request for a change in a School Grade, Alternative School Rating, or AYP status that requires a change in statute or rule.

The process for submitting appeal requests is as follows:

Any request for a recalculation of data that will not result in a change in letter grade, alternative school rating, or AYP status should not be submitted. If the district determines that a different performance grade should be assigned because of the Department's omission of student data, a data miscalculation, or special circumstances that might have affected the grade assigned, an appeal request for a Department review of the data can be submitted in the following manner:

1. On or before August 8, 2008, submit a written request for review, including all backup documentation, to the address below. Each request must be submitted by the district accountability coordinator and must be signed by the superintendent; individual schools may not submit appeals. All schools must work through the district accountability coordinator. A separate letter of explanation and separate documentation must be submitted for each school.

The information should be submitted to:

Edward Croft, Director
Evaluation and Reporting Office
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 445
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

2. The request for review must be in the form of a letter, explaining the reasons for the appeal, specific information on the situations being appealed, and descriptions of the circumstances that caused the need for the appeal. The documentation must identify the individual student records in question. The Department will not review an appeal alleging omission or miscalculation of data that does not identify the individual student records in question. All letters must be signed by the district superintendent.
3. The documentation should accompany the appeal letter and be labeled, highlighted, or marked for the individual school being appealed.
4. A text data file with all of the relevant appeal information must be uploaded to the following secure web site: https://app2.fldoe.org/ARM_Applications/ARM_Login/default.aspx.
5. The text file format is located at the site.

The Department process for reviewing appeal requests will be as follows:

1. After August 8, 2008, Department staff will conduct a review of the appeals and documentation and make initial recommendations.
2. Department staff recommendations will be presented to an appeals committee for review and recommendations.
3. Committee recommendations will be presented to the Commissioner of Education for determination of the final School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and/or AYP designation.

The Department will notify each district superintendent and district accountability coordinator of the final School Grade, Alternative School Rating, and AYP status after the Commissioner's final determination. Local district officials, as designated by the district superintendent, are responsible for notifying individual schools.

Thank you for your cooperation and help in ensuring that all School Grades and AYP calculations are accurate.

JJP/ec