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Technical Assistance Paper Reading Intervention Waivers

Summary:

In 2011, the Florida Legislature amended Section 1003.4156, Florida Statutes, and Section 1003.428, Florida Statutes, to provide that middle and high school students may be exempt from reading remediation requirements under certain circumstances. These changes will become effective July 1, 2011.

These changes will allow middle and high school students who score at Level 1 or Level 2 on Florida Comprehension Assessment Test (FCAT) Reading, but who did not score below Level 3 in the previous 3 years, to be granted a 1-year exemption from the reading remediation requirement. However, the student must have an approved academic improvement plan already in place, signed by the appropriate school staff and the student's parent, for the year for which the exemption is granted.

The Academic Improvement Plans must be in a consistent format approved by each district. The plan must include specific actions that schools, students, and parents will take, in lieu of student enrollment in reading intervention, to improve achievement in reading.

The purpose of this Technical Assistance Paper (TAP) is to provide information to school district personnel who work with reading programs and initiatives.

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A. Background and Introduction

A-1. What is the purpose of this technical assistance paper (TAP)?

The 2011 changes to 1003.4156, Florida Statutes and Section 1003.428, Florida Statutes, have raised questions regarding the implementation of district reading intervention in light of the waivers now afforded under these statutory amendments.

The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide further guidance to districts relating to reading intervention requirements, as they relate to the new waiver policy in place.

B. Interpreting Sections 1003.4156 and 1003.428, Florida Statutes

B-1. What do the revised statutes require?

Under the revised statutes, Section 1003.4156(5)(b) states, “A middle grades student who scores at Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Reading but who did not score below Level 3 in the previous 3 years may be granted a 1-year exemption from the reading remediation requirement; however, the student must have an approved academic improvement plan already in place, signed by the appropriate school staff and the student's parent, for the year for which the exemption is granted.” Similarly, Section 1003.428(b)(2) states, “A high school student who scores at Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Reading but who did not score below Level 3 in the previous 3 years may be granted a 1-year exemption from the reading remediation requirement; however, the student must have an approved academic improvement plan already in place, signed by the appropriate school staff and the student's parent, for the year for which the exemption is granted.”

B-2. Is a district required to provide a waiver for students meeting the criteria set in these amended statutes?

No, as the statutes note, these students, ‘may’ be granted a 1-year exemption. Districts have the right to exceed minimum requirements set by statute.

B-3. What must the Academic Improvement Plan include?

A consistent format approved by the district that details the responsibilities of the school, student and family. It should also include a statement that acknowledges that this is a one year good cause exemption. If the student does not achieve FCAT Reading Level 3 in the current school year they must take intensive reading.

B-4. Does this change apply to students in Grades 11 and 12 who have not met the graduation requirement for FCAT Reading?

Yes. Students in Grades 11 and 12 who have not met the graduation requirement for FCAT Reading may be granted a 1-year exemption from the reading remediation requirement. These students would need to have an approved Academic Improvement Plan in place.