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Commissioner of Education

January 23, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Jim Horne

SUBJECT: Third Grade Promotion Policies

Under the statewide public school student progression law eliminating social promotion, students who scored at Level 1 on the grade 3 reading Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) may be promoted to grade 4 if the student:

- demonstrates an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the State Board; or
- demonstrates, through a student portfolio, that they are reading on grade level as evidenced by demonstration of mastery of the Sunshine State Standards in reading equal to at least a Level 2 performance on the FCAT.

At its January 21st meeting in Miami, the State Board of Education adopted alternative assessment policies and portfolio guidelines for third grade promotion. Information on these adopted alternatives is attached. It is important to note that while the alternative assessment policies provide a standard measure of accountability, the portfolio guidelines will require additional guidance and assistance at the local level to ensure compliance with the intent of the student progression law. The adopted portfolio guidelines are *minimum* guidelines, with the expectation that school districts would have the flexibility to set portfolio standards that may exceed the guidelines just adopted. It is our hope that school districts will play an active role in assisting individual teachers and schools when the portfolio is used as an alternative. We believe your involvement is critical in ensuring that each portfolio is of high quality and is representative of a consistent approach across the school district. As Superintendent, you are required to accept or reject portfolio promotion recommendations in writing per Section 1008.25(6)(c)2, Florida Statutes.

Please be certain of the Department's availability to assist you in the implementation of these new policies and guidelines, if needed.

CC: Assistant Superintendents of Instruction

Alternate Assessment and Portfolio Guidelines for Third Grade Promotion Adopted by the State Board of Education – January 21, 2003

Alternative Assessment Policies

The standardized assessment to be used is the grade 3 reading Norm Referenced Test (NRT) portion of the FCAT or the SAT-9 alternative assessment.

The acceptable levels of performance on the alternative assessments for grade 3 for the 2002-2003 school year are:

- To promote a student using the grade 3 reading NRT portion of the FCAT as an alternative assessment good cause exemption, the grade 3 student scoring at Level 1 Reading FCAT must score at or above the 51st percentile on the grade 3 reading NRT portion of the FCAT.

OR

- To promote a student using the SAT-9 as an alternative assessment good cause exemption, the grade 3 student scoring at Level 1 Reading FCAT must score at or above 51st percentile on a parallel form of the SAT-9. The SAT-9 may only be administered one time. The earliest the alternative assessment may be administered is following the receipt of the grade 3 student reading FCAT scores or during the last two weeks of school, which ever occurs first, for student promotion purposes.

Student Portfolio Guidelines

To be accepted as meeting the portfolio option for demonstrating mastery of the required reading skills, the student portfolio contents must:

- be selected by the student's teacher.
- be an accurate picture of the student's ability and only include student work that has been independently produced in the classroom.
- include evidence that the benchmarks assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT have been met. This includes multiple-choice items and passages that are approximately 60% literary text and 40% information text, and that are between 100-700 words with an average of 350 words. Such evidence could include chapter or unit tests from the district's/school's adopted core reading curriculum that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards.
- be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the Sunshine State Standard Benchmarks for Language Arts that are assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT. For each benchmark, there must be at least five examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of "C" or above.
- be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

The Department of Education shall, upon analysis of school assessment and promotion information, identify and audit a sample of schools to determine their level of compliance with section 1008.25(6)(b)4, Florida Statutes.