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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Jacob Oliva

DATE: January 11, 2023

SUBJECT: **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan Proposed Changes – Opportunity for Comment through January 20, 2023**

Contact Information:
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DPS: 2023-18

On December 14, 2022, states received information from the United States Department of Education (USED) calling for accountability amendments to ESSA state plans by February 1, 2023. The Florida Department of Education has prepared a draft amendment that is now posted at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/essa.stml> for public comment through January 20, 2023.

The amendment addresses four items related to Florida’s transition to a new statewide progress monitoring assessment system, Florida’s Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), which has a baseline year of 2022-2023:

- The adoption of Benchmarks for Excellent Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards;
- The absence of learning gains data in the Federal Percent of Points Index during the baseline year;
- Carry forward and adjustment of school improvement designations during the baseline year; and
- Revisiting long-term goals after the baseline year.

Proposed Changes

On February 12, 2020, the Florida State Board of Education approved an amendment to Rule 6A-1.09401, Florida Administrative Code, *Student Performance Standards*, adopting new student academic standards for K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics. These B.E.S.T. Standards were developed by Florida teachers for Florida teachers throughout an extensive public review process. Implementation began in 2020-2021 and assessments are aligned beginning in 2022-2023.

On March 15, 2022, Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1048, Student Assessments, into law. The bill amended section (s.) 1008.34, Florida Statutes (F.S.), to address the transition to 2022-2023 school and district accountability metrics (i.e., school and district grades) based on Florida’s new assessment system aligned to Florida’s new academic content standards (B.E.S.T. Standards). Therefore, modifications to Florida’s school accountability metrics for federal purposes are being requested.

As noted in state law (s. 1008.34(7), F.S.), school and district grades based on data from the 2022-2023 shall serve as an informational baseline for schools and districts to work toward improved performance in

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future years. Therefore, pursuant to state law, schools may not be required to select and implement a turnaround option in the 2023-2024 school year based on the school’s 2022-2023 grade, and a school that receives the same or lower school grade during the informational baseline year (2022-2023) compared to the 2021-2022 school year is not subject to sanctions or penalties that would otherwise occur as a result of the 2022-2023 school grade. **Given the informational nature of the baseline school grades and the requirements of state law, Florida is requesting no new identification of schools for support and improvement in fall 2023, using data from the 2022-2023 informational baseline year. Rather, Florida is requesting that for one year only, the designations of schools for support and improvement in 2023-2024 be carried over from 2022-2023.** This would be consistent with state requirements during the transition year, and are an acknowledgment of Florida’s implementation of a new assessment system for which student performance expectations (i.e., cut scores for on-grade level performance) will not yet be set by the fall of 2023.

Regarding identification of schools, Florida will differentiate the designations of Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI).

Targeted Support and Improvement
A school not identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) that has at least one consistently underperforming subgroup with a Federal Percent of Points Index below 32% for three consecutive years.
Additional Target Support and Improvement
A school not identified for CSI or TSI, but has one or more subgroups with a Federal Percent of Points Index below 41%.

During the 2022-2023 school year, Florida transitioned to the new Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) in Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics and updated End-of-Course (EOC) assessments in Algebra 1 and Geometry aligned to Florida’s new B.E.S.T. Standards. The end-of-year comprehensive FAST assessment and updated mathematics EOCs, which are the assessments that will be used for school and district accountability purposes, will be administered for the first time in 2022-2023. As with any transition to new statewide assessments, student performance expectations (i.e., cut scores for the various achievement levels) will not be set until after the baseline administration. Florida has scheduled performance standard setting activities to begin summer 2023 with educator panel recommendations, continue through the late summer and fall with input from various actors including a reactor panel, the public, and the legislature, and ultimately culminate with State Board of Education action by the end of the calendar year (2023) to adopt the performance expectations (i.e., cut scores) on the new assessments.

Month/Year	Task
	Assessment Activity
August 2022–May 2023	Administer baseline FAST and Algebra 1/Geometry EOC assessments aligned to the B.E.S.T. Standards.
April 2023	Administer B.E.S.T. Writing Field Test.
	Standard Setting Activity
October 2022–November 2022	Request nominations for Standard Setting panels.
January 2023	Finalize Standard Setting panel membership.
March 2023	Send Standard Setting invitations to panelists.
July–August 2023	Conduct Standard Setting meetings, including “reactor” meetings with business leaders, educational administrators, and other citizens.
August 2023	Conduct rule development workshops and seek input from the Florida Legislature.
October 2023	Submit proposed rule amendment to the State Board of Education for the approval of Achievement Level cut scores assessments aligned to the B.E.S.T. Standards.

Given this timeline for the setting of new cut scores on Florida’s new assessments, Florida anticipates releasing school and district accountability data based on the 2022-2023 school year **after** the new cut scores are adopted. Therefore, school and district accountability metrics based on the 2022-2023 school year will not be available until late fall/early winter 2023, serving as the informational baseline for schools and districts to work toward improved performance in future years. Given the one year delay in accountability data due to the transition to new assessments and the setting of new student expectations, Florida strongly believes that carrying over the designations from the 2022-2023 school year to the 2023-2024 school year is the best course of action to ensure schools are receiving the needed support for improvement. This will ensure that there is no delay in support and services to Florida’s most struggling schools and students.

Though Florida is requesting to carry over the 2022-2023 designations of schools for support and improvement to the 2023-2024 school year, Florida will still publish the school accountability data based on the 2022-2023 school year (the informational baseline year) after the new cut scores are adopted by the State Board of Education. Additionally, in recognition of the transition, Florida law acknowledges that learning gains data will not be available for the calculation of school and district grades based on the 2022-2023 school year (s. 1008.34(7), F.S.). In order for learning gains to be calculated, two years of data are required. The ability to calculate learning gains will return once the new assessments are administered for the second time in the 2023-2024 school year. Given this reality, the school accountability data that will be published based on the informational baseline year of 2022-2023 will need to be modified in terms of the components/indicators used due to data availability. **Specifically, for one year only, Florida is requesting that due to the lack of data availability, indicators related to Learning Gains (Learning Gains ELA, Learning Gains Mathematics, Learning Gains Lowest 25% ELA, and Learning Gains Lowest 25% Mathematics) be excluded from the calculation of the Federal Percent of Points Index (FPPI).** Data for all other indicators will still be reported and included within the calculation of the FPPI for the 2022-2023 informational baseline year, which will be available **after** the adoption of the new cut scores for the new assessments.

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Lastly, given the implementation of new statewide assessments and the eventual adoption of new cut scores for performance on those assessments, Florida will need to re-establish its long-term goals and measures of interim progress for academic achievement. As mentioned, the establishment of new cut scores for on-grade-level performance by the State Board of Education is expected by the end of the calendar year (2023). **Once that new baseline is established, Florida will identify new long-term goals for academic achievement and improvement.**

The public comment period for the proposed changes is open until January 20, 2023. The draft amendment is available at <http://www.fl DOE.org/academics/essa.stml> and comments should be emailed to ESSA@fldoe.org.

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