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Commissioner of Education

Just Read, Florida!

September 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner of Education

RE: Changes to FCAT for High School Graduation

The 2009-10 school year marks the beginning of the transition to the FCAT-2 statewide assessment program. As we begin this transition, there are important pieces of information that must be communicated to your students. Of primary importance is the impact of this transition on your incoming grade 9 students. Students entering grade 9 in 2009-10 will have different state assessment requirements than those students starting high school in prior years.

Students entering 9th grade this year will not be taking the existing Spring Grade 10 FCAT assessment, now referred to as FCAT-1, to meet the assessment requirements for graduation, since spring 2010 is the last administration of this version. The chart below provides details on the assessment requirements for this school year's entering 9th graders. Further explanation follows this chart.

Options for Assessment Requirement for Graduation
Students Entering Grade 9 in 2009-10

Subject Area		Test	Score Requirement	Availability
Reading		Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading	FCAT-2 Linked Score: TBD (300)✶	Spring 2011 and each spring thereafter
	or	Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading Retake	FCAT-2 Linked Score: TBD (300)✶	Fall 2011 and each fall thereafter

Subject Area		Test	Score Requirement	Availability
Reading	or	Grade 10 FCAT-1 Reading Concordant Score (eligible students)	SAT Reading: 410; ACT Reading: 15	Consult SAT and ACT testing centers
Mathematics		Grade 10 FCAT-1 Mathematics Retake✦	FCAT-1 Scale Score: 300	Spring 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013
	or	Grade 10 FCAT-1 Mathematics Concordant Score (eligible students)	SAT Mathematics: 370; ACT Mathematics: 15	Consult SAT and ACT testing centers

✶ FCAT-2 Linked Scores: An initial passing score will be set on the Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading to allow grade 10 students participating in the baseline administration in the 2010-11 school year to meet their assessment requirement with a score equivalent to the current Grade 10 FCAT-1 Reading graduation standard (scale score of 300).

✦The Grade 10 FCAT-1 Mathematics Retake will serve as the mathematics assessment requirement for students entering grade 9 in 2009-10. While the Department is recommending to the legislature that end-of-course (EOC) assessments be used to measure high school mathematics and replace comprehensive assessment requirements for graduation, there currently is no statutory authority to implement these plans. Therefore, the 2010 Legislature must approve these recommendations prior to noticing any new requirements that would transition away from comprehensive assessments of mathematics in high school.

It is important for you to incorporate information about these changes that will be taking place into your communications with students entering grade 9 in the 2009-10 school year. Several key points include the following:

- Grade 10 students in 2010-11 will participate in the baseline, or first operational, administration of the Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading. Students taking the Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading for the first time in spring 2011 will not be held to new passing standards. We anticipate that students will continue to have several options for meeting the high school graduation requirement, including the regular FCAT-2 administration, retake administrations, and the use of concordant scores. The passing standard for all of these options will be equivalent to the currently required scale scores (Grade 10 FCAT-1 Reading Scale Score: 300). This equivalence will be accomplished through special studies conducted after the baseline administration of the Grade 10 FCAT-2 Reading.
- Grade 10 students in 2010-11 will take the retake version of FCAT-1 Mathematics. As you know, this version of the test does not include short-response or extended-response items, only multiple-choice and gridded-response items. Information on the test design is available at: http://fcat.fldoe.org/pdf/fc05designsummary.pdf.

As the new school year progresses, additional information on the transition to new assessments will follow. In the meantime, it is critical that you provide a notice to all incoming grade 9 students that the Grade 10 high school assessments in reading and mathematics will change in spring 2011. This information should supplement the guidance documents that you provide to your students at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year.

Information on the new FCAT-2 Reading (grades 3-10) and Mathematics (grades 3-8) item specifications is available on the Department's FCAT Web site at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp. Draft information on FCAT-2 Mathematics (grades 9-10) may be found on the Web site of the Department's Test Development Center at http://sharepoint.leon.k12.fl.us/tdc/external/default.aspx. Select "FCAT Mathematics" from the folder list and then select "FCAT HS_Math_App_B." Please note that this document is still in draft form and is subject to change. The Department will post the final specifications document on the FCAT Web site upon its completion which will occur no later than summer 2010.

In addition to participating in the 2010 Grade 9 FCAT-1 Mathematics administration, selected high schools in 2009-10 will participate in the computer-based field test of Grade 9 FCAT-2 Mathematics. This test will be composed of items aligned to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) in algebra (90%) and discrete mathematics (10%) and may, depending upon legislative action, become the Algebra I EOC assessment and be required for high school graduation for future high school cohorts.

After the results of the 2011 FCAT-2 Reading baseline administration are analyzed and standard-setting committees have completed their recommendations, the State Board of Education will adopt a final passing standard on the reading assessment required for graduation. It is anticipated that the new passing standard will be approved by January 2012 and will be effective for those students entering grade 9 in 2011-12.

If you have any questions about the transition to new assessments, please feel free to contact Kris Ellington, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Accountability, Research, and Measurement, or Victoria Ash, Bureau Chief of K-12 Assessment, at (850) 245-0513.

EJS/ke

cc: Assistant Superintendents for Curriculum and Instruction
District Assessment Coordinators
Dr. Frances Haithcock
Jeff Sellers