

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

FLORIDA

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The Florida State Assessment System

Florida uses a number of criterion referenced tests to chart student achievement.

• ***Grade Levels and Subjects Tested***

1. Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT):
 - Reading for grades 4, 8 and 10
 - Math for grades 5, 8 and 10.

FCAT Reading assesses content from two areas: (a) Constructs Meaning from Information Text and (b) Constructs Meaning from Literature.

FCAT Mathematics assesses content from five areas: (a) Number Sense, Concepts and Operations, (b) Measurement, (c) Geometry and Spatial Sense, (d) Algebraic Thinking and (e) Data Analysis and Probability.

2. Florida Writes!:

The Florida Writing Assessment is given in grades 4, 8, and 10.

3. High School Competency Test (HSCAT):

Passing both the communications (reading and writing) and mathematics sections of the HSCAT is a requirement for high school graduation. The test is administered in the eleventh grade. However, starting this year (1999-2000) students can substitute the 10th grade FCAT for the high school graduation requirement.

In 2003, the HSCAT will be discontinued altogether and replaced with the FCAT.

• ***Norm or Criterion Referenced***

FCAT: Criterion

Florida Writes!: Criterion

State and District Accountability Systems and the Federal Role – 6/2000

HSCT: Criterion

- ***Matrix and Census Testing*** – Census

- ***Item Types***

FCAT: Multiple-choice and “production items” (students write an answer, solve a problem, give a lengthy explanation, or draw a sketch).

Florida Writes!: performance

HSCT: multiple choice

- ***Student Performance Levels***

The definitions and scoring ranges for the **FCAT** Achievement Levels are as follows:

- *Level 5*: the student has success with the most challenging state content standards and answered most of the test questions correctly, including the most challenging ones.
- *Level 4*: the student has success with the challenging state content standards and answered most of the test questions correctly but may have had only some success on the most challenging ones.
- *Level 3*: the student has partial success with the state standards but performance is inconsistent, with many of the questions answered correctly but having less success on the most challenging ones.
- *Level 2*: the student has limited success with the challenging content of the state standards.
- *Level 1*: the student has little success with the state standards.

See attached for the FCAT Math and Reading scoring ranges for 1999-2001 and 2002+.

Florida Writes! Achievement Levels range from 6.0 as the high to 1.0 as the lowest score.

- ***Inclusion Policies***

By state law, all students in the appropriate grades must participate in the state assessments. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) determines participation for special education students. If a general education diploma is desired then the student must pass the HSCT. Limited English proficiency (LEP) students with fewer than two years of ESL are excluded, but those with more than two years must be tested. LEP students are:

1. Provided with additional time,
2. Allowed to divide the test into shorter testing periods, and/or
3. Have the teacher read questions out loud.

Modified test instruments are allowed for students with disabilities.

- ***Other Assessments*** – none

- ***State requirements for local assessment***

Although the Florida Department of Education collects the results of tests administered by local school districts at grades 4 and 8, the administration of such testing is not required.

A+ Plan for Education: When the new tests are in place in 2000-01, the state assessment program will have expanded to include grades three to ten. The testing system will measure student learning from year to year. The FCAT will also include some norm-referenced items comparable to the Stanford 9.

Performance Data

- ***What data are reported?***

The School Accountability Report acts as a report card, grading each school A-F using data from the FCAT and Florida Writes! Along with reporting the percentage of students scoring at each level within a school, school report cards also include the following:

- Suspension rate
- Rate of absence over 20 days
- Dropout rate
- Promotion rate
- Percent receiving free/reduced lunch, and
- Mobility rate.

- ***How are the data distributed?***

Individual student scores are produced, and the report is distributed to districts, schools and parents. District and state data are also available via the Internet.

- ***How are the data disaggregated?***

Data is disaggregated by:

1. gender
2. race/ethnicity
3. socio-economic status
4. mobility rates
5. staff turnover.

The Florida State Accountability System

- ***Student Accountability***

Students are responsible for achievement on the state assessments. As part of the A+ Plan, “students will be required to meet standards (as assessed by the FCAT and Florida Writes!) in order to be promoted to the next grade.”

Passing the HSCT, which can now be replaced with the 10th grade FCAT, has been a requirement for graduation.

- ***School Accountability***

Under the **A+ Plan for Education**, the state has begun to grade the schools on the A-F scale: **A:** Meet grade "B" criteria AND the percent of students absent more than 20 days, percent suspended and dropout rate (high schools) are below state averages AND there is substantial

improvement in reading AND there is no substantial decline in writing and math AND at least 95% of standard curriculum students were tested.

B: Current year reading, writing and math data are at or above higher performing criteria AND no subgroup data are below minimum criteria AND at least 90% of standard curriculum students were tested.

C: Current year reading, writing and math data are at or above minimum criteria.

D: Current year reading or writing or math data are below minimum criteria.

F: Current year reading, writing and math data are below minimum criteria.

- Under current rule subgroups include the economically disadvantaged, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian students.
- Standard curriculum students also include Language Impaired, Speech Impaired, Gifted, Hospital Homebound and LEP students who have been in an ESL program more than two years.
- Substantial improvement in reading means an increase of more than two percentage points in students scoring at FCAT levels 3 and above. If the school has 75% or more students scoring at or above FCAT achievement level 3 AND not more than two percentage points decrease from the previous year then substantial improvement is waived.
- Substantial decline means five or more percentage points decline in the percent of students scoring FCAT achievement level 3 and above in Math OR five or more percentage points decline in the percent of students scoring 3 and above on Florida Writes!

The minimum criteria for school performance to receive the grades C, D and F include:

FCAT Reading: 60% score level 2 and above

FCAT Math: 60% score level 2 and above

Florida Writes!: 50% scores 3 and above at the elementary level
67% score 3 and above at the middle school level
75% score 3 and above at the high school level.

The higher performing criteria for school performance to receive grades B and A include:

FCAT Reading: 50% score level 3 and above

FCAT Math: 50% score level 3 and above

Florida Writes!: 67% scores 3 and above at the elementary level
75% score 3 and above at the middle school level
80% score 3 and above at the high school level.

A school's letter grade is also reduced by one level if it reports *absenteeism, dropout or suspension rates* that are significantly above the state average. Schools that are graded with an F are not making adequate yearly progress, so that during the current year a school's reading, writing or math data must be at or above minimum criteria to be making progress.

Title I schools: The state's definition of adequate yearly progress for Title I schools remains unchanged until the federal government approves the A+ Plan.

High Schools have not made adequate yearly progress if:

- Fewer than 85% are passing High School Competency Test (HSCT) in communications

- Fewer than 80% are passing the HSCT in mathematics
- Fewer than 67% are scoring 3 and above on Florida Writes!

Middle Schools have not made adequate yearly progress if:

- Fewer than 40% are scoring above the 50th percentile in Reading Comprehension
- Fewer than 40% are scoring above the 50th percentile in Mathematics Concepts/Application
- Fewer than 50% are scoring 3 and above on Florida Writes!

Elementary Schools have not made adequate yearly progress if:

- Fewer than 33% are scoring above the 50th percentile on Reading Comprehension
- Fewer than 33% are scoring above the 50th percentile in Mathematics Concepts/Application
- Fewer than 33% are scoring 3 and above on Florida Writes!

However, the state has removed this process from the statutes and will be asking the U.S. Department of Education for a waiver until the A+ Plan is fully implemented.

Rewards and Sanctions

If the school fails to improve beyond an F for two out of four consecutive years, it will be subject to state sanctions. In addition, the students in the school can attend:

1. any public school that scored a C or better in the county or an adjacent county, or
2. an eligible private school using an “opportunity scholarship,” commonly known as a voucher.

\$15 million was appropriated by the 1999 Legislature for this year's Florida School Recognition Program. Up to \$100 per FTE will be allocated to each qualified school. Qualified schools include those that meet the higher performing grade "A" criteria or showed “significant improvement.” Schools that improve by one letter grade from one year to the next, and F-graded schools that show significant improvement also qualify to receive additional funding. The size and number of qualified schools will determine the award amount for each school.

In addition, the A+ Plan requires that high performing teachers be rewarded annually within the school district salary structure. The plan requires that school district employee salary plans devote at least five percent of each teacher and administrator’s salary to annual performance evaluations by the year 2002, based largely on student performance.

- ***District Accountability***

The state accountability system is focused on schools as opposed to districts. A formal district system has not been established.

- ***Subgroup Performance as an Indicator***

Under current rule subgroups include economically disadvantaged, Black, White, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian students. To be graded an A or B school, no subgroup can perform below the minimum criteria outlined.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools

- **Identification**

The **A+ Plan** now identifies schools that fail to improve beyond an F for two out of four consecutive years as subject to state sanctions and the loss of students through vouchers.

Title I schools are in program improvement if they fail to meet adequate yearly progress for two years consecutively.

- **Assistance to Low Performing Schools**

Governor Bush has stated that schools performing at a failing level will be given two years to improve during which they will receive “unprecedented assistance” and support. Support from the state has included assistance in the development, implementation and evaluation of school improvement plans and priority in discretionary grant programs.

Schools not performing up to academic standards also receive extra funding as assistance.

- **Who provides the assistance?**

The districts and the Office of School Improvement (OSI) in the State Department of Education provide the assistance. Staff from the state department include Team Support Staff, information, computer systems and communications specialists.

- **Does support to Title I schools differ?**

No difference, but there is a priority placed on Title I schools for competitive grants.

Alignment of the State Accountability System and Title I

Until the changes in the accountability system under the A+ plan, there had been complete alignment of the state accountability system and the Title I system. However, the current status is only transitional, and it is expected that the A+ Plan will soon replace the previous system for Title I adequate yearly progress and program improvement.

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