

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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## MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Kris Ellington

DATE: March 14, 2011

SUBJECT: Implementation of Data Forensics Program to Strengthen the Fairness and Validity of Spring 2011 Assessment Results

This memorandum serves to announce the Department's intent to utilize statistical analyses of test data during the Spring 2011 FCAT/FCAT 2.0/EOC assessments administration to help ensure fair and valid results statewide. Through Pearson, our primary assessment contractor, the Department has contracted with Caveon Test Security to provide its Caveon Data Forensics™ for all statewide assessments. Caveon will analyze data to identify highly unusual test results for two primary groups: 1) students with extremely similar test responses; and 2) schools with improbable levels of similarity, gains, and/or erasures.

**Students with extremely similar test responses:** The Department will flag and invalidate the test scores of students whose test responses are so similar (and statistically aberrant) that the validity of the test responses must be questioned. For this spring, a very conservative threshold will be used. The Department will flag and invalidate only those instances where the chance of two or more tests being so similar while taken independently is 1 in  $10^{12}$ , or one chance in a trillion when tests are taken normally. Despite such a conservative threshold (the chance of being struck by lightning is one in a million), the Department is instituting an appeal process where school districts may present evidence that explains and justifies why two or more students' test responses are so similar. Based upon an individual appeal, the Department may reverse the score invalidation. Additional information on this appeal process will be provided by the Department in the coming weeks.

**Schools with improbable similarity, gains, and erasures:** The Department will flag schools and possibly conduct or request investigations when test results are marked by extremely unusual levels of similarity, score gains, and erasures. If a school is flagged in your district, you will be notified and provided details regarding the type of unusual characteristics identified through the analysis. The Department may require the school district to conduct an internal investigation and send the results to the Department.

KRIS ELLINGTON  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER  
ACCOUNTABILITY, RESEARCH, AND MEASUREMENT

Extreme incidents may prompt a formal investigation led by the Department, possibly leading to sanctions.

**Program details:** The data forensics program and its policies and procedures will be highlighted in a series of web-based presentations over the coming weeks. If possible, we urge you and relevant staff to attend one of the live events scheduled on Wednesday, March 23, and Wednesday, March 30, from 9:30-11:00 am. Otherwise, recordings of the sessions will be available for subsequent review. To register for one of the events listed below, please click on the link associated with your chosen session and follow the instructions provided. Soon after you complete your registration, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with instructions for attending the session. Please note that each session is limited to a total of 1,000 participants.

Session Title	Date and Time of Session	WebEx Link
FDOE Data Forensics Informational Session #1	Wednesday, March 23, 2011 9:30-11:00 a.m. (EDT)	<a href="https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?d=590389404&amp;t=a">https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?d=590389404&amp;t=a</a>
FDOE Data Forensics Informational Session #2	Wednesday, March 30, 2011 9:30-11:00 a.m. (EDT)	<a href="https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?d=591938137&amp;t=a">https://pearsonevent.webex.com/pearsonevent/onstage/g.php?d=591938137&amp;t=a</a>

Prior to the WebEx, you may find it helpful to review the attached presentation on the capabilities of Caveon Data Forensics™. This information was presented to the districts represented on the Department's Assessment and Accountability Advisory Committee, and they found it to be very helpful in understanding the analyses.

Thank you in advance for your efforts and help to ensure that the Spring 2011 statewide assessments are fair and accurate measures of each student's knowledge and skills. If you have any questions about this information, please feel free to contact Dr. Sharon Koon in the Office of Assessment at [Sharon.Koon@fldoe.org](mailto:Sharon.Koon@fldoe.org) or (850) 245-0513.

KE/sk

Attachment

cc: Assistant Superintendants for Instruction  
District Assessment Coordinators  
District Accountability Coordinators