

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

November 18, 2003

**SUBJECT:** School Grading and FCAT Achievement Level Definitions Rule  
Amendments

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### PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approval of amendments to Rules 6A-1.09981 and 6A-1.09422

### AUTHORITY FOR STATE BOARD ACTION

Sections 1008.22(3) and (6), and 1008.34, Florida Statutes

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department of Education is charged with implementing an accountability system that promotes high standards for student learning and achievement. Two elements of this system are the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), described in Section 1008.22, F.S., and the school performance grades described in Section 1008.34, F.S. The implementation of the school performance grades as described in SBE Rule 6A-1.09981 is dependent upon the FCAT achievement levels described in SBE Rule 6A-1.09422. Changes in the FCAT achievement levels also affect the school performance grading system, therefore these rules are being considered together.

Statewide rule development workshops were held during August to obtain input about revisions to these rules. In October, a workshop was provided to the SBE to explain the relationship between the rules, the proposed changes to the rules, and the anticipated effects of changing the rules. Collectively, the proposed revisions will significantly raise the bar for schools and students while preserving the existing high performance standards and maintaining the data base needed for analyzing longitudinal performance improvements.

**School Performance Grades.** The revisions to SBE Rule 6A-1.09981 include process improvements that will take effect in the current school year, 2003-03, and requirements for raising the bar that will take effect in 2004-05 and beyond. The six elements of the system ("achieving high standards" in reading, mathematics, and writing, and "learning gains" in reading, mathematics, and for the lowest 25% of the students) will be maintained without change. The recommended improvements are briefly summarized below:

#### Processing Improvements Effective In 2003-04

- All schools will be considered new schools during the first year data is available for the school.
- More schools will be included based on guidelines to be issued by the Commissioner about which school types should be graded.
- The district average for FCAT Writing will be substituted when a school does not contain an assessed grade level (grades 4, 8, or 10) or when fewer than 30 students are tested.
- When the number of students to determine the reading learning gains of the lowest 25% of the students is less than 30, the results of the 30 lowest performing students in the school will be used.
- When the percent of students tested is less than required, authority is given to the

Commissioner to assign a lower letter grade than represented in the points earned.

#### Raising the Bar Effective in 2004-05 and Beyond

- Include all students (standard curriculum students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students) in the calculation of learning gains and the percent tested.
- Raise the expected student performance level for FCAT Writing to a score of 3.5 for two years (2004-05 and 2005-06) and to a score of 5.0 after that (2006-07 and beyond).
- Add science as the seventh category to the school performance grading system in 2006-2007 and increase the grading scale requirements accordingly. Science would become the fourth “achieving high standards” category. It will not be possible to determine learning gains for science.

**FCAT Achievement Levels.** The current performance expectations for Florida students, called achievement levels, are rigorous and challenging for all students. The existing reading and mathematics achievement levels contained in SBE Rule 6a-1.09422 were set in 1999 for grades 4 (reading) 5 (mathematics), 8 and 10, and in 2001 for all other grades. Currently, only 31-63 percent of the students are considered proficient with the grade level reading standards and 47-63 percent with the mathematics standards. Performance of minority students is much lower. Because FCAT assesses the challenging content standards (Sunshine State Standards) in a rigorous way, it is recommended that the existing high standards be maintained. The recommended rule revision requires the Commissioner annually to review and make a recommendation to the SBE about when to implement the higher standards.

#### Proposed Rule Changes

- Add the FCAT developmental scale scores that are equivalent to the scale scores already specified in the rule.
- Include references to FCAT science where appropriate.
- Require the Commissioner to review FCAT achievement annually and make recommendations to the SBE regarding the future implementation of the higher levels.
- Define proficiency of grade level content as a score in level 3.
- Clarify application of FCAT passing scores for different groups of students.

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#### **Supporting Documentation Included:**

Draft of Amended Rule 6A-1.09981  
Draft of Amended Rule 6A-1.09422  
Section 1008.22, Florida Statutes  
Section 1008.34, Florida Statutes  
List of Participants in Rule Development Workshops

**Facilitators/Presenters:** John Winn; Cornelia Orr