

Running from accountability

Our position: School boards are taking the wrong tack in trying to wiggle out of FCAT next year.

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Central Florida's Public School Boards Coalition has approved its policy goals for the year. Reading through them, it's hard to believe the main concern is the welfare of students.

One goal is to get rid of a state requirement for physical education, even though many children are dangerously overweight and need more activity, not less.

Another questionable goal is to take the stakes away from FCAT 2005. It would be used only to see where students' and schools' weaknesses lie.

Children who couldn't read would be promoted anyway. Seniors could graduate without passing FCAT. There would be no F schools.

The Florida School Boards Association has also requested permission to wriggle out of FCAT. It says repeated storms have cost children too much time and peace of mind. It's not a normal year, the group protests.

Even districts that suffered no hurricane damage want to be let off the hook. That's the clue that this is just another foot-dragging episode in the education establishment's opposition to FCAT.

Education Commissioner John Winn rightly rejected the state group's request, saying FCAT will go on. A handful of schools that suffered extreme damage can appeal if their grades drop.

This is a well-reasoned decision. But the school boards have vowed to take the fight to the Legislature.

That would be a waste of time and political capital. The boards should employ their lobbyists to fight for teacher pay boosts, smaller classes and other measures that will truly benefit children.