

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
Requested Reports, Updates, and Discussions  
May 17, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Assessment Contract Management

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**PROPOSED BOARD ACTION**

For Information

**AUTHORITY FOR STATE BOARD ACTION**

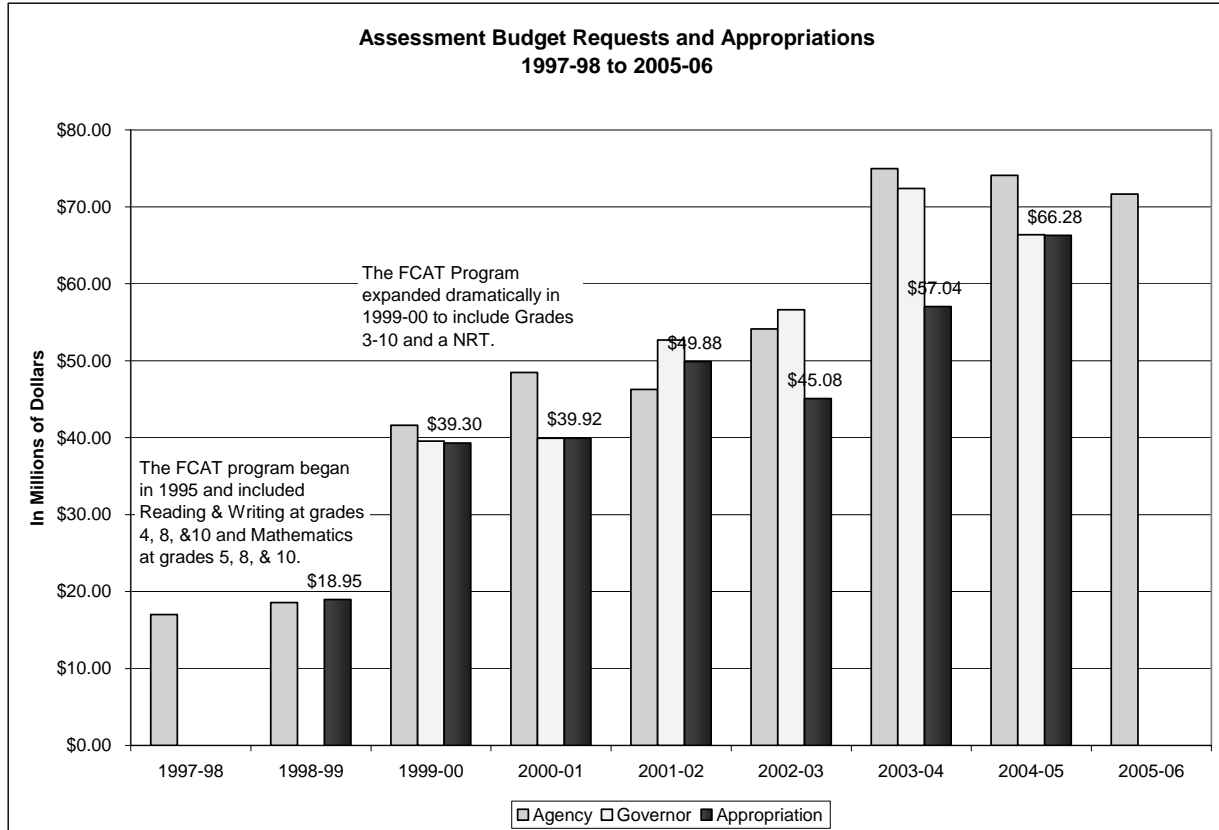
1008.22, F.S.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This item provides information about the contracts and quality management practices of the Department's Assessment Office. It describes model contract management and oversight activities that many states are seeking to emulate. In fact, a private sector organization, *Edvance*, recently recognized the Department as a "best practice partner" because of our statewide testing services procurement process. The Department's practices were reviewed as part of their benchmarking study, *Improving Current Practices in Managing Statewide Assessments: Procuring Testing Services*.

The Office of Assessment and School Performance currently uses contracts to implement FCAT, the Florida Teacher Certification and Educational Leadership examinations, CLAST, PSAT/PLAN, the school readiness system, diagnostic reading assessments, and the college placement and basic skills tests. Other contracts and projects are needed to provide quality control activities that ensure accurate reporting of test scores. To operate these assessment programs, the office has 14 contracts that total \$293,959,315 and seven project awards for \$7,588,849. These contractual agreements extend across multiple years (up to 5 years) and require a large annual budget.

Each year a legislative budget request (LBR) is prepared to cover the costs for the existing contracts and to provide any enhancements needed for program improvements (e.g., accelerated reporting schedules or online assessment). If less than the requested amount is appropriated by the Florida Legislature, then the contracted services must be reduced and/or the enhancements not implemented. The 2004-05 appropriation was \$66,279,953.00 and LBR 2005-06 was \$71,649,766.00. The figure below shows how the agency's request, the governor's request, and the appropriation have changed over time.



## Procurement and Contract Management

The timelines for developing and implementing assessment contracts involve activities that are spread over several years and that overlap within the same calendar year. If the procurements are not well planned or timed, there could be an interruption in service and test administrations would not occur as scheduled. Additionally, if the overlapping tasks are not managed correctly, testing schedules might be delayed or quality impacted. The actual number of months required for procurements and contracts depends on the extensiveness of the program.

Procurement activities usually begin 6-18 months in advance of when the contract is needed, depending on the complexity of the program. For large assessment contracts, e.g., FCAT or FTCE, the work tasks completed in one calendar year involve tests that will be administered in three different years. These activities can be thought of as phases. Typically, Phase 1 involves the development of the test design and test questions. In Phase 2, the test books and support materials for the test year are prepared. Phase 3 is the year the test is actually being administered. The overlapping nature of these activities requires intense attention to detail and constant monitoring.

Over the years, the staff of the Assessment Office has developed effective contract management activities for its various projects. Although the requirements vary by the

extensiveness of the contract, the following list of examples is typical of what the Assessment Office utilizes for program management.

- A project operational plan that includes the management design, staffing, subcontractors, and products to be developed
- A global project schedule
- Weekly/monthly management reports
- Weekly/periodic conference calls
- Weekly/periodic action item reports after conference calls
- Regular project management meetings with DOE staff
- Regular cross-contractor and DOE (joint) management meetings
- Regular meetings with Florida educators and DOE staff
- Monthly/quarterly accounting reports
- An annual summary of project activities

**FCAT Contracts:** In order to provide the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test for the state, a series of contracts are necessary. Presently, the Department is managing four large contracts to implement the FCAT Program: one for development activities, one for the NRT, and two for FCAT administration (because of transition between contractors). Periodically, these contracts must change because of contract expiration or the Department's desire to make changes to the program. Other smaller contracts are in place to assist the Department with quality control with the larger contracts (e.g., document reviews, handscoring oversight, and data verification).

In 2004, a new FCAT administration RFP was issued and a new contractor was selected. The new contract begins with the October 2005 FCAT retake administration and extends through the June 2008 retake administration. The new contract also includes an optional renewal period that will encompass years 2008-09 and 2009-10. In brief, the contract includes the administration, scoring, and reporting of FCAT in grades 3-10 for reading and mathematics, in grades 4, 8, and 10 for writing, and in grades 5, 8, and 11 for science. It does not include the development activities (item writing, test design/layout, sample tests, and various informational publications) or the NRT which are covered via contracts with Harcourt Assessment, Inc.

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**Supporting Documentation Included:** The Assessment and Accountability Briefing Book, specifically pages 12-14 (<http://firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/pdf/fcataabb.pdf>).

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