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**BLUE
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TASK FORCE**

*on Accommodations and Access
for Students with Disabilities*

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Assessment and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Draft Report

November 2002

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Blue Ribbon Task Force

**Executive Order of the Governor
2001-108**

April 3, 2002

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Charge:

Recommend for students with disabilities:

- **reasonable assessment accommodations**
- **expanded diploma options**
- **improved postsecondary access**

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Members:

Parents—

Karen Brill (Palm Beach)

Karen Clay (Hillsborough)

Ann Kimbrough (Leon)

Advocates—

Ven Sequenzia (Autism Society, State Advisory Committee)

Sylvia Smith (Advocacy Center)

Terry Ward (FAAST)

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Members: *(continued)*

Assessment Experts—

Dr. Natalie Roca (Miami-Dade)

Dr. Dawn Wilson (Duval)

Professional Educators—

Ursula LeMontagne (Teacher, Escambia)

Dr. Roosevelt Johnson (ESE Director, DeSoto)

Jan Rouse, Chair (Assistant Superintendent, Pinellas)

Facilitator: Dr. Judy Schrag

Staff: Andrea Willett, DOE

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Work of Task Force:

- 7 sessions/16 days of meetings throughout state
- public input and testimony
- presentations by Department/district staff
- consultation with experts in related areas
- utilization experiences of other states
- review of research and professional literature
- extensive deliberations

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Task Force Meetings (16 days):

06/06-07

Tallahassee

06/27-28

Jacksonville

07/22-23

Orlando

08/14-16

Ft. Lauderdale

08/28-30

Tallahassee

09/12-13

Tampa

10/26-27

Pensacola

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Context of Work:

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

- statewide test administered in grades 3-10
- measures attainment of Sunshine State Standards

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FCAT = High Stakes Test

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FCAT High Stakes include:

- student progression/graduation (standard diploma)
- school grades
- school improvement process
- funding incentives

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FCAT and NCLB

The No Child Left Behind Act
requires the use of high stakes tests....

- high expectations
- accountability
- reporting student progress

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Charge to Task Force regarding FCAT:

- Full participation of students with disabilities through reasonable accommodations
- Test results accurately reflect achievement (not a measure of disability)
- Tests use research-based assessment practices/technology
- Validity, reliability, security of tests are not violated



Preliminary Findings and Considerations:

- No alternate assessment leading to a standard diploma
- Limited allowable accommodations
- Waiver process not well known
- Limited existing formats/versions of test
- Lack of research regarding impact of accommodations
- Without a standard diploma, limited opportunities for postsecondary schooling, employment, or military

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Eight Areas of Recommendations

- A.** FCAT Administration/Ongoing Development/Assessment Options
- B.** Access and Accommodations
- C.** Alternate Assessment Options
- D.** Graduation Requirements/Diploma Options
- E.** Exemptions and Appeals
- F.** FCAT Results Reporting and Accountability
- G.** Access to Postsecondary Opportunities
- H.** Educational Support, Technology, and Research



A. FCAT Administration/Ongoing Development/Assessment Options

Expand FCAT to provide multiple assessment options leading to standard diploma:

- Additional formats
- Broadest array of reasonable accommodations
- Alternate assessment options to demonstrate knowledge/performance of Sunshine State Standards
 - juried assessment
 - portfolio
 - oral presentations/interviews
 - experiments/demonstrations

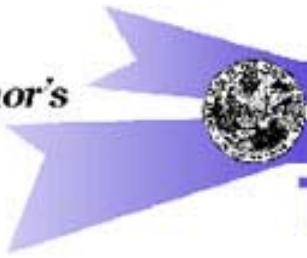
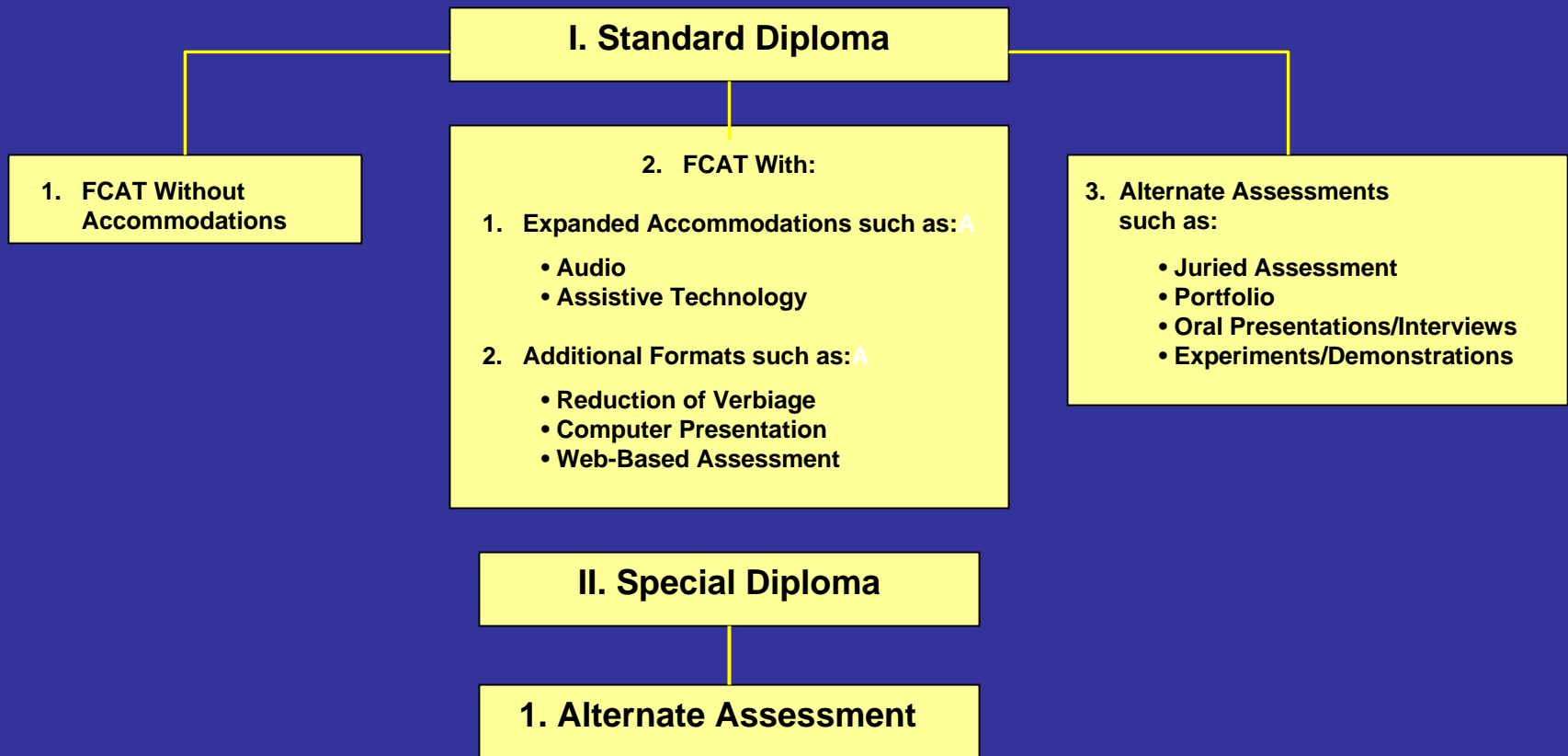


Figure 1.0 Expanded Options in the Statewide Assessment Program





A. FCAT Administration/Ongoing Development/Assessment Options *(continued)*

- State Accommodations Panel (see B)
- Review/revision of test items to ensure they are valid and reliable for students with disabilities
- Use of universal design principles and inclusion of students with disabilities in field-test and psychometric analyses of tests
- Annual discussions with students/parents regarding assessment, accommodations, and diploma options



B. Access and Accommodations

State Accommodations Panel (SAP)

Members—parent, testing expert, ESE representative, researcher, teacher, assistive technology expert, content specialist(s)

- Review/approve requested accommodations
- Favor expanded participation where research does not conclusively oppose
- Establish timely process for decision-making
- Disseminate annual update of accommodations
- Review statewide use of accommodations in testing
- Eliminate discrepancies between FCAT and postsecondary education



B. Access and Accommodations *(continued)*

School districts shall provide students with disabilities, when taking the FCAT or any alternate assessments within the statewide assessment program, any reasonable accommodation that:

- has been included as part of their IEP or Section 504 plan
- has routinely been used in the classroom (generally at least 3 months)
- cannot be demonstrated (by SAP) to jeopardize the reliability, validity, or security of the FCAT



B. Access and Accommodations *(continued)*

Rule revision to clarify that all students, including those with disabilities, must participate in the statewide assessment program

Information and training for all stakeholders regarding accommodations and role of SAP

District review/improvement of participation rates

State monitoring to ensure provision of reasonable accommodations consistent with IEP and 504 plans



C. Alternate Assessment Options

Expand state assessment program to include alternate assessment options for standard diploma:

- State uniform system for students with disabilities, grades 3-10, for whom FCAT is not appropriate
- IEP/504 teams will determine student participation and appropriate assessment option
- Alternate assessment participants must be eligible for same programs, services, and activities as students taking FCAT



C. Alternate Assessment Options

(continued)

- Participation must not stigmatize or penalize student
- Alternate assessment must measure same areas as FCAT for grade 10 reading and math
- Options may include portfolio, juried assessment, interviews/demonstrations, projects, experiments, constructed responses



C. Alternate Assessment Options

(continued)

DOE to develop, validate, implement assessments and appropriate scoring processes and rubrics to ensure statewide consistency, and establish comparability of scores with FCAT achievement levels

Information and training for all stakeholders, including IEP and 504 plan participants, regarding alternate assessment options

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D. Graduation Requirements/Diploma Options

Revision of Rule

Allows students with cognitive or other learning deficits to be eligible for consideration of the special exemption from the graduation test for a standard diploma.... to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of the grade level benchmarks of the Sunshine State Standards

Exempts senior year students new to Florida from the FCAT as a graduation requirement and allows an alternate assessment of reading and math standards

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D. Graduation Requirements/Diploma Options

(continued)

Pending rule revision, for the class of 2003, learning disabilities shall be broadly interpreted to be a type of physical disability eligible for the current special exemption.



D. Graduation Requirements/Diploma Options

(continued)

Multiple formats and options, including alternate assessments that lead to a standard diploma as well as those for a special diploma, shall be provided within the state assessment program.

Information regarding these will be disseminated to parents and schools.

Expanded opportunities for remediation will be provided to students with disabilities to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to Sunshine State Standards and high school graduation.

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E. Exemptions and Appeals

Exemptions from graduation test requirements
shall be implemented as above



E. Exemptions and Appeals *(continued)*

Expanded Appeals Process

Must be well-defined, formalized, implemented in fair and timely manner, and broadly communicated

Must allow appeal of such issues as the following:

- denial of eligibility for alternate assessment leading to standard or special diploma
- type of alternate assessment to be used
- scoring process
- disapproval of testing accommodation(s)
- failure to implement an approved accommodation
- use of FCAT score for promotion.

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F. Reporting of FCAT Results and Accountability

School districts shall be held accountable for the academic progress of all students and for any needed remediation for students who do not meet grade level benchmarks relative to the Sunshine State Standards.



F. Reporting of FCAT Results and Accountability

(continued)

Assessment scores for all students shall be included in reporting and accountability system (revise Rule):

-- reporting methodology shall be developed to ensure score comparability across assessment options and formats

-- scores of students with disabilities, regardless of format used, shall not be identified in the assessment program

-- unintended consequences of a single accountability system shall be monitored (levels of ESE identification, more segregated placements, increased dropout rates)



F. Reporting of FCAT Results and Accountability *(continued)*

Schools shall not be penalized based on scores of students with disabilities until assessment system includes broader accommodations and options.

Support for remediation efforts shall include

- improved analysis and diagnostic reporting of assessment results
- guidelines for use of test scores and data to target instruction
- utilization of results by general and special education teachers in providing needed remediation



F. Reporting of FCAT Results and Accountability *(continued)*

Web-based assessment shall be explored to support:

- Improved efficiency and timeliness of assessment reporting
- Early identification, planning, and remediation



G. Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

Adequate agency funding to support effective transition processes (IEP meeting attendance, adult evaluations, counseling, supported employment, assistive technology transfer)

Transition IEPs must address financial responsibilities of participating agencies to provide transition services.

Early access to vocational rehabilitation supports and services to ensure that application, eligibility determination, and IPE development occur prior to students' exiting high school



G. Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

(continued)

Effective dissemination of IDEA provisions that allow students with disabilities to remain in school until their 22nd birthday

Alignment of accommodations for students with disabilities within the statewide assessment system leading to a high school diploma with those in postsecondary programs (see B)

Implementation of inter/intra-agency agreement (ESE, VR, other agencies) regarding provision of transition services



G. Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

(continued)

Implementation of university appeals process (like the one in community colleges for associate or non-degree programs) to allow, according to specific criteria, entrance of students with disabilities who have not passed the FCAT or received a standard diploma

Alignment of definitions and eligibility criteria for learning disabilities across ESE and VR



G. Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

(continued)

Reexamination of current community college/university guidelines for required postsecondary education evaluation of students with disabilities (i.e., “recent evaluation”)

Collaboration of school districts and appropriate institutions in effective transition IEP development to support student access to postsecondary education

Review of publicly-funded scholarships and financial aid programs to ensure fair and open eligibility requirements and prevent discrimination against students with disabilities



G. Access to Postsecondary Opportunities

(continued)

Broad dissemination of provisions for allowable course substitutions for admission to postsecondary programs; amendment to include all disability areas consistent with current practice (s. 1007.264, F.S.)

Expansion of Auxiliary Learning Aids program to support students in all disability categories

Guidance to districts in transition planning to include the transfer of assistive technology from high school to postsecondary programs technology

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H. Educational Support, Technology, and Research

Fund development and deployment of computer- and web-based options to the FCAT and alternate assessments

Fund remediation of students with disabilities who are not meeting grade level benchmarks of the Sunshine State Standards (Supplemental Academic Instruction/other)

Fund research to develop alternate assessment leading to standard diploma for students with disabilities



H. Educational Support, Technology, and Research *(continued)*

Fund and implement collaborative training for all stakeholders on the statewide assessment program (alternate assessments, diploma options, IEP decision making, reasonable accommodations, exemptions and appeals, transition, postsecondary education options)

Provide training for all testing personnel regarding proper administration of statewide assessment program options and formats

Collect and report data by all institutions of higher education and organizations on scholarships, financial aid, and reasonable course substitutions for college/university admissions

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Discussion