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Dear Superintendents:

This year's release of FCAT results has varied greatly from years past and I know the delays in the reporting of student scores have caused issues for many of you locally. Please know that I understand your frustrations and concerns and that I remain intently involved in concluding this year's reporting in a successful and reliable manner.

Let me state first and foremost that the results you have received, and the results you will receive in the coming weeks, are and will be both accurate and reliable. This will be the case for all grades and all subjects tested. The issues we are experiencing with our new contractor, Pearson, are not related to the scoring process, which has gone very smoothly. As part of our normal protocol, we have completed validation measures to ensure complete accuracy and, in addition, we have utilized the services of a third-party scoring and equating organization, The Buros Institute. The Department has contracted with Buros to review and validate reading, mathematics and science FCAT scoring since 2007. We expanded their audit scope this year to encompass writing due to planned changes in the writing tests. Buros' complete, independent evaluation of the 2010 FCAT scoring process has resulted in additional verification of the accuracy of this year's results. Buros will provide a full report summarizing these findings which is expected later this summer.

However, despite confidence in this year's results, I am sure you remain curious about the cause of the delays we have been experiencing. These difficulties are directly related to Pearson's database technology, which handles student demographic information. Florida's assessment process involves a great number of validation procedures, beyond the validation of students' scores, which are designed to ensure that information in each student's assessment record is complete and accurate. During the scanning and scoring process, database files are created by the contractor from the tests received from school districts. These files are matched against a Pre-Identification file, which contains student information reported to the contractor directly from districts prior to the testing administration. The student information contained in the test results files must match up perfectly with each district's Pre-Identification file so that you can seamlessly integrate the test results into your student information database. It is in this file matching that our delays are occurring. Each apparent mismatch must be researched, resolved and rechecked in order to ensure accuracy. While this checking and rechecking process is

clearly outlined in Pearson's scope of work, internal systems issues within their database are causing delays in the resolution of these matches.

Additionally, I realize that you may have particular concerns with this year's FCAT Writing results as they have been delayed the longest. The extended delay on these scores is the result of the additional validation review by Buros and the database issues mentioned above. Again, we remain fully confident in the results of this FCAT Writing administration.

I am also aware that some of you remain apprehensive about how the FCAT writing results will translate into the school grading formula. Due to the testing administration change from two essay scorers to one, a score of 3.5 is no longer possible, which necessitates a slight change in grade calculations. As previously communicated, in order to lessen the impact of this change for this year we will use the average of the percent of students who scored 3.0 and above and the percent of students who scored 4.0 and above as the measure for writing in school grades. Following this year we will then transition to using scores of 4.0 and above in keeping with our continued drive toward increased performance of our schools.

I know this process has been very stressful for each of you as you respond to concerns from within your communities and work to restructure local administrative functions to align with these delays. However, as I know you all will agree accuracy must at all times trump expediency, especially given the importance of these results. For this reason, the remaining releases of FCAT reading, mathematics, science and writing results are likely to be delayed until the end of June. We will inform you as soon as possible once reliable projected dates are available.

With this in mind, Spring 2010 FCAT individual student reports will not be available for distribution prior to end of the school year; Pearson will reimburse school districts for any expenses incurred related to the mailing of these individual student reports to each student's parent or guardian.

Please be assured that we continue to address these issues with Pearson and, following the completion of the reporting of results, I fully intend to take action that will ensure the contractor-related problems experienced this year are not repeated in the future.

You have been patient beyond measure and I appreciate your continued support as we work through these delays to the ultimate conclusion of a successful 2010 FCAT administration. Should you have any additional concerns or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Chancellor Frances Haithcock
Division of Public Schools
Florida Department of Education