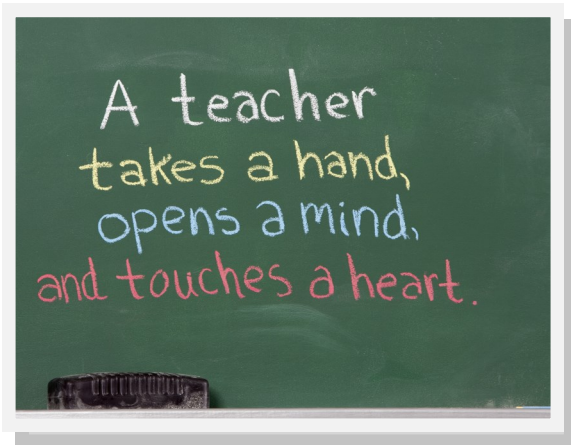


Just for Parents

May 2014 • Volume 2, Issue 5

Saying 'Thank You' to Florida's Educators

Long before I began my teaching career, I worked as a switchboard operator at a vending machine factory in Aurora, Ill. Through the summers after high school, I worked a number of odd jobs, including driving a forklift and packaging textbooks.



Part of the time I was a relief switchboard operator and my sole job was to use electrical cords to connect one caller to another on a giant, high-back switchboard. I had to make sure that when a caller dialed the switchboard he or she was connected to the right person.

After almost 30 years of working on behalf of students, I still think about that job and how today's teachers are often tasked with helping students and their families make important connections.

Recently, I had the pleasure of announcing the finalists for the [2015 Macy's/Florida Teacher of the Year Award](#). I can tell you that each one of these talented educators has helped students make connections between classroom knowledge and future goals. I know there are many more outstanding educators inspiring students to find their passion.

I hope that you were able to spend this year's Teacher Appreciation Week honoring those teachers who work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of your children.

Sincerely,

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education



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End-of-Course Assessments to Improve College Readiness

The Florida End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments are part of Florida's Next Generation Strategic Plan to increase student achievement and to improve college and career readiness. Students enrolled in Algebra 1, Biology 1, Civics, Geometry and U.S. History will take EOC Assessments this spring.

All EOC Assessments are computer-based tests (CBT). Students are given the opportunity to participate in a practice test to become familiar with the software, item types and online tools they will encounter and use during testing.

If you or your student would like to review the CBT practice test at home, instructions and a practice test (called an "ePAT") can be downloaded at www.FLAssessments.com/ePAT.

Paper-based versions of the tests are provided to students with disabilities who have this accommodation outlined in their Individual Educational Plans.

Additional resources, including EOC fact sheets and frequently asked questions, are available on the EOC homepage on the department's website at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/eoc/>.

Avoiding the Infamous 'Summer Reading Loss'



Summer can be such a special time for children. Going on vacation, attending summer camps and sleeping in are just a few activities that children often look forward to

during the summer months. However, lurking around the corner is the infamous summer reading loss. Your child could potentially lose up to three months' worth of reading progress in one summer. Here are a few things you can do to help:

Grades K-5

- Read to your child daily.
- Read a variety of different materials.
- Discuss what you've read together.
- Ask your child questions about what was read.
- Encourage your child to write or draw about what he or she has read.

For more information:

[Elementary Summer Reading Loss Prevention Read to Learn](#) (For parents of third grade students)
[Summer Reading Camps](#)

Grades 6-12

- Discuss stories or articles you have both read.
- Ask your child questions about what was read.
- Encourage your child to write in response to what was read.
- Ensure your child reads widely—at least one book every 10 days.

For more information:

[Teen Summer Reading Loss Prevention](#)

Students in grades 6-12 may have school-required summer reading assignments. Contact your child's school or visit the school's website for information. A list of Florida's schools can be found at www.fldoe.org/schools/schoolmap//district_list.asp.

Other helpful summer reading links:

[Just Read, Families!](#)
[Just Read, Florida!](#)
[2014 Summer Recommended Reading List](#)
[Find a Book – Florida](#)
[Florida Libraries](#)

Children's Mental Health Awareness



May is Children's Mental Health Awareness Month. This nationwide strategy focuses on the importance of caring for every child's mental health beginning at birth.

Without early diagnosis and treatment, children with mental health disorders can have problems at home, in school and in forming friendships and these problems can continue into adulthood.

Boys and girls of all ages, ethnic/racial backgrounds and regions of the United States experience mental health disorders. They have become an important public health issue because of their impact on children, families and communities.

What You Can Do

Parents: You know your child best. Talk to your child's health care professional if you have concerns about the way your child behaves at home, in school or with friends.

Youth: It is just as important to take care of your mental health, as it is your physical health. If you are angry, worried or sad, do not be afraid to talk about your feelings and reach out to a trusted friend or adult.

Teachers/School Administrators: Early identification is important so that children can get the help they need. Work with families and health care professionals if you have concerns about the mental health of a child in your school.

Health Care Professionals: Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment based on updated guidelines are very important. There are resources available to help diagnose and treat children's mental health disorders.

For more information, please visit:

[Fast Facts About...Children and Mental Health](#)
[Children's Mental Health Fact Sheet](#)

Upcoming Events and Designations

- **Asian Pacific Heritage Month** is a time to acknowledge the generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders who have enriched America's history and are instrumental in its future success.
- **Haitian Heritage Month** is a celebration of Haitian heritage and culture. Activities include parades, flag raisings and exhibits.
- **Physical Fitness & Sports Month** is a time for people of all ages and body types to learn about the benefits of regular physical activity. This month is a great time to spread the word about the benefits of getting active.
- **Fathers in Education Day** provides fathers an opportunity to be involved in a variety of ways to show their support for their children's education and communities. View the [Senate Resolution](#).
- **National Bicycle Week** advocates the importance of bicycling as a means of transportation. The central aim of the week is to give individuals the opportunity to help the environment and exercise in a fun and social way.

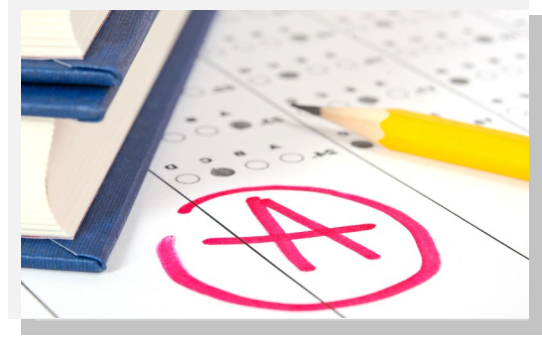
Achievement Gap Continues to Shrink

Florida 12th grade Hispanic students' average scores in reading were significantly higher than the national average according to a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report. In addition, the percentage of Florida's Hispanic students scoring at or above "Proficient" in reading was the highest of the 10 states that had sizable Hispanic populations. The new report highlights state-level results of grade 12 assessments in reading and mathematics for 13 participating states.

"The report issued shows that Florida's Hispanic students are definitely making progress toward closing the achievement gap," said Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart. "I am very proud of their hard work and thank Florida's teachers for their exceptional dedication to student success."

Other highlights of the report include:

- The percentage of Florida's Hispanic 12th grade students performing at or above "Proficient" in reading improved from near the national average in 2009 to significantly higher than the nation in 2013. Thirty-four percent of Florida's Hispanic 12th graders scored at or above "Proficient" compared to only 22 percent nationwide.



- In 2013, the reading achievement gap between Florida's White and Hispanic 12th graders was narrower than the national gap, with an average score difference of 11 points compared to a 21-point gap nationally.
- The mathematics achievement gap between Florida's White and Hispanic 12th graders was narrower than the national gap, with an average score difference of 15 points compared to a 21-point gap nationally.

Known as "The Nation's Report Card," NAEP measures what America's students know and can do in various subject areas.

For more information, visit [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#).

Thousands Participate in Children's Week at the Capitol

Children, parents, advocates, community leaders and policy makers from throughout the state gathered for a day of educational and interactive activities last month for the 2014 Children's Week.

Teachers were encouraged

to bring their students to Tallahassee to tour the Capitol, learn about the legislative process, meet with policy makers and enjoy a fun and informative atmosphere of learning. To view more photos, visit [Children's](#)

[Week 2014](#).

