



# Just for Parents

## A Note from Commissioner of Education, Dr. Tony Bennett:

Our students have the best chance to succeed when parents are active and engaged in their child's education. As a father of four, including a set of triplets, I understand how important it is to be involved and informed about the happenings in the classroom and the changes occurring in education throughout the state. As Florida's Commissioner of Education, I am committed to communicating often with parents about the issues facing our state's education system. I encourage all parents to share this information with family and friends, and to start a dialogue with your child's educators. For more information about ways to get involved or to sign up for future *Just for Parents* issues, visit <http://www.fdoe.org/family/>.

The Bureau of Family & Community Outreach offers the following services and programs to parents and guardians:

Click on a link below to learn more!

[Parent Involvement](#)

[Faith and Community Based Initiatives](#)

[Safe Schools](#)

[Dropout Prevention](#)

[Volunteer and Recognition Programs](#)

[21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers](#)

[Mentoring/Student Assistance Initiatives](#)

**Bureau of Family & Community Outreach**

**(850) 245-0847**

## Help Your Child Prepare for FCAT Testing

With the end of the school year approaching, schools are preparing for [FCAT 2.0](#) testing. The FCAT 2.0 Writing exam was administered in late February and FCAT 2.0 Reading, Mathematics, and Science will be administered from April 8 – 26, 2013. To view specific testing dates for your child's school, check out the [Daily Test Administration Schedule](#). Schedule modifications may be made, so parents are encouraged to contact schools to confirm scheduling details.



The FDOE encourages parents to learn more about Florida's assessment. The following documents are provided to help parents understand the purpose of the FCAT 2.0 and what the assessment looks like for students: [FCAT 2.0 Fact Sheet](#), [FCAT 2.0 Frequently Asked Questions](#), [FCAT 2.0 Sample Questions and Answer Keys](#).

The following testing policies are in effect to ensure security and validity of results:

**Electronic Devices**—If your child is found with **any** electronic devices, including but not limited to cell phones and smart phones, during testing, including bathroom breaks, his or her test will be invalidated. Students should either leave devices at home or in their lockers on the day of testing.

**Testing Rules Acknowledgment**—Prior to testing, test administrators read testing rules to students, and students must acknowledge they understand the rules by signing the Testing Rules Acknowledgment statement.

**Test Invalidations**—Students are responsible for working on their own during the test and for protecting their answers. If students are caught cheating during testing, their tests will be invalidated. Additionally, the department employs a test security company, Caveon Test Security, to analyze student test results to detect unusually similar answer patterns.

**Leaving Campus**—If your child leaves campus before completing the test (e.g., for an appointment), he or she **will not** be allowed to complete the test. If your child does not feel well on the day of testing, it may be best for him or her to wait and be tested on a make-up day. [Please be mindful not to schedule appointments on testing days.](#)

Students perform best with plenty of rest and a nutritional breakfast prior to testing. The department recommends parents ensure students are well-rested and encourage students to do their best during testing.

Visit the Florida Department of Education at: [www.fdoe.org](http://www.fdoe.org)



Join FDOE's online Parent Community. Sign up today!

<http://www.fdoe.org/family/>



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## Student Support Services—What can they do for you?

Professionals in the [Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services](#) include school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses, all of whom work with students, school staff, and families. **What is the goal?** *To remove barriers to learning, so that teachers may teach and students may learn.*

Some of the services provided in this multi-tiered system of support include:

- Working with teachers and other school staff to ensure learning is personalized for all students—especially those with learning and behavioral problems;
- Re-engaging students who have become discouraged with school;
- Providing support during periods of transitions with (1) enrollment; (2) school and grade changes; (3) daily transitions; (4) program changes; and (5) accessing services;
- Strengthening home and school connections, as well as strengthening community/agency collaborations;
- Addressing school and personal crises and trauma, including creating a caring/safe learning environment to ease the impact of traumatic events that occur in or out of school;
- Helping families to access effective services and special assistance at school and in the community as needed; and
- Supporting and addressing students' overall physical and mental health.

The following links provide families with additional information about the role of Student Support Services:

- [American School Counseling Association](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [School Social Work Association of America](#)
- [National Association of School Nurses](#)

## Changes Ahead for the GED® Test

The GED test will see major changes in 2014 that will increase rigor and ensure alignment around college and career readiness. The current GED test and partial test scores expire at the end of 2013. Individuals who have taken part of the GED test since 2002 must complete the entire test on the current version. If incomplete at the end of the year, individuals must retake the entire test under the new version, which will be released on January 2, 2014.



The new GED assessment was developed to help better prepare adults for modern educational and career opportunities. It will continue to provide adults the opportunity to earn a high school credential, but goes further by measuring skills that are essential for career and college readiness. Four content areas, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, will be assessed – literacy (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies. Finally, the new version will be delivered by computer, as measured content standards require items that cannot be administered in traditional paper-and-pencil format. For more information about the GED test or GED testing centers near you, visit <http://ged.fldoe.org/>.

## Common Core and Your Local School District

Our schools and districts are diligently working to prepare for full implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the 2014-15 school year. FDOE is committed to helping our schools succeed and has developed an online tool to help gauge district readiness for digital learning and CCSS. Parents are encouraged to contact their schools about CCSS and find out ways to get involved as we embark on these transformative education endeavors. To view district progress on key readiness indicators, visit <http://www.flccss.org/>.