

## Appendix A

### Required Data Elements for State Report Card

Section 1111(h)(1)(C) of No Child Left Behind requires the following information in the State Report Card.

1. Information, in the aggregate, on student achievement at each proficiency level on the State academic assessments (disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged) except that such disaggregation shall not be required in a case in which the number of students in a category is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.
2. Information that provides a comparison between the actual achievement levels of each student subgroup and the State's annual measurable objectives for each such group of students on each of the academic assessments.
3. The percentage of students not tested (disaggregated by the student subgroups), except that such disaggregation shall not be required in a case in which the number of students in a category is insufficient to yield statistically reliable information or the results would reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student.
4. The most recent 2-year trend in student achievement in each subject area, and for each grade level, for the required assessments.
5. Aggregate information on any other indicators used by the State to determine the adequate yearly progress of students in achieving State academic achievement standards disaggregated by student subgroups.
6. Graduation rates for secondary school students disaggregated by student subgroups.
7. Information on the performance of local educational agencies in the State regarding making adequate yearly progress, including the number and name of each school identified for school improvement under section 1116.
8. The professional qualifications of teachers in the State, the percentage of such teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials, and the percentage of classes in the State not taught by highly qualified teachers, in the aggregate and disaggregated by high-poverty compared to low-poverty schools

which (for this purpose) means schools in the top quartile of poverty and the bottom quartile of poverty in the State.

**Proposed No Child Left Behind Report Card  
with Additional State Indicators**

| Indicator   | NCLB Required | Current Report Card | Changes to State Report Card  |
|---|---------------|---------------------|---|
| Assessment Results by proficiency level (disaggregated).  | 0             |                     | Disaggregated information is not currently reported, but is available.  |
| Assessment results compared to Florida's annual objectives by (disaggregated).  | 0             |                     | Currently, we do not have annual objectives by subject or by student subgroup. Objectives will need to be determined. |
| Percentage of students not tested (disaggregated).  | 0             |                     | Not currently reported, but available.  |
| Assessment results compared to the most recent 2-year trend in each subject, for each grade.                          | 0             |                     | Prior year comparison currently reported, 2-year trend data is available.   |
| Results of Florida Writes (disaggregated).  | 0             |                     | Disaggregated information is not currently reported, but is available.  |
| Graduation rates (disaggregated).   | 0             | 0                   | Disaggregated information is not currently reported, but is available. Report will include PY Grad Rate.              |
| AYP, including schools designated for improvement.  | 0             |                     | AYP calculation will need to be determined, collected, and reported.  |
| The professional qualifications of teachers disaggregated by high poverty vs. low poverty.                            | 0             | 0                   | Disaggregated information is not currently reported. Determination of high poverty vs. low poverty needs to be made.  |
| The percentage of teachers in the state teaching out of field disaggregated by high and low poverty.                  | 0             | 0                   | Currently aggregated data is added to the state report card at the district. Data to be collected and reported.       |
| The percentage of classes in the state not taught by highly qualified teachers disaggregated by high and low poverty. | 0             |                     | Data to be collected and reported.  |
| Dropout Rate  |               | 0                   | PY Dropout Rate to be Reported.   |
| Number of teachers and staff new to the school  |               | 0                   |   |
| Results of Kindergarten Readiness   |               | 0                   |   |
| October Membership  |               | 0                   |   |
| Teachers, administrators, and staff who receive satisfactory annual evaluations                                       |               | 0                   | Add to LEA Report Card  |
| School advisory council membership composition.   |               | 0                   | Add to LEA Report Card  |
| School Lottery \$ Budget  |               | 0                   | Add to LEA Report Card  |

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|---|
| <h2 style="margin: 0;">Current State Report Card Indicators – Recommended for Deletion</h2> |
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| Indicator on State Report Card   | Recommendation   |
|--|--|
| Average number of days of students absent  | Keep on the Indicators Report  |
| Average number of days of teacher and administrator absences   | Keep on the Indicators Report  |
| Graduates found by FETPIP  | Keep in Reports produced by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program |
| Graduates found by FETPIP in the Military, in post-secondary schools, and/or employed                                | Keep in Reports produced by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program |
| Occupational Completion Point Graduates found by FETPIP compared to all OCP graduates follow-up by FETPIP            | Keep in Reports produced by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program |
| Occupational Completion Point Graduates found by FETPIP in the Military, in post-secondary schools, and/or employed. | Keep in Reports produced by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program |
| Number of diplomas awarded to Adults   | Keep in Reports produced by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program |
| Students enrolled any time during the 180 day year   | Keep on the Indicators Report  |

**Current State Report Card**

The School Advisory Council Report is produced in accordance with State Rule 6A-1.09982. Each district school board is responsible for developing and implementing procedures for schools to use when issuing annual school reports. Each school must distribute a school public accountability report to all parents, guardians, and adult students and make it available to the general community upon request. Reports are due on November 15 of each year.

**NCLB Report Card**

Not later than the beginning of the 2002-03 school year, school districts must disseminate the NCLB Report Card to all schools in the school district and parents in the reported school. To the extent practicable, the information should be made widely available through public means such as the Internet and reported in a language that the parents can understand.

## Appendix B

### Description of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

Section 1111 of H.R.-1 (NCLB), outlines the Congressional requirements for academic standards, assessments, and accountability system. These requirements will not be repeated herein but will be identified by Section numbers throughout the description of Florida's programs for the reader's cross-reference.

#### Challenging Academic Standards (s. 1111(b)(1))

Section 1008.22(3)(a), F.S. (available at [www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm)) requires the Commissioner of Education to bring to the State Board of Education sets of skills and competencies that will guide instruction in all of the public schools. The specific requirement is stated as follows:

Submit to the State Board of Education a list that specifies student skills and competencies to which the goals for education specified in the state plan apply, including, but not limited to, reading, writing, science, and mathematics. The skills and competencies must include problem-solving and higher-order skills as appropriate and shall be known as the Sunshine State Standards as defined in Section 1000.21, F.S. The commissioner shall select such skills and competencies after receiving recommendations from educators, citizens, and members of the business community. The commissioner shall submit to the State Board of Education revisions to the list of student skills and competencies in order to maintain continuous progress toward improvements in student proficiency.

The development of Florida's content standards began with creation of curriculum frameworks as a resource and a guide for school districts. The frameworks included the Sunshine State Standards (Standards) that specify the challenging content expected of Florida students.

The development of Florida's Sunshine State Standards was discussed in the Title I Plan for 2001-02 and will not be repeated herein. Specific information about the manner in which each set of standards was created is available at the following Department of Education web site:

<http://www.firn.edu/doe/curric/prek12/frame2.htm>. In summary, the Standards were developed with the involvement of practicing educators from across Florida, reviewed by various interested parties, including the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL), reviewed by all school districts, and adopted by the State Board of Education in 1996.

### Grade Level Expectations

The original design of the Standards did not include grade-by-grade expectations for all grade levels. As decisions were made to expand the statewide assessment program to include all grades 3-10 (see following discussion), it became necessary to create “grade level expectations.” These are described at length on the Department’s web site at [www.firn.edu/doe/menu/sss.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/menu/sss.htm) and will not be repeated here.

### Evaluation and Review of the Sunshine State Standards

In addition to the review of the emerging standards by McREL as previously described, the Sunshine State Standards have been reviewed by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Their commentary can be found at <http://www.aft.org/edissues/standards99/states/Florida.htm>. AFT concludes that Florida’s Standards are “clear, specific, and grounded in content.” Here are selected statements descriptive of the mathematics, language arts, and science Standards:

#### *Language Arts*

“The **English** standards are clear across all three levels, and the content at the elementary and middle levels is strengthened by the addition of the new *Expectations*. ... In addition, the *Florida Writes!* assessment booklets clarify the writing forms at all three levels and include examples of student work that illustrate the quality and complexity of writing expected of students at each of the levels.

#### *Mathematics*

“With the addition of the new *Grade Level Expectations*, the elementary and middle level **mathematics** standards are quite clear and specific. ... At the high school level the standards are generally clear and specific, but at times, they are broad.”

#### *Science*

“The **science** standards are also clear, specific, and grounded in content. ... The *Expectations* help clarify the standards for grades K-8 and illustrate how the standards might look in a classroom.”

Education Week also conducted a review of the standards and accountability programs across the 50 states. Florida’s program was rated “A” in the special publication *Quality Counts* that can be seen on the web at [http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc03/rc/rcard\\_frameset.htm](http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc03/rc/rcard_frameset.htm).

The Department of Education commissioned a special mid-term review of the Sunshine State Standards to be conducted by the Suncoast Area Center for

Educational Enhancement at the University of South Florida. The results of this activity will be used for a more comprehensive review of the Standards over the next three years.

The Standards represent what all students should know and be able to do as designated by the State Board of Education. The adoption of the Standards sets policy direction for instruction in Florida's schools. However, the Standards do not limit schools or school districts in what should be taught. Local units are completely free to supplement the instructional program with content and objectives not included in the Standards.

### Academic Assessments (Section 1111(b)(3))

Florida has had an organized statewide assessment program for more than 30 years. (A chronology of the statewide assessment programs can be found at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/hsaphome.htm>.) As understanding of the value of data has increased and as testing and computer systems have developed, especially in the last 20 years, the Florida statewide assessment program, management information system program, and school/district accountability program have grown and become more sophisticated. The activities during the school year 2002-03 continue this steady evolution and improvement process.

As early as 1973, Florida showed an understanding of the importance of measuring student achievement, measuring other educational indicators, and reporting to the public. In 1971, Governor Reubin Askew appointed a Citizens' Committee on Education to study education and recommend ways to improve our schools. The report of this committee, *Improving Education in Florida*, included such concepts as citizen participation in the educational process, public reporting of information, state- and district-level assessment programs, and participation in the fledgling National Assessment of Educational Progress (The Governor's Citizens' Committee on Education, Tallahassee, FL, March 15, 1973).

In 1976, the Florida Legislature enacted an Educational Accountability Act that expanded the statewide assessment program to grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and introduced the nation's first requirement that students pass a high school competency test to qualify for a regular diploma. The State developed and implemented these tests and subsequently faced two legal challenges. The high school competency test was challenged in *Debra P. v. Turlington* (474 F. Supp. 244, MD Fla. 1979), and the basic skills tests were challenged in *Love v. Turlington* (1980). The State position prevailed in both situations with the courts ruling that competency tests can be required although the State must assure that the students are afforded due process. These landmark rulings established the precedent for court rulings in other states, including, most recently, a challenge to the TAAS system in Texas (*GI Forum et al v. TEA et al*, 2000).

The Legislature continued to modify and improve the statewide assessment requirements during the 1980s and even extended the concepts to the postsecondary level with creation of certain statewide testing requirements for community college and university students. However, it became apparent that the emphasis on minimum competencies for all students had its limitations. Average and above average students were not being challenged, and the general focus on “minimums” was not producing graduates who could perform in today’s employment marketplace.

In the early 1990’s, the Legislature revised the structure of the state assessment program and created the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability. Their work contributed to discussions about the importance of challenging educational standards and the need to move away from minimum competency tests and the traditional reliance on multiple-choice test questions. Coming from the work of the Commission and the Department, an overall assessment plan was adopted for 1996-97 and revised for 1997-98.

In the mid-1990s, the State moved rapidly toward creation and adoption of the Sunshine State Standards, as previously described. The Standards and the associated curriculum frameworks defined challenging content in seven subject areas. In 1995, a request for proposals was issued for a new, expanded statewide assessment program. Contracts for development of the new assessment were issued in mid-1996, and the State began the creation of tests that would look much different than the older minimum competency tests.

By 1992, the statewide assessment program developed and implemented a writing assessment program in grades 4, 8, and 10. In 1999, under Governor Jeb Bush, the program was expanded to all grades 3 – 10. The new assessment program would contain both criterion-referenced tests measuring state content and nationally norm-referenced tests. Performance items were to be included to the extent that was practical. Student, school, district, and statewide results would be reported and used as the basis for a school accountability program. See s. 1008.22, F.S., available at <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm>.

Under the terms of the new statute, the existing High School Competency Test (HSCT), a minimum competency test required for graduation, would be phased out and students graduating in 2003 would have to earn a passing score on the new grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) to graduate. Students who were enrolled in 9th grade in the Fall of 1999 thus were given advance notification of their graduation requirement vis-à-vis the state test.

The new testing structure is shown in Figure 1 below. Reading and mathematics are tested with both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests at eight grade levels, while writing and science are measured at three grade levels each. This combination permits the achievement of students to be measured against two different dimensions – the State’s own challenging content as well as

national norms. Although Figure 1 does not show it, Florida also participates in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at both the national and state levels. (Due to a scheduling conflict, Florida did not participate in the 2000 state-NAEP but did participate in the Spring 2002 testing and will continue to participate in the future as required by *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*).

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test exceeds the minimum requirements of NCLB that only requires student assessment in reading and mathematics once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. Because the FCAT measures student achievement in reading and mathematics in all grades 3-10 and uses a coordinated vertical score scale, Florida is able to track student achievement over time from one grade level to another. This generates powerful information with which to monitor progress as is required by NCLB.

The writing assessment component and the High School Competency Test component have been in existence for many years. Each of these tests was developed through the efforts of commercial contractors and school district curriculum content committees to both develop and validate items. For additional information, the reader may refer to the Department of Education's web site at [www.firn.edu/doe/sas/sasshome.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/sasshome.htm), which contains a description of these programs as well as a chronology of the development of the state assessment program from 1976 to the present.

Through the 1995 competitive bid previously mentioned, the Department contracted with CTB/McGraw-Hill (CTB) for the development and implementation of the FCAT tests in grades 4 (reading), 5 (mathematics), 8 (reading and mathematics), and 10 (reading and mathematics). Initial development took place from May 1996 through the census field test in March 1997. The first full-scale census assessment occurred in February 1998 followed by the second administration in February 1999.

The test development process began with selection of those portions of the Standards that would be measured. Since the Standards themselves are very broad goals and were not specific enough to define the assessment system, benchmarks within the Standards were selected for this purpose. The test blueprint was created to show how many items would be needed for the test and how they would be distributed. In general, about 20% of the items would be either short- or extended-response items. In mathematics, gridded response items also were to be used.

Item specifications were drafted by writers from CTB, reviewed by Department staff, and validated by committees of practicing Florida classroom teachers and curriculum supervisors. The specifications can be seen at the Department's web site at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatis01.htm>. Items and performance exercises were drafted by CTB writers, reviewed by Department staff, and, again, validated by committees of Florida educators. Pilot tests of the items and

exercises were conducted with small groups of students, not to gather statistical information, but, instead, to see whether students understood the directions and the item content. Pilot test participants were interviewed to gather feedback information. A community sensitivity review committee and an item bias review committee also reviewed all of the items prior to their use.

CTB psychometricians worked cooperatively with Department assessment staff to select the measurement model that would be used. In this case, since the performance items were being merged with the multiple-choice items, it was decided to use both 2- and 3-parameter item response theory techniques to analyze the data, create the score scale, and equate the tests from year to year and horizontally across operational forms.

The field test of the test items and performance exercises was conducted in 1997 with students in all schools across Florida participating. An item sampling methodology was used, so not all students took all items although all students at the assessed grade levels were tested. Exceptional education students (those with disabilities and those who are gifted) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were included in the field test. The test items were calibrated, and items were selected for the 1998 operational tests.

In 1998, the tests were administered and the results were reported. Since achievement levels (i.e., performance standards) had not yet been adopted, student performance was reported in terms of scale scores and content subscores. In addition, student performance was displayed in terms of whether the score was within the lower, middle, or upper third of Florida examinees.

**Figure 1**

**Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Design**

| Grade | Sunshine State Standards Assessment Component |                                |                   | Norm-Referenced Testing Component |
|-------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
|       | FCAT with Performance Tasks                   | FCAT without Performance Tasks | FCAT Writing Test |                                   |
| 3     |   | Reading<br>Mathematics         |                   | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 4     | Reading                                       | Mathematics                    | Writing           | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 5     | Mathematics,<br>Science                       | Reading                        |                   | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 6     |   | Reading<br>Mathematics         |                   | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 7     |   | Reading<br>Mathematics         |                   | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 8     | Reading,<br>Mathematics,<br>Science           |                                | Writing           | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 9     |   | Reading<br>Mathematics         |                   | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |
| 10    | Reading,<br>Mathematics,<br>Science           |                                | Writing           | Reading,<br>Mathematics           |

NOTE: The statutory language authorizing the science assessment specified grades 4, 8, and 10. A decision was made to move to grade 5 to avoid over-testing 4th graders.

A new Request for Proposals issued in 1999 resulted in the selection of Harcourt Educational Measurement (HEM) to continue expansion of the available item pool in reading and mathematics. A separate Request for Proposals in 2000 led to a contract with NCS Pearson (subcontracting with Riverside Publishing Company) for creation of the new science test.

FCAT Design

The statewide assessment test, now known as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test or FCAT, is geared to the Sunshine State Standards and directly measures specific benchmarks that are part of the Standards. Local school districts, of course, may have instructional objectives that supplement or go beyond the Sunshine State Standards, but the FCAT is not intended to measure such content.

The FCAT does not measure everything that is found in the Sunshine State Standards and was not designed to do so. Consider, for example, that students

are expected to be able to write a research paper, conduct a scientific experiment, or perform certain physical activities. Measuring such content in a standardized assessment program would be impractical and, therefore, must be omitted. Local schools and districts must determine the extent to which local assessments or classroom evaluation activities will be used to measure these areas.

The FCAT program design identifies those benchmarks that are candidates for inclusion on the test, but because of the practical limits of time, it is not possible to include all content on any given test form. From year to year, adjustments are made in the content to cycle through the benchmarks while maintaining a core of content needed for stability and equating purposes.

Sample items can be found on the Internet at the following location: <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatsmpl.htm>. These documents include a count of the benchmarks that exist in the Sunshine State Standards and how they are measured with the FCAT. Writing is a special situation since the assessment consists of a single holistically scored writing prompt. When students take this test, they are required to perform many of the benchmarks in Language Arts, but the written product is not scored analytically to differentiate among the separate writing skills.

FCAT Reading assesses content from two areas of the Reading and Language Arts Standards: (a) Constructs Meaning from Information Text and (b) Constructs Meaning from Literature.

FCAT Mathematics assesses content from five areas: (a) Number Sense, Concepts and Operations, (b) Measurement, (c) Geometry and Spatial Sense, (d) Algebraic Thinking, and (e) Data Analysis and Probability.

FCAT Science assesses content from eight content strands: (a) Nature of Matter, (b) Energy, (c) Force and Motion, (d) Processes that Shape the Earth, (e) Earth and Space, (f) Processes of Life, (g) How Living Things Interact with Their Environment, and (h) Nature of Science.

### Scoring and Scaling

The FCAT assessment instruments include both multiple-choice items and performance items. The performance items are of three types: (1) extended response; (2) short response; and (3) gridded response items used only in mathematics. The tests are scored and scaled using 2- and 3-parameter IRT analyses. For more complete detail, refer to the *2000 FCAT Technical Report* included as an Attachment. (The reports for 2001 and 2002 have not yet been published.)

The student scores for the reading and mathematics tests are reported on a score scale from 100 to 500 with additional information that indicates his/her achievement level. The FCAT norm-referenced component, the Stanford Achievement Test Version 9 (SAT-9), generates a national percentile rank based on multiple-choice questions in reading comprehension and mathematics problem-solving.

When the FCAT was administered in March 2001, items were imbedded across grade levels to provide the basis for calculation of a developmental score scale linking all eight grade level tests together. During June-August 2001, Harcourt Educational Measurement, with its subcontractor HumRRO, performed the analysis needed for the developmental scale. The developmental scale ranges from 0 to 3000 across grades 3 through 10.

The analysis was successful, and the developmental scale was used in the process of creating the FCAT achievement levels for the “new” grade levels that had been added to the FCAT system. The State Board of Education subsequently adopted an administrative rule incorporating the performance standards that defined the FCAT Achievement Levels in reading and mathematics, coordinated across the existing grade levels and the newly added grade levels. The Achievement Levels for the FCAT in grades 3-10 are discussed below.

Beginning with the test results from the March 2002 assessment, it is possible to measure a student’s growth (gain) across years. Students received an Individual Student Report in May 2002 that revealed whether they gained, stayed the same, or declined in their academic proficiency in terms of the Achievement Levels. For example, if a student was in Level 3 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 2001 and is in Level 4 in 5<sup>th</sup> grade in 2002, he would receive a computer printed message stating that he had improved from one year to the next. Florida’s A+ school grading system, described elsewhere, uses growth information as one factor in calculating a school’s grade.

The Department prepared an Internet web site that permits parents and teachers to key enter a student’s scores and generate a graph showing how the student progressed compared to the other students in the state. This analysis is done on the basis of the actual developmental scale score rather than on changes in the Achievement Level. The initiation of gain scores will provide the educational system with a new and powerful tool to understand student progress. Later in this Plan, it will be seen how Florida proposes to use information from the gain scores to evaluate progress under NCLB.

### Multiple Measures

The FCAT system is a multi-dimensional program. It utilizes machine-scorable items as well as performance items. The grade ten test is used as a high school

graduation requirement. The FCAT system also incorporates a national norm-referenced test in reading comprehension and mathematics problem-solving.

### Higher-Order Thinking Skills

To understand how the new FCAT measures higher order thinking skills and understanding, reviewers should inspect the Sunshine State Standards, the benchmarks being measured, the item specifications, and the sample exercises. One will immediately see that students are not being asked simple, one-step, minimal skills items. They must think, analyze, and explain, answering questions that require original thought and multiple steps, cast in a framework that crosses all subject areas. In other words, the stimulus material in the mathematics test or the reading test can come from any appropriate material from any content area (e.g., science). Reading skills and mathematics skills are thereby applied in other content domains.

### Comprehensive Writing Assessment

The Department has initiated steps to revise the current writing assessment so it will be more comprehensive. In addition to the existing single essay prompt, the revised test would include machine scoreable items measuring editing, language mechanics, and other writing skills. By including new content and additional items, the content will be broadened, and it will be possible to more closely equate each year's test form to that of the preceding year. Current plans call for the new writing test to be implemented in the spring of 2005.

### Alignment of Assessment and Standards

The FCAT is not an off-the-shelf test product; it has been built to Florida's content standards and expectations from the first day.

In all cases, the FCAT items and performance exercises are written to match the Department's approved item specifications, which match the designated benchmarks. This linkage has been built into the system and is verified at every stage of the test development process. Both the specifications validation committee and the item validation committees reviewed the given materials in terms of the degree of match to the benchmarks.

The FCAT is developed with the assistance of subject area committees of Florida educators who teach or supervise mathematics, reading, writing, and science. These practicing classroom teachers and curriculum supervisors assist in approving the overall test design, the benchmarks to be assessed, the test specifications, and the test items themselves. Their work guarantees that the tests are aligned with the Standards. It also guarantees that consideration is given to the measurement of content areas not currently included in the test so that changes can be made in future editions of the tests.

The task of alignment is built into the test development system rather than determined by some outside source. In effect, since the initial materials are developed by the test contractor, the Florida-based committees are the outside reviewers and validators.

The FCAT is not a basic skills test, and the items include a range of difficulty. The test measures more complex skills and requires the students to think, solve, and explain.

Information about the Sunshine State Standards, the test specifications, sample items, and the FCAT are available on the Internet and through various printed publications. (See the assessment program's web site at [www.firn.edu/doe/sas/sasshome.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/sasshome.htm).) The FCAT item specifications are public documents and are disseminated to all school districts for their use.

*No Child Left Behind* requires that the statewide assessment program:

- Specify what children are expected to know and be able to do;
- Contain coherent and rigorous content; and
- Encourage the teaching of advanced skills.

The Florida system meets each of these three criteria.

### Individual Student Assessment Reports

The FCAT program is a census-based assessment, although sampling procedures are used for some statistical analyses and for field-testing new items. This design provides complete data reports for each student, school, and district.

A publication titled Understanding FCAT Reports, 2002 includes a description of various report forms. The FCAT Individual Student Report provides the usual identification information about the student and then describes the student's performance. The data show the student's total score for each subject area, compare the student against the established performance criteria, compare the student against statewide averages, show how the student performed in each subcontent area, and provide a measure of growth over a two-year period. Beginning with the 2000 assessment, a separate report included how well the student performed on the national norm-referenced component (the SAT-9). The reverse side of the individual reports includes descriptive information for the parent written in English and Spanish. This document is available upon request.

## Disaggregated Reports

Florida's student assessment program has a long history of providing disaggregated reports of student data. The current FCAT provides a variety of reports of data for subpopulations.

*NCLB* requires that assessment results be provided by school district, school, racial and ethnic group, English proficiency status, migrant status, gender, students with disabilities compared to non-disabled students, and economically disadvantaged compared to those not economically disadvantaged. Florida is committed to reporting these categories of data. However, it is not possible to produce them in the initial reports of FCAT data because several data files must be merged to generate some of the reports (e.g., economically disadvantaged). It, therefore, may be necessary to create the reports after the initial releases of data.

All required reporting subgroups and reporting specifications will be provided. Disaggregated reports are generated for ALL schools, not just Title I schools.

Disaggregated data reports from the FCAT are provided directly to each school district as well as administrators within the Department of Education. Each school district provides further dissemination to school administrators, teachers and parents as appropriate. State and district school improvement personnel regularly utilize disaggregated data for planning and achievement monitoring purposes. To promote the appropriate use of disaggregated data for monitoring progress and to aid strategic planning for school improvement, regional workshops were held to train district testing, evaluation, and school improvement staff how to read, interpret, and use the data reports.

## Technical Quality of the FCAT

The FCAT is designed to be reliable, valid, and free from bias. Considerable effort was devoted to and is being devoted to the technical quality of the assessment program.

Validity has many dimensions, but in its most fundamental sense, a test is not said to be valid but, instead, one speaks about whether an interpretation of an examinee's score is valid. This is, perhaps, a subtle distinction and not one that the average consumer clearly understands. This is why many people ask, "Is this test valid?"

Validity is not a single judgment but is a conclusion reached by looking at different pieces of evidence. At the same time, the developing agency, in this case the Florida Department of Education, bears a responsibility for stating the intent of the test and how the scores are to be used. The FCAT was designed to be used to measure whether or not students have demonstrated skills proficiency to meet the State's academic standards. This does not preclude use of FCAT

scores in some other ways such as to predict a future performance, but any such uses would have to be individually validated, as they were not part of the original test design.

With the above principle in mind, the development of FCAT is founded on content validity as indicated by the match between the test and the benchmarks the items purport to measure. In other words, the question is, “Do the items match the content that the State desires to measure?”

The content validity of FCAT was built into the developmental process from the very first steps. The item specifications were created by the test development contractor and reviewed, revised, and validated by committees of Florida classroom teachers and curriculum specialists. The overall test blueprint was likewise reviewed, revised, and validated by subject area content committees in Florida. During these reviews, the materials provided by the contractors were and are heavily edited; items are rejected or modified to make certain they meet the test item specifications. Reviewers use worksheets that track their acceptance or rejection of each item.

All items are pilot-tested on small groups of students and the students are interviewed after each sitting. This permits the test administrator to learn first-hand what difficulties the examinee has with the instructions, the items, or the materials. All test items are field-tested with large random samples of Florida students, accomplished by administering statewide field tests or by imbedding items within operational forms. All items in such field tests are subjected to statistical item analyses and further review by staff of the Department and the contractor. Such analyses routinely include 2- and 3-parameter IRT approaches, calculation of classic psychometric indices, dimensionality studies, and DIF analyses. Content validity thus is established by a thorough and professional quality control process.

As the FCAT was initially developed in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10, data were gathered to compare student performance on the test with their performance on district norm-referenced tests and grades earned in courses. The data collected in 1998 from a sample of districts revealed a reasonably strong correlation between the Stanford 8 and FCAT scores. In 2000, the FCAT included use of the Stanford 9 (SAT-9) and, thus, the comparisons could be done by the Department as soon as the results were available. These studies generally show that the FCAT-SSS and the FCAT-NRT are correlated at about the 0.83 – 0.85 level.

Comparing grades earned in courses is more problematic since teachers are known to assign grades for reasons other than academic proficiency. Furthermore, students have many different course selection possibilities and a simple correlation between FCAT and grade point average is often indistinct. The Department conducted a few studies of the relationship between grades and FCAT scores. Generally, the results show that low scores on the FCAT are associated with poor performance in courses and vice versa.

For grade 10 students in Florida, there is an additional source of interesting data. These students have the option of taking the entering freshman college placement test. The State offers this test to high school students with the intent of inspiring all students to aim toward postsecondary education and to select courses that will prepare them for college work. Scores of over 10,000 high school students who took this test have been collected, and correlation and predictive studies of the data have been conducted.

Florida also is creating a “value-added” accountability system that will track students over time as they move through the educational system.

Another important dimension of interest is that of “instructional validity,” the degree to which the content measured by the test is being taught. The State is obligated to consider instructional validity as one important dimension of the provision of due process to students. (See the findings of the *Debra P. v. Turlington* case.)

Florida districts and schools have been on notice for many years about the development and, later, the adoption of the Sunshine State Standards. The Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education after public hearings and much discussion and review. Various memoranda were sent to district superintendents and other educators about the importance of teaching the content defined by the Standards. Publications and other informational and educational tools have been developed to assist districts in adopting the Standards.

The State conducted an instructional validity study in the 2000-01 school year to guarantee that all students are having the opportunity to learn the desired content. This is particularly important because the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students of 2000-01 will be the first class to be required to pass the FCAT for graduation. The results showed that Florida school districts have implemented the Sunshine State Standards into the instructional program.

The consequential aspects of validity require long-term review and consideration. Certain impressions are available at this time. First, the test results are improving over time. This may be interpreted as schools spending more time emphasizing the benchmarks being measured by FCAT. Since the test is secure and is not released and since the tested content is broad, rather than narrow as in older minimum competency days, it may be reasonably concluded that students are making good progress toward the challenging standards adopted by the State Board of Education. Second, comments from instructional leaders and supervisors across the state articulate their beliefs that the FCAT, with its reach into higher content and its use of performance items, is moving the instructional program in the directions they desire. Third, there are always those who complain that the state assessment tests are unnecessary and are an undesirable intrusion into the daily classroom life. Teachers object that they

have to “cease their normal activities and teach FCAT.” The response to this is that “FCAT-prep” activities are not needed and are not desirable since the Sunshine State Standards are to be woven into the curriculum and instructional program in a seamless manner.

In summary, based on immediate information, the program appears to be working as designed and results are being obtained. Longer-term information will be needed for clarification of other dimensions of impact.

Reliability of the FCAT is also a matter of psychometric concern and interest. The technical data describing the FCAT are shown in the *2000 FCAT Technical Report*. This includes a description of the standard errors of measurement and the rater consistency for the performance items. In regard to the latter, while the performance scoring is being conducted, the Department receives daily statistical reports showing rater consistency for each performance item. Other data show the consistency of each individual rater. If a rater is not performing up to the established standards, the individual is retrained or discharged.

Florida places great emphasis on good test administration procedures, test security, and ethical behavior of students and test administrators. Readers should pay particular attention to the FCAT Test Administrator's Manual, provided as an Attachment, which includes copies of test security statutes and administrative rules. It is expected and demanded that Department staff, contractor staff, advisory committees, content committees, and district educators follow instructions relative to maintenance of test security. Procedures are in place to investigate any allegation of a breach in test security. This includes criminal prosecution and referrals to the Professional Practices Commission for action against the professional license. In addition, a paper on ethical behavior in the administration of assessment tests has been prepared and given wide circulation. See the Department's web site at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/pdf/ethics.pdf>.

The Department's Office of Assessment and School Accountability convenes a committee of district test administrators each year to debrief following each annual assessment cycle. The Section Administrator personally tours the State after the spring assessment administration and makes from eight to ten presentations about the score reports. At the same time, feedback is gathered from workshop participants concerning the program and problems occurring during test administration. Each test administrator with every school completes a feedback form to describe any difficulties with test administration and suggestions for improvement. This feedback is analyzed by the test support contractor and given to the Department.

In addition, the Office of Assessment and School Accountability statistical analysis staff provides intense quality control over the processing of test answer sheets by the test support contractor. There is an independent audit of each step

of the contractor's work and approximately 40 separate computer programs are run against the various computer files provided by the contractor to identify errors of various types. Equating and calibration analyses are separately run by two and sometimes three groups to triangulate results and confirm accuracy. No test results can be processed by the contractor until the quality control staff agrees that there are absolutely no errors present. This process requires about ten calendar days to complete. In addition, staff members are present at each site where performance items are being scored. They monitor activities, provide guidance, participate in training, and solve problems as they occur. This requires that each person be on-site from four to six weeks in out-of-state locations.

The State has a formal and regular operation to maintain a high quality assessment program through analyses and input from various external sources. There are technical advisory committees, curriculum content committees, and external *ad hoc* committees of advisors. These groups either are convened to review and update the assessment instruments or they are convened to solve a particular problem or critique some aspect of the assessment. The test support and development contracts include thousands of dollars in resource money to provide travel and consultant fees where needed. Research projects are routinely commissioned with state universities to explore issues related to scaling, dimensionality, IRT questions, plans for vertical scaling, etc. The program and its tests are reviewed and evaluated every year and are in a constant process of improvement.

We believe that Florida's extensive quality control process excels among the various state assessment programs.

Additional explanatory information about the FCAT program including a chronology of development, sample items, test specifications, and other documents can be found on the web at the following address:

<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm>.

### National Assessment of Educational Progress

Florida has participated in the state-level administrations of the NAEP tests, with one exception when the first version of FCAT was being implemented. The state will participate in the state-level NAEP in the future, as required by *NCLB*.

### Challenging Student Academic Achievement Standards

*No Child Left Behind* requires all states to adopt challenging academic achievement standards for the tests in mathematics, reading/language arts, and science. This has been accomplished in Florida for the mathematics and reading/language arts assessments, although, in Florida, such standards are referred to as FCAT Achievement Levels. Their development and current status is described in the section below.

The Department of Education created definitions for five Achievement Levels that would be the basis for describing student performance on the FCAT. The definitions are shown below in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

**Definitions of the FCAT Achievement Levels**

- Level 5: Performance at this level indicates that the student has success with the most challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. A Level 5 student answers most of the test questions correctly, including the most challenging questions.
- Level 4: Performance at this level indicates that the student has success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. A Level 4 student answers most of the questions correctly but may have only some success with questions that reflect the most challenging content.
- Level 3: Performance at this level indicates that the student has partial success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards but performance is inconsistent. A Level 3 student answers many of the questions correctly but is generally less successful with questions that are most challenging.
- Level 2: Performance at this level indicates that the student has limited success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards.
- Level 1: Performance at this level indicates that the student has little success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards.

To operationalize the five definitions, it was necessary to select performance standards or “cut-scores” for each level and have them adopted by the State Board of Education as administrative rule. The Department has, at this time, engaged in two separate standard-setting operations.

The first standard setting exercise was implemented for the initial tests in reading (grades 4, 8, and 10) and mathematics (grades 5, 8, and 11). In the fall of 1998, a statewide committee of practicing teachers and curriculum leaders was designated for the purpose of advising the State on the selection of achievement levels (i.e., performance standards). This committee of about 80 people was divided into elementary, middle, and senior high working groups. They were convened at a location near Tampa, Florida, for a four-day working session.

The participants engaged in a five-step process built around the “bookmark” standard-setting procedure suggested by CTB/McGraw-Hill, the first FCAT development contractor. Participants were given workbooks containing over 100 items that represented the range of difficulty of FCAT items. At the earliest stage, each person reviewed the items and selected the location where a “bookmark” or standard was to be defined. At each subsequent stage, the participant was provided more information and opportunity for discussion. Five votes were taken before the conclusion of the meeting.

Department staff then took the proposals for achievement levels to other groups for review. Three committees were convened – one of business leaders, one of citizens, and one of educators other than classroom teachers and curriculum specialists. Further reviews were conducted within the agency, and in December 1998, the State Board of Education adopted cut-scores for an initial stage followed by a higher, second stage.

In the fall of 2001, it was necessary for the Department to initiate development of recommendations for Achievement Levels for the new grades in 3-10 that had been added to the assessment program. With the assistance of the new test development contractor, Harcourt Educational Measurement, the Department again implemented a process involving committees of teachers, curriculum leaders, business leaders, parents, and citizens. The “book mark procedure” was used as in 1998; however, it was possible to add a new dimension to the standard-setting procedure since the Department had successfully completed a vertical scaling analysis for the assessment tests. Since the 100-500 FCAT scale could be converted to a continuous developmental scale spanning grades 3-10, it was possible for corrections to be made in the specification of the cut-scores to smooth out the Achievement Levels and make them more consistent across the grades.

In December 2001, the State Board of Education considered the issue of passing standards for the new grade levels. The Board adopted the recommended cut-scores and, in addition, decided to extend to 2004 the date at which Stage Two would become effective. Tables 1-2 display the FCAT Achievement Levels adopted by the Board.

**Table 1****FCAT READING, GRADES 3-10*****Stage 1 for tests administered in 1999-2003***

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Level 1</b> | <b>Level 2</b> | <b>Level 3</b> | <b>Level 4</b> | <b>Level 5</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>3</b>     | 100-258        | 259-283        | 284-331        | 332-393        | 394-500        |
| <b>4</b>     | 100-274        | 275-298        | 299-338        | 339-385        | 386-500        |
| <b>5</b>     | 100-255        | 256-285        | 286-330        | 331-383        | 384-500        |
| <b>6</b>     | 100-264        | 265-295        | 296-338        | 339-386        | 387-500        |
| <b>7</b>     | 100-266        | 267-299        | 300-343        | 344-388        | 389-500        |
| <b>8</b>     | 100-270        | 271-309        | 310-349        | 350-393        | 394-500        |
| <b>9</b>     | 100-284        | 285-321        | 322-353        | 354-381        | 382-500        |
| <b>10</b>    | 100-286        | 287-326        | 327-354        | 355-371        | 372-500        |

***Stage 2 for tests administered in 2004 and beyond***

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Level 1</b> | <b>Level 2</b> | <b>Level 3</b> | <b>Level 4</b> | <b>Level 5</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>3</b>     | 100-271        | 272-296        | 297-344        | 345-406        | 407-500        |
| <b>4</b>     | 100-287        | 288-311        | 312-351        | 352-398        | 399-500        |
| <b>5</b>     | 100-268        | 269-298        | 299-343        | 344-396        | 397-500        |
| <b>6</b>     | 100-277        | 278-308        | 309-351        | 352-399        | 400-500        |
| <b>7</b>     | 100-279        | 280-312        | 313-356        | 357-401        | 402-500        |
| <b>8</b>     | 100-283        | 284-322        | 323-362        | 363-406        | 407-500        |
| <b>9</b>     | 100-297        | 298-334        | 335-366        | 367-394        | 395-500        |
| <b>10</b>    | 100-299        | 300-339        | 340-367        | 368-384        | 385-500        |

**Table 2**

**FCAT Mathematics, Grades 3-10**

***Stage 1 for tests administered in 1999-2003***

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Level 1</b> | <b>Level 2</b> | <b>Level 3</b> | <b>Level 4</b> | <b>Level 5</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>3</b>     | 100-252        | 253-293        | 294-345        | 346-397        | 398-500        |
| <b>4</b>     | 100-259        | 260-297        | 298-346        | 347-393        | 394-500        |
| <b>5</b>     | 100-287        | 288-325        | 326-354        | 355-394        | 395-500        |
| <b>6</b>     | 100-282        | 283-314        | 315-353        | 354-390        | 391-500        |
| <b>7</b>     | 100-274        | 275-305        | 306-343        | 344-378        | 379-500        |
| <b>8</b>     | 100-279        | 280-309        | 310-346        | 347-370        | 371-500        |
| <b>9</b>     | 100-260        | 261-295        | 296-331        | 332-366        | 367-500        |
| <b>10</b>    | 100-286        | 287-314        | 315-339        | 340-374        | 375-500        |

***Stage 2 for tests administered in 2004 and beyond***

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Level 1</b> | <b>Level 2</b> | <b>Level 3</b> | <b>Level 4</b> | <b>Level 5</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>3</b>     | 100-265        | 266-306        | 307-358        | 359-410        | 411-500        |
| <b>4</b>     | 100-272        | 273-310        | 311-359        | 360-406        | 407-500        |
| <b>5</b>     | 100-300        | 301-338        | 339-367        | 368-407        | 408-500        |
| <b>6</b>     | 100-295        | 296-327        | 328-366        | 367-403        | 404-500        |
| <b>7</b>     | 100-287        | 288-318        | 319-356        | 357-391        | 392-500        |
| <b>8</b>     | 100-292        | 293-322        | 323-359        | 360-383        | 384-500        |
| <b>9</b>     | 100-273        | 274-308        | 309-344        | 345-379        | 380-500        |
| <b>10</b>    | 100-299        | 300-327        | 328-352        | 353-387        | 388-500        |

For the writing assessment, the State Board of Education has not officially adopted a “cut-score” since there is no high-stakes decision required of this test. However, the Department considers a student score of “3” on the scale of 1-6 as being the lowest acceptable score. This is driven by the definition of the scoring rubric itself as can be seen at the Department’s web site:  
<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fw/fwaprubr.htm>.

The State Board of Education has not yet considered the issue of performance standards for the science assessment since the test was not administered on a statewide basis until 2002. The Department expects to undertake standard-setting operations in August 2003.

The grade 10 FCAT passing scores adopted by the State Board of Education in December 2001 specified two levels. For students tested in March and October

2001, the passing scores would be 287 in reading and 295 in mathematics. Beginning in March 2002, all 10<sup>th</sup> graders who are initially taking the FCAT for graduation will be required to earn scores of 300 in reading and mathematics. The Commissioner of Education is required to review the passing score levels in mid-2002 and determine whether to make further adjustments in the passing scores. This step is necessary because the objective of the overall accountability program is to keep moving the educational system forward. Making regular adjustments in the required passing scores (or definitions of the FCAT Achievement Levels) is viewed as essential.

No Child left Behind Academic Standards

As stated in Section 1111(b)(1)(D) of *NCLB*, each state Title I program is required to include challenging academic standards with at least three levels of proficiency –Advanced, Proficient, and Basic. States may have more than three levels, but must define the levels and explain their relationship to the levels required for Title I purposes.

Florida deliberately did not use value-laden words to describe its achievement levels because of the lessons learned in the *Debra P. v. Turlington* case. The original high school competency test was called a “functional literacy test,” and so it was easy for someone to mistakenly assume that a failing score labeled a student as being “functionally illiterate.” It has, therefore, been decided to use only numbers to identify the five different levels describing performance on FCAT.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) utilizes the labels of “Advanced,” “Proficient,” and “Basic.” There has been considerable discussion about these labels and whether another category of “Below Basic” should be added. Table 3 below shows the percentage of students attaining various achievement levels for grades 4 and 8 in reading and mathematics (*NAEP 1998 Reading State Report for Florida, 1999; NAEP 1996 Mathematics, Cross-State Data Compendium for the Grade 4 and Grade 8 Assessment, 1998*). This is followed by Table 4 that shows the percentage of students in each of the five achievement levels of FCAT from the 2002 administration.

**Table 3**

**Percentage of Students in Florida Attaining NAEP Achievement Levels**

|                                    | Below Basic | At or Above Basic | At or Above Proficient | Advanced |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------|
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Reading (1992)     | 47          | 53                | 21                     | 3        |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Reading (1994)     | 50          | 50                | 23                     | 5        |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Reading (1998)     | 46          | 54                | 23                     | 5        |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Reading (1998)     | 35          | 65                | 23                     | 1        |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Mathematics (1996) | 45          | 55                | 15                     | 1        |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Mathematics (1996) | 46          | 54                | 17                     | 2        |

**Table 4**

**Percentage of All Students in Florida Within Each 2002 FCAT Achievement Level**

| Grade   | Number of Students | Levels |    |    |    |   |
|---------|--------------------|--------|----|----|----|---|
|         |                    | 1      | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5 |
|         |                    |        |    |    |    |   |
| Reading |                    |        |    |    |    |   |
| 3       | 188,387            | 27     | 14 | 32 | 23 | 5 |
| 4       | 191,866            | 30     | 15 | 28 | 21 | 6 |
| 5       | 192,604            | 28     | 18 | 30 | 19 | 4 |
| 6       | 194,125            | 30     | 18 | 28 | 18 | 5 |
| 7       | 191,991            | 29     | 21 | 29 | 16 | 5 |
| 8       | 184,483            | 29     | 26 | 28 | 14 | 3 |
| 9       | 204,728            | 44     | 27 | 17 | 8  | 4 |
| 10      | 150,135            | 32     | 33 | 21 | 8  | 7 |

| Grade       | Number of Students | Levels |    |    |    |   |
|-------------|--------------------|--------|----|----|----|---|
|             |                    | 1      | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5 |
| Mathematics |                    |        |    |    |    |   |
| 3           | 188,606            | 21     | 20 | 34 | 20 | 5 |
| 4           | 192,366            | 26     | 24 | 32 | 15 | 4 |
| 5           | 192,472            | 25     | 27 | 23 | 19 | 6 |
| 6           | 193,948            | 35     | 22 | 25 | 13 | 5 |
| 7           | 191,786            | 33     | 21 | 26 | 14 | 7 |
| 8           | 184,379            | 25     | 22 | 31 | 14 | 8 |
| 9           | 203,911            | 28     | 24 | 26 | 15 | 6 |
| 10          | 149,784            | 19     | 21 | 25 | 27 | 8 |

According to Florida statutes, the Commissioner of Education must designate an FCAT achievement level that represents inadequate performance. This has been done, and Level 1 was so designated. For purposes implementing *No Child Left Behind*, we designate the following relationships shown in Table 5 between Florida’s Achievement levels and the labels specified by *NCLB*:

**Table 5**

**Specification of *NCLB* Achievement Standards**

| FCAT Achievement Levels | No Child Left Behind Achievement Standards |
|-------------------------|--|
| 5                       | Advanced                                   |
| 3-4                     | Proficient                                 |
| 2                       | Basic                                      |
| 1                       | Below Basic                                |

Level 1 will be considered to be “Below Basic.” FCAT Level 2 will be considered “Basic,” and Levels 3 and 4 will be “Proficient.” FCAT Level 5 will be “Advanced.” However, the labels used in *No Child Left Behind* **will not be used** in Florida’s FCAT reports and publications in order to avoid inadvertent misinterpretations of the labels.

## FCAT Inclusion Policies and Procedures

Federal requirements in NCLB clearly expect states to develop ways to include all students in the academic assessment program. Florida accepts this philosophic orientation and has taken steps to foster such inclusion. Indeed, this orientation can be seen in several Department publications. Our emphasis is one of inclusion both in the instructional programs and the student assessment programs.

The FCAT Test Administrator's Manual reinforces this theme on page four by stating, "In general, all students enrolled in the grade levels being tested should participate in the FCAT administration. Students must be administered the test for the grade level in which they are enrolled." The Manual (page 4) also says that LEP students are expected to be tested, as are students with disabilities.

The following information describes Florida's policies with regard to the testing of students with disabilities and limited English proficient students.

### Students with Disabilities

Some students need accommodations to enable them to adequately access the assessment tests. The FCAT Test Administrator's Manual contains specific instructions on determining the allowable accommodations for ESE students. Each such decision must be made on an individual basis. The student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the beginning point for such decisions, although occasionally the Department of Education assists school officials in making these decisions. The Department's current policy would not allow an accommodation that threatened the security of the test (e.g., student taking the test at home without supervision) or changed the construct being measured (e.g., reading the reading test).

In certain circumstances, a student may be excluded from taking the FCAT. If a student is excluded, the IEP must document why the assessment is not appropriate and what alternative assessment procedure will be used.

The State Board of Education recently amended an existing administrative rule that specifies policies and procedures with regard to waivers from the required high school graduation test. This rule describes the conditions under which a student can be given a waiver from the test as the vehicle for demonstration of proficiency in reading and mathematics required for award of a diploma. The rule may be seen at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/rules/6a-1-8.htm#6A-1.09431>.

To make certain the Department's policies and procedures relative to accommodations for test administration are current and appropriate, Governor Jeb Bush issued Executive Order #02-108 on April 3, 2002, to convene a special committee to study the matter and make recommendations for changes and

improvements. The committee’s recommendations were available in the fall of 2002 and are being reviewed and addressed by the Department.

Table 6 shows the 2002 participation rates for students with disabilities.

**Table 6**  
**Participation of Students with Disabilities by Grade**  
**FCAT and Alternate Assessment, 2002**

Reading

| Grade | # Enrolled | # Participated FCAT | # Participated Alternate Assessment* | % Participated |
|-------|------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 3     | 31,217     | 27,242              | 2,240                                | 94.4%          |
| 4     | 33,498     | 29,393              | 2,488                                | 95.2%          |
| 5     | 34,391     | 30,393              | 2,475                                | 95.6%          |
| 6     | 32,698     | 27,719              | 2,961                                | 93.8%          |
| 7     | 31,839     | 26,055              | 3,241                                | 92.0%          |
| 8     | 29,651     | 23,754              | 3,226                                | 91.0%          |
| 9     | 37,100     | 23,749              | 5,999                                | 80.2%          |
| 10    | 22,369     | 13,950              | 4,357                                | 81.8%          |

Mathematics

| Grade | # Enrolled | # Participated FCAT | # Participated Alternate Assessment* | % Participated |
|-------|------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 3     | 31,217     | 27,107              | 2,209                                | 93.9%          |
| 4     | 33,498     | 29,571              | 2,420                                | 95.5%          |
| 5     | 34,391     | 30,407              | 2,444                                | 95.5%          |
| 6     | 32,698     | 27,631              | 2,957                                | 93.5%          |
| 7     | 31,839     | 25,966              | 3,228                                | 91.7%          |
| 8     | 29,651     | 23,671              | 3,208                                | 90.7%          |
| 9     | 37,100     | 23,469              | 5,980                                | 79.4%          |
| 10    | 22,369     | 13,832              | 4,343                                | 81.3%          |

\* 2001-02 was the first year of state level data collection for alternate assessment.

### Limited English Proficient Students

In Florida, there are 215,777 students classified as limited English proficient and being served. These students speak 207 different languages and come from 257 different countries. The four largest language groups are Spanish, Haitian-Creole, French and Portuguese. See 2000-2001 ESOL Annual Report, State Synopsis for a listing of all native languages represented in Florida's K-12 educational system in 2000-01, available via the Internet at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/bin00011/0001esol/files/0001ESOLState.pdf>.

As described in Principle 5.4, all LEP students are to be assessed. An LEP student may be exempted only when he/she has been receiving services in a program operated in accordance with an approved district LEP plan one year or less and a majority decision is made by an LEP committee, on an individual student basis, to exempt him/her.

In this context, the term "LEP committee" is defined in Rule 6A-6.0902, F.A.C., as meaning:

"...LEP Committee means a group composed of ESOL teachers and home language teachers, and an administrator or designee plus guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists or other educators as appropriate for the situation. The parent(s) would also be invited to attend any committee meetings."

The LEP committee, in making its decision, shall consider the following factors: (1) level of mastery of basic competencies and skills in English and home language according to appropriate local, state and national criterion-referenced standards; (2) grades from the current or previous years; or (3) other test results. (See Rule 6A-1.09432, FAC, available via the Internet at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/rules/6a-1-8.htm#6A-1.09432>.)

Rule 6A-6.09091, F.A.C., Accommodations of the Statewide Assessment Program Instruments and Procedures for Limited English Proficient Students, ensures accommodations in the administration of the FCAT to LEP students. (See Rule 6A-6.09091, FAC, available via the Internet at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/rules/6a-69.htm#6A-6.0901>.) The FCAT Administration Manual contains the complete description of the accommodations for LEP students. Following are selected pages from the 2003 FCAT Administration Manual.

For school year 2002-2003, assessment results for all LEP students will be collected, analyzed and reported. The scores of LEP students participating in FCAT and those assessed by other methods shall be used in the calculation of AYP. The scores for LEP students who did not participate in the FCAT will be

collected and reported by the number scoring proficient and those not scoring proficient.

A comprehensive plan has been developed for both assessment of academic progress and English language proficiency. The June 2002 FDOE submission of the NCLB Consolidated Application describes in detail the process and reporting of results for English language proficiency and for academic achievement of all LEP students.