

# **Assessment Investigation**

## **February 18, 2015**



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## Executive Summary

In late 2014 and early 2015, Commissioner Stewart conducted a thorough and comprehensive investigation of all standardized assessments used in school districts.

The first step in conducting this investigation was to survey districts on the standardized assessments they give. In December 2014, a template was sent to each district to record the following:

- What district-level, standardized assessments are given
- What student decisions are based on test results (e.g., promotion, course grade, progress monitoring; includes additional district uses of statewide, standardized test results)
- Why students are required to take the test
- What grade levels or groups of students take the test
- Whether test information is provided to teachers, parents, and/or students
- How much time is given for the test on how many days
- How often and when the test is given
- In what format the test is given (computer, paper, or other)

Information was returned in January 2015 to assist the commissioner in completing the investigation and this report, including district-level, standardized assessments that may be summative or interim in nature, and used for benchmarking or progress monitoring. Neither formative assessments nor teacher-developed or teacher-selected assessments are included in the report. District summaries were drafted by department staff and returned to each district for additional verification. District summaries can be found in Appendix F.

To give the district information context, this report also provides information on Florida's statewide, standardized assessment program and the state-required use of results.

This report is organized in the following manner:

1. Recommendations
2. Purpose and Value of Assessments
3. Assessment Definitions
4. History of Florida's Statewide, Standardized Assessment Program
5. Impact of Florida's Education Reforms on Student Achievement
6. Statewide, Standardized Assessments – Requirements and Uses
7. Federal Assessment Requirements
8. Local Assessment Requirements
9. Summary of District Information
10. Appendices

## Recommendations

Florida has a strong, established statewide, standardized testing program that measures student progress and provides useful information to educators and parents. During the course of the commissioner's investigation, the department identified several places where the state requirements should be reduced. In order for Florida to move forward with fewer, better assessments, the commissioner recommends enacting the following four measures:

- 1. Issue an Executive Order to suspend the Grade 11 Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) for English language arts until legislation is enacted to eliminate the mandate.**
  - Since students meet their English language arts graduation requirement upon completion of the grade 10 assessment, the Grade 11 FSA for English language arts is no longer needed.
- 2. Enact legislation to eliminate the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) as a state mandate for grade 11 and make it optional.**
  - The department believes that the PERT current practice should continue as an option for students in high school and local colleges.
  - Rigorous standards and increased graduation requirements are in place to ensure college and career readiness upon high school graduation.
- 3. Enact legislation to eliminate the current progress monitoring requirements.**
  - The department believes current state requirements are overly prescriptive and progress monitoring decisions should be left at the district level.
- 4. Enact legislation to eliminate local final exams in courses/subjects where there is also a statewide, standardized end-of-course exam.**
  - Current statewide end-of-course assessments are Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, U.S. History, Biology 1, and Civics.

Further, the commissioner urges districts to consider the following recommendations:

- 1. Give no more than one school-wide or district-wide interim assessment per course/subject per grading period.** Interim assessments are administered at certain times during the school year, and can be used to predict a student's ability to succeed on a summative assessment or to diagnose student learning gaps.
- 2. Don't test students for the sole purpose of evaluating teachers.** It is important to recognize the contribution of teachers in students' learning. Students already take tests to determine whether they know their subject matter and districts should use information from these tests to help gauge teacher performance.
- 3. Provide teachers, parents, and students with information about how students are doing on each assessment used to monitor student progress.** Teachers, parents, and students deserve to know how well students are grasping the content they are taught. For parents, this information can be a sign that their child could benefit from additional assistance, while teachers may use the information to adapt their lessons to meet students' needs.

## Purpose and Value of Assessment

The primary purpose of Florida's K-12 assessment system is to measure students' achievement of Florida's education standards. The Florida Standards were developed and implemented to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for success in college, career, and life. Assessment supports instruction and student learning. Assessment results help Florida's educational leadership and stakeholders determine whether the goals of the education system are being met. Assessments help Florida determine whether we have equipped our students with the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for careers and college-level coursework. Assessment allows us to answer key questions such as:

- "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?"
- "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?"
- "Is there a better way to teach the subject, thereby promoting better learning?"

Florida's educational assessments also provide the basis for student, school, and district accountability systems. Assessment results are used to determine school and district grades which give citizens a standard way to determine the quality and progress of Florida's education system. Assessment results are also used in teacher evaluations to measure how effectively teachers move student learning forward. While assessment plays a key role in Florida's education system, it is important to remember that testing is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Florida's assessment and accountability efforts have had a significant positive impact on student achievement over time. Some of these positive impacts are highlighted later in the report.

## Assessment Definitions

In order to ensure a common understanding of terminology used in discussing assessments, some key terms are defined in this section.

### Assessment Categories

For the purposes of this investigation, K-12 student assessments fall into three broad categories:

1. Statewide, standardized assessments
2. State-required, locally determined assessments
3. District-required, locally determined assessments

Definitions of these categories are provided below.

#### **Statewide, standardized assessments**

By statute, Florida's statewide, standardized assessment system is composed of comprehensive assessments in English language arts in grades 3-11, comprehensive assessments in mathematics in grades 3-8, and end-of-course (EOC) assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Biology, U.S. History, and Civics. The statewide, standardized assessments also include the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA), which measures academic achievement of students with significant cognitive disabilities. These assessments are all *summative*, which means that they are used to evaluate student mastery of Florida's academic standards at or near the conclusion of the course of instruction. EOC assessments are factored into students' course grades.

#### **State-required, locally determined assessments**

Also by statute, districts are required to administer local assessments that measure student mastery of course content at the necessary level of rigor for the course. These summative assessments are to be provided for all subjects and grade levels not measured under the statewide, standardized assessment program. These assessments may factor into student course grades.

#### **District-required, locally determined assessments**

Districts may require other assessments not explicitly called for in state statute. These may be additional summative assessments, or these may be *interim* assessments. Interim assessments are administered at certain times during the school year, and can be used to predict a student's ability to succeed on a summative assessment or to diagnose student learning gaps. Interim assessments can also be used in *progress monitoring*, which is the process used to determine whether a student's academic performance is improving, at what rate it is improving, and how effective instruction has been. These assessments may factor into student course grades.

## **Additional Assessment Definitions**

### *“Testing Time” vs. “Testing Window”*

There is often confusion regarding the time that an individual student spends taking tests, as compared to the time that districts allot for all district and state testing to be completed for all students. This difference is more fully explained below.

**Testing Time:** Testing time is the amount of time individual students are given to respond to test items on each test. While Florida’s statewide, standardized assessments allow a generous amount of time for students to respond to test items so that they may fully demonstrate what they know and can do, the total amount of time spent on statewide tests is no more than five to ten hours each year for the vast majority of students.

**Testing Window:** A testing window is the range of dates during which districts and/or schools may choose to administer a given assessment. The state determines a general testing window for statewide, standardized assessments, and districts then select more specific timeframes for schools to administer tests to students. Districts may choose to administer tests in as many or as few days as needed during the testing window to address district-specific considerations such as holidays, seasonal breaks, device availability, or other district factors.

## History of Florida's Statewide Assessment Program

Florida's focus on educational assessments and accountability began well before the first administration of the FCAT, which occurred in 1998. Key events in the state's efforts to improve student achievement are described in the following condensed chronology. This summary outlines the origin of the student assessment and school accountability systems in Florida and how these efforts have changed over time.

### 1970s and 1980s

- Florida began administering statewide assessments in the 1970s.
- Nation's first graduation test was authorized in 1976, and implemented first with the graduating class of 1983 (minimum competency test).

### 1990s

- Florida Writing Assessment Program was administered for the first time to fourth-graders in 1992, expanding to eighth-graders in 1993 and tenth-graders in 1994.
- Identification of critically low-performing schools began in 1995, based on norm-referenced test scores in grades 4 and 8; writing scores in grades 4, 8, and 10; and results from the High School Competency Test in grade 11.
- FCAT was first administered in Reading (grades 4, 8, and 10) and Mathematics (grades 5, 8, and 10) in 1998.
- A-F School Grades were first issued in 1999, based on FCAT performance in the assessed grade levels and subjects, as well as additional indicators including dropout rates, attendance, and student discipline.
- Learning gains data were not yet available, and not part of School Grades from 1999 to 2001.

### 2000s

- FCAT Reading and Mathematics were expanded to grades 3-10 in 2001, allowing for the calculation of annual student learning gains.
- In 2002, the criteria for School Grades was expanded to include student learning gains and learning gains of the lowest-performing students (the Low 25%), with 50% of the grade based on student achievement and 50% based on learning gains.
- Passing of the Grade 10 FCAT Reading and Mathematics exams (standards-based assessments) became a requirement for high school graduation beginning with the class of 2003.
- In 2003, FCAT Science was administered for the first time – once in elementary, once in middle, and once in high school.
- In 2007, School Grades were expanded to include science performance and the learning gains of the Low 25% in mathematics.

### 2010s

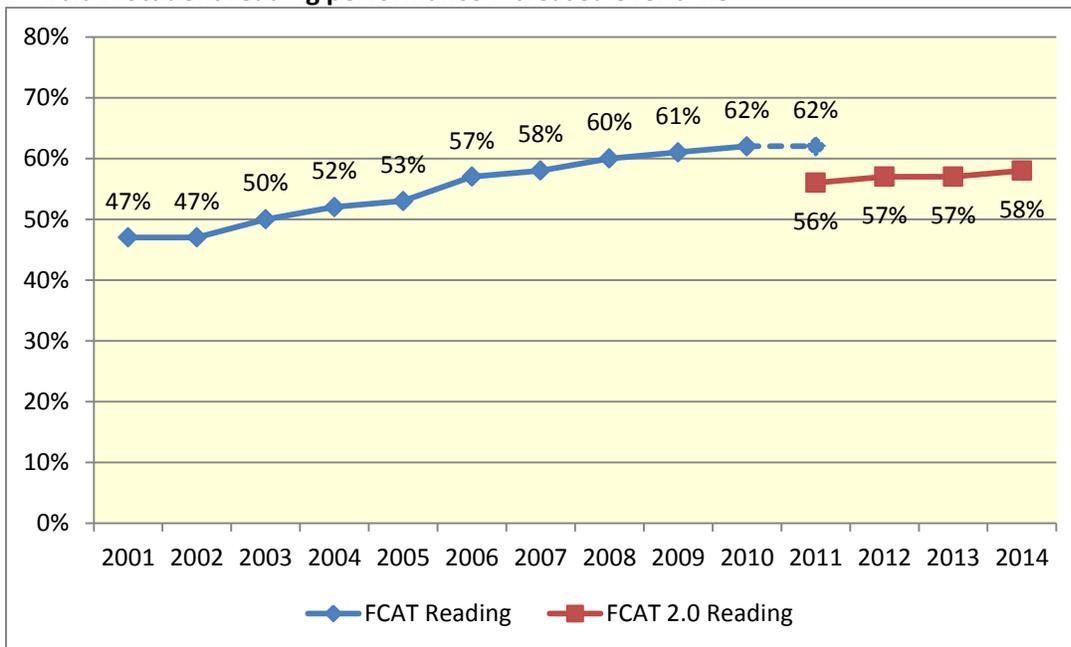
- In 2010, School Grades for high schools were expanded to include acceleration, graduation rates, and college readiness.
- In 2011, Florida transitioned to FCAT 2.0, assessments developed to measure mastery of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.
- Florida EOC assessments began with Algebra 1 in 2011, and expanded to Geometry and Biology 1 in 2012, U.S. History in 2013, and Civics (middle school course) in 2014.
- In 2012, School Grades incorporated performance from FCAT 2.0 and EOCs for the first time.
- In 2014-15, Florida is transitioning to the Florida Standards Assessments, which measure mastery of the Florida Standards.

## Impact of Florida's Education Reforms on Student Achievement

Through the administration of assessments, parents, the public, and educators are able to identify the areas in which students are excelling and the areas in which students are struggling. Since the implementation of statewide assessment and accountability reforms, Florida has seen an increase in student achievement.

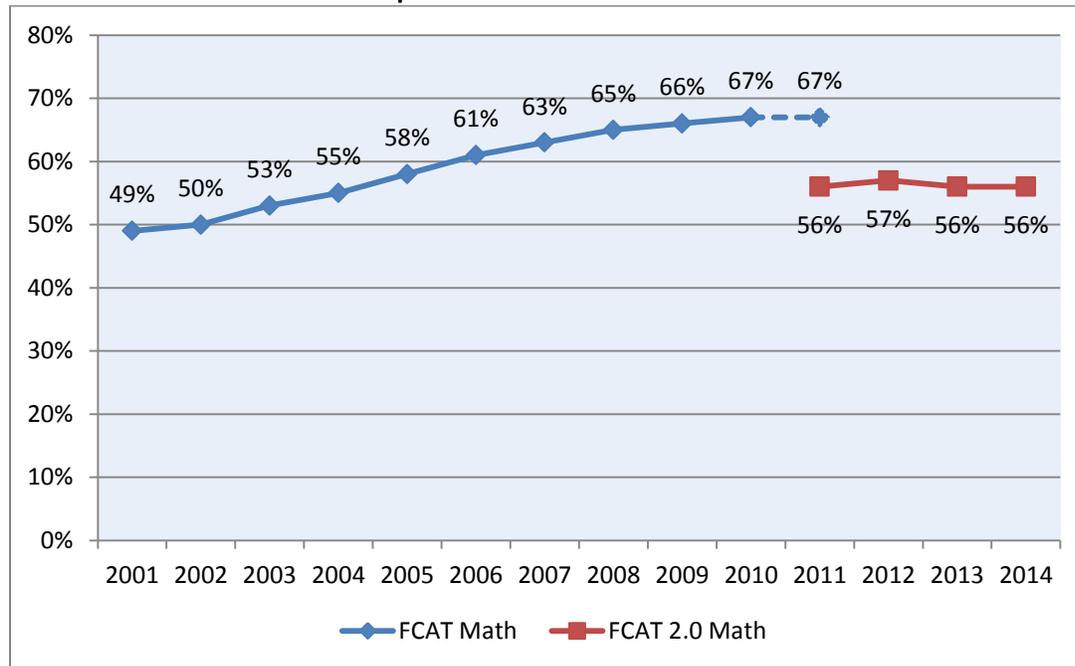
On the FCAT, Florida's students increased their performance over time to meet more rigorous standards. Between 2001 and 2011, the percent of students in grades 3-10 scoring at or above grade level on the FCAT Reading assessment increased 15 percentage points from forty-seven (47) percent to sixty-two (62) percent. Even though more rigorous standards and assessments were put into place with FCAT 2.0 in 2011, the percent of students in grades 3-10 scoring at or above grade level on the FCAT 2.0 Reading assessment was fifty-eight (58) percent, which is still 11 percentage points higher than in 2001 under the previous assessment.

**Exhibit 1: Student reading performance increased over time**



Between 2001 and 2011, the percent of students in grades 3-8 scoring at or above grade level on the FCAT Mathematics assessment increased 18 percentage points from forty-nine (49) percent to sixty-seven (67) percent. Once again, even though more rigorous standards and assessments were put into place with FCAT 2.0 in 2011, the percent of students in grades 3-8 scoring at or above grade level on the FCAT 2.0 Mathematics assessment was fifty-six (56) percent, which is still seven percentage points higher than in 2001 under the previous assessment.

**Exhibit 2: Student mathematics performance increased over time**



Florida has also seen increases in nationally recognized assessments, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The 2013 NAEP Reading results show that since 2003, Florida's fourth- and eighth-grade students have increased the percentage scoring at or above basic in reading by 12 and nine percentage points respectively, compared to a five-percentage-point gain by the nation's fourth-graders and a three-percentage-point gain for eighth-graders. The 2013 NAEP Mathematics results show that since 2003, Florida's fourth- and eighth-grade students have increased their overall mathematics scores by eight percentage points, surpassing their national counterparts.

**Exhibit 3: NAEP Reading percentage at or above Basic**

	2003	2013	Percentage Point Change
Florida - Grade 4	63%	75%	12%
Nation - Grade 4	62%	67%	5%
Florida - Grade 8	68%	77%	9%
Nation - Grade 8	72%	77%	5%

**Exhibit 4: NAEP Mathematics percentage at or above Basic**

	2003	2013	Percentage Point Change
Florida - Grade 4	76%	84%	8%
Nation - Grade 4	76%	82%	6%
Florida - Grade 8	62%	70%	8%
Nation - Grade 8	67%	73%	6%

One aspect of student achievement that Florida has focused on in recent years is facilitating greater access to college-level coursework, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, for high school students. Florida has seen an increase in both participation and performance on AP examinations. For instance, 80,175 high school seniors graduating in 2013 took at least one AP exam. Students scored at level 3 or higher (score needed to earn college credit) on 41,149 exams. By comparison, in 2003, only 32,566 high school seniors took at least one AP exam, with only 19,452 scoring a 3 or higher. As the data show, more graduates took and succeeded on AP exams in 2013 than in 2003.

**Exhibit 5: Florida has increased high school students' participation and performance on AP exams**

	2003	2013	Increase
Number of students taking AP exams	32,566	80,175	47,609
Number of students with at least one score of 3+	19,452	41,149	21,697

All three of these examples (FCAT to FCAT 2.0, NAEP, and AP) highlight Florida's commitment to increasing student achievement; in addition, these results illustrate that every time Florida has raised the bar, Florida's students have met and exceeded expectations.

## Statewide, Standardized Assessments – Requirements and Uses

As described in previous sections, Florida’s statewide, standardized assessment program has a lengthy history and has proven invaluable in increasing student achievement and advancing the state’s accountability goals. The purpose of this section is to provide more information regarding state statutory and State Board of Education rule requirements related to assessment, the use of assessment results, and the statewide assessment program itself. To provide some initial context, the tables below show the number of schools and students tested from summer 2013 through spring 2014.

School Type	Number of Schools Tested
Elementary	1,860
Middle	609
Senior High	946
Combination (e.g., K-6, 7-12, K-12, etc.)	463
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,878</b>

Grade Level	Number of Students Tested (includes both paper-based and computer-based tests)
3	210,795
4	201,074
5	197,846
6	197,191
7	207,279
8	210,640
9	210,324
10	214,491
11	175,921
12	61,242
Retake	6,992
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,893,795</b>

This section is organized as follows:

- Overview of all state statutes and State Board of Education rules governing the statewide student assessment program,
- Overview of the primary statutory authority for the statewide student assessment program, and
- Details regarding the scope and nature of the Florida Standards Assessments, FCAT 2.0 assessments, and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards assessments that are required under this authority.

## Overview of State Statute and State Board of Education Rules Governing the Statewide Student Assessment Program

The following table provides an overview of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) and State Board of Education rules (Florida Administrative Code, F.A.C.) that govern Florida’s statewide assessment system, including their uses. Following the table, additional detail is provided regarding the required accountability uses for students, teacher, schools, and districts.

Statewide, Standardized Assessments – Statutes and Rules			
Assessment	Assessment Citation	Required Use	Required Use Citation
Statewide Assessment Program (includes FCAT, FCAT 2.0, FSA, EOCs, FAA, Concordant Scores)	s. 1008.22, F.S. Rule 1.09422, F.A.C. Rule 1.0943, F.A.C. Rule 1.09432, F.A.C. Rule 1.094223, F.A.C.	Third Grade Retention; Student Progression; Remedial Instruction; Reporting Requirements	s. 1008.25, F.S. Rule 6A-1.094221, F.A.C. Rule 6A-1.094222, F.A.C.
		Middle Grades Promotion	s. 1003.4156, F.S.
		High School Standard Diploma	s. 1003.4282, F.S.
		EOC Assessments as 30% of Course Grade	s. 1003.4282, F.S. s. 1008.22, F.S.
		School Grades	s. 1008.34, F.S. Rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C.
		School Improvement Rating	s. 1008.341, F.S. Rule 6A-1.099822, F.A.C.
		District Grades	s. 1008.34, F.S.
		Differentiated Accountability	s. 1008.33, F.S. Rule 6A-1.099811, F.A.C.
		Teacher Evaluation	s. 1012.34, F.S.
		Opportunity Scholarship	s. 1002.38, F.S.
Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) – measures the English language acquisition of English Language Learners	s. 1003.56, F.S.	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Exit	Rule 6A-6.0902, F.A.C. Rule 6A-6.0903, F.A.C. Rule 6A-6.09021, F.A.C.
Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) – required of selected 11th-graders to determine college and career readiness and 12th-grade course placement	s. 1008.30, F.S.	College Readiness Coursework	Rule 6A-10.0315, F.A.C.

Statewide, Standardized Assessments – Statutes and Rules			
Assessment	Assessment Citation	Required Use	Required Use Citation
Preliminary SAT (PSAT)/Preliminary ACT (PLAN) – administered by each public high school to all 10th-grade students, though the parent has the opportunity to exempt his/her child from PSAT/PLAN	s. 1007.35, F.S.	Inform Course Placement	
Kindergarten Screening – required for all kindergarten students within the first 30 days of the school year to determine the readiness and performance of VPK providers	s. 1002.69, F.S.	VPK Readiness Rates	Rule 6M-8.601, F.A.C.
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – administered to a sample of students in selected grade levels every other year	s. 1008.22, F.S.	National and State Comparisons	
Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Assessment – measures student learning gains and student progress while a student is in a juvenile justice education program	s. 1003.52, F.S. Rule 6A-6.05281, F.A.C.	DJJ Accountability	New rule under development

### State-Required Uses of Statewide, Standardized Assessment Results

#### Accountability for Students

- A student must earn a Level 2 (out of 5) on the Grade 3 English language arts assessment to be promoted to grade 4.
  - Six good cause exemptions are provided by law.
- A student must pass the Grade 10 English language arts assessment to graduate from high school with a standard diploma.
  - Students may satisfy this requirement by earning a concordant score on SAT or ACT.
- A student must pass the Algebra 1 EOC to graduate from high school with a standard diploma.

- Students may satisfy this requirement by earning a comparative score on PERT.
- A student enrolled in a course with a statewide, standardized EOC must take the assessment, and the results must count as 30% of the student’s course grade.
- A student that does not meet the required levels of performance on the assessment must be provided with additional diagnostic assessments and must participate in progress monitoring throughout the year.

Accountability for Schools and Districts

- The achievement and learning gains of students on the statewide, standardized assessments are used to determine school grades, district grades, and school improvement ratings for alternative schools.
- Schools identified as schools in need of improvement based on student performance must provide progress monitoring.

Accountability for Teachers

- For teachers teaching courses associated with the statewide, standardized assessments, the results are used to measure student learning growth and included in the “performance of students” portion of the teacher’s evaluation.

**Primary Statutory Authority for the Statewide Student Assessment Program**

The primary statutory authority that addresses Florida’s statewide student assessment system is s. 1008.22, F.S. Per this statute, and as described in earlier sections, the primary purpose of the student assessment program is to provide student academic achievement and learning gains data to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and district staff. Also per statute, assessment data are to be used by districts to improve instruction; by students, parents, and teachers to guide learning objectives; by education researchers to assess national and international education comparison data; and by the public to assess the cost benefit of the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. As with a number of other statutes, s. 1008.22, F.S., requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules to further define provisions of the statute.

Key components of s. 1008.22, F.S.:

- Participation in the statewide assessment program is **mandatory** for all students and for all districts, except in rare instances as noted below.
- The statewide, standardized assessment program must be aligned to the state content standards and must be administered in the following subjects and grade levels:
  - English Language Arts Grades 3-11,
  - Mathematics Grades 3-8,
  - Science Grades 5 and 8, and
  - EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Biology 1, U.S. History, and Civics.
- Requires five achievement levels for all statewide assessments, with level 1 being the lowest and level 5 being the highest.
- Prohibits districts from suspending instruction for the sole purpose of practicing administration of statewide tests.
- Sets requirements for testing schedules, earliest test administration dates, and required reporting dates.

- Includes provision for the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) to be administered to certain students with disabilities, as determined by an individual educational plan (IEP) team.
- Includes provision for exemption from participation in statewide assessments for certain students with medical complexities.
- Provides the opportunity for students to meet graduation requirements through the use of concordant scores for Florida Standards Assessments and comparative scores for EOC assessments.
- Sets requirements for local assessments (this topic is addressed in this report in a separate section on local assessments).

### **Florida Standards Assessments, FCAT 2.0 Assessments, and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS)**

The standardized assessments administered statewide to all students in the selected grades and subjects described in s. 1008.22, F.S., are the Florida Standards Assessments, FCAT 2.0 assessments, and NGSSS EOC assessments. This section describes the general scope and nature of these assessments, including:

- Testing time, testing windows, and testing schedules
- A historical comparison of testing time
- Transition to computer-based testing
- Exemptions for students with medical complexities
- Opportunities for retakes and for concordant and comparative scores

#### **2014-15 Statewide Testing Time and Testing Windows**

The following tables show the total amount of testing time per student, and the time allotted to districts (testing window) to administer the assessments listed below. The terms “testing time” and “testing window” are addressed in the assessment definitions section of this report. The complete schedule of testing windows for 2014-15 is found at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7047/dps-2014-81a.pdf> and in Appendix B.

- Florida Standards Assessments English language arts Grades 3-11,
- Florida Standards Assessments Mathematics Grades 3-8,
- FCAT 2.0 Science Grades 5 and 8,
- FCAT 2.0 Reading Retake,
- Florida Standards EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and
- NGSSS EOC assessments in Biology 1, U.S. History, and Civics.

**Florida Standards Assessments (FSA)**

English Language Arts (ELA) – Writing and Reading Components						Mathematics			
Grade Level	Days of Testing Per Student	Total Hours per Grade Level		Total School Days in Testing Window		Grade Level	Days of Testing Per Student	Total Hours per Grade Level	Total School Days in Testing Window
		Writing*	Reading	Writing	Reading				
<b>3</b>	2	N/A	2.67	N/A	15	<b>3</b>	2	2.67	15
<b>4</b>	3	1.5	2.67	10	15	<b>4</b>	2	2.67	15
<b>5</b>	3	1.5	2.67	10	20	<b>5</b>	2	2.67	20
<b>6</b>	3	1.5	2.83	10	20	<b>6</b>	2	3	20
<b>7</b>	3	1.5	2.83	10	20	<b>7</b>	2	3	20
<b>8</b>	3	1.5	2.83	10	20	<b>8</b>	2	3	20
<b>9</b>	3	1.5	3	10	20				
<b>10</b>	3	1.5	3	10	20				
<b>11</b>	3	1.5	3	10	20				

\*The FSA ELA Writing Component Test is comprised of one, 1.5-hour session, which is the amount of time represented in this chart. However, students may have up to 2 hours to complete their work, if needed.

	Days of Testing Per Student	Total Hours Per Assessment	Total School Days in Current Testing Window
<b>Florida Standards EOC Assessments<sup>1</sup></b>			
Algebra 1	2	3	20
Geometry	2	3	20
Algebra 2	2	3	20
<sup>1</sup> FSA EOC assessments are comprised of two, 1.5-hour sessions, which is the amount of time represented in this chart. However, students may have up to one-half of a regular school day to complete each session, if needed.			
<b>Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) EOC Assessments<sup>2</sup></b>			
Biology 1	1	2.67	25
Civics	1	2.67	25
U.S. History	1	2.67	25
<sup>2</sup> NGSSS EOC assessments are comprised of one, 2.67-hour session, which is the amount of time represented in this chart. However, students may have up to one regular school day to complete the assessment, if needed.			
<b>NGSSS Assessments</b>			
<b>Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) 2.0</b>			
	Days of Testing Per Student	Total Hours Per Assessment	Total School Days in Current Spring Testing Window
Reading Retake	2	3	10
Grade 5 Science	2	3	20
Grade 8 Science	1	3	20

### Comparison of 2007-08, 2013-14, and 2014-15 Testing Times

The table below shows the difference in testing time among three selected years. The comparison with 2007-08 is included because that was the last year when performance tasks (questions that are not multiple-choice responses) were included in selected grades in both Reading (grades 4, 8, and 10) and Mathematics (grades 5, 8, and 10), and it was also the last year that the state administered a norm-referenced test (NRT) in grades 3-10 to compare the academic performance of Florida's students with the performance of other states. The inclusion of performance tasks and the NRT both increased testing time. While the Florida Standards Assessment English language arts Reading Component and Florida Standards Assessment Mathematics assessments are slightly longer than FCAT 2.0 and NGSSS EOC assessments, the primary reason that 2014-15 assessments are longer than the previous year is the addition of the Florida Standards Assessment English language arts Writing Component in grades 4-11. In 2013-14, the FCAT 2.0 Writing prompt was administered in grades 4, 8, and 10 only, and required students to write in response to a short prompt with no accompanying text. Students were allotted 60 minutes for this task. In the Florida Standards Assessment English language arts Writing Component, students have up to two hours to read two or three text selections, and respond to a prompt based on those selections. This writing task requires students to analyze the text, organize a response, cite evidence based on the text to support their response, and attend to the conventions of standard English grammar and usage. This task is aligned to the expectations of Florida's writing standards and will encourage improved writing instruction. Assessing writing at each tested grade helps ensure that there is an emphasis on evidence-based writing each year in order to better prepare students for college and careers.

Grade Level	Number of Days of Testing			Total Hours Per Grade Level		
	2007-08	2013-14	2014-15	2007-08	2013-14	2014-15
3	5	4	4	6.5	4.67	5.33
4	7	5	5	9.25	5.67	6.83
5	7	6	7	9.17	7.33	9.5
6	3	3	5	6.33	4.67	7.3
<sup>3</sup> 7	3	3	5	6.33	4.67	7.3
<sup>3</sup> 8	5	5	6	11.75	8.33	10
<sup>3</sup> 9	<sup>4</sup> 3	2	3	6.17 <sup>4</sup>	2.33	4.5
<sup>3</sup> 10	<sup>4</sup> 4	3	3	9.92 <sup>4</sup>	3.33	4.5
<sup>3</sup> 11	1	N/A	3	2.5	N/A	4.5
<sup>3</sup> This grade is likely to have at least one EOC assessment that could add 1-2 days and 2.67-3 hours per assessment and administration (four administration opportunities per year). <sup>4</sup> This includes a mathematics assessment for grades 9 and 10.						

See Appendix A for the testing times for other statewide assessments.

### Statewide, Standardized Assessment Schedule

Statute requires the Commissioner of Education to establish schedules for the administration of assessments and the reporting of student assessment results.

- By August 1 of each year, the commissioner must notify each district in writing and publish on the department's website the assessment windows and reporting schedules for, at a minimum, the school year following the upcoming school year.
- The assessment and reporting schedules must provide the earliest possible reporting of student assessment results to the districts. Results must be reported annually no later than the week of June 8.
- Schedules are posted at <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/assessment-schedules.shtml> and the 2014-15 schedule is in Appendix B.

### Computer-Based Testing Transition

Section 1008.22, F.S., requires that assessments be delivered online, and the department has been gradually phasing them in since 2011 to assist districts with managing this transition with respect to obtaining the necessary infrastructure, bandwidth, and number of devices needed for digital instruction, all of which form a primary focus of the state's educational technology strategy. Additionally, the Florida Standards Assessment English language arts Writing Component is computer-based in grades 8-11, but

remains paper based in grades 4-7 to give schools and districts time to instruct students in proper keyboarding techniques as required in the Florida Standards.

The complete computer-based transition schedule can be found at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7048/dps-2014-81b.pdf> and in Appendix C.

Since 2010-11, every district certified that it was ready to administer the computer-based tests, and each year, all computer-based testing has been completed successfully. The table below shows this transition and the number of computer-based assessments administered each year.

School Year	Subject Area and Grade-Level Assessments Delivered Online	School Districts Certifying Readiness for Computer-Based Testing	Online Assessments Delivered Successfully
2010-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCAT Grade 10 Mathematics</li> <li>Algebra 1 EOC</li> </ul>	All	All
2011-12	Prior year online assessments, with the addition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCAT 2.0 Grades 6 &amp; 10 Reading</li> <li>Geometry EOC</li> <li>Biology 1 EOC</li> </ul>	All	All
2012-13	Prior years' online assessments, with the addition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCAT 2.0 Grades 7 &amp; 9 Reading</li> <li>FCAT 2.0 Grade 5 Mathematics</li> <li>U.S. History EOC</li> </ul>	All	All
2013-14	Prior years' online assessments, with the addition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCAT 2.0 Grade 8 Reading</li> <li>FCAT 2.0 Grade 6 Mathematics</li> <li>Civics EOC</li> </ul>	All	All
2014-15	Additional online assessments include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FSA Grades 5 &amp; 11 in English language arts</li> <li>FSA Grades 7 &amp; 8 in Mathematics</li> <li>FSA Algebra 2 EOC</li> </ul>	TBD	Testing begins in March 2015

Our districts have already administered online assessments successfully this school year, using both American Institutes for Research (AIR) and Pearson platforms. As in past years, districts confirm their readiness annually through the use of the computer-based testing certification process. The certification process helps schools and districts ensure in advance that there are sufficient technology resources to successfully conduct all testing within each testing window. District staff reviews each school's readiness, works with school personnel to resolve issues, and submits to the department a certification of readiness that is signed by the superintendent.

In addition to the district certification process, there is also an infrastructure trial that provides an opportunity for districts and schools to prepare for the operational computer-based assessment administrations by simulating test-day network utilization, determining any school or district issues, and confirming that all workstations that will be used for testing can run the appropriate software. Infrastructure trials and the training resources needed to conduct them are offered to districts, and will be completed in the coming weeks.

Each year, there are risk mitigation strategies in place to ensure the successful administration of all statewide, standardized assessments. The primary strategy used to mitigate against any type of large-scale system failure is to ensure in advance that schools and districts certify that they are ready with the necessary infrastructure, bandwidth, and devices, and to ensure that the contractors' systems are capable of delivering the assessments effectively and efficiently. AIR, who will be delivering the vast majority of online tests this year, has dedicated a robust system with mechanisms built in for contingencies, and this capability has been proven both in formal load tests and operational testing. Last school year, AIR delivered nearly 17 million online tests to nearly six million students in 26 states. A formal load test was conducted in December, which showed that AIR's server capacity will be sufficient to allow students to load and navigate test questions with no delays. For routine issues that happen in a classroom or school, contractors' systems are designed to handle these situations. For example, if a student's device breaks or if a school loses internet connection or power, the student's work is saved and he or she may continue when testing resumes. Florida's statewide online tests are designed to maintain security and validity in the event of failures. Just as the system is designed for contingencies in schools and districts, the contractors' test delivery systems are ready for contingencies in the event of failures of the servers delivering the test. Many servers are involved in delivering the tests and components of the system are backed up, as is student data.

### **Exemption**

The State Board of Education adopted the rule for exemptions for students with medical complexities at its November 2014 meeting. Rule 6A-1.0943, F.A.C., is available at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=6A-1.0943>.

### **Retake Opportunities; Concordant and Comparative Score Opportunities**

For a student who does not meet the graduation requirement for the Grade 10 English language arts assessment or the Algebra 1 EOC, retake opportunities are offered at least until the student's cohort is scheduled to graduate. For students who are taking the Grade 10 English language arts assessment and/or the Algebra 1 EOC for the first time, they will receive a score linked back to last year's assessments in order to determine if the graduation requirement has been met. Additionally, for as long as students in this cohort take retakes, the linked score will still apply. Once standards are set on the new assessment later in 2015, the linked passing score will be converted to the new scale, and that will become the student's new "alternate passing score." This alternate passing score will remain in place until he or she passes or obtains a passing concordant or comparative score. In other words, these students will always be held to the same standard of the linked score and would not be required to meet the new, possibly higher passing score that later cohorts will need to meet.

In Rule 6A-1.094223, F.A.C., the State Board of Education adopted concordant scores on the SAT and ACT for FCAT 2.0 and comparative scores for the Algebra 1 EOC in the summer of 2013. These concordant and comparative scores provide other opportunities for students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills in order to earn a standard high school diploma. The concordant and comparative scores will remain in place through the transition to the new assessment until the State Board of Education adopts new concordant and comparative scores, likely in 2016. This ensures that, until new concordant and comparative scores are approved, students attempting to meet

graduation requirements through these avenues will be treated fairly and will be held to the same standard as students in recent years.

## Federal Assessment Requirements

Federal laws and regulations [Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Section 1111(b)(3) and (7), and the Code of Federal Regulations (Title 34)] provide requirements that states must follow regarding academic assessments and English language proficiency assessments (see Appendix D). The federal government requires that:

- States must assess students' proficiency in, at a minimum, mathematics, English language arts or reading, and science.
- The same assessments must be used to measure the academic achievement of all children.
- The academic assessments must be aligned to the state's academic standards.
- The state must demonstrate that the assessment is of sufficient quality to be used for the purposes intended.
- Reasonable accommodations must be provided for students with disabilities as needed to measure the academic achievement of these students.
- States must provide for one or more alternate assessments for a child with a disability if the child's IEP team determines the child cannot participate in the statewide assessments, even with appropriate accommodations.
- English language learners must be assessed and be provided accommodations to the extent needed to yield accurate data on what these students have achieved.
- States must annually assess the English proficiency of all students with limited English proficiency.

The table on the next page shows how Florida uses statewide assessments to satisfy federal assessment requirements.

State and Federal Testing requirements in Florida for K-12 Public School Students  
**Red highlighting** Indicates Assessments Students **Must Pass** for Promotion or Graduation  
 Compiled by Florida House of Representatives Staff

STATE LAW REQUIRES				FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide standardized English language arts (grades 3-11) and math assessments (grades 3-8, Algebra I &amp; Geometry) since 2001; and a science assessment in (grades 5, 8, and Biology I) since 2003. These assessments form the basis of our school accountability system. The Florida Alternate Assessment offered as an alternative to the Florida Standards Assessment for cognitively impaired students.</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, English language arts and math assessments in grades 3-8 and once in high school; and a science assessment once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12.</li> <li>Administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress at a sample of schools in grades 4 and 8, every other year.</li> <li>Administration of the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment to certain students identified as English language learners.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 1999, school districts must use local assessments, for each course not assessed under the statewide assessment program, to measure student performance, calculate learning gains, and evaluate instructional personnel. Districts may use statewide assessments, other standardized assessments, industry certification assessments, district-developed or district-selected end-of-course assessments, or teacher-selected or principal-selected assessments.</li> </ul>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration of the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) to 11th graders not meeting college-ready standards on state assessments.</li> </ul>						
Level	Grade	Reading, Writing, Math, and Science	Other Subjects			
Elementary	K	<i>Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener must be administered to each kindergarten student within the first 30 school days</i>	<i>Measurement of student performance based upon grade level standards</i>			
		<i>Student performance in reading, writing, math and science must be assessed at each grade level.</i>				
	1					
	2					
			<b>English Language Arts</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>
	3	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>			
	4	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>			
	5	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	FCAT		
Middle	6	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>		Civics EOC	
	7	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>			
	8	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	FCAT		
High	9	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>	<i>Algebra I EOC Geometry EOC and Algebra II EOC also satisfy Federal math requirement. PERT (11<sup>th</sup>)</i>	<i>Biology I EOC satisfies federal science requirement.</i>	U.S. History EOC	
	10	<i>Florida Standards Assessment</i>				
	11	<i>Florida Standards Assessment/PERT</i>				
	12					

**Shading:**

Required statewide assessment	Required by state and federal law	Required by state law: locally selected assessment
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**Abbreviations:**

EOC-End of Course Assessment  
 FCAT-Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

## Local Assessment Requirements

Local assessments have for many years been an important part of school, and anyone who has attended school – public or private – has taken some form of local assessment, and likely has taken many. The requirements for local assessments have been in statute since 1999, and were updated in 2011 to align with new requirements for teacher evaluation systems and to provide more specificity regarding local assessments.

Statutory language – specifically s. 1008.22, F.S. (see Appendix E) – requires that there be a local assessment that measures student mastery of the course content, and the assessment must be as rigorous as necessary to meet the intent of the course. It is critical to note that **local assessments are the responsibility of the districts.**

As provided for in s. 1008.22, F.S., districts have wide latitude in selecting or developing local assessments, and these may include:

1. Statewide assessments.
2. Other standardized assessments, including nationally recognized standardized assessments.
3. Industry certification assessments.
4. District-developed or district-selected end-of-course assessments.
5. Teacher-selected or principal-selected assessments.

The local assessments described above are not restricted to traditional multiple-choice or paper/pencil assessments. Rather, they may include a wide variety of formats, including, but not limited to project-based assessments, performances that are judged by an individual or group, assessments scored using a rubric, and practical application assignments, among others.

For all English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies courses offered in the district that are used to meet graduation requirements and are not already assessed by statewide, standardized assessments, the district school board must select or develop the local assessment. For district-developed assessments used to meet this requirement, districts have the latitude to develop them in whichever manner meets their needs.

As required in statute, the commissioner identified methods to assist and support districts in the development and acquisition of local assessments. The most comprehensive support is the Florida Item Bank and Test Platform. Districts have participated in the development of items, training on the creation and uses of high-quality assessments and assessment practices, and in the functionality of the bank itself over the last two years. Beginning in summer 2014, districts began using both item bank functions (including integration of test items with local item banks and test delivery platforms), and the test platform where districts create and administer their own local assessments (both in paper-based and computer-based formats). These items are all aligned to Florida Standards and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, or Frameworks in career and technical education, and each district can create and use assessments for a variety of purposes based on their instructional needs. Districts report that they have replaced older, unaligned student assessments with much improved methods of assessing student progress and mastery of Florida content standards.

In addition, detailed technical assistance documentation on options and best practices for establishing learning growth models on local assessments, and best practices for developing and administering local assessments have been provided. Department staff continues to provide other technical assistance and are available for face-to-face trainings, e-mail support, and phone support. Through the department's

Race to the Top grant, a number of districts worked together to develop high-quality local assessment items that will benefit instruction for students and teachers. These are available statewide in hard-to-measure subjects such as fine arts, physical education, career and technical education, and for high-enrollment core courses not already covered by statewide assessments.

## Summary of District Information

District information indicates there is a wide variation of local assessment offerings among all of the districts across the state (see Appendix F). Upon review of the information that districts reported about their **state- and district-required, locally determined standardized assessments**, the department observed the following:

- As indicated by districts, over half of Florida’s districts administered at least five or more assessments throughout the year, per grade in the grade spans of K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.
  - For grades K-5, counts include the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) and alternative assessments for third grade promotion, when districts included them.
  - For grades 6-8, this count includes but is not limited to industry certifications and district end-of-year assessments. Some districts included industry certifications and end-of-year assessments in their response; others did not.
  - For grades 9-12, this count includes but is not limited to industry certifications, district end-of-year assessments, and AP assessments. Some districts included industry certifications and AP in their response; others did not.
  - More districts indicated that they assess more frequently in grades 9-12 than in other grade levels.
- The shortest testing time reported for a single administration was a two-minute oral reading test. The longest testing time reported for a single administration was a 295-minute SAT-10 administered over four days.
- Two districts did not report any assessments at the high school level.
- A small number of districts reported that they administered five or more computer-based assessments in grades K-12.
  - If a district indicated they administered an assessment both on paper and computer it was included in the count of computer-based assessments. Also, counts include some AP, industry certification, and IB exams.
- A majority of districts use at least one assessment as part of a student’s course grade or course completion in grades 6-12.
- Nineteen districts reported to give at least one assessment for teacher evaluation but did not report using that assessment for any student-level decisions such as promotion, course grade/completion, or progress monitoring.
- Eight districts did not indicate that any of their 2014-15 assessments would be used for teacher evaluation. One of these districts did note which assessments would be used for teacher evaluation in 2015-16 per statutory requirements.

As part of the investigation, districts were also asked to identify whether they used the results of statewide, standardized assessments for any purpose beyond what is required in state law. Many districts reported that they use the results of these assessments to inform student placement and identify students in need of remediation. Several districts reported that they use the statewide EOC assessments to satisfy the local assessment requirement. Several districts reported using statewide

assessment results as a factor in promotion and retention, especially at the elementary level. A few districts reported unique uses of the statewide assessment results at the local level:

- Escambia reported that FSA results will be used for school choice eligibility in grades 5 and 8.
- Flagler reported using the PERT results as 30% of the course grade for the 12th-grade college readiness courses.
- Gulf reported using the PERT results as 20% of the course grade for 11th- and 12th-grade college readiness courses.
- Hamilton reported using the PERT results as 10% of the course grade for the 12th-grade college readiness courses.
- Orange reported requiring statewide EOC results as 30% of the course grade for all students enrolled in the course, regardless of what the statute requires for a given cohort.