



**Evaluation of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for
Educational Options Program
Participation, Compliance and Test Scores in 2021-22**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the 2021-22 academic year evaluation for the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program, as required by the 2022 Florida Statutes, s. 1002.394 (9)(c). The Learning Systems Institute is the organization responsible for conducting the second evaluation of the FES program. This report provides a summary of key findings, details about test score collection and 2021-22 test score results of program participants.

This report does not compare the performance of FES students to public school students. Due to the difference in the tests that each group takes, such a comparison may not be valid.

LSI was designated as the independent research organization and was directed to conduct the annual evaluation of the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program. This report presents data collected by LSI for students participating in the 2021-22 academic year. The main findings include:

Participating private school compliance with protocol:

- Compliance with program testing requirements was high in 2021-22. Participating private schools reported test scores for 90.0 percent of program participants in grades 3-10.

Test scores of program participants, 2021-22:

- FES students scored at the 48.2 normal curve equivalent in reading and the 44.0 normal curve equivalent in math.

1. BACKGROUND

This report details the 2021-22 academic year evaluation results of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES) program, as required by the 2022 Florida Statutes, s. 1002.394 (9)(c). This report is the second to evaluate the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES) program. This evaluation was conducted by the Florida State University Learning Systems Institute.

This report provides a summary of key findings, details about test score collection and 2021-22 test score results of program participants. This report does not compare the performance of FES students to public school students. Due to the difference in the tests that each group takes, such a comparison may not be valid. While FES students take a nationally norm-referenced test, public school students take the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) Test. Because there is no correspondence between the FSA and the nationally norm-referenced tests that FES students take, the independent research organization tasked with this evaluation, the Learning Systems Institute (LSI), holds that it is not valid to make these comparisons.

Pursuant to the 2022 Florida Statutes, s. 1002.395(9)(f) that require an independent evaluation of the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program, the Learning Systems Institute has been tasked with conducting an annual evaluation of the FES program beginning with the academic year 2021-22. This report provides the results of the 2021-22 academic year evaluation of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options Program.

2. TEST SCORE COLLECTION IN 2021-22

Data collection protocol

As mandated by the 2022 Florida Statutes, s. 1002.394(9)(c)(1), participating private schools administered a nationally norm-referenced test approved by the Florida Department of Education. The state designates an approved list of tests from which to choose: the ACT Aspire, Comprehensive Testing Program, Curriculum Associates i-Ready Assessments, Educational Development Series, Iowa Assessments, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Iowa Tests of Educational Development, Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress, Pivot INSPECT Summative Assessment, PSAT/NMSQT, Scantron Performance Series, Stanford Achievement Test, STAR (Math Enterprise, Reading Enterprise), TerraNova, or Wide Range Achievement Test. Alternatively, participating students may be administered the FSA in accordance with 1002.394(9)(c)(2).

Data collection took place during the year 2021-22, in which private schools sent students' test scores to the Learning Systems Institute. The 1,682 private schools that had participating FES students in grades 3 through 10 during the 2021-22 school year were contacted by the Learning Systems Institute in fall 2021, spring 2022 and again throughout spring and summer 2022 to encourage compliance with score reporting. Schools were provided a roster of participating FES students in grades 3 to 10, which was obtained in late fall 2021 from the Scholarship Funding Organizations. From the private schools with participating FES students, 36,348 students were enrolled in grades 3 to 10, the grades mandated for testing per the 2022 Florida Statutes, s. 1002.394(9)(c)(1). If schools had any missing or invalid student scores, they were instructed to

provide an explanation backed by evidence, most commonly in the form of a notarized letter, for each missing or invalid student score.

Participating private school compliance with protocol

Score reporting in 2021-22

Most schools were in compliance with test score reporting for the academic year 2021-22. Regarding test score submission, most schools sent photocopied test score sheets that had been scored by the testing company. In a small number of cases where tests had been hand-scored, schools were instructed to send detailed test administration and scoring procedures. Throughout the spring and summer of 2022, the Learning Systems Institute followed up with schools that had sent invalid test score results, including missing or incomplete test scores.

Test score sheets were sent to LSI via a secure, online score portal. As test score data was received, six data entry staff members recorded students' test scores and test information in the secure score portal. The scores were then reconciled with the original scores to ensure the highest accuracy. Test scores are deleted following one year after this double-entry and reconciliation procedure to ensure student privacy as mandated by s. 1002.22(2)(d) of the Florida Statutes.

There were 1,682 FES participating schools with students in the relevant grades in 2021-22. The vast majority of the FES participating schools provided evidence of test administration consistent with the specifications of the program. One hundred and thirty-one participating schools, serving 919 testing-eligible students, closed or did not

report scores for any participating students.¹ There were 36,348 students in relevant grades participating in the FES Program in 2021-22. Valid, legible test scores were received for 32,693 FES students, which represents 90.0 percent of all expected test scores received.

Table 1: Distribution of score reporting percentages: 2021-22

	Percentage
Legible, valid scores received	90.0
Not enrolled at time of testing	2.4
Ineligible for testing	0.1
School closed/suspended	0.0 ²
Student sick/absent	1.5
Missing/unusable test score	6.0
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.	

The rate of legible, valid scores received was high in 2021-22. As seen in Table 1, private schools reported test scores for 90.0 percent of program participants in grades 3-10.

Table 2: Percent and number of students with legible, valid scores: 2021-22.

Number of students	Number of students with legible, valid scores	Percent of students with legible, valid scores
36,348	32,693	90.0

¹ LSI reported these non-compliant schools to the Florida Department of Education.

² The percentage of school closed/suspended is 0.03%; however, it is 0.0% in Table 1 because we rounded it to one decimal place.

In 2021-22 the number of students in relevant grades participating in the program was 36,348. As can be seen in Table 2, the percentage of students with legible, valid scores was 90.0.

Comparison of students with legible, valid test scores to scholarship population

Although the rate of successful score reporting was high in 2021-22 at 90.0 percent, there were 10.0 percent of students whose expected scores were not received. Thus, it was still important to examine whether the students whose test scores were successfully reported are comparable to the population enrolled in 2021-22.

For this analysis, we used demographic data provided by the Scholarship Funding Organizations, which included race and sex. We found differences between students whose test scores were successfully reported and those whose scores were not successfully reported in terms of their sex and race. Students whose scores were successfully reported were more likely to be white (37.8 percent) and female (50.6 percent), compared to students with no test scores (26.6 percent white and 47.6 percent female). We cannot make any claims about whether students with missing test scores would have had higher or lower gain scores than those with test scores available.

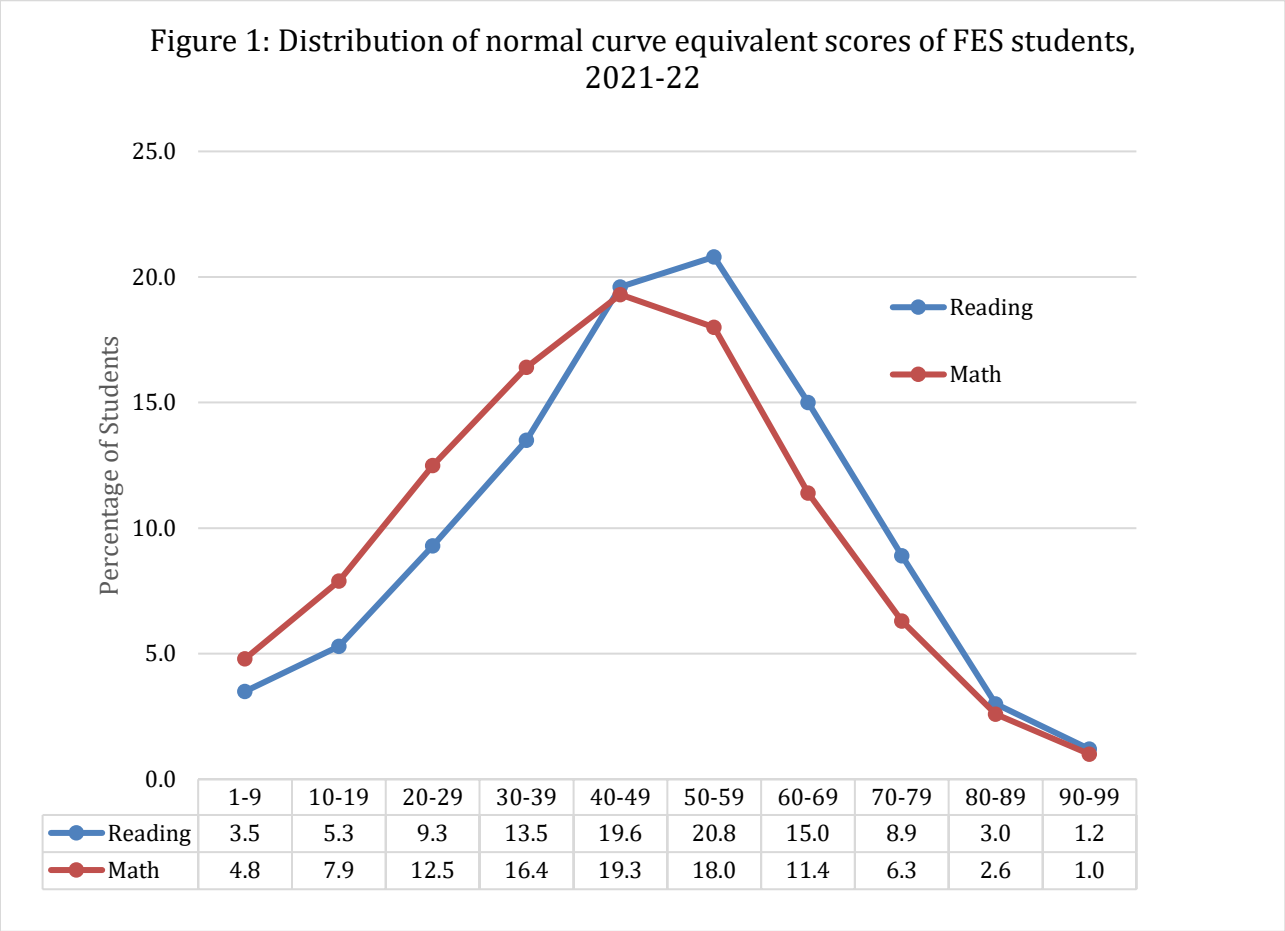
3. TEST SCORES OF FES STUDENTS IN 2021-22

We report test scores in the form of the normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores. The NCE is a normalized standard score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06. The scale corresponds to national percentile ranks (NPR) at 1, 50, and 99.

As reported in the previous section, schools administered different nationally norm-referenced tests approved by the Florida Department of Education.

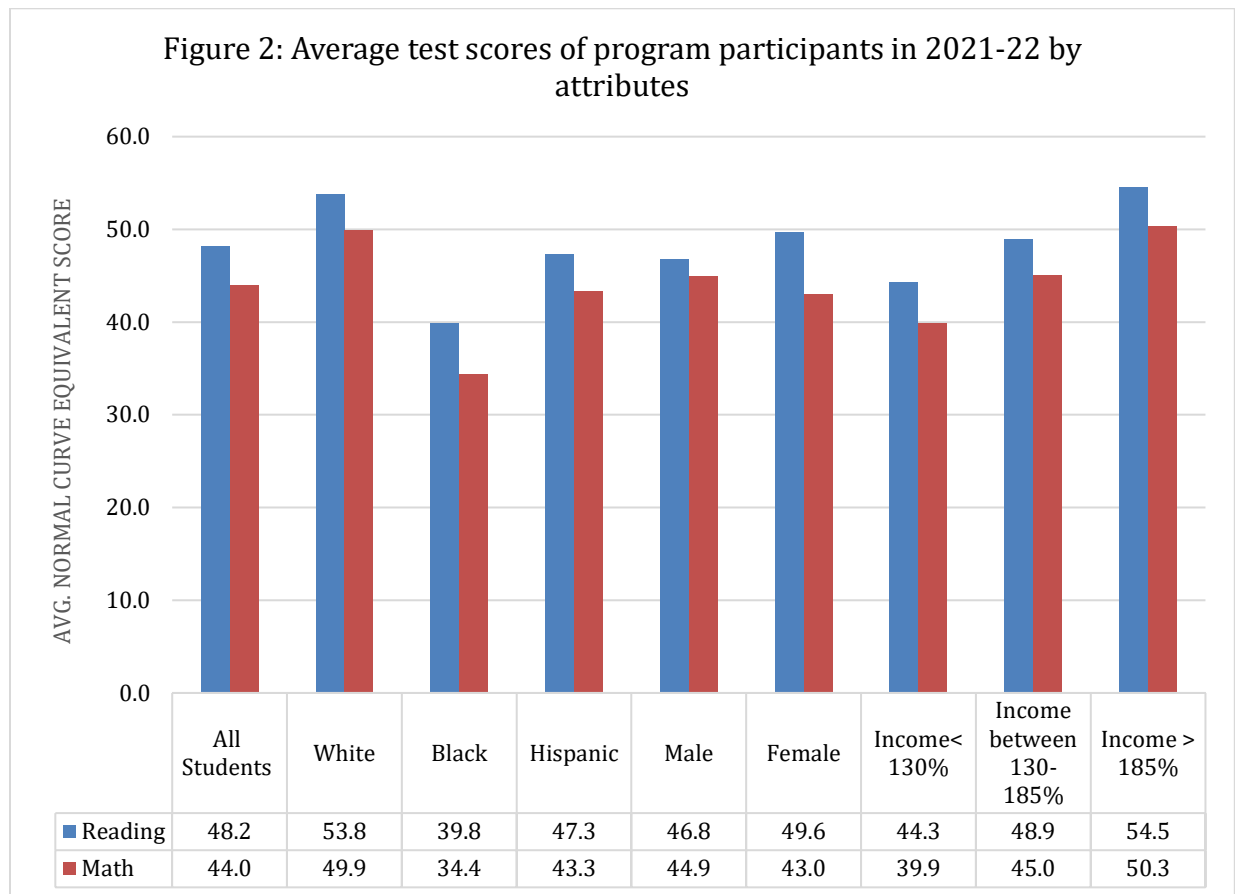
scores as normal curve equivalent scores ensure reasonable comparability across schools and program participants. Moreover, normal curve equivalent scores convey information about students' rankings compared with normal standards.

Figure 1 presents the basic distribution of reading and math scores of FES students participating in the program in 2021-22. Most of the students were in the middle of the test score distributions. The average normal curve equivalent score for FES students was 48.2 in reading and 44.0 in math in 2021-22. In terms of corresponding national percentile rankings, the typical student in the FES Program scored at the 48th national percentile in reading and the 44th national percentile in math.



Average test scores in 2021-22 by attributes of program participants

We provided a breakdown of test scores of 2021-22 program participants by race, sex, and percent of poverty. Percent of poverty is expressed in terms of likely eligibility for the federal free or reduced lunch program based upon the federal poverty guidelines.³ Students from families who have incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for free school meals, while those from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line are eligible for reduced-price meals.



As seen in Figure 2, white participants had higher mean scores than black

³ LSI used data from the Scholarship Funding Organizations for these analyses.

participants or participants of other races. Males tended to perform slightly better than females in math, while females tended to perform better than males did in reading. Lastly, relatively higher-income families tended to score better than relatively lower-income families.

4. CONCLUSION

This report shares findings on the compliance and performance of private schools that participated in the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES) program in 2021-22. Compliance with program testing requirements was high in 2021-22. Private schools reported test scores for 90.0 percent of program participants in grades 3-10.

FES students scored at the 48.2 normal curve equivalent in reading and the 44.0 normal curve equivalent in math in 2021-22, which corresponds to the 48th national percentile in reading and the 44th national percentile in math.