

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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September 25, 2013

Ronda Bourn  
Consortium Administrator  
3841 Reid Street  
Palatka, Florida 32177

Dear Ms. Bourn:

Thank you for your time in considering our recommendations regarding the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) and an appropriate measure of student growth for teacher evaluation purposes. Attached you will find copies of the following: *Florida Alternate Assessment Student Growth Study Summary of Results 2010–2011*, the *Commissioner's Taskforce on Inclusion and Accountability Recommendations* and Rule 6A-1.09981, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Implementation of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability.

In the interest of creating a growth model that could be used to monitor and evaluate the growth of students taking the alternate assessment, Measured Progress completed a comprehensive exploratory study for the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). For the *Florida Alternate Assessment Student Growth Study*, student records were matched across three years of FAA data and were analyzed for trends in students' performance. The analyses of the data were completed in two phases. In phase one, five growth models varying in their degrees of complexity were examined for their effects on the estimation of growth, based on the results obtained in phase one and with consultation with the FDOE and the FAA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Phase two compared the simplest model from phase one with a hybrid model (model six) that incorporated the most attractive features from all of the complex models in phase one. The analysis of model six indicated that by using the standard-error-based within-performance-level testing, student growth could more fully be captured and it increased the identification of below-proficient students who have attained growth.

The report by Measured Progress proposed that 11 points (the standard error based on performance-level testing) constituted a learning gain on the FAA.

MONICA VERRA-TIRADO, ED.D., CHIEF  
*Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services*

The TAC members cautioned that although the proposed model six was an effective tool for determining learning gains for the purpose of school improvement and accountability, it would not recommend its use for teacher evaluation for teachers of students who consistently performed in the emergent level, particularly those students who perform in levels one and two on the FAA.

The Commissioner's Taskforce on Inclusion and Accountability, which met in March 2012, considered this recommendation. During the taskforce meeting, there was much discussion about what exactly constituted a learning gain for students taking the FAA. Although it was agreed that students who increased a level on the FAA made a learning gain for purposes of school accountability, the rules governing what constituted a gain when the student did not increase a level were unclear.

The taskforce was concerned that the average growth for students scoring at the emergent level was between two and six points, short of the 11 points recommended by the study mentioned above. Though the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement initially recommended 11 points as a learning gain for students taking the FAA, the taskforce recommended five points, consistent with the average growth of students scoring on the emergent level on the FAA. This recommendation was included in the development of Rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C., Implementation of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability.

Taking into consideration the recommendations from the *Florida Alternate Assessment Student Growth Study*, the caution from the TAC and the input from the Commissioner's Taskforce, it is our recommendation that the FAA is appropriate for teacher evaluation in the following circumstances:

- Students who score four or higher on the prior year assessment and have maintained their level or scored higher on the current year assessment
- Students who score in levels one, two or three on the prior year assessment and score at least one level higher on the current year assessment
- Students who score in levels one, two or three on the prior year assessment, maintain the same on the current year assessment and increased their total score by five or more points

For those teachers of students who consistently score in levels one or two for three consecutive years, the district should determine what data will be used for teacher evaluation purposes.

Sincerely,

Monica Verra-Tirado, Ed.D., Chief  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

MVT/bmm

Attachments

cc: Kathy Hebda  
Eileen L. McDaniel  
Bethany Mathers