

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA  
RESEARCH, EVALUATION, ASSESSMENT & BOUNDARIES**

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*signatures on file*

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TO: Principals  
Charter School Principals

FROM: Katherine Blasik, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent  
Research, Evaluation, Assessment & Boundaries

VIA: Dr. Verda Farrow, Area Superintendent  
South Central Area

SUBJECT: **SCHOOL GRADING AND FCAT ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DEFINITIONS  
RULE AMENDMENTS**

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On November 18, 2003, the Florida State Board of Education approved the proposed revisions to Rule 6A-1.09422 (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Requirements) and Rule 6A-1.09981 (Implementation of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability). Included in these rules is language that affects school accountability reporting and calculation of school grades. It is important to note that the six elements of the school grade calculation ("achieving high standards" in reading, mathematics, and writing, and "learning gains" in reading, mathematics, and for the lowest 25% of the students in reading) **will be maintained without change** for the 2003-2004 school year. Below are the changes which will impact the calculation of school grades, with the dates that each will go into effect.

2003-2004 School Year:

- Implementation of the "step 2" FCAT achievement level cutoff scores has been delayed such that **the existing achievement level cutoff scores will be maintained** as they were in the 2002-2003 school year.
- The annual "learning gains" calculation will be based on only those students who take a higher grade level test in the current year than in the previous year. Retained students will be excluded from the calculation of learning gains.
- The requirement that the learning gains in Reading for the lowest 25% of students at a school must be no more than 10 percentage points below the learning gains in Reading for all students in order for the school to be designated an "A" school has been eliminated.
- The district average for "achieving high standards" in FCAT Writing will be substituted when a school does not contain an assessed grade level (grades 4, 8, or 10) or when 30 or fewer students are tested. Previously, the points earned by the school in "achieving high standards" in Reading were substituted.
- When the number of students in the lowest 25% of the students is less than 30, the reading learning gains of the 30 lowest performing students in the school will be used.

- All schools will receive a school grade during the first year data is available for the school, including new schools.
- More schools will be included based on guidelines to be issued by the Commissioner about which school types should be graded.
- When the percent of students tested is less than required, authority is given to the Commissioner to assign a lower letter grade than represented by the points earned. Previously, schools that tested fewer than 90% of eligible students received an automatic “F” designation.

2004-2005 School Year and Beyond:

- The expected performance level for FCAT Writing will be raised to a score of 3.5 for two years (2004-2005 and 2005-2006) and subsequently to a score of 4.0 (2006-2007 and beyond).
- ALL students (standard curriculum students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students, regardless of date of entry) will be included in the calculation of learning gains and the percent tested beginning in the 2004-2005 school year.
- FCAT Science will be added as a category to the school performance grading system in the 2006-2007 school year, and the grading scale point requirements will be increased accordingly. Science will become the fourth “achieving high standards” category (defined by the percent of students scoring at Achievement Level 3 and higher).

In addition, the changes to the rule add the FCAT Developmental Scale Score (DSS) cutoff equivalents to the scale scores already specified in the rule, add references to FCAT Science where appropriate, and define proficiency of grade level content as a score at Achievement Level 3 on the FCAT SSS assessments. The revised rule further requires that the Commissioner of Education annually review FCAT achievement and make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding the future implementation of higher standards. Finally, the rule clarifies that application of FCAT passing scores for different groups of students and requires the Commissioner of Education to review the FCAT passing scores between July of 2005 and March of 2006 and make recommendations to the State Board regarding maintaining or increasing the passing scores.

Access to the revised rules may be found on the Review of A+ Plan Status (School Grading Information) page of the Student Assessment Department website, which is located at [www.broward.k12.fl.us/studentassessment/SchoolGrading.htm](http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/studentassessment/SchoolGrading.htm). If you have any questions regarding the School Accountability Rule changes, please contact **me at (954) 760-7342** or **Anne Dilgen, Director of Student Assessment, at (754) 321-4257**.

KAB/AD/KK:kk

cc: Senior Management  
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