

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

March 17, 2014

Dear Principals:

I know that this has been an exciting time for all of us involved in education and especially for those of you who devote each and every day to helping prepare Florida children for success in college, career and in life. Your work has resulted in improved student performance in so many areas and in Florida becoming a national model in public education. I cannot thank you enough.

With your input and dedication, we have successfully taken the steps to implement the Florida Standards for mathematics and English language arts for all students. I appreciate the support and excitement so many of you have shown for the new standards, and I have heard from so many of you who are embracing the flexibility in daily instruction and opportunities for our children to develop more critical and analytical thinking skills.

Building on our history of improving student achievement, we are ready to move forward. With the State Board of Education's unanimous approval of updates to the Florida Standards in February, I have chosen the not-for-profit American Institutes for Research to provide the new English language arts and mathematics assessments, which will be administered in the 2014-15 school year. I am confident that this new assessment is the best decision for Florida students. The new assessment will measure each child's progress and achievement on the Florida Standards. With the high-quality instruction that your leadership provides, the assessment will help us keep all students on their path to be college and career ready. In his Executive Order, Governor Rick Scott outlined the objectives for this new assessment, and these assessments meet each of those.

I also have heard over and over from a number of educators that you want tests that provide a more authentic assessment of our students' grasp of the Florida Standards. These assessments will do that, because they will include more than multiple choice questions. Students will be asked to create graphs, interact with test content and write and respond in different ways than they would on traditional tests. New question types will assess students' higher order thinking

Assessment message to principals
March 17, 2014
Page 2

skills in keeping with the higher expectations of the Florida Standards. Later this spring, students, educators and parents will be able to preview samples of new question types by taking practice tests that will be made available for anyone interested in reviewing them.

I am sure many of you will have questions and receive many questions from parents and colleagues. We have prepared some answers to potential questions. Please feel free to review that document and our press release announcing this decision at www.fldoe.org/eduaccsummit.asp.

I am proud to say that the Florida Standards and this new assessment are the result of unprecedented input from educators and the public. We will continue to work directly with educators and school districts as we develop this new assessment.

We will also continue to provide information to support your work. Please share this message and encourage your colleagues to email us at PrincipallySpeaking@fldoe.org or JustforTeachers@fldoe.org to continue receiving updates on this and other topics.

I look forward to working with you on this truly historic effort to help our students succeed. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pam Stewart". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Pam Stewart