

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education

March 17, 2014

Dear Parents:

Thank you for embracing the role you play in every aspect of your child's development. With the tireless work of your teachers and educators, Florida students are improving their performance in so many areas, while making Florida a national model in public education. Most importantly, more Florida students are graduating with the tools they need to succeed in college, career and life.

As many of you know, your children will have new goals to meet with the adoption of the Florida Standards. Simply put, these standards are the detailed expectations of what every child should be able to do at each grade level.

The new standards were developed with unprecedented input from Florida teachers, educators and the public. It is an exciting step. The emphasis with these new standards is for your children to think critically and analytically and go beyond memorization. These new standards will help your child be prepared for success no matter what path they choose after graduation.

With these new standards, the FCAT will be replaced next school year with a new assessment. Florida students have been learning the new Florida Standards, and must have an assessment that aligns to that instruction. I am confident that I have selected an assessment that is the best assessment for Florida students.

I am sure many of you will have questions. While your teacher is the best resource for information, we have prepared some answers to frequently asked questions. Please feel free to review that document and our press release announcing this decision at www.fldoe.org/eduaccsummit.asp.

Briefly, as I said in our statements to the media, this is the best choice for Florida students. The new assessment will measure each child's progress and achievement on the Florida Standards.

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With the high quality instruction provided by our teachers, this tool will give every student the opportunity to be college and career ready.

Your most immediate question may be about what differences your child will see. The scheduled FCAT tests for this year will not be affected. Changes will begin in the 2014-15 school year.

The new assessment will include more than just multiple choice or simple fill-in-the-blank questions. Students will be asked to create graphs, interact with test content and write and respond in different ways than on traditional tests. New question types will assess students' higher order thinking 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.

The guidelines for promotion and graduation will remain largely the same. Students entering 3rd grade in 2014-2015 will be required to achieve a certain score on the 3rd grade assessment in order to meet promotion requirements. Students not meeting these criteria may still meet promotion requirements through the same exemptions that are currently available. Students entering 10th grade and/or taking Algebra 1 in 2014-2015 will still be required to achieve a certain score on the respective assessment in order to meet graduation requirements. These students will continue to have the opportunity for retakes all students have had before. Students who need to retake an assessment based on an FCAT 2.0 score will be able to retake the FCAT 2.0.

We will continue to provide information to support your efforts. Please share this message and encourage other parents to email us at JustforParents@fldoe.org to continue receiving updates on this and other topics.

I look forward to working with you together on this truly historic effort to help your children 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