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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About the Requirement to Participate in State Assessments

Q. What is the "pledge or oath" that students and teachers are required to sign prior to taking the Florida Standards Assessments?

A. The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) requires teachers to ask students to sign or acknowledge the "Testing Rules Acknowledgement" statement. If students do not sign the "Testing Rules Acknowledgement," they can still participate in the test. For computer based testing, if the student does not select the button to acknowledge understanding of the testing rules, the student is able to access the test questions without pause or interruption. In computer based testing, the only way the proctor would be aware of a student's refusal to acknowledge test rules, is if the student indicates this refusal to the proctor. For paper based testing, if the student refuses to sign the "Testing Rules Acknowledgement," the student continues on and begins the test without pause or interruption. Proctors monitoring for the signatures will not interrupt testing for a missing signature. In the Spring 2020 TAM provided to test administrators, the test administrator is directed to notify the school assessment coordinator if the student did not sign or acknowledge the "Testing Rules Acknowledgement." This should be done after testing has been completed to ensure there are no interruptions during testing. This information is not submitted to the district or the state.

Q. May students "opt out" of standardized assessments?

A. No. Under Florida law, neither parents nor students may opt out of taking the FCAT/FSA or any other portion of the assessment program in the district. Section 1008.22(3), Florida Statutes, states, "Participation in the assessment program is mandatory for all school districts and all students attending public schools..." Additionally, Section 1008.25 (4) (a), Florida Statutes states, "Each student must participate in the statewide, standardized assessment program required by 1008.22."

Q. What does the "NR2" designation mean and who assigns it?

A. An NR2 designation means that the student's score is not reported because the student did not meet "attemptedness." The FLDOE determines if the student has met attemptedness and if the student has not, designates the test NR2. Attemptedness is defined by the actual number of questions a student must answer in each test session. The number of questions that must be answered to qualify as attemptedness is not defined in writing by the FLDOE and the number of questions attempted in order to receive an NR2 is subject to change by the FLDOE. The FLDOE completes an analysis of test responses to determine attemptedness, with their goal being to award scores to as many students as possible.



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Q. What penalties exist for a student who receives an "NR2" score?

A. There are no specific state penalties for students who receive an NR2 score. It is important to note the following for grade 3 students who receive an NR2 score, no score ("NT"-Not Tested), or a Level 1 score:

- There is a requirement for third grade students to demonstrate mastery of third grade standards on the state English Language Arts (ELA) assessment to be promoted to fourth grade. Absent a passing score, the student is provided a make-up test opportunity (SAT 10 after Grade 3 FSA Reading scores are released). If the student does not achieve mastery on this assessment, the district will use a portfolio with state-approved reading passages and teacher selected work samples to document mastery of third grade standards.
- A tenth grader who does not have a passing score on the FSA-ELA test or the Algebra I EOC exam must earn a passing score on the SAT, ACT, PSAT, or PERT (PERT can only be used for students that entered Grade 9 prior to 2018-19) to graduate from high school.

Additionally, there are no district penalties for a student with an NR2 score. Students will be placed in grades/courses based on a review of a variety of individual student data points. The data points include, but are not limited to, teacher-made or teacher-selected classroom assessments, student course grades, a review of recent FSA scores (if available), progress monitoring, and other relevant state-approved assessment results. FSA results will be reviewed upon release and verification of data. Upon receipt of FSA results, districts are not required to change students' course assignments. For example, if a student is not placed in an intensive reading or math course, but scores a Level 1 on the FSA, school personnel will review all current, available, and relevant student data to determine if the student should remain in their assigned course or be rescheduled for an intensive course. If the student is performing at or above expectations in the standard, honors or advanced course, then the student will remain in that course. Students are eligible to participate in advanced, honors, gifted, IB, AP, and AICE courses, as well as extracurricular activities and field trips.

Q. Why do students need to take the statewide, standardized tests?

A. Third-graders must pass the Florida Standards Assessment ELA test to be promoted to fourth grade. For those who do not earn a passing score, other paths, including alternate tests and a portfolio, are available for promotion.

- Students must pass a civics course in middle school. The civics end-of-course exam counts as 30 percent of the course grade.
- Students must pass the Algebra I end-of-course exam to graduate. Students who do not pass the exam may earn a passing comparative score the SAT, ACT, PSAT, or PERT (PERT can only be used for students that entered Grade 9 prior to 2018-19).
- Students must pass the Grade 10 FSA ELA to graduate. Students who do not pass may earn a passing concordant score on the SAT or ACT.
- Secondary end-of-course exams in Biology, Civics, Geometry and U.S. History counts 30 percent toward a student's final course grade in those courses. Courses must be passed to earn course credit for promotion and graduation.
- Schools must have 95 percent of eligible students tested to receive a state grade and be able to earn school recognition funding. If a student does not take the test at all or does not meet attemptedness by answering enough questions, it counts against the school grade.



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Q. If a student earns a passing score on the Grade 3 FSA, what other statewide assessments are required for promotion?

A. No other statewide assessments are required to meet promotion requirements. No portfolio is required and the student does not take other standardized assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the TerraNova, or the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10).

Q. If a student does not earn a passing score on the Grade 3 FSA, what additional standardized tests are required for promotion?

A. Section 1008.25, Florida Statutes, requires any third-grade student who does not demonstrate proficiency on the FSA Reading be retained. The student will take a standardized test such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the TerraNova or the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10). If a student earns a passing score, he/she has met the promotion requirement for earning a passing score in reading. If the student does not earn a passing score, he/she is required to attend Summer Reading Camp and take another standardized assessment to show mastery of grade 3 skills. The student may choose to take the third approved assessment (listed above) before the start of the next school year and be promoted to grade 4 with a passing score on that assessment. The option of third grade portfolios as outlined in Section 1008.25(6)(b)4 F.S. provides that a student who demonstrates through a student portfolio that the student is performing at least at Level 2 on the statewide standardized assessment is eligible for a good cause exemption.

Q. If a grade 3 student does not take the FSA, what additional standardized assessments are required for promotion?

A. Third grade students must participate in the statewide standardized assessment program required by section 1008.22, F.S. and demonstrate proficiency in reading in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Students not achieving a Level 2 or higher on the statewide assessment may qualify for a good cause exemption. The student will take a standardized test such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the TerraNova or the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 10). If a student earns a passing score, he/she has met the promotion requirement for earning a passing score in reading. If the student does not earn a passing score, he/she is required to attend Summer Reading Camp and take another standardized assessment to show mastery of grade 3 skills. The student may choose to take the third approved assessment referred to above before the start of the next school year and be promoted to grade 4 with a passing score on that assessment. The earliest the alternative assessment may be administered for student promotion purposes is following administration of the grade 3 FSA ELA. An approved standardized reading assessment may be administered two times if there are at least 30 days between administrations and different test forms are administered.

Q. What alternate assessments may be administered to a third grader who has scored Level 1 on the FSA to determine if he/she qualifies for a good cause exemption and promotion to fourth grade?

A. Students not achieving a Level 2 or higher on the statewide assessment may qualify for a good cause exemption. The Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT 10), given after Grade 3 FSA ELA Reading results are released, is used as the alternate assessment. Rule 6A-1.094221 (1)(A), F.A.C., authorizes the use of the following nationally norm-referenced test in the determination of a good cause exemption for promotion to fourth grade:

- Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT 10) – scoring above the 45th percentile
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)– scoring above the 50th percentile
- TerraNova, 3rd Ed. – scoring above the 50th percentile



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Q. What are the good cause exemptions provided under the law?

A. The district may only exempt students from mandatory retention in grade 3 for good cause. Good cause exemptions are limited to the following:

1. Limited English proficient students who have had less than 2 years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages program.
2. Students with disabilities whose individual education plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of s. 1008.212.
3. Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading or English Language Arts assessment approved by the State Board of Education.
4. A student who demonstrates through a student portfolio that he or she is performing at least at Level 2 on the statewide, standardized reading assessment or, upon implementation, the English Language Arts assessment.
5. Students with disabilities who take the statewide, standardized reading assessment or, upon implementation, the English Language Arts assessment and who have an individual education plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading or English Language Arts for more than 2 years but still demonstrates a deficiency and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3.
6. Students who have received intensive reading intervention for 2 or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3 for a total of 2 years. A student may not be retained more than once in grade 3.
7. Students who have received intensive remediation in reading or English Language Arts for 2 or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3 for a total of 2 years. Intensive instruction for students so promoted must include an altered instructional day that includes specialized diagnostic information and specific reading strategies for each student.

Q. Who is eligible for a good cause exemption?

A. Third-grade students *must participate* in the statewide standardized assessment program required by s. 1008.22, F.S., and demonstrate proficiency in reading in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Section 1008.25(6)(b)4., F.S., states that a student who scores a Level 1 on the Grade 3 FSA ELA assessment may be promoted to fourth grade if the student demonstrates through a concordant score on an approved alternate assessment or a student portfolio that the student is performing at Level 2 on the statewide standardized assessment.

Q. When are third grade scores going to be released? What score(s) will students receive?

A. Third grade scores are expected to be released by the end of the school year. In accordance with House Bill (HB) 7069, the following reporting deadlines are specified in 1008.22(7)(a), F.S.:
"Assessment results for the grade 3 statewide, standardized ELA assessment, must be made available no later than May 31." Parents of students who do not meet the requirements for promotion will be notified of additional testing opportunities to demonstrate mastery of grade 3 standards and/or the requirements for attendance at Summer Reading Camp to provide additional intervention and support to meet promotion requirements before August.



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Q. What are other concerns related to third grade students who do not take the statewide assessment?

A. The District is required to provide intensive reading instruction to students in Grades K through 3 who have a substantial deficiency in reading based upon statewide standardized assessments. There would be no evidence of reading performance on a statewide assessment upon which to make this determination.

Q. What are the current requirements for the portfolio?

A. As provided in the updated Rule 6A-1.094221, F.A.C., to be accepted as meeting the portfolio option for demonstrating mastery of the required reading skills, the student portfolio must:

- Be selected by the student's teacher;
- Be an accurate picture of the student's ability and only include student work that has been independently produced in the classroom;
- Include evidence that the benchmarks assessed by the Grade 3 statewide standardized assessment have been met. This includes multiple choice items and passages that are approximately 60 percent literary text and 40 percent information text that are between 100-700 words with an average of 500 words. Such evidence could include chapter or unit tests from the district's/school's adopted core reading curriculum that are aligned with the third grade reading standards or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the third grade reading standards; be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the third grade reading standards Language Arts that are assessed by the Grade 3 statewide standardized assessment. For each standard, there must be at least three examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of 70 percent or above. The good cause exemption must be signed by the teacher and the principal indicating the work is an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

Q. Do the FSAs count toward student grades?

A. The FSA tests do not count toward a student's grade in a subject or course. There are several state-required assessments that do, however, have an academic consequence related to a student's grade. The Algebra I End of Course (EOC) exam requires a passing score to graduate. The following Courses: Biology, Geometry, Civics, and U.S. History have a state requirement that the EOC exam counts for 30% of the student's final semester grade, which may impact course placement and the earning of course credit.

Q. How will the MCSD use the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) data for student placement in academic intervention programs required by statute?

A. Placement in academic intervention programs, students will be placed in grades/courses based on a review of a variety of individual student data points. The data points include, but are not limited to, teacher-made or teacher-selected classroom assessments, student course grades, end of course tests, a review of FSA scores, progress monitoring assessments, and other relevant state-approved assessment results.

Students who demonstrate a need for intervention or intensive programs based on multiple sources of data will be provided with additional support. FSA results will be reviewed upon release and verification of data.



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Q. Must students take End of Course (EOC) assessments?

A. Yes. High school and middle grades students may not be able to obtain credit for completion of courses which require 30% of their grade be based on the student’s performance on the EOC according to Section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes.

Q. Can a high school student meet the graduation requirements or receive a diploma without passing the 10th grade statewide assessment and Algebra 1 End of Course (EOC) assessment?

A. No. Students must pass these assessments to be awarded a high school diploma from a Florida public school. Section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes, requires passage of the 10th Grade ELA Assessment and the Algebra 1 EOC assessment as prerequisites for graduation.

Q. What are the options for meeting the graduation options for students who do not earn a passing score on the Grade 10 FSA ELA or Algebra 1 EOC?

A. Students can retake the Grade 10 FSA ELA or Algebra 1 EOC Assessment each time the test is administered until achieving a passing score, and students can enroll beyond the twelfth-grade year should they need additional instruction to pass an assessment. A student can also graduate by receiving a score concordant to the Grade 10 FSA ELA passing score on either the ACT or SAT and a score comparative to the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment passing score on the PERT (PERT can only be used for students that entered Grade 9 prior to 2018-19), ACT, SAT, or PSAT. Even if they have achieved a concordant score before the grade 10 assessment, all students enrolled in grade 10 are required to participate in the statewide assessments in accordance with section 1008.22, Florida Statutes (F.S.). Additionally, if students have achieved a comparative score prior to enrolling in and completing Algebra 1 or an equivalent course, they must take the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment in accordance with s. 1008.22, F.S.

Table 3: Concordant and Comparative Scores

Table with 2 columns: Assessment Name and Score. Rows include Grade 10 FSA ELA or Grade 10 FCAT 2.0 Reading (SAT EBRW, ACT English, SAT EBRW, SAT Reading, ACT Reading) and Algebra 1 EOC (FSA or NGSSS) (PSAT/NMSQT Math, SAT Math, ACT Math, PERT Mathematics).

*Administered in March 2016 or beyond. Students who entered grade 9 prior to 2018–19 may also use a concordant score of 430 on SAT Critical Reading if it was earned prior to March 2016.

**The average of the English and Reading subtests. If the average of the two subject test scores results in a decimal (0.5), the score shall be rounded up to the next whole number. The scores for the English and Reading subject tests are not required to come from the same test administration.

***Administered in 2015 or beyond. Students who entered grade 9 in 2010–11 and beyond may also use a comparative score of 39 on PSAT/NMSQT Math if it was earned prior to 2015.

****Administered in March 2016 or beyond. Students who entered grade 9 in 2010–11 and beyond may also use a comparative score of 380 on SAT Math if it was earned prior to March 2016.



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Scores needed to meet the graduation requirements for state assessments:

Assessment	Eligibility	Passing Score (FSA scale)
Grade 10 FSA ELA	Entered Grade 9 in 2014-15 or after	350
FSA Algebra 1	First participated in Spring 2016 or beyond	497

Q. What is the consequence for the District if it fails to administer required assessments?

A. The District risks both federal and state funding if it fails to administer required assessments. The District could not be an academically high performing school district pursuant to Section 1003.621, Florida Statutes.

Q. What would happen if a school district did not administer the statewide standardized assessment?

A. All of the elementary schools would be in the 300 lowest performing schools, therefore requiring additional instruction and increased state involvement with the operation of the schools. Additionally, schools would not be eligible for school grades, making them ineligible for school recognition funds.

Q. What if less than 95% of students in a school participated in the statewide assessment?

A. Schools would receive a school grade of "incomplete" as a result of not meeting the requirement that 95% of students participated in statewide assessments per Section 1008.34, Florida Statutes and would be ineligible to receive school recognition funding. It is unclear as to whether or not the school would be required to implement turnaround options under Section 1008.33, Florida Statutes. Failure to participate in statewide assessments also jeopardizes Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds.