

## Setting the Record Straight

### **Response to John Winn's 10/6/15 Tallahassee Democrat my view: Setting high assessment standards will benefit our children**

In John Winn's Oct. 6 My View piece, he made an outright false statement: that "school superintendents have consistently sought to weaken the grading formula or even suspend grades altogether."

Florida superintendents, past and present, have steadfastly defended and supported increased rigor, high academic standards, and a strong accountability system that accurately measures student performance. That support has not waived. Superintendents have been fact-based, real-life supporters as Florida has moved forward in developing an accountability system that is accurate and fair. At no time have superintendents, past or present, tried to derail or weaken the grading formula. They are, and have been, vocal in their efforts to ensure that Florida's accountability system is fair and reliable. They have a constitutional duty to do so.

While superintendents have called for suspending the issuance of grades for the 2014-15 school year, not surprisingly Winn fails to explain the fundamental reason behind this recommendation:

**Florida's current public school accountability system is not working, and we need to pause and revamp the flawed and incomplete process upon which Florida's accountability system is based.**

School grades should inform instruction, not further erode a floundering accountability system. It is a disservice to students, teachers, schools and our communities to rush forward in calculating and issuing school grades based on:

- a flawed administration of the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA)
- an assessment that was not fully aligned (100%) to the Florida Standards
- suspect and incomplete data
- the absence of baseline data to calculate learning gains (prior year performance) as required by Florida Statute 10008.34(3)(b).

In a high stakes testing environment, it is imperative that Florida have a strong, equitable, and reliable accountability system that people believe in and support, and which accurately reflects student performance. Rushing to assign erroneous grades that will have significant implications for our students, teachers, schools, communities and our state as a whole, is reckless at best.

While superintendents continue to embrace a strong and viable accountability system, we have now witnessed the erosion of public support for an accountability system that was once a model for the nation.

In order for Florida to remain a leader in school reform and accountability, we must pause and revamp the flawed and incomplete process upon which Florida's accountability system is based. Failure to do so at this time will certainly further undermine Florida's accountability system, to which Florida superintendents, past and present, have dedicated years of effort and support. Florida students deserve no less than for superintendents to do their job and voice their valid and real concerns.

I suggest there are few, if any, more prepared than Florida superintendents to provide guidance pertaining to a flawed accountability system with high-stakes implications for Florida students. Our students deserve no less.

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