



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF DISTRICT SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 30, 2015

FLORIDA SUPERINTENDENTS HAVE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED A STRONG AND RELIABLE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Tallahassee, FL – Florida superintendents have steadfastly defended and supported increased rigor, high academic standards, and a strong accountability system that accurately measures student performance. That support has not wavered. Superintendents appreciate and are encouraged by Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart’s 2014-15 cut score recommendations. However, the crux of the issue remains unaddressed – the viability of Florida’s current accountability system.

Florida’s public school accountability system is complex, interdependent, and modified annually. The overall purpose of the accountability system should be to improve student performance and inform instruction. However, our current accountability system is based on a flawed and incomplete process that ultimately yields flawed and incomplete data upon which high stakes decisions are being based for students, schools and our communities. The multitude of changes over the past several years – regardless of intention – has resulted in a continual erosion of Florida’s accountability system. A concern that Florida superintendents have consistently voiced:

“As Florida moves forward in implementing . . . a new assessment, we must ensure that these new standards and assessments are aligned with all aspects of the accountability system . . . However, the overly aggressive implementation schedule is not realistic, and is so problematic as to jeopardize student success. Florida needs to take a step back and install a realistic timeline that will promote success for students and restore support of all stakeholders in Florida’s public schools.” [Source: FADSS 2013 Legislative Platform]*

“Today the integrity of Florida’s accountability system, including school grades, is in question. Florida’s school grade system has seen multiple changes over the past few years, including 34 changes in 2011-2012 alone. The culmination of these changes have had a significant impact on Florida’s accountability system and today many Floridians lack confidence in school grades as a precise measure of a school’s performance.” [Source: FADSS 2014 Legislative Platform]*

“There has been much change in the overall accountability system, including school grades. These changes and accompanying timeline have created circumstances that raise serious concerns among school superintendents.” [Source: FADSS 2015 Legislative Platform]*

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*Available at WWW.FADSS.ORG

Recommended Next Steps

1. **Suspend school grades for the 2014-15 School Year.**

For the Department of Education and the State Board of Education to move forward in calculating and issuing school grades using a flawed assessment, suspect and incomplete data, and only 50% of the traditional criteria (proficiency alone) while excluding learning gains**, as required by Florida Statute, is a disservice to students, teachers, schools and our communities at large. Moreover, superintendents question the significance of publishing school grades more than nine (9) months after the flawed administration of a brand new assessment which was not fully aligned (100%) to the Florida Standards and for which there is no baseline data for comparison. School grades should inform instruction, not further erode a floundering accountability system.

Assigning erroneous grades that will have significant implications for our students, teachers, schools, communities and our state as a whole, is reckless at best. Rather than rushing to issue grades, the focus should be on setting appropriate and realistic cut scores for this baseline year that accurately reflect true learning gains as defined as “a year’s growth in a year’s time,” that will be available for use in determining 2015-16 school grades.

- **Secondary recommendation:** *In lieu of suspending grades, issue an “I” (Incomplete) to all Florida schools for the 2014-15 school year due to incomplete data to accurately and fairly assign a school grade.*

2. **Amend Section 1008.34 F.S.**

FADSS proposes language to amend Section 1008.34 F.S. to address school grades as well as other inequities currently associated with implementing Florida’s accountability system. [See page 3 for proposed bill summary]

3. **Develop plan of action to address Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) issues identified by the Independent Verification Study**

Florida superintendents stand ready to work with DOE to develop a detailed plan of action and timeline to address the 13 recommendations with the FSA as identified in the *Independent Verification of the Psychometric Validity for the Florida Standards Assessment* by Alpine Testing Group.

4. **Conduct a comprehensive review of the accountability system**

FADSS calls for a comprehensive review of Florida’s accountability system, including but not limited to: a description of the system, including alignment and consistency within the accountability system; a determination of the capacity of districts and schools to administer the required statewide, standardized assessments without interruption in the ongoing delivery of instruction to students who are not being assessed; a development of a timeline for transition to school grades that includes all the components of school grades to be available before school grades are released; and an analysis of districts pay for performance plans and impact on teacher recruitment and retention.

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. 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 need to 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.

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***Learning gains is a required component in calculating school grades (Florida Statute 1008.34(3)(b))*

FADSS Proposed 2016 Accountability Legislation Summary

The bill amends s. 1008.34, F.S., relating to schools grades.

The bill delays the issuance of school grades until the 2015-2016 school year.

The bill specifies that for the 2014-2015 school year, each school will receive an “I” or “Incomplete” as a school grade or school improvement rating.

However, the school grade components relating to performance will be calculated and reported.

This includes:

- Percentage of students passing FSA in English Language Arts.
- Percentage of students passing FSA in math or Algebra 1.
- Percentage of students passing statewide assessments in social studies.
- For middle schools, the percentage of students passing high school standardized EOCs or attaining national industry certifications.
- In addition, for high schools: the 4-year high school graduation rate; percentage of students eligible to earn college and career credit.

The bill specifies that for the 2014-2015 school year, a school district will receive a grade of “I” or “Incomplete.”

The bill redefines learning gains to accurately reflect a year’s worth of growth in a year’s worth of time.

The bill requires the Department of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of the accountability system. Requires the Commissioner of Education to submit the report and corresponding recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2016.

Past Press Releases [<http://fadss.org/news/PressReleases>]

Press release, 2/27/14

Florida Superintendents Support A Transitional Accountability Plan as Proposed by SB1368

“It is unrealistic to expect a full and quality implementation across all grades and courses (K-12) by the 2014-2015 school year when we don’t even know what the assessment will look like,” states FADSS President Wally Cox. “The goal of having an integrated system that can accurately and fairly assess student performance, evaluate teachers, implement pay for performance and assign school grades is in jeopardy, and we need to slow down and get it right,” adds Cox.

Press release, 7/11/2012

2012 School Grades Underscore the Complexities with Florida’s Accountability and Assessment System

“...we must be careful not to make decisions without a thorough understanding of the impact on students, as well as the feasibility of successfully implementing those decisions in a timely manner with adequate resources. Superintendents are concerned that many decisions are being made without a comprehensive review of the full impact of education decisions on students and school districts, and the recent changes in the accountability system have cast doubt on the credibility of the system,” adds Montford.

Press release, 1/23/2012

Superintendents Embrace Comprehensive Accountability Measures and Transparency – Not District Ranking Based Solely on FCAT Scores

“The Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) reiterates its commitment to high accountability measures that are comprehensive, transparent and take into account all the factors that play a role in the educational achievement of students.”

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