

2013 FCAT 2.0 and School Grade

Frequently Asked Questions



Florida's State Board of Education is continuing to transition from FCAT to FCAT 2.0. Here are a few questions and answers about how it could affect students, schools, and why it matters.

1. What has changed for the 2012-2013 school year?

While the FCAT 2.0 test has not changed from last year, the full changes to the FCAT 2.0 scoring assessment are now implemented. These scoring changes are more rigorous and align with the standards set by the *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards* (NGSSS).

2. How will this impact my child?

In order to continue the transition to the *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*, new assessment requirements had to be determined. These requirements require students to earn passing scores in specific assessments in order to graduate.

For students entering grade 9 in the 2012-2013 school year, a passing score in Grade 10 on FCAT 2.0 Reading, as well as on End-of-Course (EOC) assessment for Algebra 1, is required to graduate. High school students will also take a U.S. History, Biology 1 and Geometry end-of-course exam.

The FCAT 2.0 cut scores have not changed since the 2011-2012 school year, with the exception of the higher cut score of 3.5 for FCAT writing.

3. What are 'EOC' assessments?

The Florida End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments are computer-based tests designed to measure student achievement on specific middle and high school level courses. The Algebra 1 EOC Assessment was administered for the first time in May 2011; Biology 1 and Geometry EOC Assessments were administered for the first time in May 2012; U.S. History EOC Assessment was administered for the first time in 2013; and Civics EOC Assessment will be administered to seventh graders for the first time in 2014.

4. Why is the school grading system changing?

Florida was granted a waiver from some requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Law. To receive the waiver, Florida agreed to change its school grading system so that more student subgroups are included in the grade. School grades are based on student scores on the changed and more challenging standards and new cut scores.

5. What are some of the changes to the School Grade?

Changes to the school grade are based on many factors, such as the changing test scores and achievement levels at every grade level, the addition of end-of-course exams at middle and high school, and a new graduation rate formula for high schools.

Specifically, a school will drop a letter grade if fewer than 25 percent of its students score a 3 or higher on FCAT reading. Schools will also drop a letter grade if the lowest 25 percent of students do not make learning gains. Unlike the 2011-2012 school year, schools are no longer prevented from dropping more than one letter grade in a single year.

6. Why do these changes matter?

These scoring changes mean more Florida schools are more likely to receive a lower school grade than in the past. Consequently, district grades may drop throughout the state. There may be fewer A and B schools, more C and D schools, and some will earn failing grades. Failing schools can require significantly more resources from schools districts, while districts are still facing tight budgets.

7. What is the long term impact of these changes?

The Next Generation Sunshine State Standards are positioning students to be well-prepared for the Common Core Standards in 2014-2015. Both of these standards are considered “fewer, higher, and clearer” than Florida’s old Sunshine State Standards.

8. What graduation options are available for grade 10 students who have not passed the FCAT 2.0 Reading assessment?

Options available to high school seniors who have not passed the Grade 10 FCAT 2.0 Reading assessment include:

- Continuing opportunities to take the test until they pass it;
- Opportunities to take the SAT or ACT to earn concordant passing scores, which is a SAT or ACT score comparable to a passing FCAT score;
- Opportunity to enroll in any community college in the state with a Certificate of Completion by taking the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (P.E.R.T.). Students who enter a community college with a Certificate of Completion may continue to retake the FCAT 2.0 or take the SAT or ACT to earn the passing scores required for a high school diploma.

Students with disabilities who are working toward a standard high school diploma can waive the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 as a graduation requirement if their abilities cannot be accurately measured by the statewide assessments after two attempts of each required assessment. Students with disabilities with Section 504 plans are not eligible for a waiver. For further information regarding waiver requirements, please contact your school or consult the document, Graduation Requirements for Florida’s Statewide Assessments at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf>.

9. What promotion options are available for grade 3 students who have not passed the FCAT 2.0?

For promotion to grade 4, there are six good cause exemptions for students scoring at a Level 1 on the Grade 3 FCAT 2.0 Reading assessment, and they include:

- English Language Learners (ELLs) who have had less than two years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program;
- students with disabilities whose individual education plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of State Board of Education rule;
- students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the State Board of Education;
- students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that the student is reading on grade level as evidenced by demonstration of mastery of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards in reading equal to at least a Level 2 performance on the FCAT 2.0;
- students with disabilities who participate in the FCAT 2.0 and who have an individual education plan (IEP) or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3;
- students who have received intensive remediation in reading for two 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 two years.

The grade 3 good cause exemptions are found in s. 1008.25, Florida Statutes, which also requires districts to implement a policy for the midyear promotion of retained grade 3 students. For additional information regarding good cause exemptions or midyear promotion for retained grade 3 students, please contact your school.

10. What graduation options are available for high school seniors who have not passed the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment, Biology 1 EOC Assessment, or Geometry EOC Assessment?

High school seniors who have not passed the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment have the option of retaking the EOC Assessment. The number of opportunities to retake the EOC assessment will depend on when students first participate in the EOC assessment. Fall, spring, and summer administrations for the EOC assessment are available.

For more information about these options, consult the document, Graduation Requirements for Florida's Statewide Assessments at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf>.