



Council for Lifelong Learning School Grading System

Fact Sheet

September 2001

1. What is the recent history of school performance ratings in Florida?

In 1991, with the enactment of the School Improvement and Education Accountability Act, the state committed to developing and implementing a system of "stringent education accountability," and ensuring that "unsuccessful schools" were provided assistance and intervention, and that actions would be taken when schools did not improve.

In the fall of 1995, the State Board of Education (SBE) unanimously adopted a rule proposed by the Department of Education (DOE) defining criteria for identifying schools with critically low student performance. Initially, the criteria used for determining a school's performance level were student's scores on Reading Comprehension and Math Concepts/Applications subtests, comparable data on the communications and math sections of the High School Competency Test (HSCT), and proficiency in writing on the Florida Writes! assessment. In the 1998-1999 school year, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), in conjunction with the Florida Writes! assessment, replaced the prior student performance measures. (See the FCAT Fact Sheet and the Testing Fact Sheet.)

In the fall of 1998, the SBE adopted another rule proposed by DOE, which would create five school performance levels. (Level I was the lowest performing level and Level V was the highest performing level). These levels are based upon student performance on the FCAT and other select performance indicators (Rule 6A-109981, F.A.C.). This rule raised the bar on school performance by making it more difficult to move from one performance level to the next. If a school was deemed to be Performance Level I (compatible with a prior critically low performing designation), the school had to improve student performance in one of the three measured areas, while at least *maintaining* student performance levels in the other two areas.

According to DOE, this rule was never implemented because of the passage of the A+ Plan in the 1999 Legislative Session.

In 1999, the Legislature passed the A+ Education Plan (Ch. 99-398, L.O.F.). This legislation expanded upon the concept of school performance ratings. Schools would now be graded on

	<p>the basis of letter grades (A-F). For purposes of implementing the Opportunity Scholarship Program, school grades "A" - "F" for the 1998-1999 school year are equivalent to corresponding School Performance Levels "V" - "I". (See the Opportunity Scholarship Fact Sheet.)</p> <p>The A+ Education Plan also created School Improvement Ratings. These ratings indicate whether a school's performance improves, remains the same, or declines. DOE must annually publish both the School Grade and School Improvement Rating in an easy-to-read report card for parents.</p> <p>In 2001, the Legislature amended current law (s. 229.57, F.S.) to establish the framework for how school grades will be determined in the future. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter, a school's performance grade must be based on a combination of student achievement scores; student learning gains as measured by the FCAT assessed in grades 3-10; and improvement of the lowest 25th percentile of students in the school in reading, math, or writing on the FCAT, including Florida Writes!, unless these students are performing above satisfactory performance.</p> <p>This legislation (Ch. 2001-90 L.O.F.) provides that in order for a school to receive a school grade of "C," the school must be able to demonstrate that adequate progress has been made by students in the school who are in the lowest 25th percentile in reading, math, or writing on the FCAT, including Florida Writes!, unless these students are performing above satisfactory performance. In addition, the Commissioner of Education must establish a schedule for the administration of the statewide assessment that provides the latest possible administration and the earliest possible results.</p>
<p>2. What are the different school grade categories?</p>	<p>School grades are identified by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A," schools making excellent progress • "B," schools making above average progress • "C," schools making satisfactory progress • "D," schools making less than satisfactory progress • "F," schools failing to make adequate progress
<p>3. What criteria are used for determining a school's grade?</p>	<p>Beginning in the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter, a school's grade is based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student <i>learning gains</i> as measured by the FCAT in grades 3 through 10; • improvement of the lowest 25th percentile of students in

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	<p>the school in reading, math, or writing on the FCAT, including Florida Writes! -- unless these students are performing above satisfactory performance; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students meeting minimum performance standards.
<p>4. What is meant by a student's annual "learning gain?"</p>	<p>Learning gain means the degree of learning achieved by one student as compared to himself or herself in a year's worth of time. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year, learning gains will become the primary performance criteria for a school's grade. The DOE will determine a student's learning gain by comparing a student's FCAT scores at the end of one year to the student's FCAT scores at the end of the prior school year. The increase in student learning over that one-year period will represent that student's learning gain.</p> <p>By comparing a student's scores to himself or herself over time, a more accurate picture of actual student performance can be achieved.</p>
<p>5. Are all students' test scores counted toward a school's grade?</p>	<p>According to s. 229.57(3)(b)7., F.S., all students must participate in the statewide testing program, except as otherwise prescribed by the Commissioner. According to DOE, all students' test scores are included in a school's grade, including students who are: language impaired, speech impaired, gifted, hospital homebound, and limited English proficient (LEP) students who have been in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for more than two years.</p> <p>The only exceptions to the testing requirements apply to severely disabled students classified in Support Levels III through V of the Exceptional Student Education categories, LEP students who have been in ESOL programs for less than two years, and students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) commitment facilities.</p>
<p>6. Are all schools graded?</p>	<p>All public schools, including charter schools, receive a school grade. DOE has established a policy of not grading schools that do not have a statistically significant testing population, DJJ facilities, or schools that provide short-term alternative education programs.</p>
<p>7. Can a school receive a high grade by concentrating on its highest achieving students at the expense of others?</p>	<p>No. According to s. 229.57(8)(b), F.S., a school's grade must not only include the aggregate scores of all eligible students who have been assessed on the FCAT, but also the aggregate scores of all eligible students who have scored at or in the lowest 25th percentile of students in the school in reading, math, or writing on FCAT, including Florida Writes!, unless these students are performing above satisfactory</p>

<p>of others?</p>	<p>performance. Thus, each district should concentrate on improving the scores of each subgroup of its lowest performers.</p> <p>In addition, in order to attain at least a "C," a school must be able to demonstrate that adequate progress has been made by students in the school who are in the lowest 25th percentile in reading, math, or writing on the FCAT, including Florida Writes!, unless these students are performing above satisfactory performance.</p>
<p>8. What are school improvement ratings?</p>	<p>School improvement ratings are indicators of whether a school's performance has improved, remained the same, or declined from one year to the next. The ratings are based on a comparison of the current year's and previous year's student and school performance data.</p>
<p>9. Are there rewards or sanctions for schools that make certain grades?</p>	<p>Yes. Schools which receive an "A," making excellent progress, are rewarded in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are eligible for school recognition awards. These awards may be for up to \$100/student; • will be given deregulated status, if requested (See the Deregulation of Public Schools Fact Sheet.); and • will be given greater budget authority. <p>Schools that improve at least one grade are eligible for school recognition awards.</p> <p>Schools that <u>improve at least 2 letter grades</u> are rewarded in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will be given greater budget authority, and • <i>may</i> be given deregulated status if they also meet the criteria for the Florida School Recognition Program. (See the Florida School Recognition Program Fact Sheet.) <p>Schools (or districts with schools) which receive a "D" or "F" are eligible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE intervention and assistance and funding; • a community assessment team to make recommendations for intervention and assistance to improve the school's performance; • priority to receive technical assistance and training services from DOE; • priority in the use of Supplemental Academic Instruction funds (See the Supplemental Academic Instruction Fact Sheet.); • district intervention and assistance; • district authority to declare an emergency and to

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	<p>negotiate special provisions to free the schools from contract restrictions which limit the school's ability to improve student performance; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBE resources and assistance. <p>Schools which receive an "F" for two years in a four- year period must offer their students participation in the Opportunity Scholarship Program. (See the Opportunity Scholarships Fact Sheet.)</p>																								
<p>10. How do parents find out about a school's grade?</p>	<p>The DOE and the school districts are required to annually publish school grades and school improvement ratings. Parents and guardians are entitled by law to an easy-to-read report card which gives information on both the school grade and rating of the school in which their child is enrolled.</p>																								
<p>11. What are the school grades in the state?</p>	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>"A"</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>"B"</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>"C"</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>"D"</u></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><u>"F"</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1998-1999</td> <td style="text-align: center;">203</td> <td style="text-align: center;">314</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1236</td> <td style="text-align: center;">613</td> <td style="text-align: center;">78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1999-2000</td> <td style="text-align: center;">551</td> <td style="text-align: center;">290</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1154</td> <td style="text-align: center;">389</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2000-2001</td> <td style="text-align: center;">568</td> <td style="text-align: center;">429</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1112</td> <td style="text-align: center;">293</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<u>"A"</u>	<u>"B"</u>	<u>"C"</u>	<u>"D"</u>	<u>"F"</u>	1998-1999	203	314	1236	613	78	1999-2000	551	290	1154	389	4	2000-2001	568	429	1112	293	0
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<p>12. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 229.0535, F.S. -- SBE Intervention Section 229.0537, F.S. -- Opportunity Scholarship Program Section 229.57(7) & (8), F.S. -- School Grades Section 229.57(9), F.S. -- School Improvement Ratings Section 229.57(10), F.S. -- School Report Cards Section 229.592, F.S. -- School Improvement and Education Accountability Section 231.2905, F.S. -- Florida School Recognition Program Section 236.08104, F.S. -- Supplemental Academic Instruction</p> <p>Rule 6A-1.09422, F.A.C. -- FCAT Requirements Rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C. -- School Performance Levels</p>																								
<p>13. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Florida Department of Education Assessment & Evaluation Services (850) 487-1893 www.firn.edu/doe</p> <p>Florida House of Representatives Council for Lifelong Learning (850) 414-6694</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Education Innovation (850) 488-7451</p>																								