

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 988

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Sullivan

SUBJECT: Student Assessment

DATE: April 17, 2001 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Harkey	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable/CS
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	RC	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The committee substitute amends s. 229.57, F.S., to establish a framework for determining school grades based on student learning gains. Beginning in 2001-2002, school grades will be based only on student performance. The Commissioner of Education will establish a schedule for administration of the statewide assessments.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

This bill amends ss. 229.57, 230.23, 231.085, 231.17, 231.29, and 231.2905, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The 1991 Florida Legislature substantially revised Florida's system of school improvement and education accountability. Entitled "Blueprint 2000," this legislation called for the development of clear guidelines for achieving school improvement and education accountability, based on eight education goals, with the intent of increasing standards, flexibility, and local control and accountability. (Ch. 91-283, L.O.F.) Consistent with Blueprint 2000's goals of increased standards, flexibility, and accountability, the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with teachers, administrators, parents, and the business community, developed student performance standards in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, government, geography, economics, and computer literacy.

In 1996, the State Board of Education approved the Sunshine State Standards in order to provide student achievement expectations. These standards provide parents, students, teachers, and school administrators a clear understanding of the skills and competencies students should have in seven subject areas (math, science, social studies, language arts, health and physical education,

arts, and foreign language) at certain stages of their school career (PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12). Additionally, the Sunshine State Standards for certain subject areas (math, science, social studies, language arts) must include grade level expectations. The standards are assessed both at the classroom level by the teacher and through an annual statewide assessment program. This assessment is primarily conducted through the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). According to s. 229.57(1), F.S., the primary purposes of the statewide assessment program are to provide information needed for the improvement of public schools by maximizing the learning gains of all students and by informing parents of the educational progress of their public school children. The assessment program is designed to do the following:

- Assess the annual learning gains of each student toward achieving the Sunshine State Standards appropriate for the student's grade level;
- Provide data for making decisions regarding school accountability and recognition;
- Identify the educational strengths and needs of the student;
- Assess how well the educational goals and performance standards are met at the school, district, and state levels;
- Provide information to aid in the evaluation and development of educational programs and policies; and
- Provide information on the performance of Florida students compared with others across the United States.

Section 231.2905(4), F.S., specifies that the School Recognition Program must utilize the school performance grade category designations in s. 229.57, F.S. All school districts must participate in the state assessment program. The program is designed to measure annual student learning and school performance and must report assessment results. Student performance data must be analyzed and reported to parents, the community, and the state. Student performance data must be used in developing objectives of the school improvement plan, evaluation of instructional personnel, evaluation of administrative personnel, assignment of staff, allocation of resources, acquisition of instructional materials and technology, performance-based budgeting, and promotion and assignment of students into educational programs. The analysis of student performance data must also identify the strengths and needs in the educational program and trends over time.

The Commissioner of Education is required by s. 229.57(6), F.S., to annually prepare reports of the results of the statewide assessment program that describe student achievement in the state, each district, and each school. Beginning with the 1998-1999 school year's student and school performance data, the annual statewide assessment program report must identify schools as being in one of the following grade categories:

- "A," schools making excellent progress;
- "B," schools making average progress;
- "C," schools making satisfactory progress;
- "D," schools making less than satisfactory progress; and
- "F," schools failing to make adequate progress.

Schools that receive a grade of “A” or schools that improve at least one letter grade from the previous year are eligible for recognition and financial awards. Schools that receive an “A” or schools that improve at least two grades are eligible for increased autonomy. Depending on the availability of funds appropriated and the number and size of the schools chosen, all selected schools receive financial awards.

Current law, s. 229.57(8)(a), F.S., specifies that designation of school performance grade categories must be based on the following timeframes:

- School performance grade category designations must be based on one school year of performance.
- In school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, a school’s performance grade category designation must be determined by the student achievement levels on the FCAT, and on other appropriate performance data, including, but not limited to, attendance, dropout rate, school discipline data, and student readiness for college.
- In the 2000-2001 school year and thereafter, a school’s performance grade designation must be based on a combination of student achievement scores as measured by the FCAT, on the degree of measured learning gains of the students, and on other appropriate performance data, including, but not limited to, dropout rate, and student readiness for college.
- Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter, a school’s performance grade category designation must be based on student learning gains as measured by annual FCAT assessments in grades 3 through 10 and on other appropriate performance data, including, but not limited to, dropout rate, cohort graduation rate, and student readiness for college.

The Department of Education is authorized in s. 229.57(11), F.S., subject to appropriation, to negotiate a multiyear contract to develop, field test, and implement annual assessments of students in grades 3 through 10. These assessments must comply with various criteria. Some of the criteria include the following:

1. A statistical system must use measures of student learning, such as the FCAT, to determine teacher, school, and school district statistical distributions, which distributions:
 - Must be determined using available data from the FCAT, and other data collection as deemed appropriate by the Department of Education, to measure the differences in student prior year achievement against the current year achievement or lack thereof, such that the “effects” of instruction to a student by a teacher, school, and school district may be estimated on a per-student and constant basis; and
 - Must, to the extent possible, be able to be expressed in linear scales so that the effects of ceiling and floor dispersions are minimized (s. 229.57(11)(e), F.S.).
2. The statistical system must provide an approach that provides for best linear unbiased prediction for the teacher, the school, and school district effects on pupil progress. These estimates should adequately be able to determine effects of and compare teachers who teach in the following situations:

- Multiple subjects to the same groups of students;
- Team teaching situations where teachers teach a single subject to multiple groups of students; or
- Other teaching situations as appropriate (s. 229.57(11)(f), F.S.).

3. The annual testing program must be administered to provide for valid statewide comparisons of learning gains to be made for purposes of accountability and recognition. Annual assessments that do not contain performance items must be administered no earlier than March of each school year, with results being returned to schools prior to the end of the academic year. Subtests that contain performance items may be given earlier than March, provided that the remaining subtests are sufficient to provide valid data on comparisons of student learning from year to year. The time of administration must be aligned so that a comparable amount of instructional time is measured in all school districts. District school boards must not establish school calendars that jeopardize or limit the valid testing and comparison of student learning gains (s. 229.57(11)(g), F.S.).

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The committee substitute amends school performance grade category designations to clarify that the school grades are to be based on the school's current year performance and the school's annual learning gains.

The bill removes the obsolete language relating to timeframes for the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years, and it also removes the enabling language for the 2000-2001 school year. Beginning with the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter, a school's performance grade must be based on a combination of student achievement scores, a student's learning gains as measured by Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in grades 3 through 10, and improvement of the lowest performing quartile of students in the school.

This bill revises provisions relating to statewide assessments by removing the overly prescriptive language having to do with the statistical procedures by which annual learning gains are to be calculated. The bill specifies that the statistical system for the annual assessments must provide the "best estimate" of the teacher, school, and school district effects on pupil progress, rather than "the best linear unbiased prediction for teacher, school, and school district effects on pupil progress." This approach must be approved by the Commissioner of Education, rather than the State Board of Education, before the pupil progression assessment is implemented.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to establish a schedule for administration of the statewide assessments rather than providing deadlines in law.

The bill reenacts ss. 230.23(16)(c), 231.085(4), 231.17(15), 231.29(3)(a), and 231.2905(4), F.S., because they cross-reference s. 229.57, F.S., which is amended by this bill.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Department of Education estimates a cost savings of approximately \$4,000,000 from the deletion of requirements for particular statistical procedures. There will be no additional costs other than accommodating normal growth in the student population.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.