



Office of Accountability, Testing and Evaluation

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 15, 2014

TO: Leadership Team

FROM: Dr. Karen Schafer, Director
Office of Accountability, Testing and Evaluation

RE: FSA Information for Parents

Over the next couple of months, as we move toward spring testing, the Testing and Accountability Office will be providing some resources you may share with parents and community members to help them understand the changes in testing and accountability that are occurring this school year. Please include the links, the documents, and the prepared articles in your newsletters or other communications when possible. Share them with your SAC at meetings or during open houses or other events at your school. If you have specific questions parents have been asking, please forward them and we will include them in a future Q & A.

A good place to start is sharing printed copies or the link to the DOE's [FSA Information for Families](#) (attached). This flyer provides an excellent overview of the new FSA tests and explains some basic facts about it. It makes an easy hand-out and conversation starter at meetings and activities.

The following is a sample of a short piece that could be included in a newsletter or other electronic communication.

Learn about Florida's New Tests through the FSA Portal

Have you heard? Florida has a new test. It's the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). Want to learn more? The FSA Portal has a wealth of information available for students and parents.

For example, by going to www.fsassessments.org and clicking on the Students and Parents link, you can access the FSA Training Tests. Students and parents may read through the Training Test Guide to learn how to take the computer-based tests. The Guide explains and demonstrates the online tools students may use as they take the test. Students and parents can take selected tests to get a feel for the kinds of questions and answer formats that will be on spring tests. Answer keys are available.

Under the Student and Parent Resources button, you can find very specific information about each FSA test – English Language Arts (ELA), the Writing component of the ELA, Math, and End-of-Course exams. Item specifications and test design summaries define the content and format of the test for each grade level and subject. Writing rubrics outline how writing tests will be scored.

The FSA Portal is updated regularly, so visit it often to learn more about the new FSA.

As many Floridians are aware, our state has been in a period of transition as we have made important decisions to improve our education system and raise the bar for our schools, educators and students. Please see below for an overview of the direction we are moving in statewide assessments, which assessments will be offered in the upcoming school year, how those assessments will be offered and ways families can support their children in preparation for the new assessments.

The Florida Standards and Florida Standards Assessments

The Florida Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts were approved by the Florida State Board of Education in February 2014 and will be fully implemented in grades K–12 in the 2014–2015 school year. All Florida schools will teach the Florida Standards, and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop and administer new statewide assessments. These assessments will provide parents, teachers, policy makers and the general public with information regarding how well students are learning the Florida standards.

What assessments will my child be taking?

The following Florida Standards Assessments will be administered for the first time in Spring 2015:

- Grades 3–11 English Language Arts (Writing component in grades 4–11)
- Grades 3–8 Mathematics
- Algebra 1 End-of-Course Assessment
- Geometry End-of-Course Assessment
- Algebra 2 End-of-Course Assessment

Promoting Success and Family Support

Parents can promote student success by staying involved in their child's education, offering positive support and feedback and encouraging them to relax and do their very best. By staying connected with their student's school and teachers and taking advantage of online resources, such as school websites and portals, parents can stay informed and be best equipped to meet the needs of their students at home.

Finding Resources

Families are encouraged to take advantage of the information and resources available on the Florida Standards Assessments portal (www.FSAssessments.org) and the FDOE website (www.fldoe.org). More resources will be made available throughout the 2014–2015 school year, so parents and students should check these websites regularly for updates.

Computer-Based Testing

Florida has been transitioning to computer-based testing since 2010 and will continue to do so in Spring 2015. AIR offers a dynamic computer-based test delivery system. Students will respond to items in multiple ways, including creating graphs, writing short responses and using other interactive features. The various question types are designed to assess higher-order thinking skills and offer exciting new ways for students to show what they know and can do. Training tests are now available for students, parents and educators to become familiar with the new testing system. The training tests can be accessed at www.FSAssessments.org/training-tests.

In Spring 2015, all grades 5–11 English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments will be administered online, with paper-based versions available for students with disabilities who have this accommodation outlined in their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). Computer-based accommodations, such as text-to-speech, will also be available in the platform for eligible students who require them. Grades 3 and 4 assessments in 2014–2015 will be paper-based tests only. Please reference the 2014–2015 Statewide Assessment Schedule located on the FSA portal (www.FSAssessments.org) for information about when the tests will be administered.