

2009 Guide to Calculating School Grades

Technical Assistance Paper



Florida Department of Education

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This technical assistance paper was prepared by staff in the Bureau of Research and Evaluation, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement. Questions? Please call (850) 245-0411 or e-mail evalnrpt@fldoe.org.

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I. Overview

Introduction

The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide a description of the procedures used to determine school grades for the 2009 school year. In 2009, the school grades include four measures of student achievement and four measures of student learning gains, the same eight components that were in place the previous year. Florida's School Accountability System is being implemented as envisioned by the A+ Plan, passed by the 1999 Florida Legislature. Florida is one of the few states that can track student demographic information from year to year and is the first to track annual student learning gains based on the state's academic standards.

School grades have been issued since 1999 with the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) being the primary criterion in calculating school grades. In 2002, significant improvements were made in how school grades were calculated to fully implement the intent of the A+ Plan. The most noteworthy improvement was the inclusion of student learning gains. Additionally, a measure was added to determine whether the lowest performing students are making annual improvements in specified subjects. Florida's accountability system allows the improvement of individual students to be tracked from one year to the next based on FCAT developmental scores in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 10.

This paper contains two sections: the Overview (Section I) and the Process for Calculating School Grades (Section II). These sections describe a series of procedures for determining a school's final grade and are intended for knowledgeable audiences who are interested in the details of determining the school grades. A more general and concise description of the school grading system is found on the school grading "guide sheet" (School Accountability Guide Sheet and Example Report), which can be accessed online at the applicable link at the bottom of the Florida School Grades Web site (<http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>).

Specific Authority

The authority for Florida's system of school accountability is detailed in Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code Rules. It is not the intent of this section to provide a detailed description of the specific contents of the state law and rule. Readers interested in the additional legal information should consult the source documents.

Florida Statutes - [Section 1008.34](#)

This section of Florida law requires the Commissioner of Education to prepare annual reports of student performance for each school and district in the state. The law specifies the grade categories, the timeframes, and the types of information to be

included in the calculations. Further, the law directs the State Board of Education to adopt appropriate criteria for each school grade category.

Florida Administrative Code Rule [6A-1.09981](#)

This rule describes the implementation requirements for Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability. The State Board of Education revised this rule in November 2003 and March 2006 for clarification and to bring it into closer compliance with the statute. The rule provides policy information as well as procedural guidance for implementing the program. It also specifies which schools are included in the system and the criteria for designating the school grades. In addition, the rule describes the rewards and recognition for schools and the assistance and intervention provisions for low performing schools (D and F).

Florida Statutes – [Section 1008.341](#)

This section of Florida law provides for school improvement ratings for alternative schools. Alternative schools that provide dropout prevention and academic intervention services pursuant to s. [1003.53](#) may elect to receive a school improvement rating in lieu of a grade. The school improvement rating shall identify schools as having one of the following ratings defined according to rules of the State Board of Education:

- "Improving" means schools with students making more academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.
- "Maintaining" means schools with students making progress equivalent to the progress made when the students were served in their home schools.
- "Declining" means schools with students making less academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.

Specific provisions of this statute are implemented by FAC Rule 6A-1.099822, which was passed by the State Board of Education on February 19, 2008.

Florida Administrative Code Rule [6A-1.099822](#)

This rule implements provisions of the alternative school rating system mandated by s. 1008.341, Florida Statutes. In cases where an alternative school elects to receive a school improvement rating in lieu of a grade, the FCAT results of students who have been referred to the alternative school by another school will be credited back to the home school for inclusion in the home school's grade calculations.¹ This provision thereby affects identification of students to be included in the school grading calculations. For more information, see p. 6, Step 2.4—*Identify students at alternative schools whose FCAT results will be credited back to home schools ("zoned schools")*.

¹ Applied to the learning gains components for reading and math.

Summary of the School Grading Criteria

The FCAT is the primary measure of students' achievement of the Sunshine State Standards. School grades are determined by the accumulation of percentage points for eight measures of achievement in addition to two other conditions.

Florida Administrative Code Rule 6A-1.09981 describes the eight performance measures included in the overall grade for a school. Points are calculated as follows:

1. One point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring at or above FCAT Achievement Level 3 in reading.
2. One point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring at or above FCAT Achievement Level 3 in mathematics.
3. One point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring at or above FCAT Achievement Level 3 in science.
4. One point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring 3.5 or higher on the FCAT writing assessment. In the event that there are not at least 30 eligible students tested in writing, the district average in writing is substituted.
5. One point for each percent of students making learning gains in reading.
6. One point for each percent of students making learning gains in mathematics.
7. One point for each percent of the lowest performing students making learning gains in reading. In the event that there are not at least 30 eligible students, the school's reading learning gains are substituted.
8. One point for each percent of the lowest performing students making learning gains in mathematics. In the event that there are not at least 30 eligible students, the school's mathematics learning gains are substituted.

FCAT Retake Bonus Points for High Schools: High schools are eligible to earn (10) bonus points to their total school grade points if at least half of the 11th and 12th grade students in the school required to take the grade 10 FCAT retake meet the FCAT graduation requirement. There must be 10 eligible students in reading and 10 eligible students in math in order to receive the bonus. Points will not be split; the bonus is all or nothing.

These points are added together and converted into a school grading scale, shown below in Table 1.

Table 1
2009 School Grading Scale

Grade	Total points
A	525 and above
B	495-524
C	435-494
D	395-434
F	Less than 395

In addition to the accumulation of percentage points for each of the eight performance measures, schools are also evaluated on the basis of two other conditions:

1. Percent Tested: Schools earning enough total points to earn a grade of A must also test at least 95% of their eligible students. All other letter grade designations are based on a minimum of 90% tested. If any school tests fewer than 90% of their students, the school will initially receive an “I” (incomplete). After investigation, if the percent tested remains less than 90%, the final grade will be lower than indicated by the total points accumulated.
2. Adequate Progress of the Lowest Performing Reading and Mathematic Students: A school with enough points to earn an “A” must show adequate progress of the low 25% in both reading and math for the current year. A school with enough points to earn a “B” or “C” must show adequate progress of the low 25% in both reading and math for either the current or previous year. The final grade will be reduced one letter grade for schools failing to meet this criterion.

For purposes of this calculation, the lowest performing students are the lowest quartile (or 25%) of students scoring at achievement levels 1-3 of the FCAT reading and mathematics subtests in each grade. The lowest 30 students are substituted when there are not 30 in the lowest quartile. In the event that there are not 30 eligible students scoring at FCAT achievement level 3 or below in reading, the percent of students making annual learning gains in reading for all students is substituted for this performance measure. In the event that there are not 30 eligible students scoring in FCAT achievement level 3 or below in mathematics, the percent of students making annual learning gains in mathematics for all students is substituted for this performance measure.

Adequate progress of the lowest performing quartile in FCAT reading and math is attained when at least 50 percent of students in the group have made annual learning gains in each subject. The following flexibilities are extended to schools falling short of the 50-percent mark:

- Schools can avoid having their grade lowered if at least 40 percent of students in the lowest quartile have made learning gains and there was annual improvement of 1% or more in the percent making learning gains.
- Schools in which less than 40 percent of students in the lowest quartile made learning gains can avoid having their grade reduced if there was at least a five-percentage-point improvement in the percent making learning gains.

See Appendix A (p. 18) for a schematic description of the school grading system. Further clarification of the details involved in the calculation of school grades is in the next section of this paper.

II. Process for Calculating School Grades

This section of the paper describes in sequential order the processes involved in evaluating the performance of each school and determining a school grade.

1. Identify the Schools to be Graded

Pursuant to State Board Rule, the Commissioner will determine the school types to earn school grades. Schools that meet all of the following criteria will receive school grades:

- The school serves at least 30 full-year-enrolled *standard-curriculum* students² with valid FCAT scores in reading and math; and
- The school serves at least 30 full-year-enrolled students³ with valid FCAT scores in reading and math in both the current year and the previous year.

This includes new schools. Department of Juvenile Justice Schools do not earn school grades. Alternative schools may elect to receive an alternative school improvement rating in lieu of a grade.

2. Identify the Students to be Included

All students enrolled in the same school for a full academic year are included in the school grades calculation. The performance of students who are standard curriculum, speech impaired, gifted, hospital homebound, and English language learners who have been in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for more than two years is included in all components of the school grade calculation. Students who are in exceptional student education or are English language learners for less than two years are included only in the participation and learning gains components of the school grade; they are not included in the components for meeting high standards in reading, math, writing, and science.

In addition, eligible students that have been referred to an alternative school⁴ by a graded school (home school) will have their FCAT scores credited back to the home school for inclusion in the learning gains components of that school's grade.

To identify which of the eight components of the school grade calculation in which a student should be included, the electronic record of each student in a school must be reviewed to determine his/her eligibility. The following steps briefly describe the process:

² Also includes speech impaired, gifted, hospital/homebound, and English language learner s (ELLs) with more than two years in an English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) program.

³ Applies to all eligible students; includes students with disabilities and ELLs in all program areas.

⁴ Applies to students enrolled in alternative schools during Survey 2 (October) or Survey 3 (February) who were also tested at alternative schools.

Step 2.1 – Determine student SWD and ELL classifications on Survey 3: The Students With Disabilities (SWD) classification and English language learners (ELL) status of each student is determined, and the student is identified as “included” for all components of the school grade if eligibility criteria are met.

- a) SWD Status: The electronic record for each student contains up to 20 possible SWD classifications, as well as the student’s entry date into the SWD program. SWD students are included in the school grade calculations for proficiency in reading, math, writing, and science when their only exceptionality is gifted (L), hospital/homebound (M), speech impaired (F), or a combination of those three. Students with any other disability are not included in the proficiency components for the four subject areas noted above. Students must be enrolled in an SWD program prior to testing to be excluded from the school grading proficiency calculations.
- b) ELL Status: ELL students are included in the school grading proficiency components when they have been in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for more than two years prior to testing.

If a student is in exceptional student education or is an English language learner and does not meet the criteria set forth in a) or b), the student is included only in the calculation of participation and learning gains components.

Step 2.2 – Determine full academic year status: Students are included in the school grading system if they have been enrolled in the same school for a full academic year. Students are considered continuously enrolled for a full academic year if they were enrolled in the same school during the October and February FTE (full-time equivalent) counts. This determination is made by matching the “Student Number Identifier, Florida” in the Survey 3 file to the “Student Number Identifier, Florida” in the Survey 2 file by district and school.

Step 2.3 – Identify the grade 10 students who have previously passed the FCAT: Grade 10 students who have previously passed the grade 10 FCAT reading and/or mathematics will not be included in the school grading calculations. The identification process is completed separately for reading and for mathematics. All enrolled tenth grade students must take the writing test, even if they have already passed the reading and/or mathematics tests.

Step 2.4 – Identify students who attended alternative schools and whose FCAT results will be credited back to home schools: Per requirements of FAC Rule 6A-1.099822, students enrolled in and tested at alternative schools will have their FCAT scores credited back to their home school if the alternative school elects a school improvement rating instead of a school grade. Districts report the “home school” (the school to which the FCAT scores will be credited back) for each student at an alternative school by using two data elements on the Survey 3 Student Demographic Information records:

- “District Number, Zoned School” (http://www.fl DOE.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st87_35.pdf), which reports the district in which the home school is located; and
- “School Number, Zoned School” (http://www.fl DOE.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st246_25.pdf), which reports the school number of the home school.

Eligible students for whom a home school (“zoned school”) is reported will have their FCAT scores credited back to the home school for inclusion in the learning gains components (percent making learning gains in FCAT reading; percent making learning gains in FCAT math) of that school’s grade. Note that a student must have FCAT scores for the current and prior year in a subject in order for learning gains to be calculated. Eligible students’ performance will be included in the home school’s grade calculation as long as the student is enrolled in a grade level at the alternative school that is offered by the student’s home school.

Note also that s. 1008.34, F.S., excludes certain classifications of students in alternative schools from school grading:

- Students subject to district school board policies for expulsion for repeated and/or serious offenses, and
- Students who are in dropout-retrieval programs who have officially been designated as dropouts.

(In addition, test scores for students who are in programs operated or contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice are excluded from school grading, as required in statute.)

Students belonging to these classifications are reported by districts to the Department of Education’s automated student database via the Federal/State Indicator Status reporting format (http://www.fl DOE.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/0809fsis.asp), using specific codes reported on the Dropout Prevention/Juvenile Justice Programs data element (http://www.fl DOE.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st91_1.pdf). The following codes will be used to identify students in alternative schools whose FCAT scores will not be included in school improvement rating or school grading calculations: R (for students in dropout retrieval programs), and E (for students in “alternative to expulsion” programs). A code of D can be reported for students in Department of Juvenile Justice programs; however, DJJ centers are already excluded from the grading process based on school type.

Step 2.5 – Obtain corrections and updates from the school districts: Lists of students to be included in school grades are identified by the Department and shared with the school districts in electronic form. Corrections are submitted to the Education Information and Accountability Services (EIAS) office, and corrected files are posted for district review. Districts are given the opportunity to correct data. Districts and schools are then given the opportunity to submit updates directly to the Bureau of Research and Evaluation (Evaluation and Reporting section) for students whose status changed after

the end of the Survey 3 reporting period and before testing. A general description of the correction/update process is provided below.

- a. Unmatched Identification Numbers: If there are students who were present for a full academic year but the student ID on Survey 2 does not match the student ID on Survey 3, this results in unmatched records. Districts are required to resolve these discrepancies by correcting the student ID on submitted records so that the Survey 2 and Survey 3 records can be matched.
- b. Inaccuracies in the data reported in Survey 3: Districts are given an opportunity to correct inaccuracies in data used for the school accountability calculations and reported in Survey 3.
- c. Non-public school students taking courses at public schools: Home schooled and private school students who receive services from a public school are excluded from calculations if N998 (Home Education) or N999 (Private School) is reported as the primary school number in the “Current Enrollment” field of Survey 3. For students whose primary instructional school has been misidentified, districts must report the correct primary school number to the Office of Evaluation and Reporting.
- d. ELL status during FCAT is different from Survey 3: Only ELL students who were enrolled in an ESOL program for more than 2 years at the time of testing are included in the four proficiency components for school grading. Updated information must be provided for students who enroll in an ESOL program after Survey 3 but before testing.
- e. SWD status during FCAT is different from Survey 3: All students who are enrolled in designated SWD programs prior to testing are not included in the four proficiency components of school grade calculations (exemptions noted above). Updated information must be provided for students who are enrolled in a program after Survey 3 but before testing.
- f. Withdrawal status prior to testing: All students who were withdrawn from school after Survey 3 and prior to the first day of FCAT testing must be identified.
- g. 10th grade FCAT graduation requirements met prior to testing: All 10th grade retained students who have passed the reading and/or math FCAT prior to testing are not included in the school grade calculation. Districts must ensure that these students are appropriately identified.

Step 2.6 – Creation of the Membership File: Upon completion of both rounds of error corrections, a final file is created and referred to as the Membership File. The Membership File is used for all accountability calculations.

3. Obtain Student FCAT Scores

The Evaluation and Reporting Office works closely with the K-12 Assessment staff to obtain accurate FCAT data on all students. The matching process is similar to that used for the matching of Survey 2 and 3. After the initial matching process is complete, districts are provided a list of unmatched and mismatched students. School districts must return updated and corrected information for each student. The extent to which

this step is completed correctly by the school districts affects the Department's ability to include the maximum number of eligible students in the school grading process. The matching and corrections processes are briefly summarized below.

Step 3.1 – Identify FCAT records with blank or duplicate Student IDs: For records with a blank or duplicate FCAT Student ID, districts must provide the matching student ID from the Membership File for inclusion of student results.

Step 3.2 – Match Membership files to FCAT files by district, school, and student ID: The Membership File is matched to FCAT files using district, school, and student ID. Unmatched records are flagged and districts must provide the matching fields from the Membership File for inclusion of student results.

Step 3.3 – Identify FCAT records that have missing prior year FCAT data: Any record that does not contain prior year test results will be flagged. Districts must report correct prior year print after scan numbers that are associated with the missing data for Reading and Mathematics.

Step 3.4 – Update FCAT records with district corrections: Upon completion of error corrections, student results in the FCAT file should be closely matched to the students enrolled in the Membership File.

Note: This process is completed for all students tested, not just those to be included in the school grading process. This is important for two reasons. First, scores for these students might be needed for determining learning gains the following year if the students become eligible for inclusion; e.g., students in limited English programs for more than two years. Secondly, because all students are included in determining Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, it is necessary to correct all Student IDs. The process is also important for the alternative school rating system implemented in 2008.

4. Compute the Percentage Points for Each Performance Measure

The eight performance measures evaluated as part of determining school grades can be grouped into three categories:

- The percent of students achieving high standards (steps 4.1-4.4),
- The percent of students making learning gains (steps 4.4-4.5), and
- The percent of the lowest performing students who make learning gains (steps 4.6-4.7).

Although the computations are similar within each category, the computations for each performance measure are described separately in the following sections.

Step 4.1 – Calculate Reading Performance: This component focuses on the extent to which eligible students score sufficiently high on the reading portion of the FCAT to be considered “on grade level.” Schools accumulate one point for each percent of eligible students scoring at FCAT achievement levels 3, 4, and 5 in reading. The number of eligible students scoring at levels 3-5 is divided by the total number of eligible students who took the FCAT reading test and for whom a valid score was reported.

Step 4.2 – Calculate Mathematics Performance: This component focuses on the extent to which eligible students score sufficiently high on the mathematics portion of the FCAT to be considered “on grade level.” Schools accumulate one point for each percent of eligible students scoring at FCAT achievement levels 3, 4, and 5 in mathematics. The number of eligible students scoring at levels 3-5 is divided by the total number of eligible students who took the FCAT mathematics test and for whom a valid score was reported.

Step 4.3 – Calculate Science Performance: This component focuses on the extent to which eligible students score sufficiently high on the science portion of the FCAT to be considered “on grade level.” Schools accumulate one point for each percent of eligible students scoring at FCAT achievement levels 3, 4, and 5 in science. The number of eligible students scoring at levels 3-5 is divided by the total number of eligible students who took the FCAT science test and for whom a valid score was reported.

Note: If fewer than 10 eligible students were tested in science, the district science average is substituted for school science proficiency results. If at least 10 but fewer than 30 students were tested in science, the higher of the district science average or the school percent proficient in science is applied.

Step 4.4 – Calculate Writing Performance: This component recognizes the traditional objective that students be able to write a composition that meets at least minimal requirements. The percentage points earned take into account the percent of students scoring 3.5 and above on the essay part of the FCAT writing examination. The number of eligible students scoring 3.5 and above is then divided by the number of eligible students who took the writing test and for whom a valid score was reported.

Example: In a hypothetical school, there were 131 eligible students who took FCAT Writing. Ninety-four students scored 3.5 and above. The percent meeting high standards in writing at this hypothetical school is 72%: (94 students at 3.5 and above ÷ 131 eligible students).

Note: If fewer than 10 eligible students were tested in writing, the district writing average is substituted for the school writing proficiency results. If at least 10 but fewer than 30 students were tested in writing, the higher of the district writing average or the school percent proficient in writing is applied.

Step 4.5 – Calculate Reading Gains: Including learning gains as a performance measure for determining school grades was initiated in 2002. It emphasizes the importance of learning a year’s worth of knowledge in a year’s worth of time. Individual student learning gains are determined by comparing each student’s prior year test score to the current year test score using three different methods. Schools earn one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in reading. Students make learning gains by any one of the three methods described below.

Students make learning gains if they

- a. improve one or more FCAT achievement levels; e.g., from 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5;
- b. maintain their achievement levels within levels 3, 4, or 5; or

- c. demonstrate more than one year's growth when remaining in achievement level 1 or 2 for both years. Under this alternative, one year's growth is defined in terms of the difference between a student's current year and prior year FCAT developmental score. Students who remain in levels 1 or 2 are credited with learning gains for reading if they improve more than the cut-off scores (point differentials between prior and current year developmental scores) shown in Table 2.

Note: Retained students are included in methods a. and b. above but not in method c. because the definition of one year's growth is based on taking the FCAT at the next higher grade. Also, when a student's achievement level scores drop (e.g., from level 4 to level 3), the student is not counted as having made learning gains, even if the lower score is on or above grade level.

Table 2

One Year's Growth Definition for FCAT Reading Developmental Scores						
Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
230	166	133	110	92	77	77

Step 4.6 – Calculate Mathematics Gains: This component is parallel to the reading procedure described in step 4.5. Individual student learning gains are determined by comparing each student's prior year test score to the current year test score using three different methods. Schools earn one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in mathematics. Students make learning gains by any one of the three methods described below.

Students make learning gains if they

- improve one or more FCAT achievement levels, e.g., from 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5;
- maintain their achievement levels within levels 3, 4, or 5; or
- demonstrate more than one year's growth when remaining in achievement level 1 or 2 for both years. Under this alternative, one year's growth is defined in terms of the difference between a student's current year and prior year FCAT developmental score. Students who remain in levels 1 or 2 are credited with learning gains for mathematics if they improve more than the cut-off scores (point differentials between prior and current year developmental scores) shown in Table 3.

Note: Retained students are included in methods a. and b. above but not in method c. because the definition of one year's growth is based on taking the FCAT at the next higher grade. Also, when achievement level scores drop (e.g., from level 4 to level 3), they are not counted as having made learning gains, even if the lower score is on or above grade level.

Table 3

One Year's Growth Definition for FCAT Mathematics Developmental Scores						
Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
162	119	95	78	64	54	48

Step 4.7 – Calculate reading gains for the lowest performing students: Special attention is given to the reading gains of the lowest 25% of students or lowest 30 scoring at FCAT achievement levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school.

The students included in the calculations for this component are students who

- meet all criteria for inclusion in school grade calculations for the current year;
- have both a prior year score and a current year score on FCAT reading;
- are ranked in the lowest 25% based on their prior year FCAT reading developmental scale scores; and
- have a prior year score less than or equal to an achievement level 3 score.

Step 4.8 – Calculate mathematics gains for the lowest performing students: Special attention is given to the mathematics gains of the lowest 25% of students or lowest 30 scoring in FCAT achievement levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school.

The students included in the calculations for this component are students who

- meet all criteria for inclusion in school grade calculations for the current year;
- have both a prior year score and a current year score on FCAT reading;
- are ranked in the lowest 25% based on their prior year FCAT mathematics developmental scale scores; and
- have a prior year score less than or equal to an achievement level 3 score.

The lowest 25 percent in reading and the lowest 25 percent in mathematics is determined using the same method but applied separately to reading data and to mathematics data. The procedure used to identify the lowest 25% of the students in a school is applied separately by grade, and the identified students are combined across all grades to determine learning gains. The first step is to rank the scores of all students in the grade from highest to lowest based on their prior year reading developmental scale scores. Students without a prior year score are not included. The second step is to identify the developmental scale score that corresponds to the percentile rank of 25. This is not the same as sorting the scores descending as ranking allows for duplicate scores. This scale score becomes the boundary score. The boundary score must not be in FCAT achievement levels 4 or 5. Any student who has a score equal to or below the boundary score is included in the lowest 25%. Students from all grades are combined to form the total pool of students to be evaluated. If the total number of students in the lowest 25% is 30 or more, the percent making learning gains is calculated as described in Steps 4.5 and 4.6.

If the total number of students in the lowest 25% is less than 30, then the following process is used to identify which students will be added to the group comprising the

lowest 25% to form the group of 30 or more students that will be included in the lowest performing group. Each student is assigned a percentile ranking within his or her grade. After the lowest 25% is identified through the process described in the preceding paragraph, the remaining students are ranked together based on the percentile rank that was assigned to each within his or her grade. Of these students, the one with the lowest percentile ranking is added to the lowest performing group. If the group still numbers less than 30, then the student with the next lowest percentile ranking is added to the group, and so on, until the number of the group reaches 30. It is possible for the group to exceed 30 if there are students with a tied percentile ranking who are added at the last step.

If there are not 30 or more students who scored at or below achievement level 3 in the prior year, the reading or mathematics gains respectively of all students will be substituted.

The examples in Table 4 illustrate how this component is evaluated.

Table 4
Examples of Learning Gains for the Lowest 25% in Reading

	Shell Elementary School	Dolphin Middle School
Number of eligible students included in the current year school grade	125	1050
Number of eligible students with prior year FCAT reading scores	100	1000
Students in the lowest 25% based on the prior year's FCAT reading scores that are less than or equal to an achievement level 3 score	28	250
Is the number 30 or more?	No	Yes
Identify and add the next lowest percentile ranked student among those who were not included in the lowest 25% and whose score is no higher than level 3.	$28 + 1 = 29$	
Is the number 30 or more?	No	
Identify and add the next lowest percentile ranked student among the remaining students whose score is no higher than level 3.	$29 + 1 = 30$	
Is the number 30 or more?	Yes	
Number showing learning gains	12	150
Percent showing learning gains	40% (12/30)	60% (150/250)
If there are not 30 or more students who scored at or below achievement level 3 in the prior year, the reading gains of all students will be substituted.	If <30 Substitute Reading Gains of All students	

5. Determine Retake Bonus Points for High Schools

Students included in the bonus-points calculation for retakes include standard curriculum, speech-impaired, gifted, and hospital-homebound students, as well as English language learners (ELLs) who have been in the English for Speakers of Languages (ESOL) program for more than two years. These are the same criteria for inclusion as those applied to the percent-proficient components of school grades except students are in 11th or 12th grade during the current year.

Eligibility for the retake calculation is applied in the following order:

Eligibility for Denominator:

- a. Students who have not met the reading and/or math FCAT graduation requirement (as applicable, by subject) following the March administration of the prior year.
- b. Students enrolled full time for two consecutive years (the current and prior school years).
- c. During the prior year, students can be in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade.
- d. Students are in 11th or 12th grade during the current year.

Districts will have the opportunity to identify students who met the reading and/or math FCAT graduation requirement through a concordant test score on the assessment retake Web application. Students who have met the graduation requirement for a subject area (reading, math) through concordant test scores will be excluded from the retakes calculation for that subject area.

Eligibility for Numerator:

- a. Student is in the denominator.
- b. Reading and/or math FCAT results with a scale score of at least 300 on the Summer 2008, Fall 2008, or Spring 2009 administrations. If records are duplicated within an administration, only the highest record is kept.

Retake Calculation:

- a. The criteria for determining the retake bonus apply when there are at least 10 students in the denominator for reading and at least 10 students in the denominator for math.
- b. Numerator / Denominator = retake percent.
- c. There must be at least 50 percent meeting the FCAT graduation requirement in both reading and math in order to earn 10 bonus points.

The requirement to be enrolled in the same school for two consecutive years ensures that districts will not be held responsible for students that were only enrolled in the school for a brief amount of time. Also, the determination that the student be enrolled in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade the prior year is required because students should be taking the 10th grade FCAT. Students in 9th grade that are promoted to 11th grade are not included.

6. Determine the Percent Tested

The procedure for estimating a school's percent tested was developed long before school grades were first calculated. Starting in 1995, the estimating procedure was developed in cooperation with district testing directors and has been modified only slightly over the years. It has always been a straightforward approximation.

The estimate of the percent tested is calculated by dividing the total number of eligible students tested in each subject by the number of eligible students in membership who are expected to take each subject test. Students are eligible for inclusion in the school grades calculation for participation (percent tested) if they are enrolled in the same school for a full academic year. All students are included in the participation calculation unless (a) the student took an alternate assessment because the FCAT was not appropriate for the student due to a disability, or (b) the student was a first-year English language learner who was not administered the FCAT in reading. Note that this is a different calculation and population from those used to determine percent tested for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measure.

The example in Table 5 shows how the percent tested for a hypothetical high school is calculated.

Table 5
Example for Estimating the Percent Tested

	Number Tested	Eligible Membership	Percent Tested
Reading	620	640	
Mathematics	640	650	
Writing	340	350	
Science	345	350	
Totals	1945	1990	98%

An adjustment of the membership is included to take into account that some students in the membership have actually taken FCAT, but those scores never show up because the students may have answered too few items to generate a score or their test was invalidated due to a testing irregularity. Another adjustment is included for retained grade 10 students who have previously taken and passed the FCAT. These adjustments are accomplished by either adjusting the number tested (the numerator) or the number in membership (the denominator) as appropriate.

7. Determine Whether the Low 25% in Reading and Mathematics Made Adequate Progress

Adequate progress of the lowest performing quartile in FCAT reading and math is attained when at least 50 percent of students in the group have made annual learning gains in each subject. Schools that fall short of the 50-percent mark can still avoid having their grade reduced by one grade if they meet the following criteria:

- For schools with at least 40 percent of students in the lowest quartile making learning gains, there is at least a 1% improvement in the percent making learning gains vs. the prior year.
- For schools with less than 40 percent of students in the lowest quartile making learning gains, there is at least a 5% improvement in the percent making learning gains vs. the prior year.

See p. 4 for additional information.

8. Determine the Total Points and the Final School Grade

1. All percentage points are accumulated for each performance measure and added together to obtain the total points.
2. Schools earning enough total points to earn a grade of A must also test at least 95% of their eligible students. All other letter grade designations are based on a minimum of 90% tested. For schools testing less than 90%, the final grade may be one letter grade lower than indicated by the total points accumulated. A school's grade will only be lowered once.
3. A school with enough points to earn an "A" must show adequate progress of the low 25% in both reading and math for the current year. A school with enough points to earn a "B" or "C" must show adequate progress of the low 25% in both reading and math for either the current or previous year. The final grade of schools that would otherwise be graded C or above will be reduced one letter grade for schools failing to meet this criterion. A school's grade will only be lowered once.
4. Schools that have at least half of the grade 11 and 12 students retaking the grade 10 FCAT and meeting the graduation requirements for reading and mathematics will be awarded 10 bonus points on top of the eight components.

Table 6: Summary of School Grading Criteria

Grade	Grading Criteria
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 525 points or more • 95% tested or more • Make adequate progress in the current year with the lowest performing students.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 495 to 524 points • 90% tested or more • Make adequate progress with the lowest performing students in either the current or the previous year.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 435 to 494 points or more • 90% or greater tested • Make adequate progress with the lowest performing students in either the current or the previous year.

D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 395 to 434 points or more • 90% tested or more
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer than 395 points • 90% tested or more
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 90% tested (Schools initially receive a grade of “incomplete” while the status is investigated.)

9. Review of School Grades

State Board Rule 6A-1.09981(9) requires each district to have an accountability contact person to verify that each school is appropriately classified, that students have been correctly identified and properly included for school grading, that matching FCAT records and previous year FCAT records can be identified, and that each school grade was calculated as specified in the Rule. The Rule also permits a 30-day period of time for districts to review the grade assigned. Therefore, the Florida Department of Education has instituted an appeals process described in this section. Requests for grade changes related to the specific requirements of the statute or rule cannot be granted and should not be submitted.

If a school district identifies a data miscalculation or circumstances that might result in the assignment of a different grade, the district can participate in the school grade review process. Appropriate documentation of all elements and data to be reviewed by the Department must be submitted within thirty (30) days from the date of the school grades release. These requests must be submitted by the school district accountability contact rather than by individual schools. Appeals that do not comply with the detailed instructions from the Department will not be reviewed.

Following the thirty (30) day appeal window, the Department of Education will review the appeals documentation and present recommendations to an appeals committee for their review and recommendations. Final recommendations will be made to the Commissioner of Education, and the Commissioner’s determination of a school’s grade shall be final. The Department will notify each district Superintendent and accountability contact of the final school grade after the final decision of the Commissioner. Local district officials, as designated by the Superintendent, are responsible for notifying individual schools.

Grading Florida Public Schools

2008-09



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DR. ERIC J. SMITH, COMMISSIONER

School grades for 2008-09 utilize a point system. Schools are awarded one point for each percent of students who score high on the FCAT and/or make annual learning gains.

Scoring High on the FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the primary measure of students' achievement of the Sunshine State Standards. Student scores are classified into five achievement levels, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.

- ⇒ Schools earn one point for each percent of students who score in achievement levels 3, 4, or 5 in reading, one point for each percent of students who score 3, 4, or 5 in mathematics, and one point for each percent of students who score 3, 4, or 5 in science. If a school has fewer than 30 students with science scores, the district average for science will be used.
- ⇒ The writing exam is scored by at least two readers on a scale of 1 to 8. Schools earn one point for each percent of students scoring 3.5 or above. If a school has fewer than 30 students with writing scores, the district average for writing will be used.

Making Annual Learning Gains

Since FCAT reading and mathematics exams are given in grades 3 – 10, it is possible to monitor how much students learn from one year to the next.

- ⇒ Schools earn one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in reading and one point for each percent of students who make learning gains in mathematics. Students can demonstrate learning gains in any one of three ways:
 1. Improve achievement levels from 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5; or
 2. Maintain within the relatively high levels of 3, 4, or 5; or
 3. Demonstrate more than one year's growth within achievement levels 1 or 2 (does not include retained students).
- ⇒ Special attention is given to the reading and mathematics gains of students in the lowest 25%¹ in levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school. Schools earn one point for each percent of the lowest performing students who make learning gains from the previous year in reading and mathematics. It takes at least 50% in both reading and mathematics to make "adequate progress" for this group. Schools that fall short of 50% can still meet the requirement if they show annual improvement in this percentage.

¹For schools with fewer than 30 students in the lowest 25%, the 30 lowest performing students will be substituted.

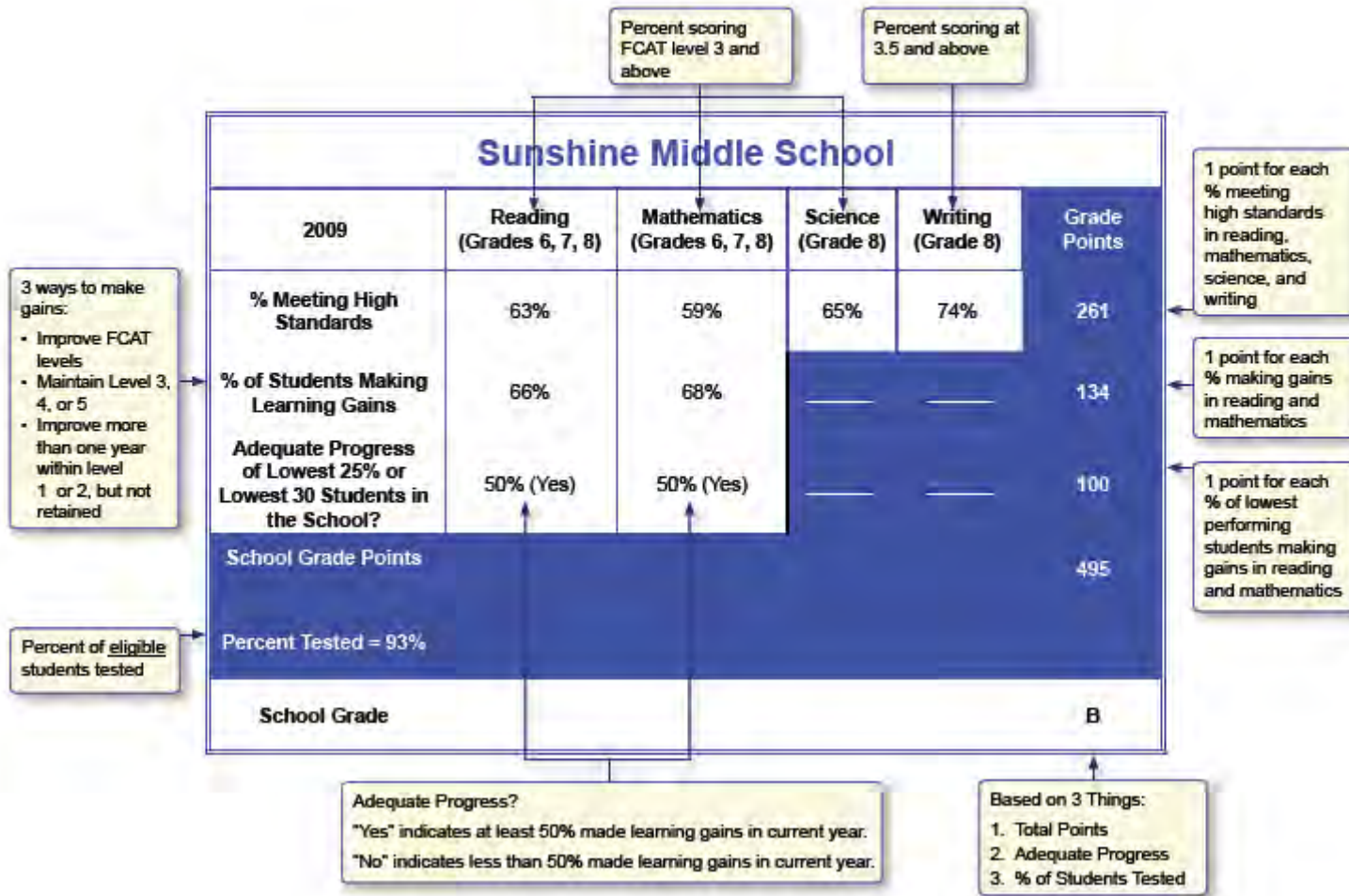
SCHOOL GRADING SCALE

A	B	C	D	F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 525 points or more - Meet adequate progress of lowest students in reading and mathematics - Test at least 95% of eligible students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 495-524 points - Meet adequate progress of lowest students in reading and mathematics within two years - Test at least 90% of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 435-494 points - Meet adequate progress of lowest students in reading and mathematics within two years. - Test at least 90% of eligible students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 385-434 points - Test at least 90% of eligible students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer than 385 points OR - Less than 90% of eligible students tested

Which students are included in school grade calculations? As in previous years, only standard curriculum students (including Speech impaired, gifted, hospital/home bound, and English Language Learner students (ELL) with more than two years in an English Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) program) enrolled in the same school in both October and February are included in the components for scoring high on the FCAT. All students, including Students with Disabilities (SWD) and ELL students, are included in the learning gains components of the school grade calculation.

What happens if the lowest students in the school do not make "adequate progress" in reading and mathematics? Schools that do not make adequate progress with their lowest students in reading and mathematics must develop a School Improvement Plan component that addresses this need. If a school, otherwise graded "A", does not demonstrate adequate progress in the current year, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade. If a school, otherwise graded "B" or "C", does not demonstrate adequate progress in either the current or prior year, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

Sample School Grade Report for 2009



Appendix B

Definition of One Year's Growth in the A+ Accountability System

Florida's A+ school accountability system has three major components:

- Yearly achievement of high standards in reading, mathematics, writing, and science;
- Annual learning gains in reading and mathematics; and
- Annual learning gains in reading and mathematics for the lowest 25% of students in each school.

The definition of learning gains is spelled out in State Board of Education *Rule 6A-1.09981*. There are three ways that schools can be credited for the annual learning gains of their students:

1. when students improve their FCAT achievement level from one year to the next;
2. when students maintain their achievement levels within 3, 4 or 5 from one year to the next; or
3. when students demonstrate more than one year's growth within Levels 1 or 2, as measured by an increase in their FCAT developmental scores from one year to the next.

The first two gain definitions are relatively straightforward because student achievement level information is readily available from the FCAT student report and district test data files provided by the Department. The third definition is more complex since it is based on the amount of gain that represents one year's growth. Thus, a definition of "one year's growth" in terms of FCAT developmental scale score gain is required.

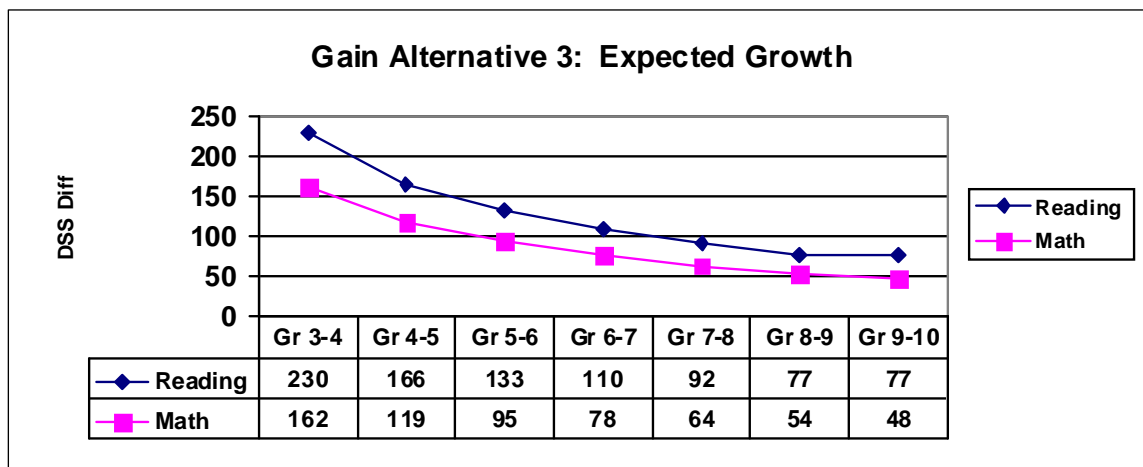
The definition of "one year's growth" applied to the third gain option for calculating school grades is based on the numerical cut-scores for the FCAT achievement levels approved by the State Board of Education. In State Board Rule 6A-1.09422, there are four cut-off scores that separate FCAT scale scores into five achievement levels, with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 being the highest. At each of the four cut-off scores between achievement levels, FCAT scale scores (100-500) were converted to FCAT developmental scores that range from 0-3000. This allows all of the cut scores to be placed on the same scale. The increase in FCAT developmental scores necessary to maintain the same relative standing within achievement levels from one grade to the next was calculated for each of the four cut points between the five achievement levels.

The following table provides an example of how the three preceding steps were applied to the reading cut points from grade three to grade four:

Grade 4 Example					
Grade	Measure	Level 1-2 Cut	Level 2-3 Cut	Level 3-4 Cut	Level 4-5 Cut
3	FCAT scale score	258	283	331	393
	Developmental score	1045	1197	1488	1865
4	FCAT scale score	274	298	338	385
	Developmental Score	1314	1455	1689	1964
3 – 4	Difference in Developmental Scores at the cut points	269	258	201	99
Midpoint of differences at the cut points			230		

The last line of the table shows the expected gain from one achievement level to the next is different, depending on the initial achievement level of the student. To produce a single value that represents the entire student population, the median value of the differences is calculated. The median of the four developmental scale score differences necessary for students to maintain the same relative standing within an FCAT achievement level in the example is 230. The median was considered more appropriate than the average or maximum of the four values because the median is less sensitive to very high or low values.

After median gain expectations were determined for each grade progression (3-4, 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, 7-8, 8-9, and 9-10), a best-fit curve (logarithmic trend line) was calculated, beginning at grades 3-4 and ending at grades 9-10. Other curve fits were considered, including regression lines and polynomial transformations; however, the logarithmic trend line was adopted because it best described the theoretical expectation of greater gains in the early grade levels and lesser at the upper grade levels due to student maturation. The expected gain values for reading and mathematics were obtained separately. The following chart provides the values used to define one year's growth.



It is important to note the following points:

- For purposes of school accountability calculations under the third gain alternative, *6A-1.09981* requires that students who remain within FCAT Achievement Levels 1 or 2 must demonstrate more than one year's growth on the FCAT developmental scale, as determined by the Department. Therefore, for students to be credited with learning gains under the third alternative, they must achieve at least one developmental scale score point more than the values listed above.
- The definition of "one year's growth" in terms of the FCAT developmental score applies to all students who are promoted from one grade level to the next. It cannot be ascertained for retained students who take the same level of the test in two consecutive years.

Other methods for defining one year's growth were also considered prior to the adoption of the procedures described herein. These alternative procedures are described briefly for historical purposes, but each of these options was determined to be less desirable than the one adopted. (1) Expected growth amounts could have been calculated using observed differences in students' developmental scale scores for two consecutive years; however, this approach would lock in expected growth values based on the first year of available gain data and might not reflect actual growth patterns in future years. (2) Expected growth could have been defined at some point in the future after tracking actual cohorts of students over multiple years and determining their average yearly gains; however, this would have delayed the use of learning gains in the accountability system for several more years. (3) The definition of "one year's growth" could have been done separately for students within each of the five achievement levels; however, this method would result in different standards for different students. (4) The definition of "one year's growth" could have been based on the values obtained from grades 3-10 without statistical smoothing; however, this would lead to widely fluctuating expectations from grade to grade.

In summary, the definition of "one year's growth" applied to the calculating of learning gains was based firmly on the numerical cut-scores approved by the State Board of Education for the FCAT achievement levels. The numeric values of the learning gain expectations represent the average progress expected of students from grade to grade.

Additional Resources for Information about Florida's School Grades

School Accountability Reports Web Site

Florida's School Accountability Reports Web site allows users to request the latest information on school grades, AYP results, Return on Investment (ROI) information, and School Report Card results. See <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/default.asp>.

Florida School Grades Home Page

The home page for Florida's School Grades includes downloadable files for school grades and AYP, as well as press materials and links to additional resources. See <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>.

Guide to Alternative School Improvement Rating Calculations

Detailed steps used in calculating the school improvement ratings for alternative schools are described in a separate guide. See the link at the bottom of the Web page at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>.

Links to Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code Rules

Florida Statutes addressing the school grading system (s. 1008.34) and the school improvement rating system for alternative schools (s. 1008.341) are accessible at <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm>.

For Florida Administrative Code Rules that implement requirements of these statutes (see 6A-1.09981 and 6A-1.099822), see <https://www.flrules.org/default.asp>.

Florida Department of Education



Dr. Eric J. Smith, Commissioner