

May 1, 2006

2006

FCAT  
Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test®

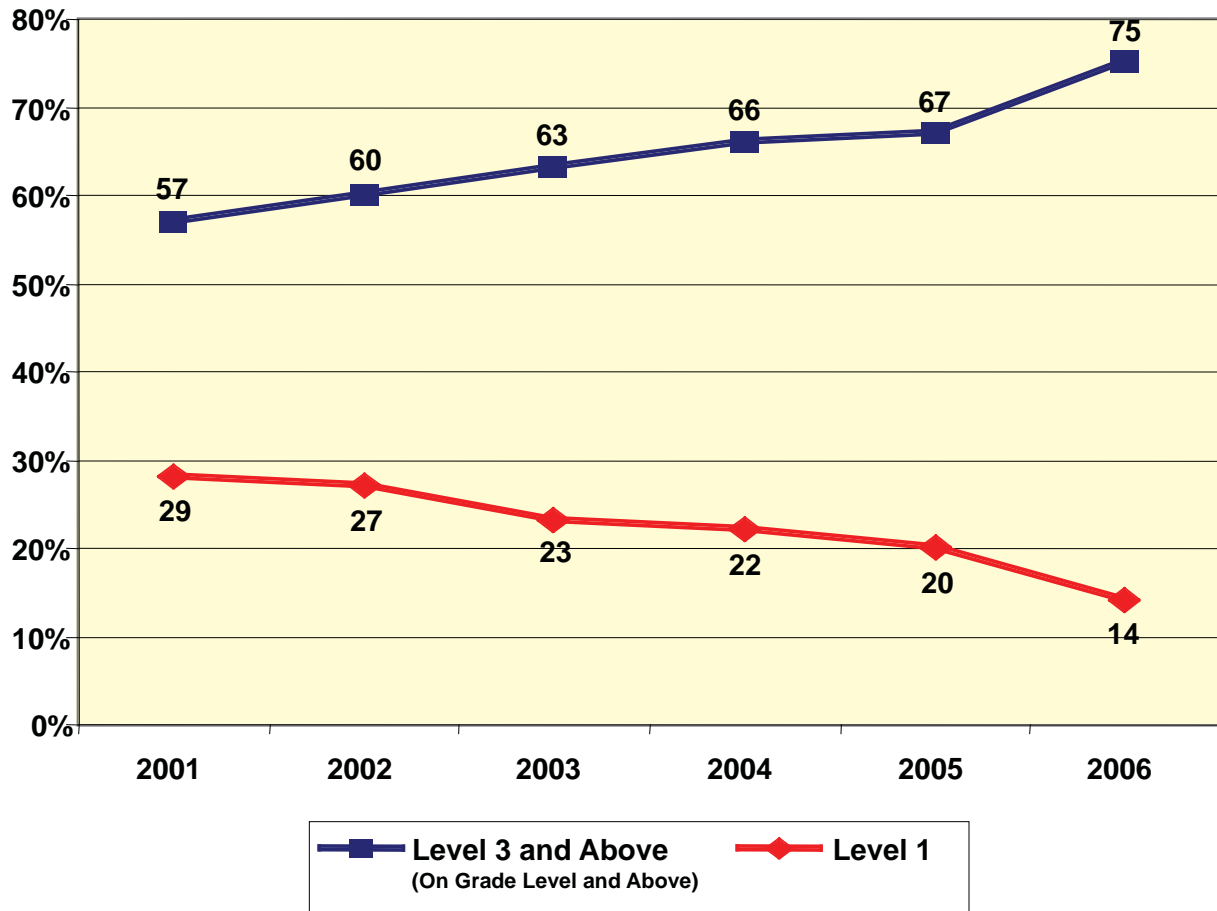
# Reading and Mathematics

## Grades 3 & 12



Florida Department of Education \_\_\_\_\_

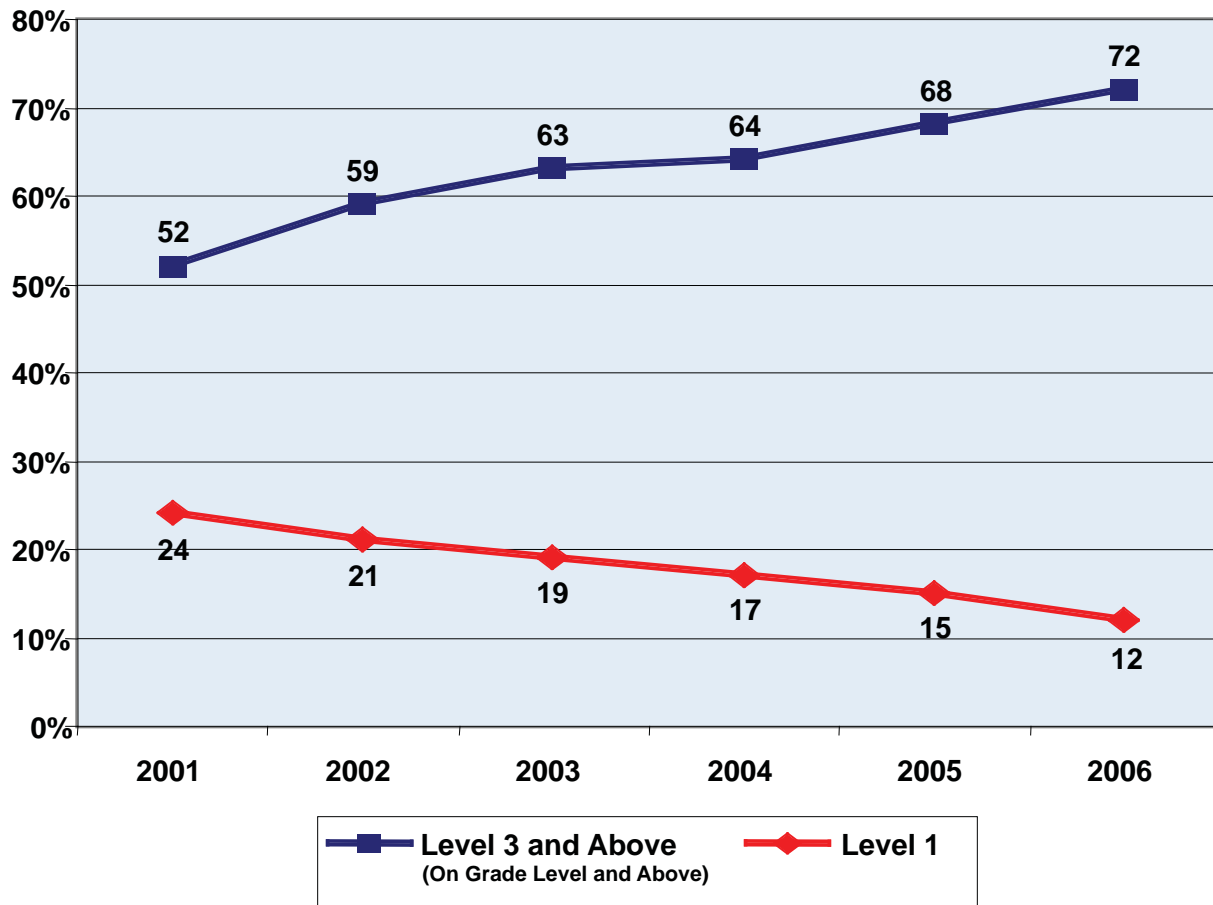
## FCAT Reading by Achievement Level Grade 3



In 2006, 75 percent of all students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Reading. This represents an increase from 57 percent in 2001, 60 percent in 2002, 63 percent in 2003, 66 percent in 2004, and 67 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 18 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 14 percent of all students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Reading. This represents a decrease from 29 percent in 2001, 27 percent in 2002, 23 percent in 2003, 22 percent in 2004, and 20 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 15 percentage points since 2001.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

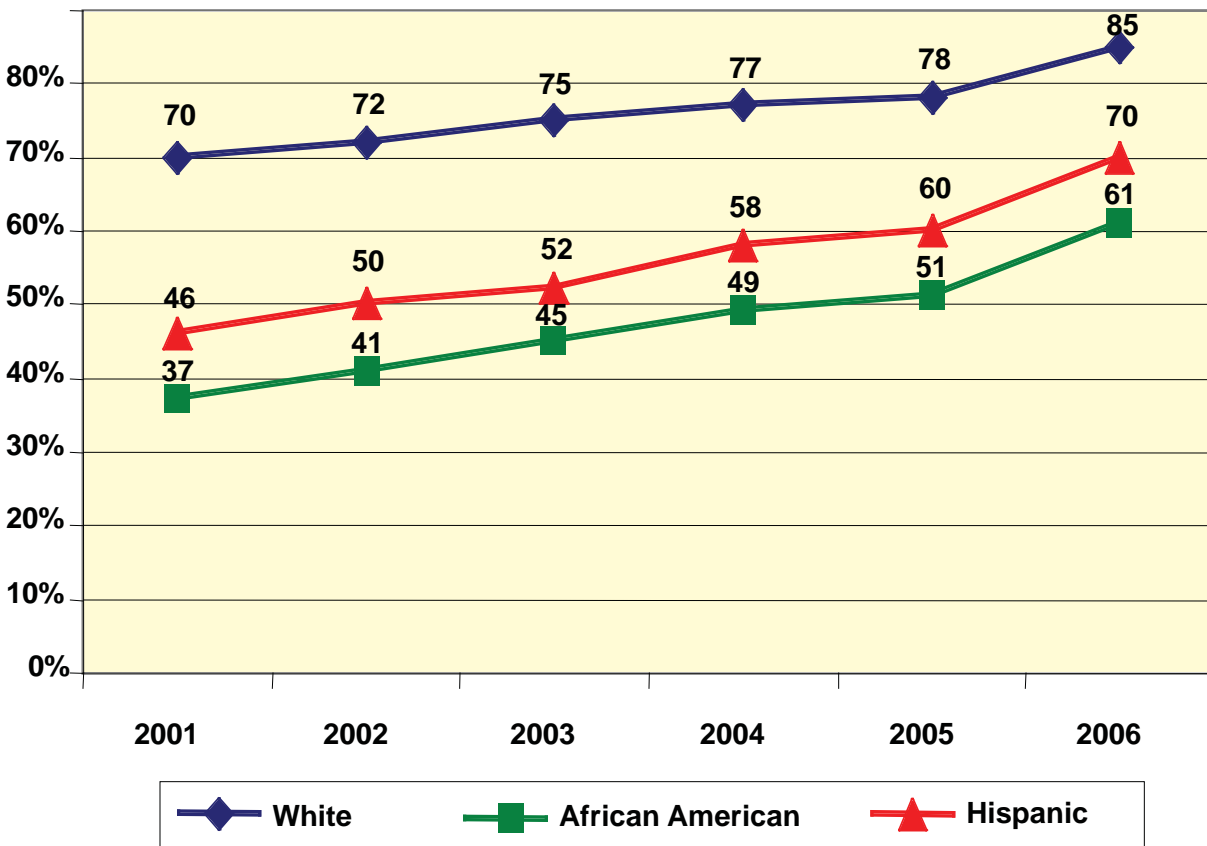
# FCAT Mathematics by Achievement Level Grade 3



In 2006, 72 percent of all students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Mathematics. This represents an increase from 52 percent in 2001, 59 percent in 2002, 63 percent in 2003, 64 percent in 2004, and 68 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 20 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 12 percent of all students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Mathematics. This represents a decrease from 24 percent in 2001, 21 percent in 2002, 19 percent in 2003, 17 percent in 2004, and 15 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 12 percentage points since 2001.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

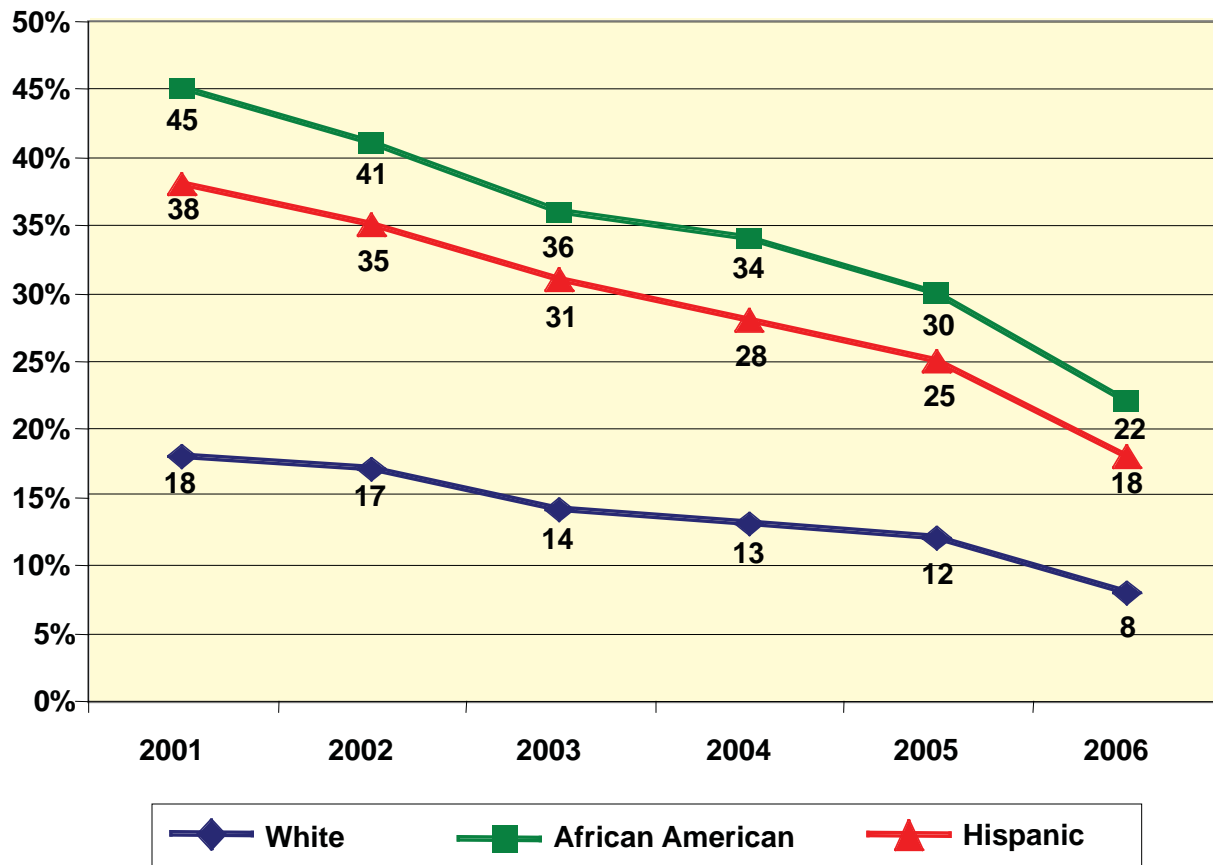
# FCAT Reading Achievement Level 3 and Above (On Grade Level and Above) Grade 3



In 2006, 85 percent of White students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Reading. This represents an increase from 70 percent in 2001, 72 percent in 2002, 75 percent in 2003, 77 percent in 2004, and 78 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 15 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 70 percent of Hispanic students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Reading. This represents an increase from 46 percent in 2001, 50 percent in 2002, 52 percent in 2003, 58 percent in 2004, and 60 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 24 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 61 percent of African American students were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Reading. This represents an increase from 37 percent in 2001, 41 percent in 2002, 45 percent in 2003, 49 percent in 2004, and 51 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 24 percentage points since 2001.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

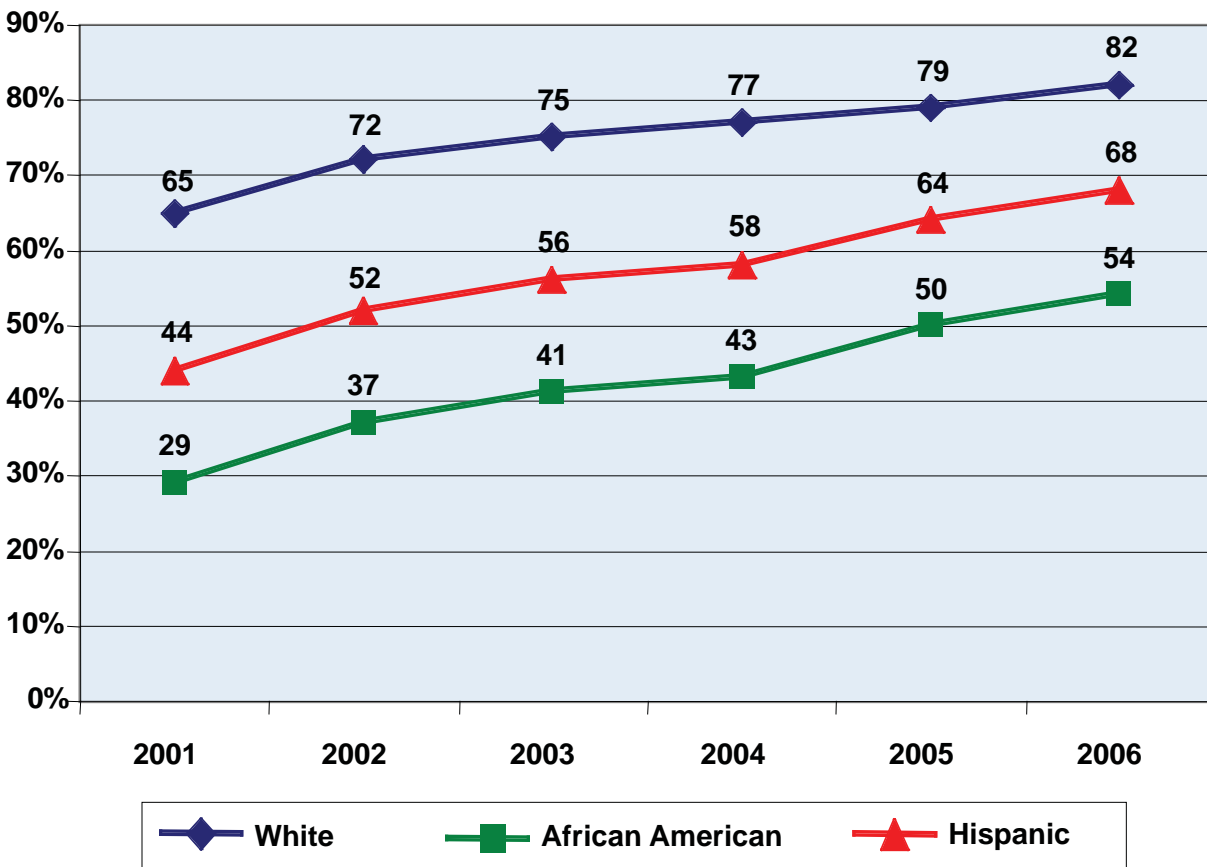
# FCAT Reading Achievement Level 1 Grade 3



In 2006, 8 percent of White students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Reading. This represents a decrease from 18 percent in 2001, 17 percent in 2002, 14 percent in 2003, 13 percent in 2004, and 12 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 10 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 18 percent of Hispanic students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Reading. This represents a decrease from 38 percent in 2001, 35 percent in 2002, 31 percent in 2003, 28 percent in 2004, and 25 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 20 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 22 percent of African American students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Reading. This represents a decrease from 45 percent in 2001, 41 percent in 2002, 36 percent in 2003, 34 percent in 2004, and 30 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 23 percentage points since 2001.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

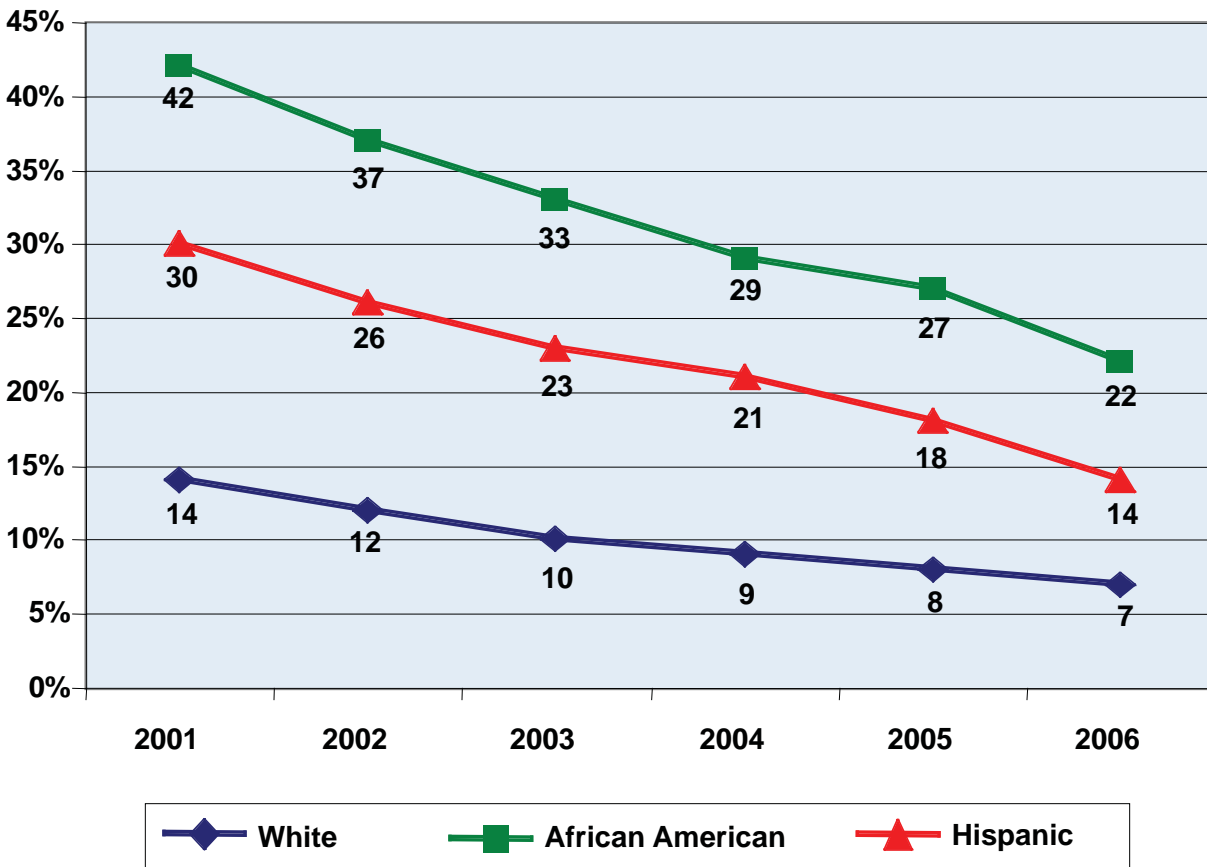
# FCAT Mathematics Achievement Level 3 and Above (On Grade Level and Above) Grade 3



In 2006, 82 percent of White students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Mathematics. This represents an increase from 65 percent in 2001, 72 percent in 2002, 75 percent in 2003, 77 percent in 2004, and 79 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 17 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 68 percent of Hispanic students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Mathematics. This represents an increase from 44 percent in 2001, 52 percent in 2002, 56 percent in 2003, 58 percent in 2004, and 64 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 24 percentage points. In 2006, 54 percent of African American students in grade 3 were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level) on FCAT Mathematics. This represents an increase from 29 percent in 2001, 37 percent in 2002, 41 percent in 2003, 43 percent in 2004, and 50 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 25 percentage points since 2001.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

# FCAT Mathematics Achievement Level 1 Grade 3

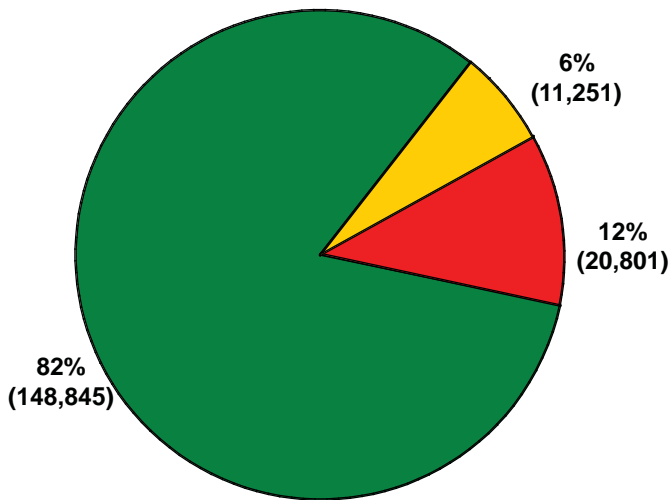


In 2006, 7 percent of White students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Mathematics. This represents a decrease from 14 percent in 2001, 12 percent in 2002, 10 percent in 2003, 9 percent in 2004, and 8 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 7 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 14 percent of Hispanic students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Mathematics. This represents a decrease from 30 percent in 2001, 26 percent in 2002, 23 percent in 2003, 21 percent in 2004, and 18 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 16 percentage points since 2001. In 2006, 22 percent of African American students in grade 3 were performing at achievement level 1 on FCAT Mathematics. This represents a decrease from 42 percent in 2001, 37 percent in 2002, 33 percent in 2003, 29 percent in 2004, and 27 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 20 percentage points since 2001.

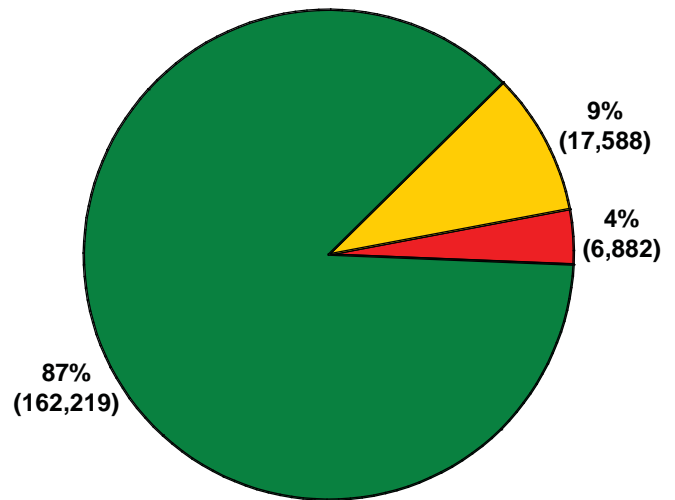
Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

# FCAT Reading First Time Test Takers Grade 3

2005  
FCAT Reading  
First Time Test Takers  
Grade 3



2006  
FCAT Reading  
First Time Test Takers  
Grade 3



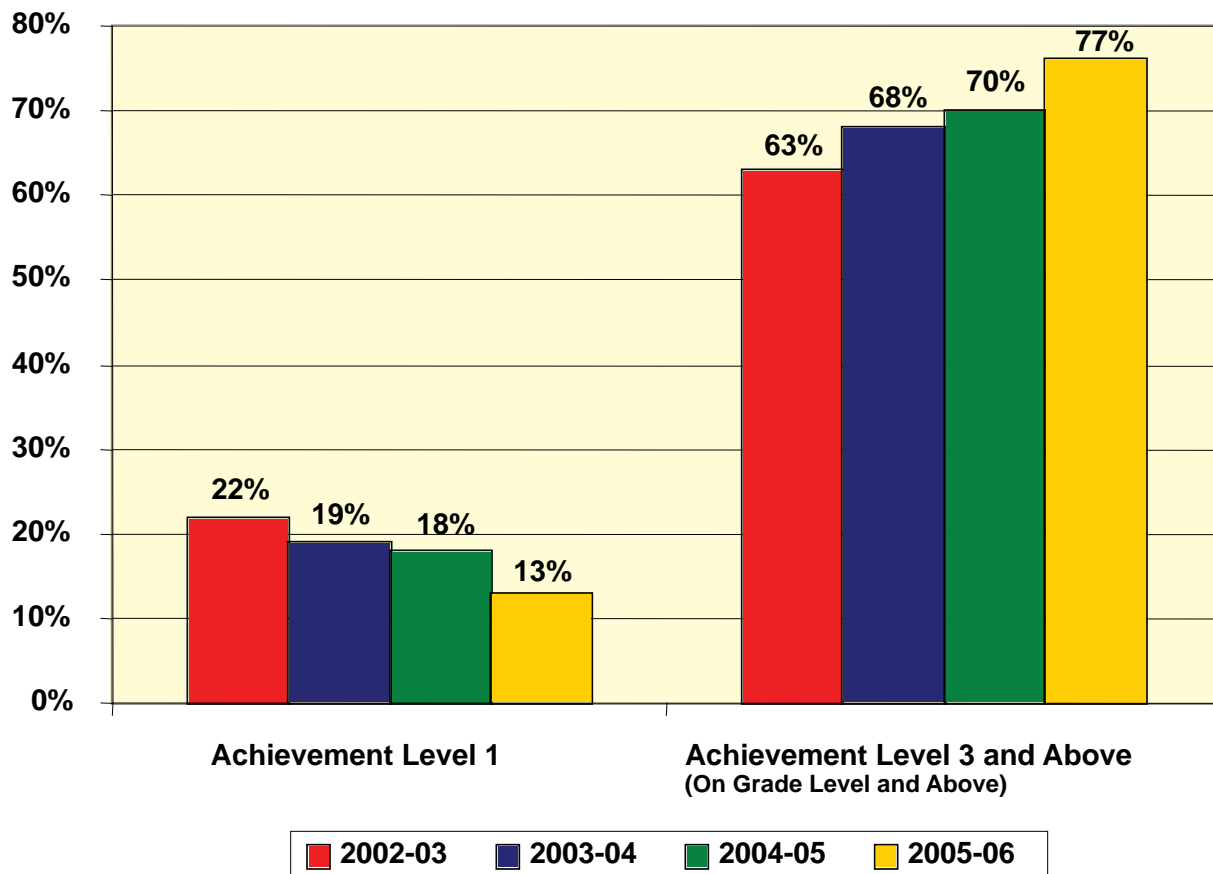
- Performing at achievement level 2 or above on FCAT Reading.
- In need of additional remediation, but are eligible for good cause exemption.
- In need of additional remediation, may be eligible for promotion only through alternative assessment or student portfolio good cause exemption.

In 2006, 162,219 students, 87%, in grade 3 taking FCAT Reading for the first time were performing at or above achievement level 2 compared to 148,845 students, 82%, in 2005. In 2006, 17,588 students, 9%, in grade 3 taking FCAT Reading for the first time are in need of additional remediation, but are eligible for a good cause exemption compared to 11,251 students, 6%, in 2005. In 2006, 6,882 students, 4%, in grade 3 taking FCAT Reading for the first time are in need of additional remediation and may be eligible for promotion through alternative assessment or student portfolio good cause exemption compared to 20,801 students, 12% in 2005.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006



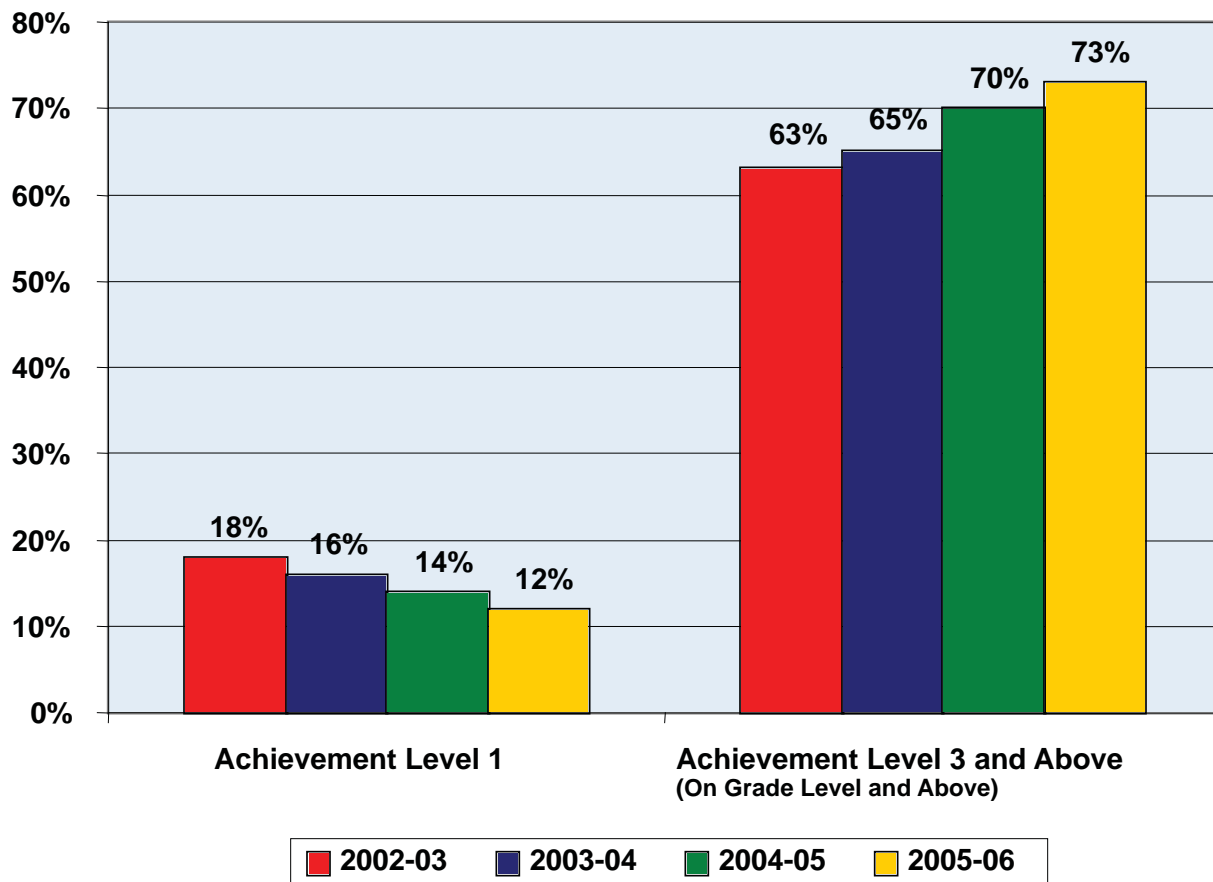
# FCAT Reading First Time Test Takers Achievement Levels 1 & 3 and Above Grade 3



In 2006, 13 percent of students in grade 3 taking FCAT Reading for the first time were performing at achievement level 1. This represents a decrease from 22 percent in 2003, 19 percent in 2004, and 18 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 9 percentage points since 2003. In 2006, 77 percent of students in grade 3 taking FCAT Reading for the first time were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level). This represents an increase from 63 percent in 2003, 68 percent in 2004, and 70 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 14 percentage points since 2003.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006

# FCAT Mathematics First Time Test Takers Achievement Levels 1 & 3 and Above Grade 3



In 2006, 12 percent of students in grade 3 taking FCAT Mathematics for the first time were performing at achievement level 1. This represents a decrease from 18 percent in 2003, 16 percent in 2004, and 14 percent in 2005 for a total decrease of 6 percentage points since 2003. In 2006, 73 percent of students in grade 3 taking FCAT Mathematics for the first time were performing at or above achievement level 3 (on grade level). This represents an increase from 63 percent in 2003, 65 percent in 2004, and 70 percent in 2005 for a total increase of 10 percentage points since 2003.

Source: Florida Department of Education, May 2006



## Reading and Mathematics Scores – GRADE 3 Statewide Comparison for 2001 to 2006

<b>FCAT Reading – Sunshine State Standards Test<sup>1</sup></b>										
Grade	Year	Number of Students	Average Developmental Scale Score	Average Mean Scale Score	Percent of Students by Achievement Level <sup>2</sup>					Achievement Level Three & Above
					1	2	3	4	5	
3	2001	186,139	1233	289	29	14	32	21	4	57
	2002	188,387	1257	293	27	14	32	23	5	60
	2003	188,107	1290	298	23	15	33	25	5	63
	2004	206,435	1315	303	22	13	33	26	6	66
	2005	202,975	1333	305	20	13	33	28	6	67
	2006	204,238	1382	313	14	11	37	33	5	75

<b>FCAT Mathematics – Sunshine State Standards Test<sup>1</sup></b>										
Grade	Year	Number of Students	Average Developmental Scale Score	Average Mean Scale Score	Percent of Students by Achievement Level					Achievement Level Three & Above
					1	2	3	4	5	
3	2001	186,336	1258	291	24	24	33	16	3	52
	2002	188,606	1309	302	21	20	34	20	5	59
	2003	188,487	1335	308	19	19	34	22	7	63
	2004	206,534	1346	310	17	19	34	23	7	64
	2005	203,037	1380	317	15	17	34	25	9	68
	2006	204,402	1409	324	12	16	34	27	10	72

<b>FCAT Norm-Referenced Test<sup>3</sup></b>							
	Year	Reading			Mathematics		
		Number Tested	Scale Score	Median <sup>4</sup> NPR <sup>5</sup>	Number Tested	Scale Score	Median NPR
SAT 9	2000	183,050	616	49	182,188	612	56
	2001	185,991	622	56	186,080	615	59
	2002	187,965	624	57	188,192	618	62
	2003	187,526	629	61	187,665	623	66
	2004	205,797	629	62	205,804	625	68
SAT 10	2005	201,925	620	50	201,794	624	62
	2006	203,784	633	61	203,436	631	67

<sup>1</sup> Data are for all students tested in all curriculum groups.

<sup>2</sup> Achievement Level information was not reported in May 2001 for grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. The data shown here reflect the retroactive application of the Achievement Level criteria.

<sup>3</sup> The 2005 FCAT Norm-Referenced Test is a custom form of the Stanford 10<sup>®</sup>. Prior to that, the Stanford 9<sup>®</sup> was used.

<sup>4</sup> Median is the score that identifies the middle point.

<sup>5</sup> NPR is the National Percentile Rank and indicates the percent of students who earned the same score or lower. Students who score at the national average earn an NPR of 50.

## 2001

- Governor Bush establishes Just Read, Florida! to ensure all Florida students are able to read at or above grade level by the year 2012.

## 2002-2003

- 300 elementary school principals from the state's lowest-performing elementary schools received training on how to make reading a priority in their schools – from scheduling, to analyzing data, to supporting their teachers through reading professional development.
- 240 elementary school reading coaches funded and trained by the state on the latest research-based methods and strategies for solid reading instruction; served 240 elementary schools statewide.
- Florida awarded \$52 million in federal Reading First funds, which will total over \$300 million in six years, to assist Florida districts and schools with the implementation of scientifically based reading instruction.

## 2003-2004

- 500 elementary school principals from the state's lowest performing schools and schools participating in the Reading First program received training.
- 206 K-5 elementary school reading coaches funded and trained by the state; served 206 elementary schools statewide.
- 329 Reading First schools served 7,500 K-3 teachers and nearly 200,000 K-3 students.
- 329 Reading First coaches served Reading First schools.
- 8,000 K-3 teachers received training on the latest in scientifically based reading research – representing 23% of all K-3 teachers in Florida.

## 2004-2005

- 1,000 elementary school principals trained; training opened up to all elementary principals.
- 218 K-5 elementary school reading coaches funded and trained by the state, serving 206 elementary schools.
- 401 Reading First schools served more than 10,000 K-3 teachers and more than 226,000 K-3 students.
- 401 Reading First coaches served Reading First schools.
- Total of 16,000 K-3 teachers – 8,000 more than the previous year – received training on the latest in scientifically based reading research – representing 46% of all K-3 teachers in Florida.

## 2005-2006

- 1,500 elementary school principals trained; training available to all elementary principals.
- 220 K-5 elementary school reading coaches funded and trained by the state, serving 220 elementary schools.
- 587 Reading First schools served more than 16,000 K-3 teachers and more than 330,000 K-3 students.
- 587 Reading First coaches served Reading First schools.
- Total of 26,000 K-3 teachers – 10,000 more than the previous year – received training on the latest in scientifically based reading research – representing 74% of all K-3 teachers in Florida.
- Literacy Essentials and Reading Network (LEaRN) website for principals, reading coaches and classroom teachers launched; provides short video clips of effective and research-proven reading instruction in Florida classrooms.



## INTRODUCTION

This booklet is for parents of Florida's third-grade students. It is designed to help you understand what Florida law says about reading requirements for third-grade students and promotion to fourth grade. It also describes what the school will do to help if your child is reading below grade level.

## BACKGROUND

Reading is the core of the school day for young students. Walk into a kindergarten, first-, second-, or third-grade classroom, and you will find children learning to read. They may be talking about the sounds letters make, listening to the teacher read a story, reading aloud together, working on a computer reading program, or talking and writing about what they have read. This is because reading and comprehension are the foundations for all academic learning. Students need strong reading skills in order to learn in all other school subjects, such as science, history, writing, and even math.

Schools regularly assess (measure) the reading ability of all students in kindergarten through grade three. This allows them to identify students who are struggling with reading. If your child is reading below grade level, the school will let you know exactly what type of reading difficulty your child is having. The school will then develop a plan to provide special instruction in reading, such as individual help from teachers, aides, volunteer tutors, and parents.

## THE PLAN

The law requires schools to develop an **academic improvement plan (AIP)** for each struggling reader. Parents will be invited to participate in developing this plan. The AIP describes the child's specific reading difficulties. It also describes the intensive teaching practices that will be used to help the child catch up in reading. This special instruction will be provided during regular school hours, in addition to the regular reading instruction. Each student's progress will be monitored frequently. This intensive help will be provided until the reading deficiency is corrected.

*If the child has a disability,* the child's **individual educational plan (IEP)** may serve as the AIP. Parents are always invited to be a part of the IEP team.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR THIRD GRADERS

The specific skills that students need in reading are described in the Sunshine State Standards. Designed by teachers, the Standards tell what Florida students should know and be able to do at each grade level. They are in line with national education standards.

By the end of third grade, students are expected to be able to read independently. This means that they can read and understand words, sentences, and paragraphs without help.

## FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) measures students' progress on the Sunshine State Standards. Students in grades 3–10 take the FCAT each spring. Third graders are tested in reading and mathematics. Their scores fall into one of five levels: Level 5 is the highest; Level 1 is the lowest.

The third-grade FCAT requires students to read stories that are about 350 words long and answer questions about what they have read. The test also requires them to use charts, graphs, maps, and other materials to gather information to answer questions.





## What does scoring Level 1 on the FCAT mean?

When a third grader scores in the lowest level on the FCAT, it warns us that the child is reading at a much lower level than is expected of third graders. Students who score Level 1 may not be able to recognize or sound-out new words or know their meaning. They may have trouble answering questions that identify a story's main idea, main characters, and order of events. They may not be able to use information from charts, graphs, or maps to answer specific questions.

## THE LAW

Florida law says that third graders who score at Level 1 in reading on the FCAT must be retained (not promoted to fourth grade). However, children who demonstrate the required reading level through the approved alternate test (the Stanford Achievement Test [SAT]) or through a student portfolio can be granted a "good cause exemption" and be promoted to fourth grade.

If your child scores at Level 1, you will be notified by the school that your child will not be promoted to fourth grade until he or she achieves the required reading level.

Students who are retained must be given intensive instruction in reading to help them catch up. You will be given information about the intensive instruction that will be provided to help your child make progress in reading.

**Note:** Some students with disabilities, some students with limited English proficiency, and some students who have already been retained twice can receive a "good cause exemption" and be promoted, although they are not reading at the required level. If your child is not eligible for a good cause exemption, you will be notified as to why your child is not eligible. See the back page for more information.

## What does the law mean?

This law means, "We are not going to give up on struggling students; we are going to invest in them." This will have a positive effect on our whole state. It will reduce the need for remedial education in middle and high school and may lower dropout rates and juvenile delinquency. It will also help Florida develop the highly skilled workforce needed in a strong economy.



## RETENTION

### What does retention mean?

Retention does not mean that the child has failed. It does not mean that teachers or parents are not working hard enough. It does mean that the child needs more time and help to catch up in reading.

### Purpose of Retention

The purpose of retention is to give children who have substantial reading deficiencies more time and the intensive instruction they need to catch up in reading.



### Why third grade?

A substantial reading deficiency must be addressed before students can move on to the more difficult schoolwork of fourth grade and beyond. In fourth grade, the focus shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. Textbooks become more complex; reading passages are longer. Students use encyclopedias, websites, and other written materials to do research for history reports, science projects, and other schoolwork. Those who have trouble understanding what they read find it very difficult to keep up. Many students become frustrated when they try to tackle this schoolwork without independent reading skills. For some students, this leads to years of difficulty in school and limited opportunities in adult life.

## How will we help students who have been retained?

Schools must provide reading enhancement and acceleration strategies to students who are retained, including the following:

- proven effective teaching strategies and methods
- a high-performing teacher
- participation in summer reading camp
- at least 90 minutes of reading instruction each day, which often involves
  - ✓ one-on-one or small group instruction
  - ✓ special books, computer software, and other instructional materials
  - ✓ more frequent progress monitoring
  - ✓ tutoring or mentoring
  - ✓ transition classes that include third- and fourth-grade students
  - ✓ after-school instruction
  - ✓ summer reading camps.

Parents must also be offered at least one of the following options:

- tutoring using proven strategies
- parent workshops and a parent-guided home reading program
- a mentor or tutor with specialized reading training.

Once the intensive instruction has begun, the child's progress will be checked frequently and the teaching strategies adjusted as needed.

## MAKING PROGRESS

### Mid-Year Promotion

If the child can demonstrate the required reading level before the start of the next school year, he or she may be promoted to fourth grade. If the child achieves the required reading level during the next school year, the child may be promoted to fourth grade at that time: mid-year. To be promoted to fourth grade mid-year, the child must demonstrate mastery of the third grade reading skills and beginning fourth grade reading skills. This is because the student must have made enough progress to be successful in fourth grade. The child may be given a standardized test or the teacher may put together a portfolio of the child's work.

### Intensive Acceleration Class

If the student has already been retained once in third grade and then scores at Level 1 again, the school must provide an intensive acceleration class that focuses on increasing the child's reading level at least two grade levels in one school year. The intensive acceleration class must

- have a lower teacher-student ratio than other third-grade classes
- have a high-performing teacher
- provide reading instruction for most of the school day
- give students the opportunity to master the fourth grade Sunshine State Standards in other subjects, such as math and science
- use research-based reading, language, and vocabulary instructional programs
- monitor student progress weekly
- maintain a portfolio for each student.

The district must also offer these students the option of being served in a transitional instructional setting designed to help them meet the fourth grade Sunshine State Standards, while continuing to remediate the reading deficiency.



## FIVE COMPONENTS OF READING

Teachers in the early grades work on improving students' skills in these five components of reading:

1. **Phonemic awareness** is the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. This includes noticing rhyme and recognizing the separate, small sounds in words (phonemes).
2. **Phonics** is the understanding of the relationships between the written letters of the alphabet and the sounds of spoken language. This knowledge allows a reader to “decode” words by translating the letters into speech sounds.
3. **Fluency** is the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. Fluent readers can concentrate on understanding what they read because they don't have to focus on decoding.
4. **Vocabulary** includes all the words the reader can understand and use. The more words a child knows, the better he or she will understand what is read. Knowing how words relate to each other is a building block that leads to comprehension.
5. **Comprehension** is the ability to understand what one has read. This includes understanding the plot of a story or the information in an article. It also includes things like recognizing the main idea of an article or being able to compare and contrast different characters in a story.

## EXEMPTIONS FROM THIRD-GRADE RETENTION

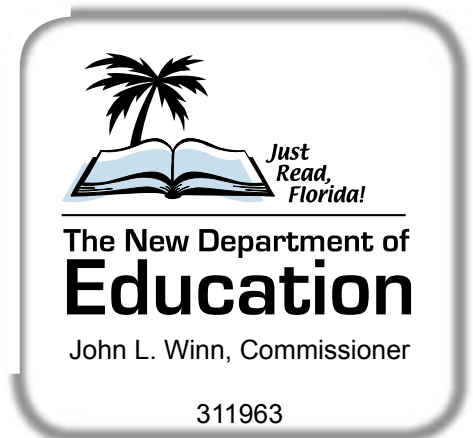
Some third-graders who score Level 1 on the FCAT in reading can be exempted from the retention requirement and be promoted to fourth grade. This is called a “good cause exemption.” Good cause exemptions are given to only the following students:

- students who show an acceptable level of performance on the alternate reading test (the SAT)
- students who show through a teacher-developed portfolio that they can read on grade level\*
- Limited English proficient students who have had less than two years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages program
- students with disabilities whose individual educational plan (IEP) shows that it is not appropriate for them to take the FCAT
- students with disabilities who take the FCAT and whose IEP or 504 Plan says that they have received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years but who still show a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten through grade 3
- students who have received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years but who still have a deficiency in reading and who have already been retained in kindergarten through grade 3 for a total of two years.

If you believe your child may be eligible for a good cause exemption, talk to your child's teacher. For a good cause exemption to be approved, the following steps must take place:

1. The student's teacher must submit documentation to the principal.
2. The principal must review the documentation and decide whether or not the student should be promoted. If the principal determines that the student should be promoted, the principal must make the recommendation to the school district superintendent.
3. The school district superintendent must accept or reject the principal's recommendation that the student be promoted.

\*The teacher selects the contents of the portfolio. The documents in the portfolio must show that the student has mastered the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks that are assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT. Talk to your child's teacher to find out more about portfolios.



**For more information go to [www.justreadflorida.com](http://www.justreadflorida.com)**



## Third Grade Summer Reading Camps District Contacts and Dates

District	Start	End	Contact	Phone	Email
Alachua	6/7/2006	6/29/2006	Dr. Diana Lagotic	(352) 955-7586	lagotidl@sbac.edu
Baker	5/30/2006	6/30/2006	Robin Mobley	(904) 259-0427	rmobley@baker.k12.fl.us
Bay	5/30/2006	6/29/2006	Lendy Willis	(850) 872-4356	willilr@bay.k12.fl.us
Bradford	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Carol Clyatt	(904) 966-6816	clyatt_c@firm.edu
Brevard	6/1/2006	6/30/2006	Lynn Spadaccini	(321) 633-1000	spadaccinil@brevard.k12.fl.us
Broward	6/6/2006	7/3/2006	Frank Vodolo	(754) 321-2130	fvodolo@browardschools.com
Calhoun	6/5/2006	7/18/2006	Wynette Peacock	(850) 674-8734	peacock_w@firm.edu
Charlotte	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Cathy Hoff	(941) 255-0808	Cathy_Hoff@ccps.k12.fl.us
Citrus	6/12/2006	7/7/2006	Dr. Mark Brunner	(352) 726-1931	brunnerm@citrus.k12.fl.us
Clay	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Sharon Chapman	(904) 284-6577	schapman@mail.clay.k12.fl.us
Collier	6/19/2006	7/19/2006	Jack Staples	(239) 377-1060	StapleJa@collier.k12.fl.us
Columbia	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Wanda Conner	(386) 755-8048	conner_w@firm.edu
Deaf & Blind School	6/5/2006	6/30/2006	Margaret McClure-VanOmer		vanormerm@fsdb.K12.fl.us
DeSoto	6/2/2006	6/30/2006	Tammy O'Donnell	(863) 494-4222	tammy.odonnell@desoto.k12.fl.us
Dixie	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Frances Bray	(352) 498-1338	francesbray@dixie.k12.fl.us
Duval	6/19/2006	7/14/2006	Myrna Amos	(904) 390-2624	amosm@educationcentral.org
Escambia	5/30/2006	6/30/2006	Dr. Deborah Malishan	(850) 469-5494	dmalishan@escambia.k12.fl.us
FAMU/Lab School	6/5/2006	7/14/2006	Dr. Rose Campbell	(850) 561-2618	Rose.Campbell@famu.edu
FAU/Lab School	6/12/2006	7/7/2006	Mary Linville	(561) 297-3970	linville@fau.edu
Flagler	6/12/2006	7/20/2006	Mary Ann Haas	(386) 437-7526	haasm@flaglerschools.com
Franklin	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Brenda Wilson	(850) 653-8831	Wilson_b4@firm.edu
FSU/Lab School	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Neal Trafford	(850) 245-3807	ntraffor@mailier.fsu.edu
Gadsden	6/5/2006	6/30/2006	Millie Anderson	(850) 627-9651	anderson_m@firm.edu
Gilchrist	6/5/2006	7/6/2006	Janet Langford	(352) 463-3265	langfordj@mygcsd.org
Glades	6/12/2006	7/25/2006	Debbie Pressley		debbie.pressley@gladesschools.org
Gulf	5/30/2006	6/29/2006	Sara Joe Wooten	(859) 229-6940	swooten@gulf.k12.fl.us
Hamilton	5/30/2006	6/29/2006	Vivian Scott	(386) 792-6524	Scott_v1@firm.edu
Hardee	5/30/2006	6/30/2006	Greg Dick	(863) 773-9058	gdick@hardee.k12.fl.us
Hendry	5/30/2006	6/29/2003	Jodi Bell	(863) 612-0750	bellj@hendry.k12.fl.us
Hernando	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Debbie Pfenning	(352) 797-7070	pfenning_d@hcsb.k12.fl.us
Highlands	6/5/2006	7/18/2006	Joyce McClelland	(863) 471-5569	mccllej@highlands.k12.fl.us
Hillsborough	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Joyce Haines	(813) 272-4481	Joyce.Haines@sdhc.k12.fl.us
Holmes	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Peggy Alderman	(850) 547-6674	alderman_p@firm.edu
Indian River	6/1/2006	7/14/2006	Terri D'Albora	(777) 564-3108	terri.dalbora@indian-river.k12.fl.us
Jackson	5/30/2006	6/29/2006	Linda Cox	(850) 482-1200	Linda Cox [Linda.Cox@jcsb.org]
Jefferson	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Nikki Bradley	(850) 342-0115	bradley_n@firm.edu

District	Start	End	Contact	Phone	Email
Lafayette	5/29/2006	7/6/2006	Marion McCray	(386) 294-2882	mmccray@lafayette.k12.fl.us
Lake	6/1/2006	6/30/2006	Doreathe Cole	(352) 253-6550	ColeD@lake.k12.fl.us
Lee	6/5/2006	6/23/2006	Joseph Roles Jr.	(239) 337-8141	joer@lee.k12.fl.us
Leon	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Iris Wilson	(850) 487-7219	wilsoni@mail.leon.k12.fl.us
Levy	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Linda Durrance	(352) 486-5231	durrani@levy.k12.fl.us
Liberty	6/5/2006	7/13/2006	Sue Summers	(850) 663-2249	Summers_g@firn.edu
Madison	6/7/2006	7/19/2006	Julia Waldrep	(850) 973-5022	waldrej@madison.k12.fl.us
Manatee	5/31/2006	7/13/2006	Linda Guilfoyle	(941) 708-8770	guilfoyl@fc.manatee.k12.fl.us
Marion	5/30/2006	7/14/2006	Christine Sandy	(352) 671-7724	christine.sandy@marion.k12.fl.us
Martin	6/1/2006	6/28/2006	Delores Oliver Calloway	(772) 219-1200	callowd@martin.k12.fl.us
Miami Dade	6/22/2006	7/20/2006	Jodi Bolla	(305) 995-3122	jbolla@dadeschools.net
Monroe	6/5/2006	7/7/2006	Frances St. James	(305) 293-1400	stjamesf@monroe.k12.fl.us
Nassau	5/30/2006	6/29/2006	Linda Morris	(904) 491-9887	morrisli@nassau.k12.fl.us
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Okeechobee	6/5/2006	6/30/2006	Mary Hurley	(863) 462-5000	hurleym@okee.k12.fl.us
Orange	6/5/2006	6/30/2006	Penny Leggett	(407) 532-7970	leggetp@ocps.net
Osceola	6/19/2006	7/21/2006	Beverly Brizendine	(407) 870-4911	brizendb@osceola.k12.fl.us
Palm Beach	6/19/2006	7/20/2006	Kim Stansell	(561) 963-3882	stansell@palmbeach.k12.fl.us
Pasco	6/5/2006	7/14/2006	Lori Wiggins	(813) 794-2000	lwiggins@pasco.k12.fl.us
Pinellas	5/23/2006	6/23/2006	Maria Lindquist	(727) 588-6088	Maria_Lindquist@places.pcsb.org
Polk	5/31/2006	6/30/2006	Diana Myrick	(863) 534-0642	diana.myrick@polk-fl.net
Putnam	6/7/2006	6/30/2006	Michael Pegg	(386) 329-0633	mpegg@putnamschools.org
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Volusia	6/1/2006	6/29/2006	Mary Cool		mcool@mail.volusia.k12.fl.us
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Walton	6/12/2006	7/18/2006	Kay Dailey	(850) 892-1100	daileyk@walton.k12.fl.us
Washington	6/5/2006	6/29/2006	Mike Welch	(850) 638-6222	welch_m@firn.edu

# FACT SHEET

for Families Building Better Readers Parent Workshop

## Introduction

Families Building Better Readers (FBBR) is a dynamic reading workshop for parents and children in the elementary grades.

This 2 ½ hour training is a collaborative outreach by the Florida Department of Education's Just Read, Florida! initiative, the Bureau of Family and Community Outreach, and the University of West Florida.

## Purpose

*This workshop will:*

- Teach parents how to set their children up for successful reading practice at home.
- Teach parents ten research-based reading activities they can do with their children to improve reading performance.
- Provide parents with resources that promote life-long literacy.
- Give children practice in doing the same activities their parents learn about and the opportunity to perform a play that reviews workshop content for all participants.
- Provide a fun learning experience for all participants.
- Promote positive partnerships between families and schools.

## Workshop Theme

The Families Building Better Readers' construction theme adds an element of fun to the event for parents and children. Every parent will receive a "tool kit" that includes reading activities to do with children at home. During breakout sessions, each activity is demonstrated by effective trainers and practiced by parents. A parallel children's workshop involves children in rich reading experiences while parents attend breakout sessions. At the end of the workshop families enjoy a play performed by their children that reviews workshop content followed by a read-aloud demonstration.

## Related Training

Translations of FBBR materials can be provided in several different languages. In addition, a special version of FBBR for Spanish-speaking parents called Edificando Mejores Lectores en Familia is available that was specifically developed to meet the special needs of Florida's migrant worker families. A similar reading workshop for middle school families is also offered called Mysteries in the Middle.



If you have any questions about Families Building Better Readers Parent Workshop or for information on family and community involvement, please contact:

**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Family and Community Outreach**

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 544  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Phone: (850) 245-0847 or Suncom 205-0847, Fax: (850) 245-0849

<http://www.firn.edu/doe/family/>  
[www.fldoe.org](http://www.fldoe.org)



# Getting Ahead by Staying Behind

## An Evaluation of Florida's Program to End Social Promotion

**O**f the many entrenched school customs that have been reconsidered and reformed over the past decade, social promotion has been among the most resistant to change. Holding children back in the same grade has long been frowned upon, and a large body

of research seems to support that point of view: retained students tend to have lower test scores and are allegedly more likely to drop out than students who initially performed at an equally low level but were nevertheless promoted.

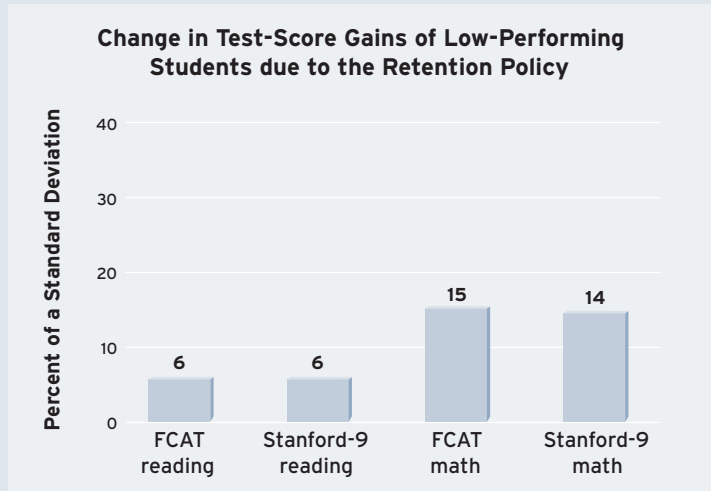
Despite the old habits and the old research, however, school districts across the nation have been slowly but steadily bucking convention. Several large systems, including Chicago (beginning in 1996), New York (2004), and Philadelphia (2005), now require students in particular grades to demonstrate a benchmark

PHOTOGRAPH / GETTY IMAGES

BY JAY P. GREENE AND MARCUS A. WINTERS

## A Productive Policy (Figure 1)

Low-performing 3rd graders subjected to Florida's new retention policy in 2003 made larger test-score gains the following year than did comparable students entering 3rd grade in 2002.



Note: All effects are statistically significant at the 0.001 level and control for differences in race, free or reduced-price lunch status, Limited English Proficiency status, and prior test scores.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from Florida Department of Education data

level of mastery in basic skills on a standardized test before they can be promoted. Florida (2002) and Texas (2002) have taken the lead among states in forbidding social promotions. In 2000, the most recent year for which national enrollment data are available, these five school systems alone enrolled nearly 20 percent of the nation's 3rd-grade students. (For more on Chicago's policy, see Alexander Russo, "Retaining Retention," *features*, Winter 2005; and Robin Tepper Jacob and Susan Stone, "Teachers and Students Speak," *features*, Winter 2005.)

But is this new approach to grade promotion effective? And what about those studies that say retention doesn't work? Proponents of the new programs believe that schools do students no favor by promoting them if they don't have the skills to succeed at a higher level. But because these arguments, however plausible, have little research to support them, we set out to determine if they have scientific merit. Our findings from Florida suggest that the use of standardized testing policies to end social promotion can help low-performing students make modest improvements in reading and substantial improvements in math.

### Florida's Program to End Social Promotion

Over the past several years Florida has attempted substantial reforms of its struggling public school system, the fourth-largest

in the country and one that consistently ranks close to the bottom on academic indicators, including high-school graduation rates and scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The Sunshine State had instituted school voucher programs, increased the number of charter schools, and devised a sophisticated accountability system that evaluates schools on the basis of their progress as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). But in May 2002, the state legislature made one of its boldest moves, revising the School Code, the state's education law, to require 3rd-grade students to score at the Level-2 benchmark or above on the reading portion of the FCAT in order to be promoted to 4th grade.

The hurdle created for students was not terribly high. The state's department of education describes a student who scores at Level 2 (of five levels) as having "limited success" against the state standards; only students who score at Level 3 or above are considered to be proficient for the purposes of evaluating schools under No Child Left Behind. Even so, roughly 24 percent of 3rd graders tested in Florida in 2001–02, the year before the retention policy was introduced, performed at Level 2 or below. This number fell slightly, to 22 percent, in the 2002–03 academic year.

Not all these students were retained, however, even after the policy change. The law allowed for exceptions to the retention policy if a student had limited English proficiency or a severe disability, scored above the 51st percentile on the Stanford-9 standardized test, had demonstrated proficiency through a performance portfolio, or had already been held back for two years. Altogether, roughly 40 percent of the 3rd-grade students who scored below the Level-2 threshold in 2002–03 were promoted.

### The Problem with Earlier Studies

Traditionally, the retention of a student, uncommon as it was, resulted from an individual teacher's assessment of the student's ability to succeed at the next level. But such teacher discretion, while arguably desirable as a matter of policy, is the primary reason earlier studies of social promotion are flawed. We must assume from studying those retention programs, which are still the predominant practice in schools throughout the United States, that students who were held back were fundamentally different from students who were promoted. Because teachers were considering intangible factors, even when race, gender, family income, and academic achievement are the same, there was no way to isolate the effect of being held back, much less to make reasonable conclusions about the effects of retention on a student's academic achievement or the probability of his dropping out

of high school. Are students who were retained less likely to graduate because they were retained? Or were they retained because of characteristics that also predisposed them to drop out? Because the retention policies were subjective, we will simply never know.

There are also reasons to believe that subjective retention policies affect students differently than policies that use promotion criteria like performance on standardized tests. If promotion depends on an individual teacher's assessment of a child, then that child is not likely to know what he or she must do to avoid being held back. Also, if few students were being held back, then those students might perform worse because they felt excluded and inferior. A policy that holds back thousands of students might dilute this sense of being singled out. Finally, subjective assessments of students are vulnerable to inappropriate influences, including teachers' prejudices and pressure brought by parents, in ways that objective criteria of performance might inhibit.

Implementing objective standards, even if they were accompanied by subjective exemptions, might significantly change the effects of retention in ways that previous research could not anticipate or measure. For research purposes, objective retention policies also create a useful comparison group of students not subject to retention. In the case of Florida's program to end social promotion, for example, we can compare students who were subject to the threat of retention with students who would have been had they been born a year later.

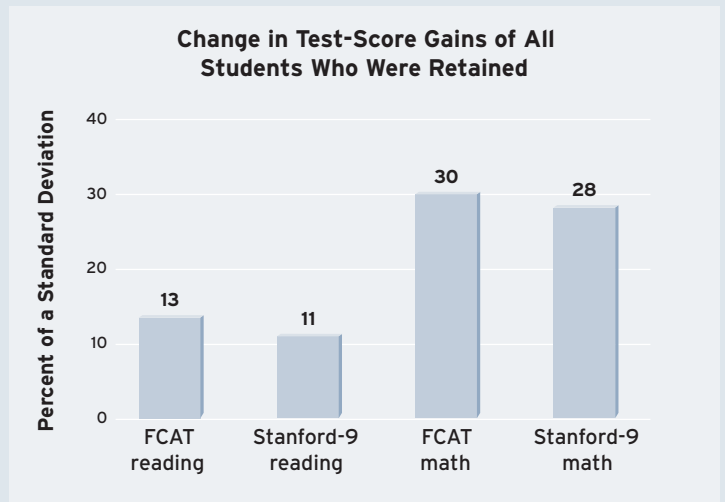
### What a Difference a Year Makes

To determine the impact of ending social promotion for 3rd graders in Florida, we compared low-scoring 3rd graders in 2002, the first students to be subject to the program, with low-scoring 3rd graders from the previous year. Of the 43,996 3rd graders in 2002 for whom we have valid test scores on both FCAT math and reading assessments, 60 percent were actually retained. By contrast, of the 45,401 3rd graders in 2001 for whom we have valid test scores, only 9 percent were retained. Our analysis assumes that the students from the two school years should be similar in all respects except for the year in which they happened to have been born. We analyzed the test-score improvements made between each student's first 3rd-grade year and the following year on both the state's own accountability exam and the Stanford-9, a nationally normed exam administered at the same time as the FCAT but not used for accountability purposes.

We measure FCAT performance using developmental-scale scores, which allow us to compare the test-score gains of all the students in our study, even though they took tests designed for different grade levels. Developmental-scale scores

### Retention Works (Figure 2)

*Students retained in 2003 as a result of the new policy made substantially more progress in reading and, especially, in math than comparable students who were promoted.*



Note: All effects are statistically significant at the 0.001 level and are adjusted for differences in race, free or reduced-price lunch status, Limited English Proficiency status, and prior test scores.

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from Florida Department of Education data

are designed to measure academic proficiency on a single scale for students of any grade and in any year. For example, a 3rd grader with a developmental-scale score of 1,000 and a 4th grader with a developmental-scale score of 1,000 have the same level of academic achievement; if a student gets a developmental-scale score of 1,000 in 2001 and then gets the same score of 1,000 in 2002, this indicates that the student has not made any academic progress in the intervening year. The developmental-scale scores required to reach Level 2 on the FCAT reading test were consistent for each year's cohort.

We began by measuring the effect on all low-scoring 3rd graders of simply having been subject to the new policy. That is, we did not distinguish in our initial analysis between students who were actually retained and those who received an exemption and were promoted to the next grade. This analysis provides an estimate of the average impact of the policy change on all students in the state performing below the Level-2 benchmark. It also allows for the possibility that exempted students enjoyed spillover benefits from the retention policy, since they were now being instructed in a system in which fewer students in 4th grade were unprepared to do grade-level work.

To identify the policy's average impact, we compared the gains in developmental-scale scores made by students who first entered 3rd grade in 2002 and scored below the FCAT

benchmark with gains made by students who first entered 3rd grade in 2001 and scored below the FCAT benchmark. In making this comparison, we took into account other factors that could affect achievement gains, such as the student's race, whether the student received a free or reduced-price school lunch, whether the student was deemed Limited English Proficient, and the student's precise test score during his first 3rd-grade year. With these differences accounted for, the only distinction between the two groups of students was assumed to be that the former group entered the school system a year later and was therefore subject to the new policy in 3rd grade.

As discussed above, however, many low-scoring 3rd graders were granted exemptions and promoted to the 4th grade even under the new policy. We therefore also evaluated the effect of actually being retained, again controlling for race, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, English proficiency, and baseline test scores. In conducting this analysis, we also needed to account for the fact that the students who were held back were a select group of students who could differ in important ways from the promoted students. Presumably, teachers and other decisionmakers expected these students, unlike promoted students, to benefit from an additional year as 3rd graders. Fortunately, the fact that simply having entered school a year later increased the probability of retention for all low-scoring students again provides a way around this obvious selection problem. In essence, the statistical method we use compares those retained students that our data suggest would not have been retained the previous year with a comparable group of students who were not retained. Our results therefore indicate the effect of retention on those students who were held back as a result of the new policy.

During this time, Florida was engaged in other education reforms as well: instituting several school-voucher programs, increasing the number of charter schools in the state, and improving the system used to assign grades to schools based on the FCAT. However, it is reasonable to assume that whatever effect these other policies have on our analyses is minor. In order for the existence of another policy to affect our results significantly, we would have to believe that the program substantially improved the education of the 3rd graders in 2002–03 without having a similar effect on the previous year's cohort. Moreover, while a sudden policy change could conceivably explain the overall improvements between the two cohorts, it is difficult to see how such a change could cause substantially larger gains among those students actually retained.

## Retention Works

Our fundamental findings from an analysis of the 3rd- and 4th-grade data for these two years indicate that the performance of students identified for retention, regardless of

whether they were retained or exempted and promoted, exceeded the performance of low-performing students from the previous year who were not subject to the retention policy; and students who were actually retained made the larger relative gains.

Students identified for retention by the Florida policy gained 0.06 of a standard deviation in reading on both the FCAT and Stanford-9 over equally low-performing 3rd graders from the previous school year (see Figure 1). In math, students identified for retention surpassed low performers who were not subject to the policy by 0.15 standard deviations (4.8 percentiles) on the FCAT and 0.14 standard deviations (4.4 percentiles) on the Stanford-9.

Students who were actually retained experienced even larger relative improvements (see Figure 2). Retained students performed better than low-scoring students who were promoted by 0.13 standard deviations (4.10 percentiles) on the FCAT and 0.11 standard deviations (3.45 percentiles) on the Stanford-9 in reading. In math retained students improved 0.30 standard deviations (10.0 percentiles) on the FCAT and 0.28 standard deviations (9.3 percentiles) on the Stanford-9 over promoted students.

Some critics of the new retention policies argued that teachers and schools would respond to them by manipulating test scores, either directly by cheating or indirectly by teaching students skills that would help them to improve their test scores but would not provide real academic proficiency. This argument would have merit only if we found strong gains on the high-stakes FCAT and no similar gains on the low-stakes Stanford-9, for which there is no incentive to manipulate scores. But our results are consistent between the FCAT and the Stanford-9, indicating that there have been no serious manipulations of the high-stakes testing system. If teachers are in fact changing their curricula with the intent to “teach to” the FCAT, they are doing so in ways that also contribute to gains on the highly respected Stanford-9. This would indicate that teachers have made changes resulting in real increases in students' proficiency.

An unexpected benefit of the retention policy is the improvement in math scores. This might seem odd, given that it is the reading portion of the FCAT that students must pass to earn promotion and that the rhetoric supporting Florida's retention program emphasizes that it will improve student literacy. Of course, the math gains could simply reflect the fact that math skills are learned primarily in schools, while reading is practiced both in and outside of school. For this reason, evaluations of school reforms frequently find stronger effects in math than in reading. Alternatively, it may be that students who were retained specifically because of their poor reading skills are particularly poor in that subject and that this limits their room for improvement.



**Our results show gains of similar sizes by the three racial groups for which we have an adequate sample size: white, black, and Hispanic.**

We also explored the possibility that the objective retention program could have different effects on students of different races. Our results show gains of similar sizes by the three racial groups for which we have an adequate sample size to have reasonable confidence in our findings: white, black, and Hispanic. The exception is for whites' performance on the FCAT reading test. It is difficult for us to interpret why white students would fail to benefit from the retention policy as measured by the FCAT reading test but would be shown to benefit as measured by the Stanford-9 reading test.

Our results also suggest that low-scoring Florida 3rd graders who were given an exemption and promoted might have benefited from another year in the 3rd grade. This does not mean that it would be wise to eliminate all exemptions to the testing requirement. There are certainly students for whom testing is either inappropriate or whose performance on other academic measures could reasonably indicate that they would be better served by moving on to the next grade. However, our findings do indicate that teachers and school systems should be cautious when granting exemptions.

**What It Means**

At first glance our findings seem inconsistent with evaluations of Chicago's program ending social promotion, to our knowledge the only similarly designed retention policy to be evaluated using comparable methods. In Chicago, students in the 3rd, 6th, and 8th grades must exceed benchmarks on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a respected standardized test, in order to be promoted to the next grade. In a study conducted in 2004 by scholars at the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the performance of 3rd- and 6th-grade students who scored just below the benchmark on the ITBS, most of whom were retained because of the mandate, was compared with the performance of students who scored just above the benchmark, most of whom were promoted. The Chicago researchers were able to measure test-score performance for two years after implementation of the program. They found benefits from the program after one year, similar to what we found in Florida, but discovered that those benefits went away after the second year. Third-grade students were not affected, and 6th-grade

students were negatively affected by the policy in their performance on the ITBS reading test. The findings on the Chicago retention program emphasize the importance of following the progress of retained students in Florida over time.

Still, the Chicago policy differs from Florida's in some respects. In 1999 the Chicago policy stopped allowing students to be retained twice, which Florida's policy does allow. This difference might reduce teachers' motivation to work with already retained students, whom they now can expect to be promoted the next year regardless of their performance. Other programs with different and more stable retention policies might show different results.

Finally, while our study provides valuable information about the effectiveness of Florida's policy to end social promotion, it does not offer a full catalog of the policy's benefits or of its potential costs. It will be some time before we can examine whether retention increased or reduced the probability of dropping out of school later on. Most important, it does not provide any information about the program's effects on students' academic progress the first time they were in 3rd grade. The policy's greatest benefits could result not from retention itself, but rather from increased efforts on the part of teachers and even students to avoid being retained in the first place.

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# STAY IN THE LOOP!

If you're a high school senior and you haven't passed the FCAT yet, you may feel discouraged. Now is the time for you to take your future into your own hands and do what it takes to succeed. Think about the possibilities. Talk to your family, teachers, and guidance counselor. And most of all, stay in school and stay in the Learning Loop!

## TAKE THE FCAT AGAIN.

Your school has the know-how to teach the skills you need for the FCAT. Take advantage of it! Sign on for the extra instruction you will be offered; do your best, and take the FCAT again in June. You could also sign up for summer school or come back to school for part of next year in order to brush up on your skills so you'll be ready for the FCAT.

## TAKE AN ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT - ACT OR SAT.

A senior may use alternate assessment (ACT or SAT) scores that are concordant with the FCAT passing scores to satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma. See your guidance counselor for more information.

## TAKE THE GED EXIT OPTION.

Stay in school and enroll in a GED Exit Option program. Then, if you pass the GED tests before the end of the school year, you can graduate with a State of Florida diploma and participate in graduation activities. Did you know that a GED is no different than a diploma? In fact, the Surgeon General of the United States is a GED recipient. The possibilities are endless!

## TAKE A CPT-ELIGIBLE CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION. THEN CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION.

If you earn all your required course credits and have at least a 2.0 GPA, you can receive a CPT-eligible certificate of completion. That will let you enroll in community college or postsecondary career and technical education programs. Take the CPT (Common Placement Test), and if you make a high enough score, you can take college credit courses. Even if you don't make the cut-off score, you can start with remedial courses at the community college, and later, you may be able to move on to college credit courses.

## TAKE A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION. THEN CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION.

If you earn all your required course credits but don't have a GPA of 2.0 or higher, you can receive a certificate of completion. The certificate of completion does not carry any of the privileges of a standard high school diploma, so you should still sign up for summer school, return to school next year, or enroll in a GED preparation program.

## TAKE COURSES THROUGH ADULT HIGH SCHOOL.

Once you are out of school, you can sign up for adult high school credit courses. You'll still need to pass the courses have a 2.0 GPA and pass the FCAT to get a diploma from your school district, but you can continue your education. Students who are still enrolled in the K-12 program may take additional credit courses through the Adult High School programs as a co-enrolled student to earn credits necessary for the standard high school diploma.

## TAKE THE GED AS AN ADULT.

Once you are out of school, you can sign up for an adult education GED preparation program. This program is offered at technical centers, adult and community education centers, and community colleges. Some community-based organizations may also offer preparation programs but the tests must be administered at an official GED Testing Center. However if you pass the GED tests, you will receive a State of Florida diploma.

## THESE OPTIONS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.

- Some students with disabilities are eligible for an FCAT waiver.
- Students with disabilities who have not yet earned a standard diploma may stay in school until their 22nd birthday.



Florida Department of Education