

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Gerard Robinson
Commissioner of Education



July 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian,

By now you have received your child's results on the state-required FCAT and End-of-Course assessments. These assessments serve as annual academic checkups to measure your child's progress in key subject areas and help ensure that your child is on track for college or career.

Florida also uses the results to calculate school grades. Schools that improve a letter grade or earn an A receive additional state funds – up to \$100 per student – in recognition of their academic achievement. Struggling schools can get assistance and additional funding – an average of almost \$2,000 per student for F schools – to help them improve.

As grades for elementary, middle and many combination schools become available, you may notice that some schools have lower grades than last year. That does not necessarily mean that the schools, teachers or students are not doing as well as they were before. There were a number of changes to the state's accountability system this year that impacted the results.

To help better prepare students for college and careers, the state has been moving to higher academic standards, new assessments that measure students' progress toward meeting the standards, and higher achievement levels for subjects such as reading and math. These new standards, assessments, and achievement levels are being used to determine school grades this year.

Also, Florida received a waiver from the federal government this year that allows the state to have one accountability system instead of two – one state and one federal. The waiver requires Florida to include all students – including those with disabilities and English language learners with at least one year of instruction in the U.S. – in its accountability system.

The combination of changes to Florida's accountability system will cause a temporary drop in some school grades. However, we can also expect student performance to improve as it did in 2007 when Florida made revisions to the school grading formula. At first, the number of A and B schools fell from about 2,000 to 1,952, but, in the two years that followed, A and B schools rose to 2,317.

Each time Florida's school grading system has increased expectations, student performance has improved over time, which is the primary goal of Florida's accountability system. Florida will continue to make the adjustments and investments necessary to ensure all students have the opportunity to get the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.

Please know that, along with the State Board of Education and your district leadership, I am working to make certain that schools and teachers have the resources they need to ensure that your child is getting the best education possible.

Thank you for supporting your child's education.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Gerard Robinson".

Gerard Robinson

More information on Florida's school grading system is available at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org>. For questions about school grades, visit www.floridapathtosuccess.org or call 1-866-507-1109. To receive periodic email updates about this topic and related issues, sign up here: <http://parents.fldoe.org/home>.