

BILL SUMMARY
Florida House Democratic Education Reform
HB 473 by Rep. Dwight Bullard

- Increases Accountability and Academic Standards
- Improves College and Career Preparation with Rigorous Academic Standards
- Replaces the FCAT with End-of-Course Exams and Student Progress Measures
- Incentivizes School Success

**I. INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY BY REFORMING
THE FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST**

Florida House Democrats propose implementing a new strategy of school accountability that ends reliance on the FCAT, a high-stakes test, as Florida's sole public school accountability tool.

We propose:

- Requiring schools to use **end-of-course exams in grades 6 through 12 and a new subject area assessment test for grades 3 through 5** to measure student performance in both core and non-core curriculum.
- Ending use of the FCAT as the state's primary assessment tool, to determine whether to retain third grade students, or as a factor in preventing students from receiving a high school diploma.

Accountability also will be measured through:

- Students' overall academic performance (i.e.: GPAs and/or student portfolios),
- Schools' ability to prepare students for promotion to the next grade and careers,
- Schools' successful use of technology and innovation in the classroom.

The grading formula for grades 3 through 8 will be based 25 percent on end-of-course exams or subject area assessment tests and 75 percent on overall student performance, student preparedness and schools' use of technology and innovation. The plan gives the State Board of Education power to expand the grading formula to other measures that are valuable indicators of student progress.

Under this model, students who make adequate academic progress throughout the year but perform poorly on the assessment tests will not be denied promotion or graduation based solely on their test scores. The Department of Education will form a panel of education stakeholders, experts and community leaders to design the assessment formula, which would be in place by the 2014-2015 school year.

The plan does not alter the new grading formula for high schools, which is based (starting this year) 50 percent on students' FCAT performance and 50 percent on other factors, such as schools' graduation rate, success in offering advanced courses and other factors. The plan requires the state to incorporate the entirety of students' work, as determined by their GPA, student portfolios, or other measures, into the high school grading formula by the 2014 school year.

II. RAISING THE BAR

- **Readiness for College and Career**
- **Better Graduation Rates**
- **Intervention for Low Performing Schools**

A. The academic standards for students to graduate high school should be enhanced to ensure that more graduates are adequately prepared for college and to compete in the global marketplace.

We propose:

- Adding Algebra II, Geometry, Biology I and high-level physical sciences to Florida's high school graduation requirements.

To achieve higher standards and to keep students on track toward graduation, schools must begin preparing students in the early grades. Students should be diagnostically tested in the 6th, 8th and 10th grades to ensure they are on track for graduation. To help struggling students succeed, **intervention programs will be mandatory for those who are deemed to not be on track for meeting these standards.**

B. The state needs more resources and a greater focus on helping low performing schools and students. Florida has one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the country, according to independent analysts, including

the authors of Education Week magazine's 2009 "Diplomas Count" study. Additionally, Florida has been identified by Johns Hopkins University as suffering from a severe "dropout crisis."

We propose:

- Ending the practice of giving high-performing schools cash awards from the state's school recognition fund.
 - School recognition funds should be used for **intervention programs** to assist underperforming students and schools.
 - High performing schools can be rewarded with more **budget flexibility** that gives school boards and principals the autonomy to use dollars to fund innovative programs, teacher bonuses and unique needs and programs.

###