

**From:** Smith, Kevin  
**Sent time:** Friday, December 09, 2011 11:18:25 AM  
**To:** Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) <Cari@excelined.org>  
**Subject:** RE: Today's Articles on FCAT Cut Scores

---

Cari,

We are reviewing PSA's today (fun!), but I would like to call you to discuss if possible. I just tried to call you.

Here are a few points, for starters: the rule was adopted last year to impact this year's 10<sup>th</sup> graders. The bottom line is that based on the current graduation level cut score of 300 (out of a 100-500 point scale), 60% of the students met the graduation requirement. Using the recommended cut score of 245 (out of a 150-300 point scale) only 52% of students would meet the graduation requirement. If you look solely at Level 3+ - 39% of kids were Level 3+ last year and 52% would be L3+ based on the recommended cut score of 245. There are many factors involved.

Is there a time today when we could discuss?

Have a great day and thanks again for all that you do!

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith,  
Deputy Director,  
Just Read, Florida! Office  
Florida Department of Education  
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 501  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399  
(850) 245-0503  
(850) 245-5105 (Fax)  
[www.justreadflorida.com](http://www.justreadflorida.com)



---

**From:** Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) [mailto:Cari@excelined.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, December 09, 2011 11:09 AM  
**To:** Smith, Kevin  
**Subject:** FW: Today's Articles on FCAT Cut Scores

Question for you, and only you: The percentage of 10th graders that scored Level 3 last year was 39%; what % of students would score Level 3 based on new cut scores????

I feel like that there is a mix of stuff going on here, and there is confusion (at least on my part). To me, the percent's quoted below have to do with raising the graduation requirement from a mid-level 2 required score to a Level 3 required score, which was actually approved through that Rule you sent me, right? When was that Rule adopted by State Board? And why is this the focus of the conversation vs. the focus being on the question I have above? I'm just trying to get clarity for myself and only myself, so I feel like I'm in the know on this.

Help please!

**From:** Jaryn Emhof (jaryn@afloridapromise.org)

**Sent:** Friday, December 09, 2011 10:28 AM

**To:** Patricia Levesque (patricia@afloridapromise.org); Joanna Hassell (Joanna@afloridapromise.org); Mary Laura Bragg (MaryLaura@Afloridapromise.org); Cari Miller (Cari@afloridapromise.org)

**Subject:** Today's Articles on FCAT Cut Scores

## Despite objections, passing the FCAT likely to get tougher

By [Jeffrey S. Solochek](#), Times Staff Writer

In Print: Friday, December 9, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/article1205348.ece>

Passing the FCAT is about to get harder.

The Florida Board of Education is poised to adopt higher scores on the annual high-stakes test for third- through 10th-graders, marking the first time in a decade new benchmarks have been set.

If the new standards are approved, many more third-graders likely would face retention, while many more high school students are projected to fail to meet the state's graduation requirement.

The percentage of 10th-graders passing the reading portion of the FCAT would fall from 60 percent to 52 percent if the new standards were applied to last year's results, according to state data.

The changes would take effect in the spring. That means current sophomores would have to meet a higher standard to pass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

Florida Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson, who is recommending the higher bar, said he was "confident the students and schools will rise to the challenge."

And the new, higher high school score "raises a new standard for a new Florida and a new era."

Robinson is recommending new scores for the high school FCAT reading exam that are two points higher than the levels supported by a majority of the state's superintendents.

Superintendents have said each point represents an additional 7,000 students statewide who would not pass the exam.

Robinson said he arrived at his proposed passing score after reviewing input from 300 educators, members of the public and Board of Education members at several workshops and sessions.

"We're putting students on a consistent path for college and careers, starting with elementary school," he said, noting that no one complained about proposed increases to the passing scores in the lower grades.

In Pinellas, school officials said the passing rate in reading for 10th-graders would drop from 59 percent to 52 percent. Almost 8,000 Pinellas 10th-graders take the reading FCAT each year so a decrease in the passing rate would mean about 550 to 600 students would now not pass.

The new scoring system is being changed to bring it in line with revisions made to the FCAT to meet new, more rigorous academic standards. The board is scheduled to take up Robinson's recommendations on Dec. 19.

The board's decision had been planned for early December. It was postponed, however, amid an increasingly heated debate about the actual number that would mean a passing score in ninth- and 10th-grade reading.

Superintendents long have called for the state to lower the score, contending it has been artificially high and creates the perception that high schools are performing worse than they are. Some of the state's leading proponents of changing the system in line with former Gov. Jeb Bush's education views argued that the scores should go up in order to hold students to an increasingly higher standard.

Chairwoman Kathleen Shanahan said that Florida's demand for "high standards" had pushed the state's schools forward and that the high FCAT scores were part of that success.

But superintendents said the state had been asking too much of 10th-graders to pass the FCAT, while passing scores for the lower grades were in fact too low. They pointed to data showing that each year the percentages of elementary students passing the FCAT at proficient level or higher soared, while the high school passing rate hovered around one-third of students.

Pasco County schools superintendent Heather Fiorentino, one of 12 superintendents who sat on one of the review panels, told her School Board on Tuesday that the issue is of huge concern for superintendents, and it should be critical for parents and children, too. Fiorentino supports increasing the scores in the lower grades but not in high school.

"If we tell a student they can read but yet they really can't, we've done a disservice to that child," Fiorentino said. "More than that, if we tell a child that they've failed but they

really haven't . . . we've also done a terrible disservice."

And some worry that if thousands fewer Florida schoolchildren score at grade level on the test, it could lower school grades and possibly open the door for more students to take advantage of vouchers and other transfers from their assigned school.

Other state board of education members appear more cautious about changing the scores. Recent appointee Gary Chartrand said he supports rigor in the system but asked for data on how FCAT failure links to dropouts.

"I want to make sure we don't decimate kids who have a chance for a good future by setting the (passing) scores too high," Chartrand said.

---

## Many Flunking the FCAT but Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson Proposes Harder Test

First Coast News

<http://www.firstcoastnews.com/rss/article/230438/3/Many-Flunking-the-FCAT-Education-Commissioner-Proposes-Harder-Test>

The FCAT is getting national attention after a school board member in Orange County failed the standardized test.

"That should tell you a lot. Something's wrong with the test, or something's wrong with him. Which one is it?" asked Raines PTA President Vivian Jenkins.

The school board member in Orange County failing the test only validated how Jenkins said she's long felt about the FCAT.

"If he can't pass it, what makes you think these students can pass it?" she said.

An outspoken critic of the test, Jenkins thinks the state should abandon it all together.

"You can have a student making straight As, but if they don't pass this test, they may not even graduate. How fair is that?" she said.

Education advocates who have spoken out against the test agree.

If you ask [Save Duval Schools](#) Executive Director Colleen Wood, the FCAT hurts more than it helps.

"It also brings into question when we tell children they're failures because they fail one test. We have to ask ourselves is that the right thing to do, and is it accurate?" said Wood.

In an effort to make the testing more accurate, State School Board Commissioner [Gerard Robinson](#) has announced plans to make the test harder this year.

Robinson argued that Florida High School graduates need to be college-ready, and suggested that a more rigorous test would prepare them.

"While these recommended scores raise standards, I am confident that Florida's children will meet them, just as they have before," said Robinson.

But with 40% of kids scoring in the low range on the 2010 test in Duval County, Wood doesn't agree.

"One high stakes test does not determine my student's [success](#). It doesn't determine the success or effectiveness of our teachers, and it surely doesn't decide it for an entire school," said Wood.

The state school board is set to vote on the proposed changes to the FCAT on Dec. 19.

---

## FCAT standards will climb

Pensacola News Journal

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20111209/NEWS01/112090313/FCAT-standards-will-climb?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

In April, the bar will most likely be raised for Florida public school students on the reading and math portions of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

And on Dec. 19, the state Board of Education could vote on tougher cut scores — the numbers that determine whether a student scores an achievement level of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, with 3 considered passing.

During a School Board discussion workshop Thursday, Escambia County Schools Superintendent Malcolm Thomas gave a presentation on the impact higher standards could have on local students.

"It's very stressful," Thomas said. "It will be very rigorous."

Thomas' presentation fell on the same day Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson announced his recommendations for cut scores.

Eight percent of Escambia 10th-graders who passed the reading portion of the FCAT last year would not have passed with the new standards Robinson is recommending, Thomas said.

Thomas said the scoring is being recalibrated now because it has not been done since 2002.

"In third grade, if a student scored near the bottom of level 4 (last year) and continues to put out the same amount of effort year to year, that low 4 will end up a 2 by 10th grade," Thomas said, during the presentation.

Throughout the process of determining the new standards, Thomas served on a panel with other state superintendents, who gave a recommendation of lower cut scores than the ones the commissioner recommended.

"What we're concerned about as superintendents is cut scores for graduation," he said. "If passed, this will go into effect this year."

After the superintendent's presentation, board members got a chance to give feedback.

"So much of it is not under our control," said board chairman Bill Slayton, who represents District 5.

District 4 board member Patty Hightower praised Thomas for his work on the state panel.

"School board members were told by their superintendents they wouldn't know what they would have done without our superintendent," said Hightower, who serves on the Florida School Boards Association. "He has really helped out around the state."

When asked if she had any comments or questions about the presentation, District 3 board member Linda Moultrie was quiet.

"I'm just reflecting on what our kids are faced with every day," she said.