

**From:** [Clare Crowson \(Clare@floridapromise.org\)](mailto:Clare@floridapromise.org) <[ClareAF@meridianstrategiesllc.com](mailto:ClareAF@meridianstrategiesllc.com)>

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**CC:**

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**Subject:** Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 11/14/11

## Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 11/14/11

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### NATIONAL NEWS

- 1) [Rough Path Seen for Senate's ESEA Bill](#); Klein – Education Week
- 2) [Idaho State Schools Superintendent Luna addresses good, bad and ugly of No Child Left Behind](#); Richert – Idaho Statesman
- 3) [Virtual Education Sees Shift to Accountability](#); Quillen – Education Week

### STATE NEWS

- 4) [Montana Board of Education approves more specific K-12 education standards](#); Staff- Associated Press
- 5) [Tough Questions on Changing Teacher Evaluations](#); Vevea – New York Times
- 6) [Evaluations capture student success, engagement](#); Martin – Columbia Tribune
- 7) [Florida: Proposed FCAT changes could dramatically impact school grades](#); Sanders – Florida Times-Union

## NATIONAL NEWS

### **Rough Path Seen for Senate's ESEA Bill**

Education Week

By: Alyson Klein

November 11, 2011

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/11/11/12esea\\_ep.h31.html?tkn=NXVFsJzgckGpWal5MNcCrvEsxyXBWkWUezion&cmp=clp-edweek](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/11/11/12esea_ep.h31.html?tkn=NXVFsJzgckGpWal5MNcCrvEsxyXBWkWUezion&cmp=clp-edweek)

The prospects for a bipartisan, comprehensive rewrite of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act moving through Congress this session remain cloudy, even after a hearing on a bill that was intended to serve as a prerequisite for sending it to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

During the Nov. 8 hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Republicans continued to express tepid support for the measure, while civil rights advocates typically aligned with Democrats lambasted the bill as a major step backward on student accountability.

For his part, U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, the committee chairman, made it clear that the measure approved by the committee Oct. 20 is a compromise.

"This bill that we have will not solve every problem in elementary and secondary education. ... No bill has everything everybody wants," Sen. Harkin said of the bill he co-sponsored with Sen. Michael B. Enzi, R-Wyo., the top Republican on the panel. He said the central question is: "Does it advance the cause of finding proper balances between federal, state, and local?"

The Obama administration—which is offering states waivers of some provisions of the current version of the law—has been quietly critical of the bill's handling of two key issues: accountability and teacher evaluation. But Sen. Harkin said after the hearing that those decisions were the result of the need for bipartisan compromise with Sen. Enzi.

"The administration can say those things," Mr. Harkin said of such critiques. "They never had to negotiate with anyone to get those waivers." The waivers would give states wiggle room under the No Child Left Behind Act, the current version of the ESEA, but only if they advance certain reform priorities favored by the administration.

It's unusual for a congressional committee to hold a hearing on a bill it's already passed. But during last month's markup of the Harkin-Enzi bill, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., threatened to slow down the process of committee consideration unless the panel held a hearing that included representatives from groups that would implement the law, such as teachers, principals, and superintendents.

#### *GOP Pushback*

Sen. Paul took the opportunity at the hearing to reiterate his view that the federal government should stay out of K-12 policy.

"The farther we get away from the local school board, the worse it gets," said the Kentucky senator. And he said he is "concerned that we still have a testing mandate. I don't think we fixed that."

Other Republicans may also be seeking changes to the bill if and when it gets to the Senate floor.

Sen. Enzi said he would like to see "a much smaller federal role" in education and "fewer programs" and was sorry that "the markup moved in the opposite direction."

Right after the panel's 15-7 vote on Oct. 20, Sen. Harkin said he'd like to move the bill to the Senate floor as soon as possible. He said he was hoping to get it passed in time to stop the administration's package of waivers. Thirty-nine states, plus the

District of Columbia, have announced their intention to apply for the waivers.

But it doesn't appear that the bill will be approved in time to head off the waiver package. For one thing, senators still have to approve spending bills and consider recommendations before year's end from the "supercommittee" charged with making long-range proposals for cutting the federal deficit.

"Ultimately, the decision to bring legislation to the floor rests with Senate leadership," said Justine Sessions, a spokeswoman for Sen. Harkin. "Chairman Harkin is working with them on the bipartisan legislation approved by the HELP Committee last month, but he is also aware that the Senate floor schedule is extremely crowded."

### *Accountability 'Retreat'?*

The hearing was done in a roundtable format. Witnesses were asked to explain which parts of the bill they particularly liked and which parts they thought needed work.

Jon Schnur, a co-founder and the chairman of the board for New Leaders, a nonprofit organization in New York City that helps train principals to work in underperforming schools, said he thought the committee should consider a big incentive for developing evaluation systems. One possibility could be to award competitively at least half of Title II funding—the nearly \$2.5 billion that states get each year for teacher quality—instead giving it all out by formula.

Elmer Thomas, the principal at Madison Central High School in Richmond, Ky., said he was glad to see the committee was "getting rid of punitive [adequate yearly progress] sanctions."

A broad coalition of civil rights and business groups, including the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund, the Education Trust, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, remains opposed to the legislation, however. Their views were represented at the hearing by Wade Henderson, the president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, who called the bill "a historic retreat from accountability."

After the hearing, a Senate aide sought to counter some of those claims, pointing to language in the bill that makes it clear that states must submit accountability plans that address the success of student subgroups, such as racial and ethnic minorities and students with disabilities. The main difference between the committee's bill and current law is that there wouldn't be a federal system of labeling schools, or federally spelled-out interventions for schools with lagging achievement.

That balance works for Tom Luna, the state superintendent in Idaho and the president-elect of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Idaho has embraced some major changes lately, including on teacher quality, merit pay, and technology initiatives—all without federal involvement, Mr. Luna, a Republican, said in an interview after the hearing.

"I think the reauthorization keeps the good parts of the No Child Left Behind Act," he said, including the focus on disaggregating data for all students, while including some positive changes, such as growth models, which allow states to measure individual student progress.

He said he believes the scaling-back of the federal role is the right move. "I don't think it's a question of whether states can step up," he said. "I think they've proven that they have."

Mr. Luna added that he'd rather see a congressional rewrite in place of waivers. "Reauthorization is long term," he said.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## **Idaho politics: Luna addresses good, bad and ugly of No Child Left Behind**

Idaho Statesman

By: Kevin Richert

November 8, 2011

[http://voices.idahostatesman.com/2011/11/08/kricht/idaho\\_politics\\_luna\\_addresses\\_good\\_bad\\_and\\_ugly\\_no\\_child\\_left\\_be](http://voices.idahostatesman.com/2011/11/08/kricht/idaho_politics_luna_addresses_good_bad_and_ugly_no_child_left_be)

Testifying at a U.S. Senate committee hearing today, state schools superintendent Tom Luna says he backs the bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the federal No Child Left Behind education law.

The testimony came months after Luna informed the federal government that Idaho would opt out of some of the provisions in the 10-year-old law.

"The current No Child Left Behind law reminds me of the old Clint Eastwood movie, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.' The good is that it created a standards-based system where schools are accountable for every child. The bad is it is a one-size-fits-all model that is difficult to implement in rural states like Idaho. The ugly is the federal government now sets the goal and prescribes the programs we must use to meet that goal. If those programs don't work, we are held accountable," Luna said. "The new piece of legislation to reauthorize No Child Left Behind keeps the good parts of the law and improves the bad and ugly parts. It moves to a growth model where we can focus on those students who are not on grade level as well as those students who are above grade level."

Here's the full news release from Luna:

*Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna told members of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee on Tuesday that he supports the current legislation to reauthorize No Child Left Behind because it finds the right balance between the state's responsibility and the federal government's role.*

*Superintendent Luna, who also serves as president-elect of the Council of Chief State School Officers, was one of 10 individuals — and the only state chief — to testify before the committee on Tuesday.*

*"I applaud the bipartisan effort in the Senate to bring forth a comprehensive reauthorization bill that maintains a meaningful commitment to accountability while promoting greater state and local leadership in K-12 education," Superintendent Luna said. "As Idaho's state superintendent, I have strongly encouraged reauthorization to transform this law away from a prescriptive one-size-fits-all federal model, to an approach that promotes state and local decisionmaking, while maintaining an unwavering commitment to accountability for all students. Idaho has already moved in this direction by passing comprehensive education reform known as Students Come First that raises academic standards, creates the next generation of assessments, implements a growth model for increased accountability, ties educator evaluations to student achievement, and rewards excellence in the classroom. The Senate HELP Committee now has found the right balance to reauthorize the federal law and give states the higher levels of accountability and flexibility they need to raise student achievement."*

*The No Child Left Behind Act was initially passed in 2001. It was supposed to be reauthorized four years ago; however, neither Congress nor the Administration had taken action until now. This summer, Idaho became one of the first states to tell U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan it would no longer abide by the outdated provisions in No Child Left Behind and instead move toward a new system of increased accountability based on academic growth, rather than just proficiency — or how many students can pass the test.*

*Idaho had already taken steps in this direction through Students Come First because these laws put in place a growth model and a system for rewarding Idaho's great teachers, among other changes.*

*Under the proposed legislation before the U.S. Senate to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, states could move away from an outdated accountability system where 100 percent of schools must meet certain proficiency targets. Instead, every state could develop and implement a high level of accountability that measures academic growth as well as proficiency.*

*"The current No Child Left Behind law reminds me of the old Clint Eastwood movie, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.' The good is that it created a standards-based system where schools are accountable for every child. The bad is it is a one-size-fits-all model that is difficult to implement in rural states like Idaho. The ugly is the federal government now sets the goal and prescribes the programs we must use to meet that goal. If those programs don't work, we are held accountable," Superintendent Luna said to the Senate HELP Committee today. "The new piece of legislation to reauthorize No Child Left Behind keeps the good parts of the law and improves the bad and ugly parts. It moves to a growth model where we can focus on those students who are not on grade level as well as those students who are above grade level."*

*Until the law is reauthorized by Congress, Idaho will move forward in applying for a waiver to ensure the state can create its own system of increased accountability and flexibility for all schools as early as next year.*

*The full Senate HELP Committee hearing, Beyond NCLB: Views on the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act, is [available online](#).*

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## **Virtual Education Sees Shift to Accountability**

Education Week

By: Ian Quillen

November 11, 2011

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2011/11/more\\_on\\_keeping\\_pace\\_embrace\\_s.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2011/11/more_on_keeping_pace_embrace_s.html)

Virtual schooling is in the era of a fundamental shift in its development that should be embraced, not feared, said authors and sponsors of the [2011 version](#) of the [Keeping Pace annual report](#) on virtual schooling here at the Virtual School Symposium in Indianapolis Thursday.

While most virtual school advocates in the past may have focused on gaining exposure for their programs, they should shift toward emphasizing accountability and transparency in those programs to a community at-large becoming more aware of virtual education, the panel said. And despite some recent negative press about online schooling's benefit or lack thereof, they agreed that many virtual providers are doing this.

"When these programs started, they started out of a point of pain," said Andy Scantland, the vice president of sales and marketing for Advanced Academics Inc., the Oklahoma City-based provider of public and private online programs, and a sponsor of the report from the Evergreen Group of Durango, Colo. "As a result, there wasn't a lot of measurability or a lot of accountability. I think that's changed a lot, and the report reflects that."

Scantland said some recent pushback reflects the movement of virtual schooling toward the mainstream. That movement is also reflected in one of the report's central findings—that single-district schools are the fastest-growing sector of the virtual school landscape.

"Accountability and measurability is good for all of us," Scantland said. "I think it's a responsibility and an obligation for this group to begin to tell this story in this way. ... The Keeping Pace report suggests looking at it against a broad array of attributes."

John Canuel, the vice president of global K-12 education strategy at Washington-based Blackboard Inc., another sponsor of the

report and a well-known provider of learning management systems, said he's seen the focus on results increase even in the most recently expanding single-district sector of virtual education.

"Many of them got into this work from a financial standpoint," Canuel said. "They were saying, 'We're losing our students [and our funding] to those schools.' We're now seeing the conversation shift to, 'This is our work and we need to get in the game.' It is changing the dynamics."

John Watson, founder of the Evergreen Group, said increasing accountability in virtual schools is essential to determine whether the virtual movement is serving its purpose.

"There's the increasing recognition that [virtual schools are] here or that they're coming, depending on which state you're in," Watson said. "The question we're trying to pivot on is, will they be transformative?"

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## **STATE NEWS**

### **Montana Board of Education approves more specific K-12 education standards**

Associated Press

By: Staff

November 5, 2011

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/d2a35dc054a049b39ff5caf219e6623e/MT--Education-Standards/>

HELENA, Mont. — Montana has joined 45 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting education standards that proponents say are more specific and prepare students to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

The state Board of Public Education adopted the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and math on Friday, Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau said.

"These new standards have the potential to fundamentally transform learning in the classroom," Juneau said. "They give every student, no matter where they live, the opportunity to receive an education that will prepare them for college or to enter the workforce."

The new standards list specific skills students are supposed to learn in each grade, while the previous standards listed, in general, what students should know by fourth and eighth grades and at graduation, she said.

They also require literacy in history, science, social studies and technical subjects.

"Literacy has to be a part of their duties as well — reading across the curriculum," Juneau said, including such things as vocabulary words in science and being able to solve story problems.

The standards were developed through an initiative sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association. The process involved teachers, principals, parents and other experts using the best education practices of the United States and other countries.

"This is a national movement, driven by the states" rather than the federal government, Juneau said.

Schools will now begin aligning their curriculum to the new standards and some have already begun that work, Juneau said.

Schools are expected to implement the new standards starting with the 2013-14 school year, but may begin earlier. The first tests that will be able to compare Montana students with students across the country being taught under the same standards will take place during the 2014-15 school year.

Montana's new standards also include Indian Education for All, as required by the state constitution.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

### **Tough Questions on Changing Teacher Evaluations**

New York Times

By: Rebecca Vevea

November 13, 2011

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/us/tough-questions-on-changing-teacher-evaluations.html?\\_r=2&ref=education](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/us/tough-questions-on-changing-teacher-evaluations.html?_r=2&ref=education)

For the first time next year, thousands of Chicago Public Schools teachers will be evaluated based partly on how well their students are doing academically. Many fear they will face dismissal if the standards are not applied fairly.

“It’s going to make people really angry,” said Ruth Resnick, a librarian at O’Keefe Elementary School, who spoke last week at a public forum about carrying out a new state law that changes how teachers, principals, librarians and other staff are graded.

But state and district leaders say the new evaluations will be better than the decades-old system now in use. They say more thoughtful and effective evaluations will not only increase student achievement, but also provide teachers with better feedback for how to improve.

Despite low graduation rates, test scores and other measures of student performance in the district, more than 90 percent of its teachers are now rated excellent or superior.

“We’re now at a critical point in time,” Darren Reisberg, the deputy superintendent at the Illinois State Board of Education, said Monday at Lane Technical High School as he opened the final public forum in a series of meetings about the new law.

Last week, an advisory council drafted legislative rules that districts must follow. The law requires a public feedback period before lawmakers vote in about nine months on guidelines for administering the new system.

Moreover, district officials and the Chicago Teachers Union, already at odds over issues like a longer school day, must agree on guidelines for, among other things, what tests to use for measuring academic growth and how much the results should factor into evaluations. Then hundreds of evaluators and principals must be trained on how to put the system into effect before the next school year begins.

School districts and their unions must also address other crucial matters, including how to measure the performance of teachers whose subjects are not tested and those who teach special-needs students and English-language learners.

“Those are the big questions, and I don’t know how they get answered in the next year,” said Lauren Sartain, a researcher at the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, who spent the last two years studying teacher evaluations in Chicago.

The law calls for the new assessments to be used in half the city’s public schools next fall and the remainder by 2013. The rest of the state has until 2014.

Public school officials think they can get it done. “We are 100 percent confident that we will be ready to roll out in 300 schools next fall,” said Alicia Winckler, the district’s chief talent officer.

But Karen Lewis, president of the teachers union, is skeptical, saying, “It’s going to be a mess.”

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced merit pay for the district’s principals over the summer, and observers say teachers are next in line for the performance incentives.

But Chicago briefly experimented with merit pay in 2007 with the Teacher Advancement Program, which offered bonuses to teachers and principals based on a combination of student achievement and classroom observations. The first two years of the program showed no increases in student test scores, a study found, though researchers cautioned that the results were preliminary.

Alex Seeskin, an English teacher at Lakeview High School, called the current evaluation system superficial, but said discussion of merit pay was premature.

“Before we even begin to talk about tying pay to a teacher’s evaluation,” Mr. Seeskin said, “we need to make sure those evaluations are reliable and accurate. To me, we’re nowhere near that.”

The Obama administration made the overhaul of teacher evaluations a signature component of the president’s Race to the Top initiative, which awards federal grants to states if they make certain changes in education.

In Illinois’s effort to win a grant, the General Assembly passed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act, which requires districts to make student growth a “significant factor” in teacher and principal evaluations.

Unlike some other states, Illinois does not require student-achievement data to account for least 50 percent of a teacher’s evaluation, according to a report by the National Council on Teaching Quality. A state panel is determining how much student-achievement data ought to count in Illinois, but districts may choose to make it a larger part of a teacher’s evaluation than what the state recommends.

Ms. Lewis said teachers were “completely against using a single measure as 50 percent of a teacher’s evaluation.”

The new system also must deal with other fairness issues. Tying teachers’ performance to student progress can be a disadvantage to those whose subjects are not tested on a state exam. In Illinois, only students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 take a state-administered test in reading, math and, in some cases, science.

Teachers, education advocates and others are asking school officials to “proceed with caution” on the new law.

Rod Estvan, an education policy analyst for Access Living, an advocacy group for disabled people, said applying the standards too strictly could hurt the teachers and specialists who work with special-education students because those students' progress, or lack of it, might not reflect the teachers' efforts.

In a paper released last month, Mr. Estvan said that if test results from special-needs students were treated like data from any other student, "you're going to see teachers fighting to keep kids out of their rooms." Conversely, if their scores are not counted, special-education students might not get the same level of attention from teachers who will focus on improving the scores of others.

"We have to be thinking very carefully about the unintended consequences," said Martha Thurlow, associate director for the National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Alexa Posny, assistant secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education, echoed Ms. Thurlow and said school districts should be looking for ways "to see what works without having high stakes attached."

The test given at the elementary level, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, has been criticized as too easy and would be miscast as a tool for evaluating teachers, according to teachers and parents who came to the forum, when the test was designed exclusively for gauging knowledge in particular subject areas.

"The ISAT was not designed for teacher evaluations, and it shouldn't be used that way," said Julie Woestehoff, executive director of Parents United for Responsible Education.

But district officials say the findings of a coming report from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research on one of the district's teacher evaluation pilot programs are promising.

Ms. Winckler, who has reviewed the consortium's findings, said she was "really encouraged" by the validity of classroom observations and how they aligned with student performance.

But Mr. Seeskin, the Lakeview High teacher, said: "I don't think that the models for measuring student growth have been tried and tested enough that they are ready to be launched next year. If we roll this out before it's ready, we're going to lose teacher trust."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Evaluations capture student success, engagement

Columbia Tribune

By: Catherine Martin

November 11, 2011

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/3cb8a2aabaeb4c3eb72b510bf7d222a4/MO--PAN-Teacher-Evaluations/>

Columbia, Mo. — Anna Osborn doesn't stop moving while Teaching her ninth-grade reading class at Jefferson Junior High School, and she doesn't expect her students to, either.

She lets the nine students roam around and ask one another questions as needed.

"Ninth-graders love to walk around and talk to each other," she said.

But she also makes sure things don't get out of hand. When a student acts up, she takes care of it while continuing to teach.

Plus, she knows an administrator could walk in to observe her classroom at any time.

Columbia Public Schools relies on teacher evaluations to determine the quality of local educators. Rather than just looking at degrees and certificates, the district is interested in whether teachers are effectively educating students, said Dana Clippard, assistant superintendent of human resources.

"It's about outcomes and learning, not just teacher behaviors," she said. "We look for evidence of student work . that reflects the intellectual character and compositions of students and reflects what the teacher did to achieve that."

Some of the district's evaluation criteria track student growth and achievement, and others focus on student-teacher relationships and whether students are engaged.

Local teachers say the evaluation system is fair and helpful, setting Columbia Public Schools apart from other schools in the country where teachers are unhappy about changing evaluation practices.

Osborn has seen both sides. The state of Louisiana handled teacher evaluations when she worked there, which meant a stranger would show up without notice to watch her teach.

She prefers Missouri's version, where districts have local control. The Jefferson administrators who evaluate her know her, she said. They know her Teaching style. They know her students and the challenges some face. And they let her know in advance if an administrator plans to stay through an entire 50-minute class.

"I think having my principal be the person in charge of my evaluation is ideal for me because he is in my building, and he knows me and he knows my students," Osborn said. "He knows my goals and is able to provide accurate feedback to help me be better."

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not have a uniform evaluation method for all school districts. In June, though, the state adopted new guidelines districts are asked to use when they develop their own evaluation practices. The guidelines ask districts to evaluate teachers based on three main categories: a commitment to serving students, classroom practices and how they affect students, and student and family outcomes.

The process has evolved since the 1980s, when evaluations were based solely on whether teachers were using techniques considered effective, said Karla Eslinger, assistant commissioner for the office of educator quality.

"Now we know that really it's looking at how engaged the students are and seeing what kind of work kids are producing . that influences the practice more than what I am doing at the chalkboard," she said.

In Columbia, performance-based evaluations include unscheduled and scheduled observations with written feedback, where evaluators note how teachers deliver curricula and how engaged students are.

Two Mile Prairie Elementary School Principal Patti Raynor takes the engagement part seriously. When she evaluates teachers in her building, she doesn't just watch from the back of the room. She starts there but then moves around to get a better sense of what the students are doing with the information. On one Friday afternoon, she even lay on her stomach between two desks to listen in on the students' discussion.

"If I'm not a part of it, I can't get the feel for the class," she said. "I need to be right in there."

Some teachers have noticed the shift in evaluation practices and think it's a step in the right direction.

"I think it's become more geared to helping you do a lot of self-reflection as opposed to just judging or critiquing you," Two Mile Prairie teacher Linda Watson said.

There's no district requirement for how often administrators should visit every classroom, but they are expected to observe multiple classrooms each week, Clippard said.

New teachers, those with five or less years of experience in the district, are observed more frequently and must go through a formal evaluation process every year. Tenured teachers still receive unscheduled observations, though full evaluation reports are only required every five years.

Observation-based evaluations aren't unique to Columbia Public Schools or Missouri, and not all teachers are pleased with the evolving evaluation process.

Washington, D.C., schools implemented a new system that also focused on classroom observations, but there, a poor grade can get a teacher fired, The New York Times reported. In the first year of the new evaluation system, 165 teachers lost their jobs, according to the Times.

Consequences here aren't so harsh. Columbia Public Schools focuses on improvement rather than punishment, Clippard said. If an evaluator sees a teacher struggling, the two will work on a plan that includes professional development in the area needed.

"The evaluation tool is meant to support the instruction they're practicing," she said. "If we have an individual that is not perfect for their experience level, we provide an improvement plan of how they can get there."

Even teachers performing well can use new ideas to improve, Clippard said. "The purpose of evaluations is to support continual improvement of the instructional process," she said. "It is a formal, documented process, but I hope the communication transcends the process. It should be a reflective, rich conversation and dialogue going on all year long."

Parkade Elementary School teacher Brian Rehg has found that to be the case in his three years in Columbia. Once, his building principal observed a reading comprehension lesson Rehg was giving that involved the children giving a thumbs-up or thumbs-down to grade the story. The principal later told him "yes" and "no" answers aren't informative, so Rehg rethought his strategy. Now after a story, he has students write their thoughts on a piece of paper, which is crumpled up and thrown into a pile. Students then take turns reading the notes aloud.

Teachers aren't given a free pass. Administrators can opt to not renew a teacher's contract if there's a persistent problem. Even tenured teachers can be fired if they continually fail to improve in problem areas, but typically those type of teachers don't become tenured.

"Before a teacher reaches tenure, we should know whether that teacher should be tenured or not," Clippard said.

One thing teachers aren't being judged on in [Columbia](#) is how well their students perform on tests.

That also aligns with the state's expectations, which call, in part, for teachers to be evaluated based on how they're using test scores to improve student learning.

"When you're talking about test scores, you're talking about one single indicator among many. To get a real sense, you need multiple data points," said Paul Katnik, director of the office of educator quality at DESE. "Evidence that comes from student test scores, behavior and attendance falls into only one-third of what we're looking at. There has to be a commitment level we're looking at, there has to be engagement and there has to be outcome results."

Clippard agreed, saying information about students and teachers will be more reliable and balanced if administrators use multiple assessments.

That's good news for Osborn, whose students are trying to catch up to grade-level expectations. Although she wants to help them boost test scores, she's not ready to be evaluated on them.

"I don't want to be worrying in October about test scores in the spring," she said. "I want and need to be worried about if I am meeting the daily instructional needs of my students."

Based on evaluations from her students, Osborn is doing just that.

"She uses simple [Teaching](#) strategies," Kayla Wingate, 14, said, "and she interacts with students."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Florida: Proposed FCAT changes could dramatically impact school grades

Florida Times-Union

By: Topher Sanders

November 14, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2011-11-14/story/proposed-fcat-changes-could-dramatically-impact-school-grades#ixzz1dh7hji1G>

*But Duval schools head says proposed higher standards are good in the long run.*

Proposed achievement levels for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test would dramatically change school grades in the state, potentially tripling the number of F schools while providing a more gradual increase in difficulty as students matriculate.

The proposal would give Florida the most rigorous state exam in the country, said Duval County Public Schools Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals, who participated in the vetting process for the new proposal.

"We're going to see a number of school grades go down as a result of this, particularly at elementary and middle," Pratt-Dannals said. "But I think long term it's the right decision."

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is scored in achievement levels from a low of 1 to a high of 5. The proposal would change the amount of points students need to earn on the FCAT to earn a particular level.

In education circles, these are known as "cut scores."

Pratt-Dannals said the changes will give clearer measures of students abilities and gradually demand more of students as they are promoted grade to grade as well as help prepare students and teachers for tougher standards that will be in place in 2015 when Florida and several other states begin giving the same exams.

The State Board of Education is meeting in Jacksonville for the first time in six years and on Monday will have a workshop at Florida State College at Jacksonville to discuss the proposed cut scores. The meeting begins at 2 p.m. in the college's Urban Resource Center at 601 W. State St., Room 103. The state board could make a final decision on the new FCAT measures during its December meeting.

A statewide grade analysis of the 2010-11 FCAT data showed that the number of A and B elementary and middle schools dropped under the proposed achievement levels, while the number of C, D and F schools increased.

The number of D schools would double and F schools would triple going from about 30 to about 90 statewide, based on the 2010-11 FCAT results.

Duval County Public Schools did an analysis to see what percent of its students would be proficient under the proposed cut scores.

Using the 2010-11 FCAT reading results, Duval students in grades three through seven showed drops in the percent of students proficient, eighth grade stayed about the same and ninth and 10th grades saw increases in the percent of students considered proficient.

The big swings would be in third and 10th grade reading. In third grade, proficiency in reading drops from 69 percent to 55 percent under the proposed measure, in 10th grade it jumps from 34 percent proficient in reading to 49 percent. Pratt-Dannals said part of the district's task will be to explain to the public how this year's school grades won't necessarily reflect actual changes in students performance.

"It will still be a tough sell," he said.

Just because a school's grade drops or increases this year won't necessarily mean student performance in that school changed, it's just that the ruler used to measure that performance has changed.

"It's going to be a communication and marketing issue we're starting to think about now," Pratt-Dannals said. "It will be a statewide issue."

Commissioner Gerard Robinson's proposed cut scores would require elementary students to earn more points on the FCAT in order to be score at proficient levels, while high school students could score fewer points to be proficient. Robinson said in a statement that he believes Florida's students and teachers are up to the task presented by the new cut scores.

Florida educators have long said that the FCAT was too easy at the elementary level and too difficult at the high school level. Robinson's proposal would correct the imbalance educators have complained about. The proposed "cut scores" went through a long vetting and discussion process, which included teachers, superintendents, parents and business leaders.

[\(Back to top\)](#)