

EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

Parent Newsletter

Winter 2014-2015

Welcome to **Edition 2** of the *Extra Special Edition* for the school year 2014-2015, the newsletter for exceptional parents of Calhoun County. Each issue contains information for parents who have children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

The following article is adapted from the Florida Standards Assessment website.

Florida Standards Assessments

As many Floridians are aware, our state has been in a period of transition as we have made important decisions to improve our education system and raise the bar for our schools, educators and students. Please see below for an overview of the direction we are moving in statewide assessments, which assessments will be offered in the upcoming school year, how those assessments will be offered and ways families can support their children in preparation for the new assessments.

The Florida Standards and Florida Standards Assessments

The Florida Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts were approved by the Florida State Board of Education in February 2014 and will be fully implemented in grades K–12 in the 2014–2015 school year. All Florida schools will teach the Florida Standards, and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop and administer new statewide assessments. These assessments will provide parents, teachers, policy makers and the general public with information regarding how well students are learning the Florida standards.

What assessments will my child be taking?

The following Florida Standards Assessments will be administered for the first time in Spring 2015:

- Grades 3–11 English Language Arts (Writing component in grades 4–11)
- Grades 3–8 Mathematics
- Algebra 1 End-of-Course Assessment
- Geometry End-of-Course Assessment
- Algebra 2 End-of-Course Assessment



Promoting Success and Family Support

Parents can promote student success by staying involved in their child's education, offering positive support and feedback and encouraging them to relax and do their very best. By staying connected with their student's school and teachers and taking advantage of online resources, such as school websites and portals, parents can stay informed and be best equipped to meet the needs of their students at home.

Finding Florida Assessment Resources

Families are encouraged to take advantage of the information and resources available on the Florida Standards Assessments portal (www.FSAssessments.org) and the FDOE website (www.fldoe.org). More resources will be made available throughout the 2014–2015 school year, so parents and students should check these websites regularly for updates.

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"Never let the fear of striking out get in your way."
- George Herman (Babe) Ruth



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Computer-Based Testing

Florida has been transitioning to computer-based testing since 2010 and will continue to do so in Spring 2015. AIR offers a dynamic computer-based test delivery system. Students will respond to items in multiple ways, including creating graphs, writing short responses and using other interactive features. The various question types are designed to assess higher-order thinking skills and offer exciting new ways for students to show what they know and can do. Training tests are now available for students, parents and educators to become familiar with the new testing system. The training tests can be accessed at www.FSAssessments.org/training-tests.

In Spring 2015, all grades 5–11 English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments will be administered online, with paper-based versions available for students with disabilities who have this accommodation outlined in their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). Computer-based accommodations, such as text-to-speech, will also be available in the platform for eligible students who require them. Grades 3 and 4 assessments in 2014–2015 will be paper-based tests only. Please reference the 2014–2015 Statewide Assessment Schedule located on the FSA portal www.FSAssessments.org for information about when the tests will be administered.

Florida Statewide Assessment Program 2014-2015 Schedule

Florida Standards Assessments (FSA)

English Language Arts and Mathematics

Dates	Assessment
December 1-9, 2014 January 5-February 13, 2015	Computer-Based: FSA Grades 8–11 English Language Arts Writing Component Field Test*
February 2-13, 2015	Paper-Based: FSA Grades 4-7 English Language Arts Writing Component Field Test*
March 2-13, 2015	Paper-Based: FSA Grades 4-7 English Language Arts Writing Component
March 2-13, 2015	Computer Based (including Paper-Based Accommodations): FSA Grades 8-11 English Language Arts Writing Component
March 23-April 10, 2015	Paper-Based: FSA Grades 3 and 4 English Language Arts
April 13-April 24, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations and Computer-Based: FSA Grades 5-11 English Language Arts FSA Grades 5-8 Mathematics
April 13-May 8, 2015	Computer-Based: FSA Grades 5-11 English Language Arts

FSA End-of-Course Assessments

Dates	Assessment
April 20-May 1, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra 2
April 20-May 15, 2015	Computer Based: Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2
July 13-17, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2
July 13-24, 2015	Computer Based: Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2

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Florida Statewide Assessment Program 2014-2015 Schedule Continued

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® FCAT 2.0

Dates	Assessment
October 6-10, 2014 and March 23-April 3, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: FCAT Mathematics Retake (SSS) FCAT 2.0 Reading Retake
October 6-17, 2014 and March 23-April 10, 2015	Computer-Based: FCAT Mathematics Retake (SSS) FCAT 2.0 Reading Retake
April 13-May 8, 2015	Paper-Based: FCAT 2.0 Grades 5 and 8 Science

NGSSS End-of-Course Assessments

Dates	Assessment
September 15-19, 2014 and December 1-12, 2014	Paper-Based Accommodations: Algebra 1 Retake, Biology1, Civics, Geometry Retake, U.S. History
September 15-26, 2014 and December 1-19, 2014	Computer-Based: Algebra 1 Retake, Biology1, Civics, Geometry Retake, U.S. History
March 23-April 3, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: Algebra 1 Retake
March 23-April 10, 2015	Computer-Based: Algebra 1 Retake
April 20-May15, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: Biology 1, Civics, U.S. History
April 20-May 22, 2015	Computer-Based: Biology 1, Civics, U.S. History
July 13-17, 2015	Paper-Based Accommodations: Algebra 1 Retake, Biology 1, Civics, U.S. History
March 23-April 10, 2015	Computer-Based: Algebra 1 Retake, Biology 1, Civics, U.S. History

Other Statewide Assessments

Dates	Assessment
July-October 2014	Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS) (Administered within the first 30 days of school)
August 2014-Mary 2015	Florida Assessments for Instruction for Reading (FAIR) (optional K-12)
September-December 2014	ACT Plan®
October 15 and 18, 2014	Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualify Test (PSAT/NMSQT)
January-March, 2015	National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grades 4, 8, and 12 Reading, Mathematics and Science
February 16-April 3, 2015	Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA)
March 2-April 8, 2015	Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Disabilities
May 2015	Advanced Placement (AP) Exams
Year Round	Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT)



Florida Standards Assessment information adapted from the <http://www.fsassessments.org> website



McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

Florida's school choice programs ensure that no child will be left behind by allowing parents to choose the best educational setting—public or private—for their child. The **McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program** provided over 26,000 Florida students with special needs the opportunity to attend a participating private school during the 2012-13 school year. The McKay Scholarships Program also offers parents public school choice. A parent of an eligible special needs student may choose to transfer the student to another public school.

In order to be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must also have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)* or 504 Accommodation Plan, and:

- Have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys (Grades K-12); or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the preceding October and February Florida Education Finance Program surveys and was at least 4 years old; or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was reported as having received Specialized Instructional Services by the Office of Early Learning and was at least 4 years old; or
- Have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind during the preceding October and February student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

To find out if your student is eligible or to apply for the McKay Scholarship, please visit the School Choice website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org. To learn more about your child's educational options, please contact your school district's Exceptional Student Education Office at 850-674-8734. You may also contact the Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Information Hotline at **1-800-447-1636** or visit the website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org and click the McKay Scholarship link.

This notice serves to inform you that your child may be eligible to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program.

This notice does not guarantee your student's eligibility.

Adapted from the www.floridaschoolchoice.org website

Accessible Textbooks: What Parents Need to Know

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) provide the same information found in textbooks or handouts in a visual format that students with visual disabilities can use more easily. The content of the materials is exactly the same as the textbook or other instructional material used in the classroom.

The following are the formats available:

Braille: format used primarily for students with vision impairments

Large Print: hard copy materials that have a larger print size than standard print

Audio: provides the information through a speech mode – either a human voice or synthesized electronic speech

Digital Text: text presented through a computer or electronic device

Braille



Large Print



Audio



Digital Text



The Individual Education Plan (IEP) team determines if a student with a disability needs AIM. As a member of your child's IEP team, you can discuss your child's needs for this service. To learn more about AIM, please view the short video at the link listed below: <http://aim.cast.org/experience/training/supports -.VG49eFZIB4M>

For additional information about Accessible Instructional Materials, please contact Donna Doelman at: doelmand@paec.org or by phone at 877-873-7232 ext 2271.



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Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties

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