



FLORIDA ORGANIZATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS Position Paper in Support of the FADSS Standard Setting Recommendations

The Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders (FOIL) includes representation from over 60 Florida districts. We recognize the crucial responsibility of setting high standards for students. Students must be prepared for a global economy that requires them to compete with workers around the world for jobs that require complex skills. We support holding our students to higher standards that challenge their abilities, but we express concern with the proposed action of the State Board of Education to alter the aligned and developmentally appropriate standards set by the Educator Standard Setting Committees, and the Reactor Panel Members, representing over 250 educators, 20+ Superintendents, and state recognized business and community leaders.

The purpose of this position paper is to support the recommendations made by Florida Superintendents and the Reactor Panel and to represent the unheard voices of Florida's students and parents. These are the Superintendents, educators and community leaders who have led Florida's student achievement to unprecedented levels. These are the leaders who will ensure Florida students achieve at the highest national and international levels.

These are also the educational leaders who know the direct impact to the students who sit in the seats of each school, who are no longer considered proficient or successful because of a combination of increased rigor, changes in test scaling and scoring, and changes in school grading. The negative impact to individual students, communities, and the economic future of the state has the potential to be devastating and immeasurable.

Specifically, we are concerned that changing the cut scores recommended by the Reactor Panel for Reading in Grades 8 through 10 will:

1. Misidentify skilled students as non-proficient requiring remediation in greater numbers

The recommendations endorsed by the Reactor Panel and initially by Commissioner Robinson represent a significant increase in standards, with a potential of 40% of students being labeled unsatisfactory. These scales represent a gradual increase in expectations that is fair to students, realistic for schools, and will result in the overall desired outcome of having our student's college and career ready. Increasing standards beyond these recommendations will result in more students being identified as unsatisfactory when that is not the case. In turn, these students will miss out on rigorous courses that they are capable of successfully completing because they are in remedial courses. Additionally, increased remediation will ultimately reduce student participation in elective courses, including practical, performing and creative arts, which often motivate students to attend school. This change is both counterintuitive and counterproductive to decreasing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate.

2. Lead to dramatically lower graduation rates, harming students and Florida's economy

Florida's NAEP scores demonstrate dramatic progress in closing the achievement gap and in some cases passing national student outcomes. If Florida's 10th Grade Reading exam and other end-of-course standards are dramatically out of line with national standards, we risk not graduating many students who have reading and math skills well above the national average. Labeling students as less capable throughout their careers in Florida or across the nation would be a disservice. Dramatically, unnecessarily, and arbitrarily lowering graduation rates would also negatively impact our state's ability to compete for business investment and jobs.

3. Undermine the State Accountability System

Increasing standards in high school may seem to be an effective way to increase college readiness, but it ignores educational and developmental research. Students make the largest gains in reading ability early in life, and the Reactor Panel proposed standards that recognize this by aligning all grades to common expectations of performance. Instead of students falling in and out of proficiency due to setting inconsistent cut scores as experienced in FCAT 1.0, the Reactor Panel's proposal creates a much needed accountability system that sets consistent, high standards for all students. This component is crucial in assuring that parents and students support our accountability system rather than view it as an inconsistent measure of student performance.

Standards-setting is an important part of our accountability system, but it does not improve student achievement, and it is only a piece of what we do as educators to ensure that our students are able to succeed. The real work occurs after standards-setting when districts take on tasks associated with curriculum, remediation, and professional development. Our NAEP results show that our reading scores in 4th grade are stronger than our reading scores in 8th grade compared to national performance even though the 8th grades standards are higher. These results demonstrate that standards alone do not determine the level of success for our students.

The Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders supports the recommendations for standard-setting proposed by the Reactor Panel and the Florida Association of District Schools Superintendents. We urge the State Board members to listen to those who are most responsible for and most committed to ensuring Florida's students are prepared for global success.