

2014 Guide to Calculating School Improvement Ratings for Alternative Schools and ESE Centers



Pam Stewart, Commissioner

July 2014

This document was prepared by the Bureau of Accountability Reporting; Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement. Questions? Please call (850) 245-0411 or e-mail evalnrpt@fldoe.org.

[intentionally blank]

Table of Contents

I. Overview	1
Introduction	1
Specific Authority	1
Florida Statutes - Section 1008.34.....	1
Florida Statutes - Sections 1008.341 (and 1008.3415)	2
Florida Administrative Code Rules 6A-1.099822 and 6A-1.099828	2
Summary of the School Improvement Rating Provisions	2
II. Process for Calculating School Improvement Ratings.....	4
1. Identify Alternative Schools and ESE Centers that Will Receive a School Improvement Rating	5
2. Identify the Students To Be Included	6
3. Identify Students Whose Scores Are To Be Excluded	6
Step 3.1 – Identify students reported in dropout retrieval programs and alternative-to-expulsion programs	6
Step 3.2 – Identify the students who have previously passed assessments required for graduation ..	7
4. Obtain Corrections and Updates from the School Districts	7
Step 4.1 - Creation of the Membership File	8
5. Obtain Student Assessment Scores	9
Step 5.1 - Identify assessment records with blank or duplicate student IDs	9
Step 5.2 - Match membership file records to assessment file records by district, school, and student ID	9
Step 5.3 - Identify assessment records that have missing prior year assessment data	9
Step 5.4 - Update assessment records with district corrections	8
6. Compute Current and Prior Year Learning Gains for Reading and for Math.....	9
Step 6.1 - Calculate reading learning gains for the current year	9
Step 6.2 - Calculate reading learning gains for the prior year	10
Step 6.3 - Calculate math learning gains for the current year	10
Step 6.4 - Calculate math learning gains for the prior year	11
7. Calculate the School Improvement Rating	11
Step 7.1 - Determine the improvement rating status for reading and for math.....	11
Step 7.2 - Determine the school's overall improvement rating	12
8. Determine the Percent Tested	12
9. Review of (Appeal Procedures for) School Improvement Ratings	14
Additional Resources for Information about Florida's School Grades, School Improvement Ratings, and AYP Results	15

[intentionally blank]

Overview

Introduction

The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to provide a description of the procedures used to determine school improvement ratings for alternative schools and ESE centers for the most recently completed school year. School improvement ratings are part of Florida's school accountability system, which originated with the Florida Legislature's passage of Assistance Plus (A+) legislation in 1999. Florida is one of the few states that can track student demographic information from year to year and is the first to track annual student learning gains based on the state's academic standards.

School improvement ratings are calculated as defined in Florida Administrative Code Rule 6A-1.099822, under the authority of sections 1008.341 and 1008.345, Florida Statutes. Based on statutory criteria, alternative schools and ESE centers are identified by the Florida Department of Education with input from Florida's school districts. Once these schools are identified for the reporting year, the administration of each school is provided the opportunity to choose, for an annual accountability evaluation, either a regular school grade (using criteria applicable to traditional schools receiving school grades) or a school improvement rating (using criteria described in Rule 6A-1.099822) for the applicable reporting year. If the administration of an alternative school does not choose either option, the school will by default be assigned a school improvement rating. Schools that elect a school improvement rating in lieu of a school grade will have the rating based on a comparison of current-year and prior-year learning gains for eligible students in reading and mathematics.

This paper contains two sections: I. Overview, and II. Process for Calculating School Improvement Ratings. These sections describe procedures for determining a school's final rating and are intended for audiences who are interested in the details of determining school improvement ratings for alternative schools and ESE centers.

Specific Authority

The authority for Florida's system of school accountability is detailed in Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code Rules. It is not the intent of this section to provide a detailed description of the specific contents of the state law and rule. Readers interested in the additional legal information should consult the source documents.

Florida Statutes - [Section 1008.34](#)

This section of Florida law requires the Commissioner of Education to prepare annual reports of student performance for each school and district in the state. The law specifies the grade categories, the timeframes, and the types of information to be included in the calculations. Further, the law directs the State Board of Education to adopt appropriate criteria for each school grade category. The law also provides an exception to school grading for alternative schools that receive a school improvement rating pursuant to s. 1008.341. Under provision of s. 1008.34 (3), an alternative school may choose to receive a school grade in lieu of a school improvement rating.

Florida Statutes – Section [1008.341](#) (and [1008.3415](#))

This section of Florida law provides for school improvement ratings for alternative schools and for ESE centers pursuant to [s. 1008.3415](#), F.S. ESE centers, as well as alternative schools that provide dropout prevention and academic intervention services pursuant to [s. 1003.53](#), may elect to receive a school improvement rating in lieu of a grade. The school improvement rating shall identify schools as having one of the following ratings defined according to rules of the State Board of Education:

- "Improving" means schools with students making more academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.
- "Maintaining" means schools with students making progress equivalent to the progress made when the students were served in their home schools.
- "Declining" means schools with students making less academic progress than when the students were served in their home schools.

Specific provisions of this statute are implemented by FAC Rule 6A-1.099822, which was passed by the State Board of Education on February 19, 2008.

Florida Administrative Code Rules [6A-1.099822](#) and [6A-1.099828](#)

Rule 6A-1.099822 implements provisions of the school improvement rating system mandated by [s. 1008.341](#), Florida Statutes. In cases where an alternative school or ESE center elects to receive a school improvement rating in lieu of a grade, the assessment scores of students at the school will be credited back to the students' home school(s) for inclusion in the grade calculation of the home school (with the exception of FAA scores at levels 1-3 for ESE center students who meet certain enrollment criteria). This provision thereby affects identification of students to be included in the school grading calculations. For more information, see the School Grades Technical Assistance Paper (available via a link provided online at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org>), p. 6, Step 2.4— *Credit back scores to home schools for students in alternative schools, ESE center schools, or Hospital/Homebound programs.*

Summary of School Improvement Rating Provisions

- **Definition of “alternative school,” “ESE center,” and “home school”:** An alternative school is defined as any school that provides dropout prevention and academic intervention services pursuant to Section 1003.53, Florida Statutes, and has students who would be attending another school (home school) if not enrolled in the alternative school. An ESE center is defined as a school designed specifically to meet the needs of students with disabilities (SWDs) in which all students enrolled in grades K-12 are SWDs. The definition of “home school” was revised by the 2008 Florida Legislature ([s. 1008.34\[3\]\[c\]3](#), F.S.) to mean the school to which the student would be assigned if he/she were not enrolled in the alternative school or ESE center.

- **Provisions:**

- **Alternative schools (and ESE centers) are identified (for accountability reporting purposes) by the Department of Education with input from school districts.** Each year, the department provides a preliminary file of alternative schools and ESE center schools for each district to review. The procedure calls for districts to be given several weeks to review the lists and to request changes (contingent on supporting documentation) before the alternative school file and ESE center school file are finalized.
- **Alternative schools (and ESE centers) have the option of receiving a school grade or a school improvement rating.** After the alternative school and ESE center lists are finalized, principals of the identified alternative and ESE center schools receive a notification requesting a decision about which option to apply. Accountability coordinators are also notified of this process by e-mail. If the administration of a notified school does not choose either option, the school will by default be assigned a school improvement rating.
- **Minimum student-count requirements are criteria for receiving a school improvement rating.** For each applicable subject (reading and math), a school must have at least 10 eligible students with valid assessment scores for the current year and the previous two years for a rating to be assigned.
- **The school improvement rating will include scores for students assigned to and enrolled in the October and February counts.** Note: students do not need to be enrolled for both surveys to be included in the alternative school rating.
- **Scores for certain categories of students in alternative schools are NOT included.** As defined in s. 1008.34(3)(b)(3), scores for students who are enrolled in alternative schools (including ESE centers) are not included in the accountability rating if these students are reported as enrolled in alternative-to-expulsion programs or dropout retrieval programs. (In addition, students in DJJ programs are not included in the school grading or rating process.) These students are identified via data reported by districts on the Dropout Prevention/Juvenile Justice Programs data element on the Federal/State Indicator Status records. For students enrolled in these programs at alternative schools (and ESE centers), their assessment scores will not be used either in the calculation of a school improvement rating or in the calculation of a school grade.
- **Scores for students who are enrolled in an alternative school (or ESE center) that elects to receive a school improvement rating instead of a grade will be credited back to the home school for inclusion in the home school's school grade calculation.** Home schools are identified on Student Demographic Information records by the data elements "School Number, Zoned School" and "District Number, Zoned School," as reported by districts to the department's student information database. (In situations where there is no home school for a student, zeroes are coded in the applicable fields on the student records.)

"Home school" is defined as the school to which the student would be assigned if he/she were not enrolled in the alternative school/ESE center.

- **The school improvement rating will be based on learning gains comparisons between the current and prior year.** The percentage of students making learning gains at the school will be compared to the percentage of students (from the same population) making learning gains in the prior year.
- **The school improvement rating will consist of one of the following ratings: “improving,” “maintaining,” “declining.”** For each subject in which learning gains are evaluated (reading, math), the following criteria apply:
 - “Improving” means at least a 5-point increase in the percent making learning gains.
 - “Maintaining” means less than a 5-point increase or decrease in the percent making learning gains.
 - “Declining” means at least a 5-point decrease in the percent making learning gains.

A school’s rating can be no higher than the status of its lowest performing subject.

 - a. In order for a school to earn an **“improving”** designation, the percentage of students making learning gains in both reading and in math in the current year must be at least five percentage points higher than in the prior year.
 - b. In order for a school to earn a **“maintaining”** designation, the percentage of students making learning gains in reading and math in the current year must be less than five percentage points above or below the percentage of students making learning gains in the prior year. A school’s rating can be no higher than the status of the learning gains comparison for its lowest performing subject, so if a school is assigned a “maintaining” status for one subject but a “declining” status for the other subject, the school’s overall status would be “declining.”
 - c. In order for a school to earn a **“declining”** designation, the percentage of students making learning gains in either reading or math (or both) in the current year must be at least five percentage points lower than the percentage of students making learning gains in the prior year.
- **Schools that improve one level in the overall rating or maintain an “improving” level are eligible for school recognition award money.**
- **Schools must test at least 80% of their students in order to avoid an initial rating of “I” (incomplete) with a final rating determined by the Commissioner of Education.**
- **Procedures for appeal of an assigned rating mirror those that are applicable to the issuance of school grades.** See also section 13 (Review of School Grades) in the school grades calculations guide, for which a link is provided online at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>.

II. Process for Calculating School Improvement Ratings

This section of the paper describes in sequential order the processes involved in identifying alternative schools and ESE centers and calculating school improvement ratings.

1. Identify Alternative Schools and ESE Centers that Will Receive a School Improvement Rating

- An alternative school is defined in Rule [6A-1.099822](#) as a school that provides dropout prevention and academic intervention services pursuant to Section 1003.53, Florida Statutes. Beginning in 2011-12, ESE centers will, like alternative schools, have the option to receive a regular grade or a school improvement rating.
- Alternative schools and ESE centers are identified (for accountability reporting purposes) by the Department of Education with input from school districts. Districts are given at least two weeks early in the year to review a preliminary list of alternative schools and a list of ESE centers and to request changes (contingent on supporting documentation) before the lists are finalized. Schools on the lists are then given the choice of electing to receive a regular school grade or a school improvement rating for the applicable reporting year. A listed school that does not choose between receiving a school grade and a school improvement rating will receive the school improvement rating by default.
- A school must have at least 10 students with assessment scores in applicable subjects (reading and math) for the current year and the previous two years for a rating to be assigned.
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) schools are not included as alternative schools and do not receive a school improvement rating (or a school grade).
- Districts may request that certain types of schools that are not DJJ schools but that could be considered “second chance” schools be excluded from the list of alternative schools because of one or more of the following reasons:
 - The school serves 100% dropout retrievals.
 - The school serves 100% alternative-to-expulsion students.
 - The school is actually a jail or an adjudicated youth facility.

However, while it is true that schools of the type described in this section could be removed from or omitted from the alternative school list, the department is providing districts with the flexibility to include these schools on the alternative school list for the following reasons:

- Assessment scores for certain classifications of students *who attend alternative schools* are to be excluded from alternative school ratings and school grades, but only if the students in these classifications are confirmed as enrolled at alternative schools. The students in these classifications include those who are

enrolled in dropout retrieval programs and those who are enrolled in alternative-to-expulsion programs.

- Schools other than DJJ centers that serve at-risk students but are not on the alternative school list will still be subject to school grading and will not have the opportunity to elect whether to receive a school grade in lieu of a school improvement rating.

2. Identify the Students To Be Included

Once the lists of alternative schools and ESE centers are finalized and schools that elect to receive a school grade in lieu of a rating are also identified, the next step is to identify students to be included in the school improvement ratings.

The following criteria for inclusion apply to students in relation to each subject (reading, math) for which assessment scores will be applied in the school improvement rating.

- The student was enrolled in Survey 3 (does not need to have been enrolled in both Survey 2 and Survey 3).
- The student was tested in the applicable subject at the alternative school or ESE center. (FCAT 2.0, EOC, and FAA scores are included.) Beginning with the 2013-14 calculation, retake scores* are also included for school improvement rating calculations (though not for learning gains calculations for school grades).
- The student has assessment scores for the current year and the previous two years in the applicable subject.
- The student is not reported in a dropout retrieval or alternative-to-expulsion program (see Step 3.1 below).
- The student has not previously passed assessments in the applicable subject required for high school graduation.

Keep in mind that for each subject area (reading and math), a school must have at least 10 eligible students with valid assessment scores for the current year and the previous two years for a rating to be assigned.

* Note: Retake scores are defined as statewide assessment scores for high school students in the applicable subject areas that are not first-time scores. For high school students (grades 9-12), retake scores include the second or additional administration of the same statewide assessment (the same EOC or Grade 10 FCAT [2.0] Reading assessment) after the student has entered grade 9. See page 11 for an explanation of how retake scores are included in learning gains calculations for school improvement ratings.

3. Identify Students Whose Scores Are To Be Excluded

Step 3.1 – Identify students reported in dropout retrieval programs and alternative-to-expulsion programs. Section 1008.34, F.S., excludes certain classifications of students in alternative schools from alternative school ratings and school grading:

- Students subject to district school board policies for expulsion for repeated and/or serious offenses, and
- Students who are in dropout-retrieval programs who have officially been designated as dropouts.

(In addition, test scores for students who are in programs operated or contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice are excluded from school grading, as required in statute.)

Students belonging to these classifications are reported by districts to the Department of Education's automated student database via the Federal/State Indicator Status reporting format (http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_1314/1314fsis.asp), using specific codes reported on the Dropout Prevention/Juvenile Justice Programs data element (http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_1314/115680.pdf). The following codes will be used to identify students in alternative schools whose FCAT scores will not be included in school improvement rating or school grading calculations: R (for students in dropout retrieval programs), and E (for students in "alternative to expulsion" programs). Note also that students in DJJ centers are excluded from the grading process based on reported school type ("10") on the department's Master School Identification (MSID) file. Codes for students in dropout-retrieval and alternative-to expulsion programs are reported in Survey 3.

Step 3.2 – Identify the students who have previously passed assessments required for graduation: Students who have previously passed assessments required for graduation will not have scores for those assessment subjects included in the learning gains calculations for school improvement ratings.

4. Obtain Corrections and Updates from the School Districts

Student classifications and membership status are identified by the Department and shared with the school districts in electronic form. Districts may submit corrections to these records via student database reporting up to a cutoff point for use in accountability reporting (usually by the end of the first week in March). Districts and schools are then given the opportunity to submit updates directly to the Bureau of Accountability Reporting via a secure Web-based application for students whose status changed after the end of the Survey 3 reporting period and before testing. These updates may be submitted daily over a multi-week period during which district and school updates are processed nightly. Any errors that remain after the close of this period cannot be updated during the appeals process. A general description of the update process is provided below.

- Unmatched Identification Numbers: If there are students who were present for a full academic year but the student ID on Survey 2 does not match the student ID on Survey 3, this results in unmatched records. Districts are required to resolve these discrepancies by correcting the student ID on submitted records so that the Survey 2 and Survey 3 records can be matched.

- Updating of information on student status; submission of certain new data: Districts have an opportunity to update information such as grade level that is used for the school accountability calculations or to submit required new data that is not yet collected on the database (e.g., for 2011-12, home school data for students in ESE centers).
- Non-public school students taking courses at public schools: Home schooled and private school students who receive services from a public school are excluded from calculations if N998 (Home Education) or N999 (Private School) is reported as the primary school number in the “Current Enrollment” field of Survey 3. For students whose primary instructional school has been misidentified, districts must report the correct primary school number to the Bureau of Accountability Reporting.
- SWD status at the time of testing is different from SWD status reported in Survey 3: Updated information must be provided for students who are enrolled in a program after Survey 3 but before testing.
- Data relevant to English language learner status is different at the time of testing from what was reported in Survey 3. Status codes (ESOL program codes) are updated as applicable.
- Withdrawal status prior to testing: All students who were withdrawn from school after Survey 3 and prior to the first day of testing must be identified.
- 10th grade FCAT graduation requirements met prior to testing: All 10th grade retained students who have passed the grade 10 reading assessment prior to testing are not included in the school grade calculation. Districts must ensure that these students are appropriately identified.
- Zoned District/School: Used for reporting a change in the reported home school after Survey 3. Home schools receive scores credited back from alternative schools and ESE centers that elect to receive school improvement ratings.
- Dropout Prevention/Juvenile Justice Programs: Used for reporting a change in status for students reported in dropout retrieval and alternative-to-expulsion programs. Students in these programs would be removed from calculations for alternative school ratings and would not have scores credited back to home schools.
- EOC graduation requirements/withdrawals/exceptions: Used for identifying students who have met graduation requirements for EOC assessments, students who have withdrawn from courses requiring EOC assessments, and students in such courses who meet specific criteria exempting them from having to take the EOC assessment.
- High School Cohort: Used for identifying students who would be included in the high school retakes calculation for bonus points.
- Prior Year Grade Level: Used to ensure inclusion of banked scores and in identifying first-time test takers.
- Prior Year District/School/SID: Used to capture banked test scores for students entering high school who passed EOC assessments in grades 6 or 7.

Step 4.1 – Creation of the Membership File: Upon completion of applicable data corrections processes, a final file is created and referred to as the Membership File. The Membership File is used for all accountability calculations based on student-level outcomes.

5. Obtain Student Assessment Scores

The Bureau of Accountability Reporting works closely with the K-12 Assessment staff to obtain accurate assessment data on all students. The matching process is similar to that used for the matching of Survey 2 and 3 in determining full-year status for school grades. After the initial matching process is complete, districts are provided a list of unmatched and mismatched students. School districts must return updated and corrected information for each student. The extent to which this step is completed correctly by the school districts affects the Department's ability to include the maximum number of eligible students in the school grading process. The matching and corrections processes are briefly summarized as follows.

Step 5.1 – Identify assessment records with blank or duplicate student IDs: For records with a blank or duplicate assessment Student ID, districts must provide the matching student ID from the Membership File for inclusion of student results.

Step 5.2 – Match membership file records to assessment file records by district, school, and student ID: The Membership File is matched to assessment files using district, school, and student ID. Unmatched records are flagged and districts must provide the matching fields from the Membership File for inclusion of student results.

Step 5.3 – Identify assessment records that have missing prior year assessment data: Any record that does not contain prior year test results will be flagged. Districts must report correct prior year print after scan numbers that are associated with the missing data for Reading and Mathematics.

Step 5.4 – Update assessment records with district corrections: Upon completion of error corrections, student results in the assessment file should be closely matched to the students enrolled in the Membership File.

Note: This process is completed for all students tested, not just those in school grading performance calculations. This is important for two reasons. First, scores for these students might be needed for determining learning gains the following year if the students become eligible for inclusion, as with English language learners with at least one year of instruction in school in the U.S. Secondly, because all students are included in calculating annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for annual reporting in compliance with ESEA, it is necessary to correct all Student IDs.

6. Compute Current and Prior Year Learning Gains for Reading and for Math

After students with requisite assessment scores are identified for inclusion in the alternative rating calculation for each subject and exclusions have been processed, the next step is to calculate learning gains for those students for the current school year and the prior school year in reading and in math. (Note, however, that retake scores in the current year are also included. See additional information on retake scores on p. 11)

Step 6.1 – Calculate reading learning gains for the current year: Individual student learning gains are determined by comparing each student's prior year test score to the

current year test score. Students make learning gains by any one of the three methods described below.

Students make learning gains if they

- a. Improve one or more achievement levels;
- b. Maintain a satisfactory achievement level on the FCAT 2.0 or FAA (at least level 3 for the FCAT 2.0, level 4 for the FAA) without decreasing a level; or
- c. Demonstrate more than one year's growth when remaining in achievement level 1 or 2 on the FCAT 2.0 (or when remaining at performance level 1, 2, or 3 for the FAA) for both years. Under this alternative, one year's growth on the FCAT 2.0 is defined in terms of the difference between a student's current year and prior year FCAT 2.0 vertical scale score. To make learning gains, students who remain at level 2 on the FCAT 2.0 have to score at least one point beyond a year's expected growth. Students who remain at level 1 have to score at least two points beyond a year's expected growth. These students are credited with learning gains for reading if their vertical scale score improves by at least the amount shown in Table 2. FAA students who remained at performance level 1, 2, or 3 are credited with gains if their score improves by at least five (5) points (raw points) compared with the prior year's score.

Note: Retained students who remain at level 1 or at level 2 will be required to demonstrate the same amount of growth as non-retained students at the same current grade level. For instance, a retained 5th grader at level 1 would be required to increase his/her reading score by at least 10 scale score points. However, students who are retained 3rd graders would be expected to show the same increase in scores as required for 4th graders (the next grade up). Also, when a student's achievement level drops (e.g., from level 4 to level 3), the student is not counted as having made learning gains, even if the lower score is on or above grade level.

Table 2:
Vertical Scale Score Increases Required for FCAT 2.0 Reading Learning Gains 2012

Reading	Grade 3-4	Grade 4-5	Grade 5-6	Grade 6-7	Grade 7-8	Grade 8-9	Grade 9-10
Level 1	12	10	9	8	7	6	8
Level 2	11	9	8	7	6	5	7

Step 6.2 – Calculate reading learning gains for the prior year: Using the same group of students for which learning gains are calculated in Step 6.1, the department calculates prior-year learning gains for each student by comparing the student's assessment performance for the prior year and for the year before the prior year.

For steps 6.1 and 6.2, retake scores are included as described on p. 11.

Step 6.3 – Calculate math learning gains for the current year: This component is parallel to the reading procedure described in step 6.1. Individual student learning gains are determined by comparing each student's prior year test score to the current year test score using the three different methods described in Step 6.1. For students

with EOC assessment scores included in gains calculations and who remained at level 1 or at level 2 when compared with the prior-year score, the student is credited with a gain if his or her common scale score increases. More information on deriving common scale scores is provided in Appendix C of the Guide to Calculating School Grades (TAP) posted at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org>. The differentials between year-to-year FCAT 2.0 Math vertical scale scores that establish learning gains for students remaining at level 1 or at level 2 are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3:
Vertical Scale Score Increases Required for FCAT 2.0 Math Learning Gains

Mathematics	Grade 3-4	Grade 4-5	Grade 5-6	Grade 6-7	Grade 7-8
Level 1	16	10	10	9	11
Level 2	15	9	9	8	10

Step 6.4 – Calculate math learning gains for the prior year: Using the same group of students for which learning gains are calculated in Step 6.3, the department calculates prior-year learning gains for each student by comparing the student’s assessment performance for the prior year and for the year before the prior year.

The percentage of eligible students making learning gains in the current year will be compared to the percentage of the same students making learning gains in the prior year to determine the school’s improvement rating status in reading and in math.

First-time scores: As with learning gains calculations in school grades, “first-time” scores on assessments are applied in steps 6.1 through 6.4 above.

Retake scores: In supplementing first-time scores included in learning gains calculations, retake scores are applied for students who otherwise would not have enough first-time scores to be included in the learning gains calculations. For these students, retake scores are included by comparing the student’s most recent (latest) current-year retake score with the student’s last prior-year score on the same assessment. This application of retakes scores requires that the student have at least one administration of the assessment in the current year (retake score) and at least one administration of an assessment in the prior year (retake or first-time score) that can be compared to the current-year retake score for the gains calculation.

Students with multiple learning gains calculations for a given subject area are counted as making gains if the student has made gains in any of the applicable calculations, including the retakes calculation.

7. Calculate the School Improvement Rating

School improvement ratings are calculated to produce a final school rating that consists of one of the following designations:

- Improving
- Maintaining
- Declining

Step 7.1 – Determine the improvement rating status for reading and for math: Once the learning gains have been calculated for eligible students in each subject as described in section 6 (“Compute Current and Prior Year Learning Gains for Reading and for Math”), an improvement rating status is assigned to each subject area based on the following criteria:

- “Improving” indicates that current-year learning gains were at least 5 percentage points higher than prior-year learning gains.
- “Maintaining” indicates that learning gains for the current year varied by less than 5 percentage points (up or down) from learning gains for the prior year.
- “Declining” indicates that current-year learning gains were at least 5 percentage points lower than prior-year learning gains.

Step 7.2 – Determine the school’s overall improvement rating: After an improvement rating status is determined for each subject, calculating the school’s overall improvement rating becomes a simple operation. Essentially, a school’s improvement rating is determined by the improvement rating status of its lowest performing subject.

A school receives an overall rating of “Improving” only if the improvement rating status of both subjects is “Improving.”

A school receives an overall rating of “Maintaining” if the improvement rating status of its lowest performing subject is no lower than “Maintaining.” For example, if the improvement rating status of one subject is “Improving” and the improvement rating status of the other subject is “Maintaining,” then the school’s overall school improvement rating is “Maintaining.” If the improvement rating status of both subjects is “Maintaining,” the school’s overall school improvement rating is “Maintaining.”

A school receives an overall rating of “Declining” if the improvement rating status of one or both subjects is “Declining.”

In addition, by rule (beginning in 2013-14), schools that would otherwise qualify for a rating of “improving” but test less than 90 percent of eligible students shall receive a final rating of “maintaining.”

8. Determine the Percent Tested

Florida legislation requires that an alternative school test at least 80% of eligible students for assignment of a school improvement rating, and that if the school falls below the 80% mark, the Commissioner of Education is authorized to assign a rating of “I” (for “Incomplete”) or otherwise withhold the rating pending availability of data that “are determined to accurately represent the performance of the school.”

Also, as noted in section 7 above, schools may not receive a final rating higher than “maintaining” if they test less than 90% of eligible students.

For alternative schools that receive a school improvement rating, the percent tested is calculated by dividing the total number of eligible students tested in each subject

(reading, math) by the number of eligible students in membership who are expected to take each subject test. Students are expected to be tested if they are enrolled in Survey 3, have not been reported as withdrawn at the time of testing, and are reported at a grade level¹ for which the FCAT 2.0 or FAA is administered in Reading and Mathematics, or are enrolled in a course for which an end-of-course (EOC) test is required (including courses reported during Survey 3, Survey 2, Survey 1 or 4 from the prior summer). Students are included only once in the percent-tested denominator of each subject area. For FCAT 2.0 and FAA examinees enrolled in the tested grades, students who are tested off grade level are still counted as tested. In the tested middle-school grades for mathematics, students may meet the tested requirement through a test score on the FCAT 2.0/FAA or on an EOC assessment in the subject area. English language learners who are in their first year of instruction are expected to test on the CELLA, at minimum, to meet the participation requirement in reading. They may also meet the participation requirement in this subject by testing on the FCAT 2.0. These students are also expected to test on the FCAT 2.0 in mathematics. A student with a course record in a subject tested by an EOC assessment is expected to be tested if the student has not previously earned a valid score on the EOC assessment, unless the student is reported as not having completed the course. However, students enrolled in grades and subjects tested by the FCAT 2.0 who are also enrolled in a course in the subject area for which an EOC assessment is expected may meet the requirement for testing in the subject area either by being tested on the applicable EOC assessment or by being tested on the FCAT 2.0 in the subject area. Students whose retake scores are included in learning gains calculations for school improvement ratings will be counted in the numerator and denominator of the percent-tested calculation for each applicable subject.

Students who are expected to test on an EOC assessment are those who have been matched to an applicable course record reported for Survey 2 or 3, or for Survey 1 or 4 from the prior summer term. Applicable courses include the following:

Algebra 1

- Algebra 1 – 1200310
- Algebra 1 Honors – 1200320
- Algebra 1B – 1200380
- Pre-AICE Mathematics 1 – 1209810
- IB Middle Years Program – Algebra 1 Honors – 1200390
- Algebra 1 for Credit Recovery – 1200315, Algebra 1B for Credit Recovery – 1200385

Geometry

- Geometry – 1206310
- Geometry Honors – 1206320
- IB Middle Years Program Geometry Honors – 1206810
- Pre-AICE Mathematics 2 – 1209820

¹ Note, however, that if a student in grade 8 has passed three or more assessments in math at the middle or high school levels and does not have a math score for the current year, the student will not be included in the math denominator for percent tested. Students enrolled in grade 2 or lower who are full-year enrolled and have valid scores for tests at grade 3 or higher are also included in both the numerator and denominator of the percent tested calculation for the application subject area(s).

- Geometry for Credit Recovery – 1206315

Students with an Algebra 1 or Geometry score (first-time takers) but no course record will be included in the math components of the calculation. Students with disabilities are included in the reading and math components of the calculation and are counted as “tested” if they have FCAT 2.0 results, EOC results, or FAA results.

The example in Table 4 shows how the percent tested for a hypothetical high school is calculated.

**Table 4:
Example for Estimating the Percent Tested**

Subject Area	Number Tested	Eligible Membership	Percent Tested (Total Only)
Reading	620	640	
Mathematics	640	650	
Totals	1,260	1,290	98%

Note that students with invalidated test scores or tests with too few items answered to generate a score still count as “tested” in the percent-tested calculation. Another adjustment is included for retained grade 10 students who have previously taken and passed the FCAT (FCAT 2.0), and for retained grade 10 students who have met graduation requirements through concordant score(s) on the ACT or SAT – these students are removed from the percent-tested calculation.

Banked scores for participation requirements. Passing (banked) EOC assessment scores for students entering grade 9 who passed the EOC assessment(s) in middle school will be included in the participation rate numerators and denominators.

9. Review of (Appeal Procedures for) School Improvement Ratings

State Board Rule 6A.1.09981 establishes procedures for school districts to review information on assigned school grades and to participate in appeals on behalf of schools in the district for which appeals criteria are applicable (described below). Rule 6A.1-099822 establishes corresponding procedures for alternative schools that receive a school improvement rating: “After the initial issuance of the school improvement ratings, school districts shall have the opportunity to review and submit for state review any appeal of the calculation.”

State Board Rule 6A-1.09981 requires each district to have an accountability contact person to verify that each school is appropriately classified, that students have been correctly identified and properly included for school grading (and school improvement ratings), that matching FCAT records and previous year FCAT records can be identified, and that each school grade (or rating, as applicable) was calculated as specified in the rule. The rule also permits a 30-day period of time for districts to review the grade assigned. To accommodate requested reviews, the Florida Department of Education

has instituted an appeals process as described in this section. Requests for grade changes related to the specific requirements of the statute or rule cannot be granted and should not be submitted.

If a school district identifies a data miscalculation or circumstances that might result in the assignment of a different grade, the district can participate in the school grade (and school rating) review process. Appropriate documentation of all elements and data to be reviewed by the Department must be submitted within thirty (30) days from the date of the school grades/ratings release. These requests must be submitted by the school district accountability contact rather than by individual schools. Appeals that do not comply with the detailed instructions from the Department will not be reviewed.

Following the thirty (30) day appeal window, the Department of Education will review the appeals documentation and present recommendations to an appeals committee for their review and recommendations. Final recommendations will be made to the Commissioner of Education, and the Commissioner's determination of a school's grade/rating shall be final. The Department will notify each district Superintendent and accountability contact of the final school grade after the final decision of the Commissioner. Local district officials, as designated by the Superintendent, are responsible for notifying individual schools.

Additional Resources for Information about Florida's School Grades and School Improvement Ratings

School Accountability Reports Web Site

Florida's School Accountability Reports Web site allows users to request the latest information on school grades, AYP results, school improvement ratings, Return on Investment (ROI) information, and School Report Card results. See <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/default.asp>.

Florida School Grades Home Page

The home page for Florida's School Grades includes downloadable files for school grades, school ratings, and AYP, as well as press materials and links to additional resources. See <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>.

Links to Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code Rules

Florida Statutes addressing the school grading system (s. 1008.34) and the school improvement rating system for alternative schools (s. 1008.341) are accessible at <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm>.

For Florida Administrative Code Rules that implement requirements of these statutes (see 6A-1.09981 and 6A-1.099822), see <https://www.flrules.org/default.asp>.

Florida Department of Education



Pam Stewart, Commissioner