



FASA Works to Improve Graduation Requirements Bill

FASA has been very active in providing recommendations and language to be included in any bill raising standards for graduation. Led by Juhan Mixon, a group of principals, Wendy Dodge and I met in Miami with Rep. Fresen and Rep. Anetere Flores, Chair of K-12 Appropriations. With another group of local principals, we met with Rep. Weatherford in Pasco; while Juhan Mixon and I traveled to Jacksonville to discuss the issue with Senator Thrasher. In addition last week more than 90 administrators scattered across the Capitol to talk with their locally elected legislators regarding the issues at FASA's legislative days.

In a meeting today we were briefed on the ideas to be included in a draft bill which should be public next week. We believe our work has greatly improved the provisions of the draft committee bill and will be acceptable to FASA members and school districts.

Here are the key provisions:

Fiscally, the intent is to exchange removal of the 9th and 10th FCAT with statewide standardized end of course (EOC) exams in Algebra I, Geometry and Biology I. The

requirements to use the EOCs and their impact on graduation requirements and student grades will be phased in according to the following schedule:

Algebra I

1. Requirement to take the EOC exam will apply to incoming 9th graders in the 2010/2011 school year. That year the test will count as 30% of the student's grade.
2. Requirement to pass the EOC exam for credit and graduation will apply to incoming 9th graders in the 2011/2012 school year.

Geometry

1. Requirement to take the EOC exam will apply to incoming 9th graders in the 2011/2012 school year. The test will count for 30% of student's grade for first two years. (11-12 and 12-13).
2. Requirement to pass the EOC exam for credit and graduation will apply to incoming 9th graders in the 2013/2014 school year.

Biology I

1. Requirement to take the EOC exam will apply to Incoming 9th graders in the 2011/2012 school year. That year the test will count as 30% of the student's grade.
2. Requirement to pass the EOC exam for credit and graduation will apply to incoming 9th graders in the 2012/2013 school year.

* Students who fail the EOC will have an opportunity to retake the exam (They can be given an incomplete and retake the EOC at the next administration or take a portion of semester or course over at discretion of the district). Additionally, the bill will contain language allowing for the use of equivalent scores on ACT/SAT to be substituted, similar to how FCAT currently allows concordant scores to be used.

* The bill will contain language allowing for a "series of courses equivalent to" each of the required subject areas to be taken in lieu of the original course. However, the student would still have to pass the state EOC for that subject and would only receive one credit for the series. Dr. Ahearn staff director of K-12 Education, stated that FDOE had already identified the equivalent series of courses for Algebra I.

* The student must pass the EOC exam for credit and graduation. It will be up to each district/teacher as to how much weight the EOC will have on individual student grades. However, common sense will dictate heavy weighting in order to give the students "some skin in the game" and prevent students from not taking the exam seriously.

* Legislatively, the goal is to push as many of the EOC exam subjects down to the middle school level as possible. The bill will require middle school students who take the courses to take the EOC exam, but only the grades and credits of middle school students passing the EOC will be transferred to the matriculating high school.

* The bill will also contain language allowing for the development of statewide standardized EOCs for other

subjects should the state be in a financial position to do so. EOCs developed for other subjects would only be used for 30% of the student's final grade and will not be required for credit or graduation.

* At a later date Algebra II will be required to be taken for graduation but it not be included in this bill. There will be no requirement for an EOC exam.

* While there will be no specific legislation at this time, it is expected that the SBE will raise cut scores for elementary and middle school FCAT in order to include them in raising the standards. The legislature is prepared to statutorily require this if it doesn't happen.

* The bill will require each high school student to take at least one online course or a course that has integrated online content, allowing flexibility in meeting the requirement. The district will make the determination of the subjects to be taken online.

* Language will be included specifying the EOC exam results to be included in the 50% of the high school grading formula that currently applies to FCAT scores. However, the Dept will be providing learning gains to be used for this portion of the grading formula from a table they have developed.

* No language will be included requiring or addressing professional development or amending current teacher certification statutes.

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