

OVERVIEW AND TALKING POINTS

The basic messages that form the foundation of these materials are found here. Infuse them into all types of communications vehicles.

One-Paragraph Overview

Our world is changing, and so is the way that we're preparing students for the future. Ensuring that every child is ready to be succeed will make our city strong, and we're already seeing great progress. Five years ago, it used to be that nearly half of students in Duval County didn't graduate on time — now that figure is 74 percent! And more students than ever are graduating prepared for college, career and the 21st Century workforce. Today, students and teachers are adjusting to another big shift: The new Florida Standards, which are guidelines for what students should be able to do at every grade level, that were first implemented in schools in 2014-2015. That also means a new way of assessing student performance. The Florida Standards Assessment was given in 2015, and that means new scores and new school grades will be released in January. All of these changes are a little like renovating a house — there's dust and noise that we have to live through, but the end result will be worth it when our students are better prepared for college and the workforce.

The key message is this: We all must give teachers and students the time they need to adjust to the new standards and the support to keep increasing student achievement.

Talking Points - Primary Messages

- Our world is changing, we don't know what tomorrow's jobs will look like. **But we do know that our future will depend on having a strong workforce, and we want our children to be prepared for it. That's why we are shifting what we want our students to know and be able to do. In our state, these guidelines are known as the Florida Standards.**
 - Because of these shifts, our statewide test must change as well. That's why we have the new Florida Standards Assessment, which students took for the first time in spring 2015. It replaced the old FCAT 2.0.
- Starting this fall, you'll hear people talking about new baseline test scores that reflect those changes. Those scores won't be released until January or February 2016.
 - As you know, schools are graded on an A-F system, but last year's school grades were delayed because of this new test. When they come out in January, the grades will be based on the new tests.
 - The new scores and grades aren't comparable to earlier years. The school grades and FSA scores that come out in January will establish a baseline for the progress we expect students to make over time.
 - Just like the standards they measure, these tests are more challenging, and the scores and grades will reflect that.



- When talking to your friends and neighbors, be an advocate for your local school(s) by explaining that students and teachers at your local school need time to adjust to the new standards — and they need your support.
 - (For direct service providers, this is the perfect place to issue a call to action for volunteers to serve students through your organization.)
- Ultimately, these new scores and new school grades will provide important information to help the community better understand where students are excelling and where they are struggling, so we can improve instruction.
- That way, we can make sure that every child in our school system is prepared for success in the future, ready to enter college or the workforce.

Talking Points - Messages about the Florida Standards

- Florida adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010, but after public concerns, revised them and adopted the new Florida Standards in 2014.
- **Standards are guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level.** They were designed by educators focus on building the critical thinking and problem solving skills that can be applied in any context. And they help military families make an easier transition from one state to another.
- **Similar efforts in other states are showing great results.**
 - Kentucky was the first state to adopt standards that are similar, and the percentage of high school graduates ready for college and career has increased for 34 percent to 62 percent in four years.
- So what's different now? Think for a moment about baking. You know how to follow a recipe for red velvet cake and get a great result. But being able to follow a recipe doesn't mean you understand why you put a certain proportion of baking soda, flour, and eggs. Previous standards and assessments only required student to memorize a "recipe." The new Florida Standards help students understand not just what to do, but why and how.
- **The Florida Standards aim to teach a deeper, more applicable set of skills. That way, students will learn how to bake a cake, not just how to memorize recipe after recipe.**
- When we give students the kinds of skills that can be applied in many different arenas, they will grow into adults who can successfully navigate this world. And when all of our children are successful, we know that Jacksonville will become the vibrant city we know it can be.

Talking Points - Messages to Understand Florida's Accountability System

- Let me give you an analogy. Think for a minute about the dashboard of your car. There are a lot of gauges and dials that tell you what's happening in the car, from how fast you are going to how hot the engine is running.
 - Measuring how well students and school are doing is a lot like that — you need a handful of different gauges, because no one measure can tell you everything.
 - The Florida Standards Assessment, the statewide standardized test that replaced the FCAT 2.0 as a broad measure of how students, schools and teachers are performing, is one of these gauges. It's an important test — just like those that doctors, nurses and military members take to be admitted to their professions, it tells us a lot about how much a student is learning.
- **Think for a moment about the speedometer — imagine that you're used to using kilometers per hour, and the gauge suddenly switches to miles. The number would be a lot lower but you'd be going just as fast.** Maybe you'd even feel like increasing your speed a bit.
- That's where we are right now with the new Florida Standards assessment. **When the new scores come out, even though they'll look different than what we are used to, our children are learning just as much, and maybe even more, than they did in the past.**
- Because of this transition year, our school grades will probably look different, too. They might be lower than we expect — but that doesn't mean our schools and our students are going backwards. In fact, we expect them to go farther than ever before.

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Talking Points on Progress in Public Education

- With all of these changes to the statewide standardized test, how do we know how well our students are doing?
- **There are plenty of measures that haven't changed, and they show that most students are heading in the right direction.**
- The most important is the four-year graduation rate. **Here in Duval County, the four-year graduation rate has surged, up from 56 percent in 2009 to 74 percent in 2014.**
 - This graduation rate is measured by a uniform federal formula that only includes students that receive a high school diploma four years after entering ninth grade. It does not include certificates of completion, GEDs, or students that take longer than four years to graduate, among other restrictions.
- In the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, Duval outperformed most other large urban districts in reading and math, ranking above the national average in many instances.
- Another way of measuring student performance that is consistent over the years is the college readiness rate. In Duval County, the number of graduates who are college ready is rising — now up to 83 percent in reading and 63 percent in math.
- Duval County also has a way to measure student wellbeing. It's called the Gallup survey, and the most recent results found increasing student engagement, hope and wellbeing.



Talking Points on Coping with Change

- We want a school system that helps all students succeed.
- Right now, our school system is in the midst of a major renovation in order to get there. Just like when you renovate a house, we're keeping what works and updating other parts that need to be upgraded.
- As with any remodeling job, there is bound to be dust, noise and inconvenience — but in the end, the short-term pain is more than worth the long-term gain.
- What we need to do is give teachers and students time to adjust to these changes — they need our support more than ever.
- Educators in our district are working really hard to

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help students achieve their fullest potential, and are improving every day.

- By making these important changes now, we will give more and more students the chance to graduate ready to succeed.