News Alert
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FLDOE Issues Emergency Order Waiving Assessments for Graduation, Grade Promotions and Additional Flexibility for the 2020-2021 School Year

Earlier today, Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran released Emergency Order 2021-EO-02 related to state mandated assessments, accountability, and reporting. After months of advocacy by teachers, parents, students, and by the School Board in accordance with Agenda Item H-23, proffered by Dr. Lubby Navarro, and unanimously approved at its October 21, 2020, meeting, regarding waivers to sanctions associated with high stakes testing, the Department of Education has released an order by the Commissioner providing flexibility to Districts in addressing high stakes accountability measures for students and schools in Spring 2021, due to the challenges of COVID-19. The emergency order, issued one week into the Miami-Dade testing window, addresses graduation for current seniors; promotion and retention decisions; Bright Future awards; school grades, school improvement ratings, and educator and administrator evaluations, and school readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Programs (VPK).

This emergency order provides the following:

- Allows districts and schools flexibility to determine on a case-by-case basis if a senior's high school record demonstrates a comparable level of achievement to state assessments, thereby allowing for graduation even in the absence of qualifying test results.
- Allows districts local discretion to determine promotion and course grade decisions, including courses that require end-of-course (EOC) exams.
- Provides high school seniors who are on track but have yet to earn a Bright Futures Florida Academic Scholars, Florida Medallion Scholars, Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars or Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award additional time to earn a qualifying test score by extending deadlines to December 1, 2021 for ACT and/or SAT and the PERT for Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars.
- For purposes of Bright Futures, it forgives volunteer hour requirements for students who intended to complete the service hours prior to graduation, but through no fault of their own had a lack of access to volunteer opportunities.
- Districts and schools, that test 90% or more of eligible students, can opt-in, at their discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to school grades or improvement ratings for each individual school.
- Calculation of learning gains for school grades will be based on growth from the 2018-2019 school year to the 2020-2021 school year, due to the cancellation of tests in Spring 2020.
- For districts and schools not opting in, school grades and school improvement ratings would not be automatically calculated and released for the 2020-2021 school year.

- Allows local districts to make decisions regarding the optional use of VAM data as part of the “performance of students” component in a teacher’s evaluation.
- Provides permission for early learning coalitions to use unspent funds, which would otherwise normally exceed the statutory thresholds allowed for non-direct services, to be utilized as long as these funds are used to provide direct supports to early learning childcare providers.
- Allows VPK providers, especially school districts with shortened summer periods, to provide no less than 200 hours of summer VPK, suspending the law requiring 300 hours.

The results gleaned from assessments are crucial to help identify students who may need academic supports, help teachers tailor their instructional delivery to meet individual student needs, and ensure equity in opportunity for closing achievement gaps.

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