

# SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL:                SB 372

SPONSOR:        Senator Sullivan

SUBJECT:         Student Assessments

DATE:             January 30, 2002        REVISED:        \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	White	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

Senate Bill 372 requires a student to earn the score on the Grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) that was required for high school graduation at the time the student first attempted the test.

This bill substantially amends the following section of the Florida Statutes: 229.57.

**II. Present Situation:**

Florida has required statewide student assessment in some grades since 1976, including the nation's first high school graduation test. The current test, called FCAT, has been administered five times since 1997, counting field test administrations. FCAT is both a criterion referenced test and a norm referenced test – meaning that it is aligned to measure Florida's own standards, called the Sunshine State Standards, and it also measures Florida's student achievement against national norms.

In school year 2002-2003, the grade-10 FCAT replaces the Florida High School Competency Test (HSCT) as the high school graduation test.<sup>1</sup> In August of 2001, the State Board of Education adopted the scores of 287 in reading and 295 in mathematics as the required score to graduate. These are the scores that assure skills at least equivalent to the passing score on the HSCT, as determined by assessment analysts for the Department of Education. The passing score is increased for students to graduate in 2002-2003. All students tested after February 1, 2002, will

<sup>1</sup> In practice, the transition from HSCT to FCAT has been in process for several years. Section 229.57, F.S., authorizes the FCAT to be substituted for the HSCT from 1999-2002. Students who were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 1999-2000 are required to pass FCAT and may not substitute the HSCT grade. So for some students who progressed rapidly through high school, the FCAT must be used to graduate in 2002.

have to earn scores of 300 in both reading and math. Since students take the test for the first time in grade 10, they have several opportunities to earn the passing score – the test is administered in October, February, and March of every year.

In October of 2001, 41,001 grade-11 students took the FCAT reading test, and 21,730 (53 percent) failed to make the required score of 287. For the math test, 33,255 grade-11 students took it in October 2001, and 19,620 (59 percent) failed to make the required score of 295. These students (21,730 and 19,620) may be retested in the administrations in March 2002, October 2002, or February 2003, to qualify for graduation in 2003. They will be required to meet the passing scores of 300 in both reading and math .

Some schools encouraged students to take both the HSCT and the FCAT because they knew FCAT would be required for some students in 2002 and for all of them in 2003. For the past 3 years, the FCAT passing scores of 287 and 295 were accepted for graduation, but students may have used their HSCT score to graduate.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The legislation under consideration will require a student to earn the FCAT passing score that was required for graduation the first time the student attempted the test.

Under the bill, the 21,730 and 19,620 grade-11 students who failed FCAT in October 2001 will pass if they make 287 in reading and 295 in math when they take the test in March of 2002. Other students in that same administration will not pass unless they make 300 on both tests. These two groups of students could be in the same graduating class, at the same academic level, but those who have not yet attempted FCAT will be held to a higher standard.

Also, students who first attempted the test in earlier administrations will need to be identified and allowed to graduate with lower scores than are required of others in their class. This dual passing score system will go on for as long as it takes for those students to graduate, at least 3 more years. If the state board raises the required score again, the process will recur.

Another complicating factor is that some students take the reading and math tests in different administrations, and they might qualify for the lower test score on one test but not the other.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

#### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Under the bill, some high school students could graduate with a standard high school diploma earlier than they would otherwise graduate. The 21,730 and 19,620 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who failed FCAT in October 2001 will graduate in 2003 if they make 287 in reading and 295 in math when they take FCAT in March 2002 or October, February, or March of 2003. If the bill does not become a law, they will not graduate until they make 300 on both FCAT tests.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The Department of Education will incur the expense of renegotiating the contract for scoring the FCAT. The amount is not known because the department has not asked the contractor (NCS-Pearson) for a bid. Several adjustments will be required. The computer programs must permit a search for any student who initially was tested in March or October 2001. The computer then will have to match the students according to various criteria (name, student number, gender) to verify that the right two scores are being considered, and then apply the lower passing score requirements. The student report will be printed with the correct label, "pass" or "fail." According to staff of DOE's assessment section, this matching process will delay release of test scores.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

It may not be possible to make the required computer changes in time for the March 2002 test administration. It is unlikely for the bill to become a law until after that date.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.