



**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: INDEPENDENT REVIEW CONFIRMS FLORIDA STANDARDS  
ASSESSMENT IS VALID**

*~ Commissioner Stewart moving forward with appropriate use of test results ~*

**Tallahassee, Fla., September 1, 2015** – Today, the Department of Education announced that Alpine Testing Solutions, the company contracted to conduct a validity study on the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), confirmed the FSA is an accurate way to measure Florida’s students’ mastery of the standards. The report goes on to say that the results can be used for group-level decisions, so the department is moving forward with those activities, which include calculating school grades, calculating scores for inclusion in teacher evaluations and setting achievement level cut scores.

- During the spring administration of the FSA, 3.2 million tests were completed successfully. More computer-based statewide assessments were completed this year than last year – approximately 2.4 million computer-based tests were completed this year, an increase over the 1.7 million that were completed last year.
- Safeguards were put in place to mitigate the impact of cyber-attack attempts made against American Institutes for Research (AIR), the company responsible for administering the FSA. The safeguards were effective, evidenced by the fact that students were not impacted by cyber-attack attempts that occurred after the first week.
- No personally identifiable student information was accessed during the aforementioned cyber-attacks.

Education Commissioner Pam Stewart said, “I want to thank Alpine Testing Solutions for their report. We are committed to ensuring that all Florida students are prepared for college or career, and I am pleased that this third-party study confirmed our confidence in Florida’s statewide assessments.

“We are proud to have strong relationships with our school districts, and we will continue working closely with them throughout the school year. Because one student interrupted due to administration issues during testing is too many, we have remained engaged with AIR to prevent future technical issues and further enhance students’ experiences. This three-pronged partnership among school districts, AIR and the department is essential to make sure future testing goes smoothly.”

At the beginning of the testing windows, some students who were taking computer-based tests experienced technical difficulties, primarily related to difficulty logging in. It was determined that the majority of the issues were the result of cyber-attacks and glitches with AIR system updates. Commissioner Stewart led the department’s efforts to address the issues and remained in constant contact with AIR to prevent future occurrences. In response to the cyber-attacks, she requested the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to launch an investigation, which is ongoing. Additionally, the department’s assessment team was available around the clock to provide assistance to school districts.

During the 2015 Legislative Session, HB 7069 was passed by the Legislature and called for an independent third-party review of the 2014-2015 FSA prior to the release of school grades. The law called for the Governor,

the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to each designate an individual to compose the three-person panel for the purpose of selecting an entity to review the FSA. The panel selected Alpine Testing Solutions, which worked in partnership with edCount, LLC.

On August, 31, 2015, the Department of Education received the final report, which included the following conclusions.

- The report found that in the Evaluation of Test Items; Evaluation of Field Testing; Evaluation of Test Blueprint and Construction; Evaluation of Test Administration; Evaluation of Scaling, Equating, and Scoring; and Evaluation of Specific Psychometric Validity Questions, the policies and procedures that were followed are generally consistent with expected practices as described in the textbook *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* and other key sources that define best practices in the testing industry.
- **Use of FSA Scores for Student-Level Decision Purposes:** When evaluating the use of FSA scores for student-level decision purposes, the report noted that the scores for students taking computer-based tests should not be used as a sole determinant for purposes such as promotion or graduation eligibility. In Florida, statewide standardized test scores are never the sole determinant of these decisions. Therefore, students who earned a passing score, even though they were impacted, are still considered to have met the assessment graduation requirement. Those students who did not earn a passing score will still have the opportunity to retake the test or meet the requirement through other approved assessments.
- **Use of FSA Scores for Group-Level Decision Purposes:** When evaluating the use of FSA scores for group-level decision purposes, such as calculating scores for inclusion in teacher evaluations, calculating school grades and setting achievement level cut scores, the report noted that the evidence supports the use of these data in the aggregate for both paper-based and computer-based assessments. Therefore, the results will be used for group-level decisions, such as calculating scores for inclusion in teacher evaluations, calculating school grades, and setting achievement level cut scores.

To read the executive summary, click [here](#).

To read the full report, click [here](#).