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Setting the Record Straight: Validity Report Must be Read in Entirety to Paint Accurate Depiction of Results

Tallahassee, Fla., September 17, 2015 – On September 1, Education Commissioner Pam Stewart announced that the independent third-party review of the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), which was mandated by the Florida Legislature, had confirmed the FSA is valid for group-level use and an accurate way to measure students' knowledge of the Florida Standards. Since that announcement, some have relied on only portions of the report, failing to provide context or connection to the entire report and its overall conclusions. This has resulted in some incorrect interpretations of the report.

Below are key areas that have been misrepresented; this information should be used to correct inaccuracies.

CLAIM #1: Many test items on the FSA are not aligned with the Florida Standards.

FACT: The final report noted that **“the majority of test items had exact matches with the intended Florida Standards”** and that **“for those that did not have an exact match, most represented a very close connection”** with a slightly different standard (p. 37). For all but three out of the 386 total items, external reviewers identified connection to a standard that appeared on the Florida test blueprints, which define test content (p. 61 – 66). This affirms that the FSA accurately measures students' knowledge of Florida's content standards.

CLAIM #2: The test items aren't suitable because they were originally written to assess Utah students.

FACT: Alpine Testing Solution's psychometricians commended the Department of Education for **following industry standards as it relates to field testing and test item selection**. On page 11, commendations include:

- Prior to the use of the FSA, **all items were reviewed by educators knowledgeable of Florida students and the Florida Standards** to evaluate whether the items were appropriate for use within the FSA program; and
- After the FSA administration, **all items went through the industry-expected statistical and content reviews to ensure accurate and appropriate items** were delivered as part of the FSA.

Further, in conclusion #1 on page 18, the report stated, **“test items were determined to be error-free, unbiased, and were written to support research-based instructional methodology.”**

CLAIM #3: The department intends to use the FSA as a sole determinant in decisions, such as the prevention of advancement to the next grade, graduation eligibility, or placement into a remedial course.

FACT: In Florida, **statewide standardized tests are never used as the sole determinant of promotion or graduation decisions**. This is evidenced by the fact that when the department released the grade 3 bottom

quintile list and grade 10 English Language Arts assessment and the Algebra I end-of-course assessment passing lists to superintendents in June, Commissioner Stewart emphasized that there are other performance measures that districts should consider when making these decisions and other avenues for student advancement.

CLAIM #4: School grades are being delayed because of the validity study.

FACT: **The release of school grades is on track.** Since the spring of 2014, the department has stated that it plans to release **informational baseline school grades** in December at the earliest, after standards setting is complete.

CLAIM #5: Some students do not have the computer skills necessary to take computer-based assessments.

FACT: Florida has been **gradually transitioning to computer-based testing since 2011** and each year all computer-based testing has been completed successfully. **Computer skills, even in the early grades, are a required component of the Florida Standards, and have been since 2006.** Just like all other areas of study, as long as students have a firm grasp of the Florida Standards, they will be prepared for the tests. **Furthermore, to allow districts additional time to teach students keyboarding skills, Commissioner Stewart determined that Grades 4-7 FSA Writing would be administered on paper in 2014-2015, and writing tests in these grades will be administered on paper again this school year.**