



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

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**ACTION BY:
Information Only**

TO: All Principals

FROM: Judith Klinek, Chief Academic Officer *JK*

**SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF DATA FORENSICS PROGRAM TO
STRENGTHEN THE FAIRNESS AND VALIDITY OF
2011-2012 FCAT/FCAT 2.0/EOC ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

The following is excerpted from a recent Florida Department of Education (FDOE) memorandum to Superintendents concerning strengthening the fairness and validity of 2011-2012 FCAT/FCAT 2.0/EOC assessment results. We wanted to share this relevant information with you.

In a key policy letter to state education officials dated June 24, 2011, the United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, wrote the following:

I am writing to urge you to do everything you can to ensure the integrity of the data used to measure student achievement and ensure meaningful educational accountability in your State. As I'm sure you know, even the hint of testing irregularities and misconduct in the test administration process could call into question school reform efforts and undermine the State accountability systems that you have painstakingly built over the past decade.

Secretary Duncan goes on to mention data forensic analyses among the steps states may take to strengthen test security and validity. You may access his entire letter here:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/110624.html>.

The FDOE takes the goals mentioned by Secretary Duncan very seriously, and strives to maintain the integrity of test data in an effort to successfully measure the educational progress of students in our state and make continued improvements to our educational system.

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Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, part of FDOE's efforts to accomplish this goal included subcontracting with Caveon Test Security to analyze all statewide assessments.

Test data were analyzed to identify highly unusual test results for two primary groups: 1) students with extremely similar test responses; and 2) schools with improbable levels of similarity, gains, and/or erasures.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you information and details regarding actions to be taken by FDOE with these statistical analyses of test data during the 2011-12 school year.

Schools with Improbable Similarity, Gains, or Erasures

For each test administration this year, analyses will be conducted to detect extreme levels of similarities, gains, and/or erasures at the individual school level. A school will be flagged for review if it meets or surpasses the designated threshold for improbable similarities, gains, or erasures. If a school is flagged, the FDOE will require the district to conduct an internal investigation to collect more information regarding testing conditions at the school and any possible irregularities or reasons that may explain the extreme results. The FDOE will review the results for each district investigation. If an investigation is not resolved prior to the release of school grades, the grade for that school will be held until a resolution is reached. In addition, unsettled or egregious cases may result in the involvement of the FDOE's Inspector General's office, Professional Practices, as well as the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Students with Extremely Similar Test Responses

As was the case for the Spring 2011 assessments, the FDOE will continue to flag and invalidate the test scores of students in the same school whose test responses are so similar and statistically aberrant that the validity of the test responses must be questioned. A conservative threshold of 1 in 10^{12} , or one in a trillion, will continue to be used in flagging scores.

- Appeals Process for Individual Students: The FDOE will continue to provide an appeals process for districts to present evidence describing the testing circumstances that explain why invalidated results should be considered valid. Complete and well-documented appeals will be reviewed in the order in which they are received. Deadlines for appeals will be set for each test administration, and appeals will not be accepted after this date. Appeals that do not support validity of test results will be denied. If an appeal provides evidence that warrants a reversal of the decision to invalidate, the student's score will be released during a later reporting window.
- Guidelines for Appeals: A reference guide is being produced by the FDOE to aid districts in the process of appealing test score invalidations. The appeals guide will outline the materials and information necessary or helpful to submit with an appeal, such as seating charts, student statements, and test administrator statements. This reference guide will also describe basic procedures districts might employ in conducting investigations.

Resources

Data Forensics Technical Information: The data forensics process will be described in technical terms for those who wish to more deeply understand the statistical process of data forensics. This reference will be provided in February 2012.

Parent/Guardian Letter: The FDOE will provide a revised letter for use in notifying a parent/guardian that his or her student's score has been invalidated. The letter will describe the data forensics process in laymen's terms.

WFM:JK:MB:bls

Approved:



E. Wayne Gent, Superintendent