

Participation in State Assessment Committees

Since 1996, the development and implementation of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) have been shaped by the active involvement of thousands of Florida educators serving on numerous committees. For the FCAT, educators guided the development of the Sunshine State Standards, the determination of which benchmarks to assess and how to assess them. Now, for the FCAT 2.0 and the Florida End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments, educators continue that work by determining how to assess the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. All Florida statewide assessment items have been reviewed and accepted by committees of Florida educators. The Florida Department of Education (the Department) maintains open communication with Florida educators regarding how the state assessment system and its various associated processes and activities might be improved. Educators may be nominated to state assessment committees by their District School Superintendent, district-level administrators, or by peers serving on state assessment committees.

Standing Committees

Rotating Membership

Assessment and Accountability Advisory Committee—This committee has approximately 15–20 members representing educators, school district personnel, and university faculty. The members of this committee advise the Department about K–12 assessment and accountability policies. Their recommendations may relate to standards for state assessment Achievement Levels, school grading policies, and alternative assessments. This committee meets once a year.

Reading Content Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 20–25 reading and/or language arts professionals from schools, school districts, and universities. The members of this committee advise the Department about the scope of the reading assessments. Their recommendations may include: which benchmarks should be assessed on a statewide test; the types of reading materials to be used; the range of difficulty for the passages to be used on the assessments; the number of benchmarks, passages, and items to be assessed per grade level; and the content of the *Test Item Specifications* documents. This committee meets once or twice a year.

Writing Content Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 20–25 writing and/or language arts professionals from schools, school districts, and universities. This group provides guidance, as needed, regarding the current writing assessment. The members of this committee also advise the Department about the scope of the test design for future writing assessments, including the benchmarks that should be assessed, the recommended item types, and the content of the *Test Item Specifications* documents. This committee usually meets once or twice a year.

Mathematics Content Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 20–25 mathematics professionals from schools, school districts, and universities. The members of this committee advise the Department about the scope of the mathematics assessments. Their recommendations include the benchmarks that should be assessed on a statewide test, the item types recommended for each assessed benchmark, and the content of the *Test Item Specifications* documents. This committee meets once or twice a year.

Science Content Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 20–25 science professionals from schools, school districts, and universities. The members of this committee advise the Department about the scope of the science assessments. Their recommendations include the benchmarks that should be assessed on a statewide test and content of the *Test Item Specifications* documents. This committee meets once or twice a year.

Social Studies Content Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 15–25 social studies professionals from schools, school districts, and universities. The members of this committee advise the Department about the scope of social studies assessments. The committee’s recommendations include the benchmarks that should be assessed on a statewide assessment and the content of the *Test Item Specifications* documents. This committee meets once or twice a year.

Technical Advisory Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 10–15 professionals with expertise in psychometrics. Members include Florida district assessment coordinators and representatives of universities and state agencies outside of Florida. In addition, the psychometric advisors of the Department’s contractors participate in the meetings. Committee members assist the Department by reviewing technical decisions and documents and by providing advice regarding the approaches the Department should use to analyze and report state assessment data. This committee meets once or twice a year.

Annual and Ad Hoc Committees

Community Sensitivity Committee—This committee, composed of approximately 15–25 Florida citizens associated with a variety of organizations and institutions, reviews all passages, prompts, and items for issues of potential concern to members of the community at large. This review ensures that the primary purpose of assessing achievement is not undermined by the inadvertent inclusion of test material that may be deemed inappropriate by parents and other citizens. Reviewers are asked to consider whether the subject matter and language of each reading passage, writing prompt, and test item will be acceptable to Florida students, their parents, and other members of Florida communities. Participants in these committees include representatives of statewide religious organizations, parent organizations, community-based organizations, cultural groups (e.g., Hispanic or Native American), school boards, school district advisory council members, and leaders in business and industry from across the state. Each Community Sensitivity Committee meets once a year together with the Bias Review Committee.

Bias Review Committee—This committee, composed of approximately 15–30 Florida educators representative of Florida’s regional, racial/ethnic, and cultural diversity, reviews passages, prompts, and items for potential bias. Reviewers look for the following types of bias: gender, racial/ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographic, and socioeconomic. A test item (or prompt or passage) is considered biased if characteristics unrelated to the skill being measured result in an unfair advantage or disadvantage for a particular group of students. (In addition to this professional judgment model, differential item functioning [DIF statistic] is examined for all items proposed for state assessments.) Participants in this committee include representatives of Florida school districts, universities, and statewide organizations that serve the various groups potentially affected by the types of bias described, such as Title I and ELL. Every attempt is made by the Department to represent the various groups potentially affected by bias at a level at or above their representation in the general population. Each Bias Review Committee meets once a year together with the Community Sensitivity Committee.

Item Content Review Committee—This committee is composed of approximately 12-15 committees of educators who serve to review reading passages, writing prompts, and reading, mathematics, science, and social studies test items to determine whether the passages and items are appropriate for the grade level for which each is proposed. In addition, these committees, composed of 8-10 educators each, are asked to evaluate whether the items measure the benchmark, are clearly worded, have only one correct answer, and are of appropriate difficulty. Participants include teachers from the targeted grade level and subject area, as well as school and district curriculum specialists. The Item Content Review Committee usually meets during late fall each year.

Science Expert Review Committee—Due to the theory-based nature of the content area, all potential science test items undergo an extra level of scrutiny. Participants in this committee review newly developed science test items to ensure the accuracy and currency of the science content. This group of approximately 10–15 participants includes practicing scientists from the private sector and university-level science researchers and faculty. The Science Expert Review Committee meets once a year, after Content Review.

Rangefinder Committee—After writing prompts are field tested, the scoring of a representative set of student responses for each prompt is completed in order to establish guidelines for the handscoring of all students’ responses. A group of approximately 10–12 Florida educators for each grade tested establishes the range of responses that represent each score point of the rubric for each prompt. As a result of these meetings, training materials for handscorers are assembled prior to handscoring of the operational prompts. Participants in these committees include teachers from the targeted grade level, as well as school and district curriculum specialists. Participants will usually have served on other state assessment committees, such as the Item Content Review Committee, prior to serving on a Rangefinder Committee.

Gridded- and Fill-in Response Adjudication Committee—This group of approximately 4–6 educators reviews all field-test responses to Mathematics gridded-response and fill-in response questions to determine whether all possible correct answers have been included in the scoring key. The various responses are examined and judged as either incorrect or correct. Committee members are asked to evaluate the possibility of finding the answer through an alternate process and to determine if the resulting answers are acceptable. On the basis of their recommendations, the Department establishes rules for how each gridded-response and fill-in response item will be scored. Participants include teachers from the targeted grade level and subject area, as well as school and district curriculum specialists. The Gridded- and Fill-in Response Adjudication Committee meets each spring.

Achievement Level Descriptions Committee—Achievement Level Descriptions (ALDs) specifically illustrate what students at each Achievement Level know and can do at each grade in each content area. They provide documentation and coherence to the establishment and use of Achievement Levels, and tie directly back to Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Ultimately, the ALDs will be the tools that will allow the Standard-Setting Committees (see below) to develop a clear conceptualization of the characteristics of students in each Achievement Level. An ALD committee includes approximately 15-25 members made up of teachers from the targeted grade level and subject area, school and district curriculum specialists, school and district administrators, and university faculty from the discipline area. This Achievement Level Descriptions Committee meets in the summer/fall after field testing the new standards.

Standards-Setting Committees—After the development and field testing of next-generation assessments, the Department will seek the advice of district educators and business/community representatives to recommend achievement level standards for the new state assessments. For example, committees are used to recommend the achievement levels currently in place for FCAT Reading and Mathematics. For these committees, members are selected from persons who are familiar with the state assessment system from prior committee participation and persons who may be unfamiliar with the state assessment but have an interest in the standards being established. Participants include teachers from the targeted grade level and subject area, school and district curriculum specialists, school and district administrators, university faculty from the discipline area, and business and community leaders. The Standards-Setting Committees meet in the summer/fall after an assessment's first operational test administration.

Special Ad Hoc Committees—On occasion, groups of parents, teachers, school/district administrators, and others are convened to review various aspects of the testing program and to advise the Department on appropriate courses of action. These committees provide advice on such issues as score reporting and interpretive products.