

Committee on K-12

Action Packet

Tuesday, March 4, 2008

1:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

212 Knott

Speaker
Marco Rubio

Chair
Anitere Flores

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

Attendance:

	<i>Present</i>	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Excused</i>
Anitere Flores (Chair)	X		
Gary Aubuchon	X		
Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall			X
Stan Jordan	X		
Kurt Kelly	X		
Will Kendrick	X		
John Legg			X
Curtis Richardson	X		
Garrett Richter	X		
Shelley Vana	X		
Totals:	8	0	2

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

HB 251 : Public Secondary Schools

Favorable With Amendments

	Yea	Nay	No Vote	Absentee Yea	Absentee Nay
Gary Aubuchon	X				
Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall			X		
Stan Jordan	X				
Kurt Kelly	X				
Will Kendrick	X				
John Legg			X		
Curtis Richardson	X				
Garrett Richter	X				
Shelley Vana	X				
Anitere Flores (Chair)	X				
Total Yeas: 8		Total Nays: 0			

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

HB 519 : Public School Utilization

Favorable

	Yea	Nay	No Vote	Absentee Yea	Absentee Nay
Gary Aubuchon	X				
Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall			X		
Stan Jordan	X				
Kurt Kelly	X				
Will Kendrick	X				
John Legg			X		
Curtis Richardson	X				
Garrett Richter	X				
Shelley Vana	X				
Anitere Flores (Chair)	X				
Total Yeas: 8		Total Nays: 0			

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

Other Business Appearance:

Curriculum Bill

Barney Bishop (Lobbyist) - Proponent
President & CEO, Associated Industries of Fla.
516 N. Adams
Tallahassee FL 32301
Phone: 850-224-7173

Curriculum Standards

Bob Boyd (Lobbyist) - Opponent
AAP Florida Lobbyist - Association of American Publishers
301 W. College
Tallahassee FL 32301
Phone: 850/412-0306

Draft Teachers Lead

Sara Wilcox (At Request Of Chair) - Proponent
Superintendent, Martin County
500 East Ocean Blvd.
Stuart FL 34997
Phone: 772-219-1200 Ext. 30222

Instructional Materials

Peggy Finch (State Employee) - Information Only
Coordinator, Instructional Materials and Charter School
4407 SE 15 Street
Ocala FL 34471
Phone: 352-694-1965

Instructional Technology

Lyn Stanfield - Proponent
Strategic Relations Manager, Apple, Inc.
2910 Kerry Forest Pkwy D-14-186
Tallahassee FL 32309
Phone: 850-671-4401;850-251-6804

PCB - Curricular Standards

Patricia Levesque (Lobbyist) - Proponent
Executive Director, Foundation for Florida's Future
215 S. Monroe Suite 100
Tallahassee FL 32301
Phone: 850-391-3070

Social Studies provisions out of the PCB

Jason Laros (At Request Of Chair) - Proponent
President, FL Association of Social Studies Supervisors; Program Chairman-FL Council for the Social
729 Loomis Ave.
Daytona Beach FL 32114
Phone: 386-479-8700

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

Standards Bill

Dr. Frances Haithcock (State Employee) - Proponent

Chancellor, K-12 Public Schools DOE

325 W. Gaines Street #514

Tallahassee FL 32399

Phone: 850-245-0509

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Committee on K-12

3/4/2008 1:00:00PM

Location: 212 Knott Building

Summary:

Committee on K-12

Tuesday March 04, 2008 01:00 pm

HB 251 Favorable With Amendments

Yeas: 8 Nays: 0

HB 519 Favorable

Yeas: 8 Nays: 0

Committee meeting was reported out: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 5:49:20PM

HOUSE AMENDMENT FOR COUNCIL/COMMITTEE PURPOSES

Amendment No. (for drafter's use only)

Bill No. **HB 251**

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE ACTION

ADOPTED — (Y/N)
ADOPTED AS AMENDED — (Y/N)
ADOPTED W/O OBJECTION ✓ (Y/N)
FAILED TO ADOPT — (Y/N)
WITHDRAWN — (Y/N)
OTHER —

1 Council/Committee hearing bill: Committee on K-12

2 Representative(s) Jordan offered the following:

3
4 **Amendment (with title amendment)**

5 Remove everything after the enacting clause and insert:

6 Section 1. Section 1003.451, Florida Statutes, is created
7 to read:

8 1003.451 Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps; military
9 recruiters; access to public school campuses.--

10 (1) A school district may not ban any branch of the United
11 States Armed Forces or the United States Department of Homeland
12 Security from establishing, maintaining, or operating a unit of
13 the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps at a public high
14 school in the district.

15 (2) (a) A school district shall allow a student attending a
16 public high school in the district to enroll in the Junior
17 Reserve Officers' Training Corps at another public high school
18 in the district unless:

19 1. The student's school offers the Junior Reserve
20 Officers' Training Corps for any branch of the United States
21 Armed Forces or United States Department of Homeland Security;

HOUSE AMENDMENT FOR COUNCIL/COMMITTEE PURPOSES

Amendment No. (for drafter's use only)

22 2. The student does not meet the Junior Reserve Officers'
23 Training Corps' minimum enrollment qualifications; or

24 3. Scheduling of the student's courses of study do not
25 allow the student to attend the Junior Reserve Officers'
26 Training Corps at another public high school in the district.

27 (b) This subsection does not require a school district to
28 provide transportation for a student to attend the Junior
29 Reserve Officers' Training Corps at another public high school
30 in the district.

31 (3)(a) A school district shall, as required in 20 U.S.C.
32 s. 7908(a)(3), grant military recruiters of the United States
33 Armed Forces and United States Department of Homeland Security
34 the same access to secondary school students, and to school
35 facilities and grounds, which the district grants to
36 postsecondary educational institutions or prospective employers
37 of students.

38 (b) A school district shall, as required in 20 U.S.C. s.
39 7908(a)(1), grant military recruiters access to the names,
40 addresses, and telephone listings of secondary school students,
41 except, the district shall comply with a student's or parent's
42 request under 20 U.S.C. s. 7908(a)(2) or s. 1002.22(3)(d) not to
43 release the student's information without prior written parental
44 consent.

45 (4) The State Board of Education shall enforce this
46 section under s. 1008.32.

47 (5) The State Board of Education may adopt rules under ss.
48 120.536(1) and 120.54 to administer this section.

49 Section 2. Section 1004.09, Florida Statutes, is created
50 to read:

HOUSE AMENDMENT FOR COUNCIL/COMMITTEE PURPOSES

Amendment No. (for drafter's use only)

51 1004.09 Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps; military
52 recruiters; access to community college and state university
53 campuses.--

54 (1) A community college or state university may not ban,
55 to the extent prohibited in 10 U.S.C. s. 983(a)(1), any branch
56 of the United States Armed Forces from establishing,
57 maintaining, or operating a unit of the Senior Reserve Officers'
58 Training Corps at the college or university.

59 (2)(a) A community college or state university shall, to
60 the extent required in 10 U.S.C. s. 983(b)(1), grant military
61 recruiters of the United States Armed Forces and United States
62 Department of Homeland Security the same access to the college's
63 or university's students, and to campus facilities and grounds,
64 which the college or university grants to other employers.

65 (b) A community college or state university shall, to the
66 extent required in 10 U.S.C. s. 983(b)(2), grant military
67 recruiters access to the names, addresses, telephone listings,
68 dates and places of birth, levels of education, academic majors,
69 degrees received, and most recent educational institutions
70 enrolled in by the college's or university's students.

71 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.

72
73
74 -----
75 **T I T L E A M E N D M E N T**

76 Remove the entire title and insert:

77 A bill to be entitled

78 An act relating to Reserve Officers' Training Corps
79 programs; creating s. 1003.451, F.S.; prohibiting a school
80 district from banning a Junior Reserve Officers' Training
81 Corps unit in certain schools; requiring a school district

HOUSE AMENDMENT FOR COUNCIL/COMMITTEE PURPOSES

Amendment No. (for drafter's use only)

82 to allow a student, under certain circumstances, to enroll
83 in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps at another
84 school; specifying that a school district is not required
85 to provide transportation for a student enrolling in the
86 Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps at another school;
87 requiring a school district to grant military recruiters
88 certain access to students, school facilities and grounds,
89 and certain student information; providing for
90 enforcement; providing for the adoption of rules by the
91 State Board of Education; creating s. 1004.009, F.S. ;
92 prohibiting a community college or state university from
93 banning, to the extent prohibited by federal law, a Senior
94 Reserve Officers' Training Corps unit; requiring that a
95 community college or state university, to the extent
96 required by federal law, grant military recruiters certain
97 access to students, campus facilities and grounds, and
98 certain student information; providing an effective date.

**House of Representatives
Committee Recommendations Worksheet
Proposed Council Bills**

Committee on K-12

Meeting Date 3/4/08

Time 1:00 pm

Place 212 Knott

Subject Teachers lead

Motion:

to recommend a proposed council bill with respect to 8
FR Teachers Lead Program
(subject)

to recommend proposed council bill _____ relating to _____
(PCB #)

Other action: _____

Vote On Recommendations		MEMBERS Representatives								
Yea	Nay		Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Aubuchon								
		Bendross-Mindingall								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Jordan								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Kelly								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Kendrick								
		Legg								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Richardson								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Richter								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Vana								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Chair Flores								
Yeas	Nays	Totals	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays
8	0									

Appearance Record

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Address</u>

**House of Representatives
Committee Recommendations Worksheet
Proposed Council Bills**

Committee on K-12

Meeting Date 3/4/08 Time 1:00 pm

Place 212 Knott

Subject Enhanced Curricular Standards

Motion: to recommend a proposed council bill with respect to Public School Curricular Standards
(subject)

to recommend proposed council bill _____ relating to _____
(PCB #)

Other action: _____

Vote On Recommendations		MEMBERS Representatives								
Yea	Nay		Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Aubuchon								
		Bendross-Mindingall								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Jordan								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Kelly								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Kendrick								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Legg								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Richardson								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Richter								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Vana								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Chair Flores								
Yeas	Nays		Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays	Yeas	Nays
8	0	Totals								

Appearance Record

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Address</u>



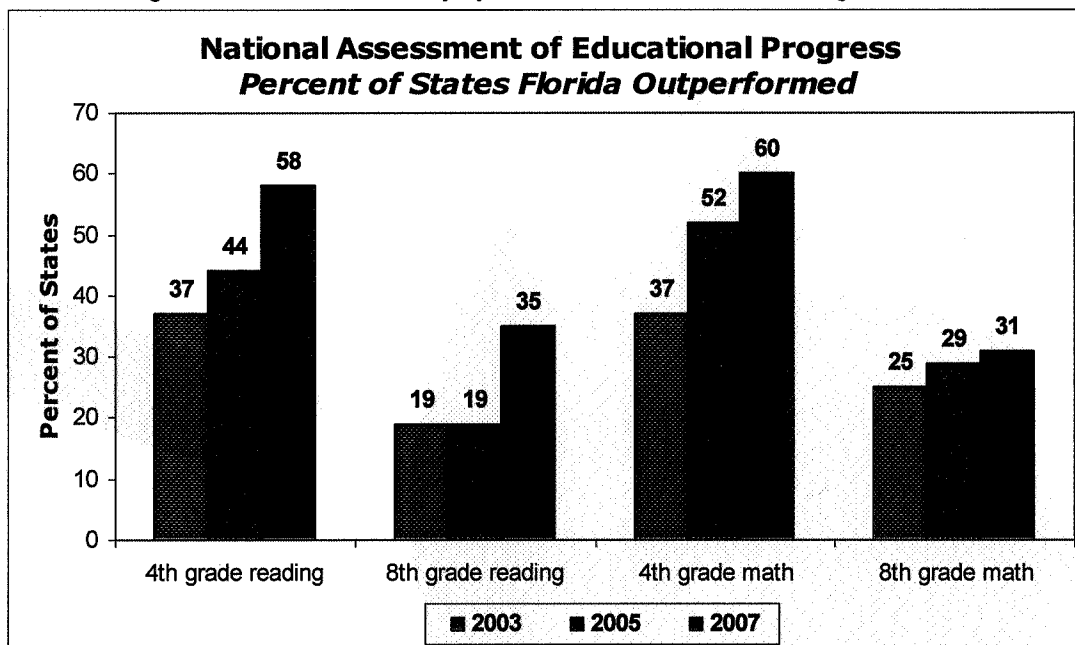
The Foundation for Florida's Future

SUPPORTS

Proposed Council Bill relating to Public School Curricular Standards

The Foundation asks that you vote YES on the Proposed Council Bill relating to Public School Curricular Standards in the K-12 Committee meeting on Tuesday, March 4.

Florida has a strong education accountability system that has resulted in rising student achievement.



This bill builds upon the strong foundation of accountability. Specifically, the Foundation for Florida's Futures supports the provisions in the bill that:

- Enhance the effectiveness of our curriculum standards by increasing their rigor and ensuring that schools focus instruction on the standards, rather than "teaching to the test."
- Give districts the freedom to use certain state funds on digital content to improve classroom instruction.
- Strengthen the law related to the rating of alternative schools and the inclusion of all students in a school's grade.
- Broaden the scope of student performance data by expanding the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) to include social studies.
- Begin to create rigorous, standardized end-of-course exams for high school social studies.
- Provide additional instructional time during the school year by moving the date for the FCAT to later in the year.

Your support of our legislative priorities will be reflected in the grade you earn on *Florida's Education Report Card* to be released following the 2008 Legislative Session.

If you have any questions, please contact Josh Hall, Director of Public Policy, at (850) 298-8571 or josh@afloridapromise.org.

www.afloridapromise.org

P.O. Box 10691 · Tallahassee, Florida 32302 · (850) 391-3070 · (786) 664-1794 fax

February 27, 2008

Survey Finds Teenagers Ignorant on Basic History and Literature Questions

By SAM DILLON

Fewer than half of American teenagers who were asked basic history and literature questions in a phone survey knew when the Civil War was fought, and one in four said Columbus sailed to the New World some time after 1750, not in 1492.

The survey results, released on Tuesday, demonstrate that a significant proportion of teenagers live in “stunning ignorance” of history and literature, said the group that commissioned it, Common Core.

The organization describes itself as a new research and advocacy organization that will press for more teaching of the liberal arts in public schools.

The group says President Bush’s education law, No Child Left Behind, has impoverished public school curriculums by holding schools accountable for student scores on annual tests in reading and mathematics, but in no other subjects.

Politically, the group’s leaders are strange bedfellows. Its founding board includes Antonia Cortese, executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, a union that is a powerful force in the Democratic Party, and Diane Ravitch, an education professor at New York University who was assistant education secretary under the first President George Bush.

Its executive director is Lynne Munson, former deputy chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and former special assistant to Vice President Dick Cheney’s wife, Lynne.

“We’re a truly diverse group,” Mrs. Munson said. “We almost certainly vote differently, and we have varying opinions about different aspects of educational reform. But when it comes to concern that all of America’s children receive a comprehensive liberal arts and science education, we all agree.”

In the survey, 1,200 17-year-olds were called in January and asked to answer 33 multiple-choice questions about history and literature that were read aloud to them. The questions were drawn from a test that the federal government administered in 1986.

About a quarter of the teenagers were unable to correctly identify Hitler as Germany’s chancellor in World War II, instead identifying him as a munitions maker, an Austrian premier and the German kaiser.

On literature, the teenagers fared even worse. Four in 10 could pick the name of Ralph Ellison’s novel about a young man’s growing up in the South and moving to Harlem, “Invisible Man,” from a list of titles. About half knew that in the Bible Job is known for his patience in suffering. About as many said he was known for his skill as a builder, his prowess in battle or his prophetic abilities.

The history question that proved easiest asked the respondents to identify the man who declared, “I have a dream.” Ninety-seven percent correctly picked the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

About 8 in 10, a higher percentage than on any other literature question, knew that Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird” is about two children affected by the conflict in their community when their father defends a black man in court.

In a joint introduction to their report, Ms. Cortese and Dr. Ravitch did not directly blame the No Child law for the dismal results but said it had led schools to focus too narrowly on reading and math, crowding time out of the school day for history, literature and other subjects.

“The nation’s education system has become obsessed with testing and basic skills because of the requirements of federal law, and that is not healthy,” Ms. Cortese and Dr. Ravitch said.

“You can be supportive of N.C.L.B. and also support strengthening the teaching of history and literature,” a spokeswoman for the Education Department, Samara Yudof, said. “It’s good to talk about expanding the curriculum, but if you can’t read, you can’t read anything at all.”

A string of studies have documented the curriculum’s narrowing since Mr. Bush signed the law in January 2002.

Last week, the Center on Education Policy, a research group in Washington that has studied the law, estimated that based on its own survey 62 percent of school systems had added an average of three hours of math or reading instruction a week at the expense of time for social studies, art and other subjects.

The Bush administration and some business and civil rights groups warn against weakening the law, saying students need reading and math skills to succeed in other subjects.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FCAT frenzy: Is it subsiding?

Little by little, some schools are toning down some of the hype leading up to the annual FCAT testing season, which starts Tuesday.

Posted on Tue, Feb. 12, 2008

BY NIRVI SHAH

nshah@MiamiHerald.com



JOE RIMKUS JR. / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

At Ramblewood Middle School in Coral Springs, students in Stephanie Stipkovich's class -- Paola Fonseca, left, Anne Cameau and Carina Victoria -- work on a science calendar.

For years, the months of classroom teaching in South Florida leading up to the annual spring FCAT exams have been a feverish combination of practice tests, pep rallies and classroom walls plastered with test tips and practice words.

But in Stephanie Stipkovich's class at Ramblewood Middle School in Coral Springs, one would never know that the high-stakes standardized testing starts Tuesday.

As Stipkovich explained a lesson on glaciers last week, she was surrounded by colorful posters and photographs of the solar system, the study of the shifting plates on the earth's surface and sea monsters. She was quick to point out to her students that some answers wouldn't be found in textbooks.

"Where is it?" she asked her class.

"In your brain," answered seventh-grader Nashae Moore.

Ramblewood's emphasis on teaching students to think for themselves -- rather than bombarding them with a collection of facts that they might need on the FCAT -- however, remains the exception in most South Florida classrooms, not the rule.

Last fall, the Broward School Board asked that the frenzy of preparation surrounding the annual state tests in reading, math, writing and science be reined in. Miami-Dade board members haven't taken the same step, but did inquire about Broward's action.

It was a tall order, considering the tests determine school letter grades and the penalties or rewards that come along with them. Poor grades mean extra scrutiny and can lead to an entire school staff being reassigned. The board's theory is that with less hype, teachers would have more time for creative lessons and students would be less stressed about the tests, which determine whether they're promoted from third to fourth grade and whether they graduate.

But in a Broward Teachers Union survey this month of nearly 2,000 teachers -- more than a tenth of the district's teaching force -- showed that 58 percent believe there is more hype than ever about the high-stakes test.

"What the district may be saying conceptually is not where reality is," union President Pat Santeramo said.

The district has taken some steps forward. About 51,000 students were told they didn't have to take a district practice exam this year because they had earned high scores in the past. And a committee to study how schools prepare for the FCAT is working on suggestions for the future.

At Ramblewood, there are no FCAT workbooks or FCAT words of the day. The only place most students will learn how to fill in test answer sheets and pick the best answers on multiple-choice questions is at an optional Saturday camp during the next few weekends.

"If you teach your children to use higher order thinking skills, if you teach them to really delve into a topic rather than regurgitate information, if you teach children how to think, then everything else will fall into place," Ramblewood Principal Tina Recchi said.

Parent Jennifer Martin wishes more schools followed Ramblewood's philosophy. Her son attends Dillard High in Fort Lauderdale, which as a D-rated school is under more pressure for students to do well on FCAT exams than Ramblewood -- a six-time A school.

Martin's son, a junior who is in gifted classes, is still being bombarded with FCAT preparation exercises.

"I don't think drill and kill is good for anybody; it's just a personal belief," Martin said.

Students shouldn't spend hours a week on that kind of test preparation, said Gisela Feild, testing director for the Miami-Dade school district.

Students should spend a little time understanding how to color in the answers on test answer sheets, learn how to manage their time and know that they need to get a good night's rest the night before the test, Feild said.

But otherwise, test preparation should mean interesting lessons in all subjects based on state standards -- which is what the FCAT tests, she said.

"If you're teaching the curriculum and the standards, you're teaching to the FCAT and that's OK," she said.

Schools set for weeks of FCAT-only lessons as exams approach

By LAURA GREEN

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Sunday, January 27, 2008

Say goodbye to field trips, assemblies and teacher training half days. Starting Monday, it's all FCAT all the time for most Palm Beach County students and teachers. The annual FCAT "blackout" is upon us.

"We're in crunch time," said Santaluces High Principal Kathleen Orloff.

The first round of testing starts with writing on Feb. 12. During the weeks leading up to it, principals follow a simple rule: If it can't be tied to improving test scores, forget about it.

Superintendent Art Johnson started the annual distraction-free period several years ago as a way to ensure students and teachers focused on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

"We have a once-a-year, high-stakes test in the state of Florida and a lot rides on it," Johnson said. "We know that time on task is a critical part of doing well. It's difficult to have time on task if any of the key personnel - teachers, students, administrators - are off campus."

This year's blackout lasts until March 28, three days after the FCAT tests are finished. The extra days at the end ensure teachers are available to help pack up testing materials.

During that window, no in-house or outside teaching trainings are scheduled. Teacher meetings are held during planning periods. Students are generally forbidden from competing in contests or attending events that take them out of the classroom, even if it has educational merit. Even some science labs are discouraged if they don't directly cover what's tested on the FCAT.

The period lasts nine weeks, compared with slightly more than seven last year. Its longer run may be a matter of where the test falls on the calendar this year as much as a desire to have more concentrated time preparing for the test, Johnson said.

High school administrators can be particularly strict about enforcing the blackout because students who do not pass the reading and math tests cannot graduate.

So much of the school year is already taken up with FCAT prep that banning field trips and other extras is overkill, said Lynette Butts, a parent of children at Rosenwald Elementary, Lake Shore Middle and Glades Central High, schools that earned a D or F last year.

"They've been drilled so much, sometimes they need a break," she said.

At Addison Mizner in Boca Raton, Principal Donna Binninger allows teachers to decide whether a field trip would benefit students even if it's scheduled during that sacred period.

"We didn't get to be an A eight years in a row because our teachers don't know what they're doing," she said.

Binninger acknowledged the school has a lot working for it before teachers start on the curriculum.

Students generally come from affluent homes with involved parents, factors that contribute to higher test scores.

"If we were a low-performing school and we had some of the issues my colleagues have, I might take a different stand."

Still, she said: "There's a balance between getting it all in and stressing them."

District approves \$1,200 contract to relieve FCAT stress

Published February 28th, 2008

By Nicol Jenkins
Special to the News

Amidst some dissent, Palm Beach County School Board members approved a \$1,200 consultant contract to relieve stress before FCAT testing.

"I have difficulties spending public dollars for this," said School Board member Paulette Burdick.

Despite some fiscal concerns, the School Board approved the \$1,200 consultant contract for Page Turner Adventures. This consultant will help relieve FCAT stress through two FCAT Survivor Presentations including test taking strategies and techniques for reading, math, and writing. The services will serve approximately 500 students in third, fourth and fifth grades at Manatee Elementary.

Before approval, School Board member Monroe Benaim also objected to spending dollars on hiring outside consultants.

"At \$600 an hour, I find it difficult to support but I do not want to interfere with the FCAT," Benaim said.

Superintendent Dr. Art Johnson said the cost is worth the positive results. District reports show that the school received assistance from Page Turner Adventures last year and student scores on the FCAT had improved.

"It's not uncommon to pay that much for consultants or speakers," Johnson said.

However, board members further suggested that the district implements a scale to rate consultants on pay.

"Above \$100 an hour we should come up with an index to have some kind of gauge," said Benaim.

School board member Debra Robinson agreed. She further suggested training staff for these programs instead of paying more for outside programs.

"Why are we writing checks to these people, when we can work with more development in-house?" Robinson questioned.

She added, "If we are wasting money here and not getting a return on their investment, why don't we train staff that enjoy their job."

In light of a recent budget shortfall, Robinson believes these consultant contract programs should be first on the chopping block.

"With another \$15 million shortfall, we need to put the gazillion programs on here for possible cuts," she said.

In other business, board member Debra Robinson discussed making a universal policy to ensure that students can bring home text books.

"It's disturbing when parents tell me that their child was told they could not bring home their text books," she said. "Students should be able to take home their books."

Superintendent Art Johnson said the issue comes down to funding.

"We do not have enough money to buy everyone their own book and to have a classroom set also," he said.

As for children not being allowed to bring home textbooks, Johnson said he would speak to school administrators to ensure this is not the case.

Former Boca Raton News staff writer Nicol Jenkins is now editor of Our Town News located in Coral Springs. Our Town News is a sister publication with the Boca Raton News, both part of the South Florida Media Group. Contact Nicol at press@southfloridamediagroup.com.



To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

<< [Back](#)

Latest News - Updated @ 3:58 P.m.

Cape schools get students ready for FCATs

By Terry Brady

tbrady@news-press.com

Originally posted on December 04, 2007

Practice tests are being administered. After school tutoring sessions are being held.

It's crunch time.

With only about two months to go before the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is administered, Cape Coral schools are doing what they can to assure its students will be ready come test days.

"It's a yearlong process," said Caloosa Middle School principal Brian Mangan. "As soon as it's done you start preparing for the next year."

Fourth, eighth and 10th grades will take the writing portion of the FCAT on Feb. 12 and Feb. 13.

The reading and math portions of the test will be given March 11-21 for the third through 10th grade. The science portion will take place that same time period for fifth, eighth and 11th grades.

The test ultimately holds in its hands the fate of the student, in that the student must pass the 10th-grade reading and math portions to graduate.

It also holds a lot for the schools in that they are awarded state bonus money based on their performance.

The Florida School Recognition Program awards schools that either maintain an A grade or jump a grade. Schools that qualify receive \$100 per student.

The Florida Department of Education disbursed more than \$129.3 million to Florida schools for their performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test last year.

Of that \$129.3 million, about \$4 million went to Lee County schools, and \$1,485,099 was awarded to 14 schools in Cape Coral.

However, with winter break occurring before the second quarter ends, the test could pose a stronger challenge than usual.

"With the schedule change, it's odd now," said Mangan, whose school has received an A grade every year since 2002.

Mangan said when the students return from break, they will now have semester exams in front of them as well as the FCAT.

"I preferred it the other way," Mangan said. "There was a longer prep time."

To help keep the kids focused with all that is ahead of them upon their return, Mangan said the students will be given FCAT prep books to look over while off.

Because elementary schools don't have mid-terms, Hector A. Cafferata Jr. Elementary principal Donald Hopper said the break shouldn't have a huge effect on his school.

However, he said he would like to see them push the test dates deeper in the school year.

"Some say 'How can you test kids in March when the school year ends in June?'" he said. "You need a full

school year. It's tough to get everything covered.

With the addition of a science portion to the test last year, there was even more material to be covered. Judging by the drop in last year's reward bonuses, it seems to be taking a toll.

The amount of money disbursed to Cape Coral schools dropped nearly \$170,000 from the year before.

Lee County schools received about \$600,000 less.

Hopper said he hopes his school will be able to bump its grade up from a B to an A this year, but said it would not be the end of the world if it didn't.

"I'm one that believes kids do well when they're having fun," he said. "Those are the things kids are going to remember, not taking a test. There is so much that goes into a school, it's not just a letter grade. If you're just nailing them with work, some schools get by with that, but it's not the philosophy here."

That being said, Hopper said he wasn't downplaying the test's importance and said he instructed teachers at the start of the year not to wait until the last second to prepare for the test otherwise students would be bogged down.

"It's too overwhelming," he said. "They'll shut down. That final push is too much for kids. We try to go over the (material) over the entire course of the school year."

Hopper said the school has had two staff members working with the school's students who scored in the bottom 25 percent all year to help improve their scores.

Island Coast High School principal Peter Bohatch took a similar approach by creating a program called "Super Gators."

Twice a week, Bohatch meets with those who scored in the bottom quartile.

However, the discussions are more geared toward the student's everyday student life with the goal of finding ways to make things more workable for the students.

Bohatch described the program as a mentoring program designed to make the students feel good about themselves, which would create a better learning atmosphere.

Outside of the program and in the classroom, Bohatch said the school is at a full, all-out push toward the FCAT.

Bohatch said the school even adjusted the bell schedule during a prep test given two weeks ago to simulate the FCAT atmosphere.

He said they would be doing a similar simulation when they return from winter break.

"We're kind of pushing a lot of the curriculum aside and going right into the FCAT (preparation)," he said. "It's a pretty heavy attack."