



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions that many parents and citizens have, and the most up-to-date answers to them.

## **What are the Florida Standards and how do they benefit my child?**

Our world is changing, we don't know what tomorrow's jobs will look like. But we do know that if we prepare children with critical thinking and problem solving skills, they will be better prepared to succeed in the future. That's the idea behind the Florida Standards, adopted in 2014. They are guidelines for what students should know and be able to do in math and English Language Arts at every grade level. These standards were designed by educators to ensure that when students graduate from high school, they are ready for college and the workforce.

## **What's different about the Florida Standards?**

Think for a moment about baking. You know how to follow a recipe for red velvet cake and get a great result. But do you know why you put a certain proportion of baking soda, flour and eggs? That's what the Florida Standards aim to do — teach students not just what to do, but why and how. That means teaching a deeper, more applicable set of skills. That way, students will learn how to bake a cake, not just how to memorize recipe after recipe. When we give students the kinds of skills that can be applied in many different arenas, they will grow into adults who can successfully navigate this world.

## **How will these changes affect my child?**

The Florida Standards are better aligned with what your child needs to know to be successful in post-secondary education and careers when they graduate from high school. So the long-term impact is that all children will be better prepared to succeed! In the short term, you may notice some changes in the type of homework and schoolwork that your child has. And because the standards are more rigorous, there's a chance that you'll notice that their score on the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) might be lower than it was with the FCAT 2.0.

## **My child doesn't understand their homework, and neither do I. What can I do to help them?**

It's true — math homework looks different than the way we adults learned to add, subtract, multiply and divide. The way teachers are teaching is changing to help students think more deeply instead of just memorizing formulas like we all used to do. If you don't understand an assignment, the best thing to do is to communicate with your

child's teacher. Ask your child's teacher if there are examples or other resources to help you help your child with homework. There are also a number of different informational sessions being offered by Duval County Public Schools' Parent Academy. See below for more information. Finally, Duval County Public Schools and the Jacksonville Public Library offer homework. For more information, visit [www.duvalschools.org/domain/5447](http://www.duvalschools.org/domain/5447) or [www.tutor.com/jacksonville](http://www.tutor.com/jacksonville) (make sure to enter your library card number).

**You know how to follow a recipe for red velvet cake and get a great result. But do you know why you put a certain proportion of baking soda, flour and eggs? The Florida Standards aim to teach students not just what to do, but why and how. That way, students will learn how to bake a cake, not just how to memorize recipe after recipe.**

### **What do I need to know about the Florida Standards Assessment?**

New standards mean a new statewide assessment, and in the spring of 2015, students took the new Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) for the first time. The results of this test will not be released until likely January 2016. Some information was released in fall 2015, but these are not formal results. If your child did not do well on the 2015 test, there will be no direct impact on them (they will not be retroactively retained), and although schools will receive school grades, they will not be punished if they receive a low school grade. To keep up with the latest news, visit [jaxpef.org](http://jaxpef.org) for updates.

### **I'm not a parent of a student in public schools. What do I need to know?**

This shift affects everyone! For our city to reach its full potential, we need to make sure that all children are prepared to reach their full potential. When we all work together to get students ready to become the strong workforce of the future, Jacksonville will become the vibrant city we know it can be. If you don't have kids in school, you can still help! Volunteer at a local school, or just make time to talk to people you know about this shift. Go to [jaxpef.org/get-involved](http://jaxpef.org/get-involved) to see a list of volunteer opportunities and find other ways to move public education forward.

### **How can I help my child be successful in school with all of these changes?**

- Stay in tune with what your child is learning. Make sure you're doing homework with them and helping them use Achieve and iReady on the computer on a regular basis at home.
- Make sure you have open and regular communication with your child's teacher. Ask how your child is doing, and whether and how well they are meeting expectations.
- Duval County Public Schools is offering a wide variety of different hour-long sessions to help parents understand the Florida Standards. The sessions are specifically targeted at different subjects and grade levels so you can pick the ones most applicable to you. To see a full schedule, which includes after-hours sessions, go to

[www.duvalschools.org/parentacademy](http://www.duvalschools.org/parentacademy) and register online.

- Visit [www.fsassessments.org](http://www.fsassessments.org) to find out more about the Florida Standards Assessment and see sample problems.
- CPALMS is a site designed mostly for educators, but has some examples that might be helpful as you work to help your child with homework. Go to [www.cpalms.org](http://www.cpalms.org) to get started.
- Schools and the Jacksonville Public Library offer homework. For more information, visit [www.duvalschools.org/Page/17284](http://www.duvalschools.org/Page/17284), [www.duvalschools.org/domain/5447](http://www.duvalschools.org/domain/5447) or [www.tutor.com/jacksonville](http://www.tutor.com/jacksonville) (make sure to enter your library card number).
- Parents can go to this link and get downloadable resources for each grade level: [www.duvalschools.org/Page/16648](http://www.duvalschools.org/Page/16648).

### **What if my child does not pass the FSA in third or tenth grade in spring 2016?**

Beginning with the 2016 administration of the FSA, children who score at a Level 1 in third grade are at risk of being retained. However, there are several options available to help your child pass into fourth grade, including taking an alternative assessment, submitting a portfolio or attending summer school. Students are required to pass the tenth grade test in order to graduate from high school (typically a mid-range Level 2), so they will have two additional years to re-take the exam. Most importantly, talk with your child's teachers and guidance counselors and ask what you can do to make sure your child is successful.

### **What's happening with school grades?**

Right now, the school grades for the 2014-15 school year will not be issued until, at the earliest, January or February 2016. The grades, which are required to be issued by the Florida Legislature, will be calculated differently for the 2014-15 school year because of the transition to the new standards. Since there is no good way to measure growth — which typically accounts for half of a school's grade — from the FCAT 2.0 to the FSA, it is likely school grades will be lower than they were in 2014-15, and significantly so in some cases. Schools will not be sanctioned for the grades they receive in 2015. School grades will come out on a normal schedule for the 2015-16 school year, include student growth measures, and should be released in June or July 2016.

### **What can I do to support local public schools during this time?**

Right now, our public school system is in the middle of a major renovation. We're keeping what works and updating other parts that need to be upgraded. Just like when you remodel your house, it can be noisy and inconvenient at times. That's why our schools need more support than ever! We all need to speak out about the need to give teachers and students time to adjust to these changes. Consider volunteering at a public school near you, or with one of the many great nonprofit organizations that work to support students with mentoring, after school programs and other services.