



# Orange County Public Schools

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February 25, 2005

Dear Parents/Guardians:

It's almost time for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). **Students in grades 3-11 will be tested from March 7-17, 2005**, just prior to their spring break.

I'd like to thank you in advance for giving your children every opportunity to perform well on the test by making sure they get enough rest every night and a good breakfast each morning. You can help by encouraging your child, making sure they're on time for school and ready to concentrate.

This is a very important test that will determine your child's readiness for promotion to the next grade level for students in grades 4-8. Please refer to the promotion and retention policy printed on the reverse side of this letter. This is the same information that was distributed in October with the first report cards and most recently to parents whose children have a Level 1 FCAT Reading score in the 2004 FCAT testing.

Please remember that the policy is still in effect regarding mandatory third grade retention for third grade students who score at Level 1 on FCAT Reading. Parents with students in kindergarten through third grade were notified of this law in October with the good cause exemptions.

Our teachers and school support staff have worked hard this year to prepare students academically, feed them nutritious meals, and provide safe transportation and healthy classrooms. As parents, you work hard to read with your children, check their homework, help make learning fun, and be involved with their schools. Now it's time for our students to do their best, and with your help, I know they can.

Questions about these policies should be directed to your child's school.

Sincerely,

Ronald Blocker  
Superintendent

**A NOTICE TO PARENTS: Changes to the 2004-05 Student Progression Plan  
Orange County Public Schools**

**GRADES 4 - 8 PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICY**

In this 2004-05 school year, new policies are in effect in Orange County Public Schools for student promotion to the next grade level. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, students in Grades 4-8 must show mastery of grade level work above an FCAT Reading score of Level 1. This policy has been approved by the Orange County School Board in order to reduce the promotions of students who are not ready for success with the academic work required at the next grade level.

**Exemptions:**

If a student scores a Level 1 in the FCAT Reading, the student must be retained unless he or she qualifies for an exemption. The exemption may be based on specific learner characteristics (such as a student new to the English language or a student with exceptional education needs), remediation, or proof of performance mastery in works other than the FCAT test. These exemptions include:

1. A Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) student with less than two years of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services and with LEP committee recommendation;
2. An Exceptional Education student with an IEP (Individual Education Plan) for satisfactory completion of an alternate assessment other than FCAT and with an IEP team recommendation;
3. A student achieving a score of comparable proficiency above FCAT Reading Level 1 on an alternative test: the NRT (Norm Reference Test), the SAT-9 (Stanford Achievement Test), the DRP (Degrees of Reading Power) or reading program assessments used in the school-based reading program.

**Additional Requirements for Middle School:**

For middle school students, the passing of four academic courses (three of which include English, math, science or social studies) is also required. At the end of Grade 8, if a student has not met promotion requirements, a mandatory summer session must be attended. If the student makes sufficient progress in this session as documented by learning gains in reading, then the student will be promoted to Grade 9. If the student does not make sufficient progress as indicated by an alternate assessment measure, the student will be retained.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS**

If your child is deficient in reading, please work closely with your child's teachers to establish the strongest program of support for increased skills in reading. The more time your child is involved with reading activities, the higher the reading achievement will be. Your support with reading activities at home will be a very important part of your child's progress and success.