

## Fact Sheet – Dangers of the Tying of NAEP Proficiency to FSA Passing Rates in SB 926/HB 773

Hidden inside SB926/HB773 is language that redefines the Level 3 passing score as "proficient" and could be used to dramatically alter the passing rates of the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) by aligning passing scores on the FSA with "proficiency" levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Commissioner of Education, Pam Stewart, argued AGAINST such alignment in January 2016, after months of educator and public input, and the Florida State Board of Education overwhelmingly supported her. Alignment of FSA passing scores to NAEP proficiency will lead to dramatic declines in passing rates and will have catastrophic consequences for students, school grades, district grades, property values, and property tax revenues at a time when districts and the state are facing a potential budget deficit and many competing priorities.

Starting on line 65-68 the new language reads as follows:

"Beginning with any new contract for the ELA assessment and the mathematics assessment entered into after July 1, 2017, achievement level 3 shall be defined as proficient for each new assessment."

Senate staff analysis defines proficiency by the NAEP standard of "demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter", suggesting NAEP proficiency is indeed the language to which the bill intends to align FSA passing scores.

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2017/926/Analyses/2017s00926.pre.ed.PDF>

Because the current FSA AIR contract ends this year and a new contract will need to be negotiated for 2017, this change of language will profoundly affect achievement levels for the new testing contract and ultimately passing rates.

Both the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) which is the federal agency that administers the NAEP, as well as multiple other expert entities argue against tying NAEP proficiencies to state tests achievement levels.

- NCES –  
**Myth:** The NAEP Proficient level is like being on grade level. **Fact:** Proficient on NAEP means competency over challenging subject matter. ***This is not the same as being "on grade level,"*** which refers to performance on local curriculum and standards. NAEP is a general assessment of knowledge and skills in a particular subject. (<http://bit.ly/2nir66S>)
- Brookings Institution (<http://brook.gs/2mKhLwj>)  
Equating NAEP proficiency with grade level is bogus. Indeed, the validity of the achievement levels themselves is questionable. They immediately came under fire in reviews by the [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#), the [National Academy of Sciences](#), and the National Academy of Education.<sup>[1]</sup> The National Academy of Sciences report was particularly scathing, labeling NAEP's achievement levels as "fundamentally flawed."

In January 2016, current FSA cut scores were chosen so that Level 4 closely aligned with NAEP proficiency. If Level 3 scores are to be aligned with “Proficiency”, the resultant passing score would be equivalent of today’s Level 4, greatly decreasing passing rates.



**Summary of Commissioner's Recommended Cut Scores  
Comparison to External Data**

	Commissioner's Recommendation, FSA Spring 2015	NAEP, 2015	Commissioner's Recommendation, FSA Spring 2015
	Level 3 (Satisfactory) and Above	Proficient and Above	Level 3 (Above Satisfactory) and Above
Grade 4 Reading	54%	39%	27%
Grade 4 Mathematics	59%	42%	31%
Grade 8 Reading	55%	30%	29%
Grade 8 Mathematics	45%	26%	18%

Additionally, per the Staff Analysis for HB 773:

According to the Florida Department of Education, if the Level 3 cut point is aligned to the NAEP “Proficient” level, the percentage of students passing assessments required for graduation would decrease from 51 percent to 36 percent.

In summary

- Defining Level 3 passing scores as “proficient” is an attempt to force the alignment of FSA passing scores to unrealistic NAEP proficiencies, even as admitted by the agency that administers the NAEP.
- Commissioner Stewart argued AGAINST such alignment when setting the current FSA passing scores, after months of teacher and public input. The FLBOE overwhelmingly agreed with her (6-1).
- The FSA contract is up for renegotiation THIS year, and this language will profoundly affect achievement levels.
- Proficiency on NAEP means competency over challenging subject matter. ***This is not the same as being “on grade level”, as admitted by NCES and multiple expert entities***
- The proficiency language in SB926/HB773 can serve NO other purpose than to align future FSA passing rates to NAEP results.
- **The proficiency language change will require close to a level 4 score for passing. Passing rates will plummet across the state resulting in**
  - **More student failures, more retentions, more remediation at great district and tax payer cost**
  - **Plummeting high school graduation rates, again with increased remediation costs, harm to economic growth, and emotional harm for an academically very questionable premise.**
  - **Plummeting school and district grades.**
  - **Grave impact to property values due to those grades, harming citizens and drastically decreasing property tax revenue, creating further revenue loss to school districts, in turn requiring more help from the state that is facing a deficit and multiple competing priorities**

The Choices for the Committee:

1. Remove this language from lines 65-68. (Best)
2. Clearly define the proficiency language as semantics only, that is not meant to align cut scores to NAEP in the future.
3. Vote the bill down