

General Assessment FAQs (all grade levels)

Are state assessments (e.g. FSA and EOCs) still planned for the 2020-21 school year?

Yes. State assessments are scheduled for students in grades 3-10 as follows:

State Testing Schedule:

April 2021: Grade 3 Reading. Grades 4-10 Writing.

May 2021: Grades 4-10 Reading. Grades 3-8 Mathematics. Grades 5 and 8 Science.
State EOC exams in Civics, U.S. History, Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology 1.

The complete PCS Assessment Calendars can be found at: <https://www.pcsb.org/Page/15479>

Will students attending school virtually (MyPCS Online or Pinellas Virtual School) be provided a time and location to complete state assessments in person?

Yes. Schools will be in contact with remote learners to schedule testing times and locations. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) requires that all state assessments be completed in-person and on-campus in accordance with testing security and validity protocols. In keeping with health and wellness practices, the state has provided greater flexibility with testing schedules so schools can provide smaller test settings, maintain social distancing, and have adequate time to sanitize testing locations.

How will taking the spring 2021 assessments benefit my child?

Student assessments this spring will be used to assess how students are performing according to the grade-level standards in the specific subject area. Parents will receive detailed progress reports from the assessment results to measure how their child is performing according to grade-level standards. Schools and teachers will use the results to identify if learning loss has occurred and to what extent students need additional support during the summer and into next school year. The results will also benefit teachers and school leaders as they plan for summer programming, make curriculum adjustments for 2021-22 and allocate additional resources from state and federal grants to accelerate student learning.

How has the state/district adjusted its plan for assessment results in light of the pandemic and possible learning loss?

Results from all state FSA and EOC assessments will not be used to determine student grades (unless the score helps the student) and will not impact promotion status or course selection for the following school year. For individual students, assessment scores will strictly be used to diagnose performance of grade-level standards and then determine which supports are necessary to accelerate student learning moving forward. School leaders may use the aggregate results in planning for summer programs, adjustments to the 2021-22 curriculum, and schoolwide tutoring/programming.

How does the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Emergency Order (EO-2021-01) in February 2021 impact testing?

An [Emergency Order \(EO-2021-01\)](#) was issued by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) on February 15, 2021, that extends the spring testing window for each subject by two (2) weeks. EO-2021-01 takes into account that many districts delayed the start of school in August 2020. This extension allowed for additional testing days and for more flexibility in scheduling tests. The emergency order established adjusted assessment data reporting timelines. Results for the grade 3 ELA FSA will be released no later than June 20, 2021, and all other assessment data will be released no later than July 31, 2021. The emergency order does not address any other aspect of state standardized testing.

How does the Florida Department of Education's (FDOE) Emergency Order (EO-2021-02) in April 2021 impact testing?

New information from the Emergency Order is the basis for the Frequently Asked Questions document, including updates to graduation requirements, End-of-Course exams, promotion/retention, Bright Futures requirements and more. See the entire Order at: <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/2021-EO-02.pdf>

What steps are being taken to keep students and staff safe during the upcoming spring assessments?

For students currently receiving in-person instruction at their schools, testing structures will be similar to previous school years but will be adjusted in keeping with PCS health and wellness protocols (masks, social distancing, etc.).

For students currently in virtual instruction (MyPCS Online and Pinellas Virtual School), families are asked to remain in contact with their schools to determine the most efficient and safest method for in-person, on-campus testing. Pinellas County Schools will continue to ensure the safest testing environments possible. The multi-layered health and wellness efforts include:

- **Daily deep cleaning of testing locations;**
- **Social distancing between test-takers;**
- **Required face coverings/masks for students and adults; AND**
- **No sharing of calculators, headsets or other materials.**

Does my student have to take the state assessment(s) on their school campus?

State assessments must be taken in-person, per state guidelines. In extreme health and wellness cases, students may be provided the opportunity to take the state assessment(s) at a centralized district location. Families should work directly with their school team to determine the most efficient and safe method for in-person, on-campus testing.

Even after talking to the school and considering the enhanced testing protocols in place, what if I still am not comfortable sending my student to school to test?

Parents who choose to have their child not take one or more Florida Standards Assessments will not receive the grade-level performance data for their child relative to the grade-level standards. Schools will not be able to provide personalized learning plans based on this data. Students will not be academically penalized, but they will not receive the benefits of measuring their performance relative to grade-level standards as well as their performance versus other students in the state.

Will schools still receive a letter grade as previous years?

For the 2020-21 school year, school grades will not be calculated for schools by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). In lieu of school grades, the FDOE will be posting all federally required data on the [Florida Know Your Schools website](#).

A grade for a school will only be calculated by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) if the district requests for this to occur. In order for a school grade to be calculated, a school must meet the criteria set by the FDOE.

Student-specific performance data will be provided to parents/guardians, as done each year. School and district aggregate data will be publicly available through the [Florida Know Your Schools](#) and [Pinellas County Schools](#) websites.

Elementary Grades FAQs

How will the FSA be used for third grade promotion?

Students are still required to demonstrate at least a Level 2 performance on the third grade Florida Standards Assessment (Note: Level 1 is the lowest level of performance to Level 5 as the highest level of performance). If a student does not take the test, they may demonstrate at least a Level 2 performance through a performance portfolio that includes reading comprehension, writing and fluency assessments. The performance portfolio may include grade-level proficiency on other assessments such as the NWEA MAP, Istation, iReady and other comprehensive assessments.

How will retention in other grade levels be determined? Can parents request retention or promotion?

Retention and promotion decisions must be based solely on academic performance. Parents may provide input regarding retention or promotion, but ultimately the school principal must decide promotion or retention based solely on academic performance of the student during the 2020-21 school year.

Middle and High School FAQs

If my child does not take FSA how will their course selections in middle and high schools be affected?

Returning PCS students have already made course selections for the 2021-22 school year based on parent, student, teacher and school counselor input as well as multiple achievement data points. This will continue to include overall student classroom grades, district assessments and teacher recommendations when making these determinations. No single assessment will determine access to advanced or remedial coursework.

In courses that have an End-of-Course Assessment, how will grades be calculated if the EOC is not part of the course grade?

The results of End-of-Course (EOCs) assessments for courses with state EOCs (Civics, Algebra, Geometry, Biology and U.S. History) will not count as 30% of the student final grade unless the test grade improves the student's overall course grade. If the EOC test score would lower the student final grade, it will not be used. In all cases, the results will be used to measure to what extent students learned the course content and what supports are needed to ensure success in the next sequential course.

Do students still need to take the End-of-Course Assessments?

Yes. Taking End-of-Course (EOCs) assessments ensures students and parents know student achievement, progress and skills within the classes they were enrolled during the 2020-21 school year. While the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has waived the FSA/EOC requirements for the class of 2021 only, at this time this requirement has not been waived for other cohorts of students. The Algebra and Geometry EOCs are currently the required math graduation EOC depending on the graduating class. Currently, all students except the class of 2021 need to sit for and pass the assessment for graduation.

Will the FSA English Language Arts and Algebra EOC be required for graduation for the class of 2021?

No. Students in the class of 2021 may have the graduation test requirements waived if they meet all other graduation requirements, including all course credits and at least a 2.0 grade point average. Students or parents with questions about these requirements should contact the high school assistant principal for curriculum at the student's school for assistance.

Will students attending school virtually be required to take [district-issued/created final exams and other district-required tests on campus?](#)

No. The district will continue to offer teacher-created tests, final exams and other district assessments through computer-based testing platforms. Teachers will continue to proctor, monitor and provide technical support for these types of tests via Microsoft Teams.

What about other end-of-year assessments including Cambridge AICE, International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or Industry Certification exams?

Exams that award college credit(s) and/or workplace credentials will be scheduled for in-person, on-campus administration following the same health and wellness protocols as state assessment testing. The governing body for each of these exams, sets forth the administration regulations and, at this time, there is not an opportunity to take these exams virtually.

What about the end-of-year Advanced Placement (AP) exams?

College Board has developed an exam schedule that includes three cycles of testing and asked each school/district to identify the schedule that is best for their students. Pinellas County has determined the test schedule (posted at <https://www.pcsb.org/Page/1561>) that maximizes instructional time and provides for paper/pencil assessments to the greatest extent possible. While most exams offer a digital option, our intent is to provide every student with a supportive and quiet testing environment that is free from distraction where a trained adult can assist in the event something goes wrong during testing. Students who do not attend the in-person assessment will be assigned the at-home digital assessment and be provided a one-pager on the steps they must take in preparation for the exam.

How will diploma designations be determined for the class of 2021?

Students who will graduate in the spring of 2021 may still qualify for the Scholar or Merit diplomas without having met the passing requirements on the state's EOCs if they've met all the specific course and/or certification requirements of the two diploma designations. See the Florida Department of Education [diploma designations chart](#) for more information.

What changes to the Bright Futures Scholarship apply to the Class of 2021?

There are two changes for students who are expected to graduate in the spring of 2021 and who are working to qualify for any of the four Bright Futures Scholarships:

- **Extension of Testing Deadline:** Students working toward the Florida Academic or Medallion Scholars awards will have until December 1, 2021, to earn the minimum required SAT or ACT score specified for each scholarship award.
- **Volunteer Hours:** Students working toward qualifying for any of the four Bright Futures Scholarship awards (Florida Academic Scholars, Florida Medallion Scholars, Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars, or the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars) and who have not been able to complete the required number of volunteer service hours due to circumstances listed below, may still be found eligible for these awards through a transcript documentation process submitted by your student's school counselor to the Florida Department of Education. The circumstances are:
 - Student had planned for, and intended to, complete the service hours prior to the student's graduation but was unable to do so because the pandemic created a lack of access to volunteer opportunities.
 - Student, due to health concerns, fell short of the volunteer service hours.