

**Estimated Number of Current Grade 12 Students in the District's 16 Regular High Schools
With Unsatisfied Graduation Requirements:
GPA, Credits Earned, and FCAT¹**
Program Evaluation
February 6, 2009

I. Introduction

Monitoring the progress of high school seniors' satisfaction of graduation requirements is of utmost concern for the district as it continues to find ways to increase high school graduation rates. Thus, at the request of the school board, this study was conducted to estimate the number of high school seniors in the district's 16 regular high schools who may be at risk of not graduating this year due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Cumulative GPA not high enough.
- Too few credits earned.
- Graduation requirement for FCAT Reading and Math not met.

To arrive at the desired estimate, the most recent student demographic and test score data for the target population was analyzed. The following students were then identified as potentially at risk of not graduating:

- students with cumulative unweighted GPA of less than 2.0;
- students who have earned less than 21 credits; and
- students who have not met the FCAT requirement or its alternative.

It is important to note that these categories may not accurately identify all students who are actually at risk of not graduating.

The rationale for using a GPA of 2.0 as the dividing line between students who may or may not be at risk of not graduating is based on the GPA requirement for high school students in the 4-year, 24-credit diploma program. Students in the 18-credit college- or career preparatory diploma programs have a stricter GPA requirement of 3.5 and 3.0, respectively, for all credits earned in the program. Currently, however, there is no data flag in the student files used in this analysis that accurately and correctly differentiates high school students on the basis of the diploma program they're aiming for. As a result, students who have better than 2.0 GPAs may actually be at risk of not graduating. That is, the 2.0 GPA criterion may be too narrow.

Similarly, the 21 minimum credits earned criterion is based on a minimum of 3 credits earned per semester from 9th grade up to the first semester of the 12th grade, for students in the 4-year, 24 credit diploma program. Students in the 18-credit diploma program may therefore be incorrectly flagged as at risk of not graduating under this criterion. That is, the 21 minimum credits earned criterion may be too broad.

¹Data Source: ASTU and ATEs consolidated files current as of February 3, 2009. ASTU contains student demographic data including GPA and credits earned up to the end of the first semester of SY2008-2009, and ATEs contains historical test scores for FCAT, SAT, and ACT.

And while the FCAT is a well-defined, and, in fact, rigid, criterion for the purpose of identifying students who may be at risk of not graduating, its usefulness in the context of the present analysis is limited by the absence of FCAT data for some students in the target population. Indeed, FCAT scores are unavailable for at least 3 percent of students under consideration. On the other hand, for the majority of them who do have FCAT data, the result of the analysis suggests that many who are identified as at risk of not graduating due to unsatisfied FCAT requirement are already eligible to use the SAT or ACT to overcome the FCAT hurdle if they have passed Reading but not Math, or vice versa. In other words, the degree of risk of not graduating imposed by the FCAT could already be substantially less, if not zero, for these students.

Aside from the stated deficiencies of these three criteria, two other important factors are missing in the analysis.

One is the determination of whether credit requirements for specific subject areas are met or not. For example, a minimum number of credits earned in Mathematics is required for graduation, and the minimum number depends on the diploma program. It is therefore entirely possible that students excluded by the three criteria considered here may actually be at risk of not graduating because of unsatisfied subject area-specific requirements.

The other factor not included in the analysis is data on participation in programs such as Novanet, Virtual School, PDO, or night school, that allow students to make up missing credits. The exclusion of this data clearly biases the result of uniformly applying the 21 minimum credits earned criterion.

In the end, the results presented in this report, which in a sense represent the worst case scenarios, are best interpreted in light of these limitations. By using the estimates here in conjunction with tools already in place at the schools, such as the cohort report, individual schools stand a better chance of correctly identifying high school seniors who are at risk of not graduating this year, and delivering appropriate interventions to those who need them, in a timely manner.

II. Results

The analysis described in the Introduction was done by high school and the results are presented in the tables below.

In the first three tables, the number of students in each school who may be at risk of not graduating due to unsatisfied requirement in GPA, credits earned, and FCAT, respectively, are highlighted.

In the Summary table, the highlighted column represents the number of students in each school who have at least one of these unsatisfied requirements.

Cumulative GPA

High School	At least 3.5	At least 2.0 but less than 3.5	Less Than 2.0	No GPA Data	Total
Boca Ciega	61	272	35	0	368
Clearwater	87	241	10	0	338
Countryside	104	381	30	0	515
Dixie Hollins	42	269	62	0	373
Dunedin	77	238	14	0	329
East Lake	139	295	4	0	438
Gibbs	69	319	57	0	445
Lakewood	55	238	22	0	315
Largo	97	273	68	0	438
Northeast	72	303	66	0	441
Osceola	51	242	35	0	328
Palm Harbor University	219	280	0	0	499
Pinellas Park	54	289	12	0	355
Seminole	122	320	16	0	458
St Petersburg	117	372	21	0	510
Tarpon Springs	105	320	39	5	469
All High Schools	1,471	4,652	491	5	6,619

Credits Earned

High School	At least 24	At least 21 but less than 24	Less Than 21	No Credits Earned Data	Total
Boca Ciega	238	100	30	0	368
Clearwater	64	244	30	0	338
Countryside	465	29	21	0	515
Dixie Hollins	201	104	68	0	373
Dunedin	84	207	38	0	329
East Lake	86	337	15	0	438
Gibbs	302	106	37	0	445
Lakewood	144	162	9	0	315
Largo	306	62	70	0	438
Northeast	325	70	46	0	441
Osceola	260	50	18	0	328
Palm Harbor University	239	253	7	0	499
Pinellas Park	77	251	27	0	355
Seminole	425	28	5	0	458
St Petersburg	275	219	16	0	510
Tarpon Springs	318	91	55	5	469
All High Schools	3,809	2,313	492	5	6,619

FCAT

High School	Satisfies FCAT Requirement	Does Not Satisfy FCAT Requirement	No Test Score Data	Total
Boca Ciega	267	91	10	368
Clearwater	286	46	6	338
Countryside	436	57	22	515
Dixie Hollins	237	121	15	373
Dunedin	279	42	8	329
East Lake	407	24	7	438
Gibbs	296	123	26	445
Lakewood	230	70	15	315
Largo	354	61	23	438
Northeast	322	106	13	441
Osceola	287	39	2	328
Palm Harbor University	482	16	1	499
Pinellas Park	279	57	19	355
Seminole	417	31	10	458
St Petersburg	428	77	5	510
Tarpon Springs	397	59	13	469
All High Schools	5,404	1,020	195	6,619

Summary

High School	Satisfied GPA, Credits, and FCAT Requirements	At Least One of GPA, Credits, or FCAT Requirement Unsatisfied	No GPA, Credits, or FCAT Scores Available	Total
Boca Ciega	244	114	10	368
Clearwater	265	67	6	338
Countryside	416	77	22	515
Dixie Hollins	194	164	15	373
Dunedin	254	67	8	329
East Lake	392	39	7	438
Gibbs	278	141	26	445
Lakewood	226	74	15	315
Largo	304	111	23	438
Northeast	284	144	13	441
Osceola	256	70	2	328
Palm Harbor University	479	19	1	499
Pinellas Park	260	76	19	355
Seminole	406	42	10	458
St Petersburg	417	88	5	510
Tarpon Springs	360	96	13	469
All High Schools	5,035 (76%)	1,389 (21%)	195 (3%)	6,619

III. Recommendations

Some recommendations may be made from the results of this study. First of all, the limitations of the analysis as described in the Introduction suggest the following improvements in the way the district maintains student data:

- include a data variable that identifies a high school student's diploma type;
- include data flags that indicate whether a subject area specific credit requirement has been met or not;
- include data flags that separately indicate whether a student has met the FCAT Reading and Math requirements;
- include a data variable that indicates program participation in credit catch-up programs such as Novanet, etc.

Further, the analysis done in this report should be conducted routinely, perhaps at the end of each semester, and not only for seniors but for all high school students as well.