

## Technical Assistance Paper

### Middle Grades Reform

#### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide technical assistance regarding the Middle Grades Reform Act created by the 2004 Legislature. This technical assistance paper will address the following topics:

- Background
- Legislation
- Implementation Guidelines
  - Rigorous Reading Requirement
  - Personalized Middle School Success Plan
  - Assistance to Schools and School Districts
- Questions and Answers

#### Background

The 2004 Legislature passed Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 354 (CS/CS/SB 354) which created section 1003.415, Florida Statutes (The Middle Grades Reform Act), to focus on increasing the rigor of academics in grades six through eight, using reading as the foundation to increasing student achievement in all subject areas. The intent of this legislation is for all middle school students receive rigorous academic instruction through challenging curricula delivered by highly qualified teachers in schools with outstanding leadership to ensure that eighth grade students are prepared to successfully transition to high school.

#### The Legislation

##### Curricula and Courses

CS/CS/SB 354 requires the Department of Education to review course offerings, teacher qualifications, instructional materials, and teaching practices used in reading and language arts programs in the middle grades. The Department must consult with the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University; the Just Read, Florida! Office; reading researchers; reading specialists; and district supervisors of curriculum in the development of findings and recommendations. The Commissioner of Education shall make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding changes to reading and language arts curricula in the middle grades based on research-based, proven effective programs. The State Board must adopt rules based on the Commissioner's recommendations no later than March 1, 2005. Implementation of new or revised reading and language arts courses in all middle grades must be phased in beginning no later than the 2005-2006 school year with completion no later than the 2008-2009 school year.

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## **Rigorous Reading Requirement**

Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, each public school serving middle grade students, including charter schools, with fewer than 75 percent of its students reading at or above grade level in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade as measured by a student scoring at Level 3 or above on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Reading during the prior school year must incorporate a rigorous reading requirement by October 1 for reading and language arts programs as the primary component of the school improvement plan. Annually, the Department must provide to each district school board by June 30 a list of schools that are required to incorporate a rigorous reading requirement as the primary component of the school's improvement plan. The department will provide technical assistance to school districts and school administrators required to implement the rigorous reading requirement. The purpose of the rigorous reading requirement is to assist each student who is not reading at or above grade level to do so before entering high school. The school must use research-based reading activities that have been shown to be successful in teaching reading to low-performing students.

The program must include

- specific areas that address phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary
- desired levels of performance in those areas
- instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance.

Schools required to implement the rigorous reading requirement must provide quarterly reports to the district school superintendent regarding the progress of students toward increased reading achievement, and the results of such implementation must be used as part of the annual evaluation of the schools' instructional personnel and school administrators.

## **Comprehensive Reform Study on the Academic Performance of Students and Schools**

By December 1, 2004, the Commissioner of Education must submit to the State Board of Education and legislative leaders recommendations to increase the academic performance of middle grade students and schools based on a comprehensive study of academic expectations, attendance policies and student mobility issues, teacher quality, identification and availability of diagnostic testing, availability of personnel and scheduling issues, middle school leadership and performance, and parental and community involvement.

## **Personalized Middle School Success Plan**

Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, each principal of a school with a middle grade shall designate certified staff members at the school to develop and administer a personalized middle school success plan (PMSSP) for each student entering sixth grade who scored below level 3 in reading on the most recently administered FCAT. The purpose of the success plan is to assist the student in meeting state and school district expectations in academic proficiency and to prepare the student for a rigorous high school curriculum. The success plan shall be developed in collaboration with the student and his or her parent and must be implemented until the student completes the eighth grade or achieves a score at level 3 or above in reading on the FCAT, whichever occurs first. The success plan must minimize paperwork and may be incorporated into a parent/teacher conference, included as part of a progress report or report card, included as part of a general orientation at the beginning of the school year, or provided by electronic mail or other written correspondence.

The personalized middle school success plan must

- identify educational goals and intermediate benchmarks in core curriculum areas which will prepare the student for high school

- be based on academic performance data and identification of the student's strengths and weaknesses
- include academic intervention strategies with frequent progress monitoring
- provide innovative methods to promote the student's advancement such as flexible scheduling, tutoring, focus on core curricula, online instruction, an alternative learning environment, or other interventions that have been shown to accelerate the learning process.

The plan must be incorporated into any individual student plan required by federal or state law, including the academic improvement plan (AIP), an individual educational plan (IEP) for students with disabilities, a 504 plan, or an English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) plan.

### **Implementation Guidelines**

According to national research supported by several entities, including the Southern Regional Education Board, comprehensive middle reform efforts must focus on creating a collaborative culture and on using data to improve teaching and learning for all students. Reform efforts must seek to create high-performing schools with the goal of ensuring success for all students by strengthening academic core and creating a challenging learning environment. Components include a curriculum grounded in rigorous academic standards, instructional strategies designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards, high expectations and a system that includes extra time and help for students at risk of academic failure, classroom practices that engage students in their own learning, qualified teachers, strong leadership, use of technology for learning, and use of data to review and monitor student progress.

A middle school student's program of study should lead to successful completion of requirements for the student's chosen postsecondary goals. School counselors perform a critical function in assisting students in the development of a comprehensive plan allowing for exploration of their educational and career opportunities. They also play an important role in facilitating opportunities that afford students and their parents the chance to accurately assess students' strengths, interests, and preferences that encourage the selection of challenging educational programs.

Transition from elementary to middle and on to high school is an important factor in a comprehensive school improvement effort. Students must be provided assistance and support to help them succeed in preparing for challenging postsecondary education, careers, and lifelong learning. Educators must continue to work together to design challenging academic programs to meet the needs of all students, align resources to ensure appropriate support, and develop an accountability system to monitor academic performance and progress of the students.

### **Rigorous Reading Requirement**

The rigorous reading requirement is a system of planning and implementation for ensuring the success of all middle grade students. As part of the implementation of the rigorous reading requirement, each school must use research-based reading activities that have been shown to be successful in teaching reading to low-performing students. These research-based activities should align with the Florida Formula for Success as depicted below.

## The Florida Formula for Success

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5 Major Components of Reading Instruction                    3 Types of Assessments                    Initial Instruction                    Immediate Intensive Intervention

|                    |                     |                |                   |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Phonemic Awareness | Screening           | Explicit       | Flexible Grouping |
| Phonics            | Diagnosis           | Systematic     | Accommodations    |
| Fluency            | Progress Monitoring | Scaffolded     | Differentiated    |
| Vocabulary         |                     | Differentiated |                   |
| Comprehension      |                     | Print-Rich     |                   |

Schools required to implement the rigorous reading requirement must provide quarterly reports to the district school superintendent regarding the progress of students toward increased reading achievement, and the results of such implementation must be used as part of the annual evaluation of the schools' instructional personnel and school administrators. The evaluation will be based on teachers' and administrators' implementation of the rigorous reading requirement. The results of the FCAT will serve as the tool for evaluation.

The rigorous reading requirement as part of the school improvement plan must describe how the school's plan will align with the Florida Formula and include a listing and description of the following components:

1. high-quality instructors in reading as defined by attainment of or progress towards certification in reading, successful teaching experience in the area of reading as defined by increased student performance on the FCAT, attainment of or progress towards the reading endorsement, and professional development in the area of reading
2. screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments being used with an assessment schedule (Include a description of how instruction will be differentiated based on the results of the diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments. The Just Read, Florida! website [<http://www.justreadflorida.org/educators.asp>] may be referenced for appropriate use of instructional assessments for differentiated instruction.)
3. the desired levels of performance for each of the five major components of reading instruction as outlined in the Florida formula (These performance levels should be measurable and use data from progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments. Some students have already met adequate levels of performance and may not need diagnosis and instruction in all of the five major components.)
4. courses being used for remediation (i.e. reading, intensive reading, intensive language arts) and how these courses will be designed to optimize student performance through uninterrupted instruction (i.e. teacher to student ratio, minutes of daily instruction, days per week, a sample block describing how instructional time will be spent)

5. specific scientifically-based Comprehensive Core Reading Programs (CCRP) being used (The Florida Center for Reading Research [FCRR-[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)] reports may be referenced for details of programs appropriate for addressing each of the five major components of reading instruction outlined in the Florida Formula.)
6. specific scientifically-based Supplemental Reading Programs (SRP) being used (FCRR [[www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)] reports may be referenced for details of programs appropriate for addressing each of the five major components of reading instruction outlined in the Florida formula.)
7. professional development in the area of reading being offered to teachers, reading coaches, and administrators and how it will help students achieve the desired levels of performance (Refer to the district's add-on plan for the reading endorsement, as well as other available professional development in reading.)
8. technology being used to help students achieve the desired levels of performance (i.e. FCAT Explorer, online instruction)
9. certified staff members at the school who will be charged with developing and administering the personalized middle school success plan (PMSSP) for sixth grade students scoring below Level 3 on the 2004 FCAT (These might include a team of teachers, guidance counselors, and reading coaches. Include a description of how these staff members will be chosen and assigned to students.)
10. efforts to recruit highly qualified reading instructors and reading coaches (i.e. financial incentives, leadership roles)
11. innovative methods being implemented to promote advancement for students in grades six, seven, and eight who scored below Level 3 on the most recently administered FCAT in reading (Innovative methods might include peer tutoring programs, family literacy programs, mentoring programs, technology programs, extended day programs, reduced teacher-student ratios, programs to promote school-wide independent reading practice, content-area reading initiatives, and double blocking of reading courses with a minimum of 90 minutes of daily instruction in reading.)
12. activities that will be incorporated before school, after school, during the summer, and during an extension of the school year to ensure students achieve the desired levels of performance such as tutoring programs, mentoring programs, summer reading camps.

## Sample Intensive Reading Blocks for Students in the Middle Grades

### Sample 90 Minute Reading Block

| Time and activity                       | Monday  | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Method                       | Reading Components   |
|---|---|---------|-----------|----------|--------|------------------------------|--|
| 25 minute Initial Instruction           | Whole class or small group leveled initial instruction<br>•Explicit and scaffolded modeling of differentiated strategies  |         |           |          |        | Supplemental Reading Program | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency                                    |
| 5 minute Warm up                        | Daily Vocabulary Review Routine   |         |           |          |        |                              | •Morphemic Analysis<br>•Syntactic Application                                |
| 35 minutes Differentiated Instruction   | Differentiated instruction<br>•Small group and individual instruction<br>•Literacy centers<br>•Technology<br>•Books on tape<br>•Reading strategy instruction, application, and feedback |         |           |          |        | Supplemental Reading Program | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency<br>•Phonics<br>•Phonemic Awareness |
| 20 minutes Independent Reading Practice | •Student selected texts<br>•Independent reading level<br>•Progress monitoring (WCPM fluency and comprehension)  |         |           |          |        |                              | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency                                    |
| 5 minutes Closing                       | Teacher Read Aloud<br>•Discussion of new vocabulary<br>•Discussion of concepts  |         |           |          |        |                              | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Modeling Fluent Reading                    |

### Sample 120 Minute Reading Block

| Time and activity                       | Monday  | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Method                       | Reading Components   |
|---|---|---------|-----------|----------|--------|------------------------------|--|
| 45 minute Initial Instruction           | Whole class or small group leveled initial instruction<br>•Explicit and scaffolded modeling of differentiated strategies  |         |           |          |        | Supplemental Reading Program | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency                                    |
| 5 minute Warm up                        | Daily Vocabulary Review Routine   |         |           |          |        |                              | •Morphemic Analysis<br>•Syntactic Application                                |
| 45 minutes During Reading Stage         | Differentiated instruction<br>•Small group and individual instruction<br>•Literacy centers<br>•Technology<br>•Books on tape<br>•Reading strategy instruction, application, and feedback |         |           |          |        | Supplemental Reading Program | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency<br>•Phonics<br>•Phonemic Awareness |
| 20 minutes Independent Reading Practice | •Student selected texts<br>•Independent reading level<br>•Progress monitoring (WCPM fluency and comprehension)  |         |           |          |        |                              | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Fluency                                    |
| 5 minutes Closing                       | Teacher Read Aloud<br>•Discussion of new vocabulary<br>•Discussion of concepts  |         |           |          |        |                              | •Comprehension<br>•Vocabulary<br>•Modeling Fluent Reading                    |

## **Personalized Middle School Success Plan**

School districts must ensure that beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, each principal of a school with a middle grade must designate certified staff members (such as administrators, teachers, reading and math coaches, library/media specialists, guidance counselors, and other student services personnel as appropriate) at the school to develop and administer a personalized middle school success plan for *each* entering sixth-grade student who scored below level 3 in reading on the most recently administered FCAT. The intent is that the staff member will assume a case management role for the individual students assigned. A team approach involving appropriate administrators, teachers, and student services staff is encouraged for analyzing student performance data and determining activities appropriate for the student to meet his or her goals. A staff member, however, must be responsible for the plans of a group of students, ensuring that all eligible students have an appropriate and implemented plan. For example, an exceptional student education (ESE) teacher might be responsible for the plans of 30 ESE students, not all of whom are in his or her class. The ESE teacher would confer and collaborate with other educators in the school in the development of the plan and she would ensure that the plan, is being implemented as developed.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of the success plan is to assist each student in meeting state expectations (FCAT performance at grade level) and school district expectations (including those in the student progression plan) in academic proficiency and to prepare the student for a rigorous high school curriculum by

- demonstrating proficiency in basic skills
- taking rigorous courses in the core subjects (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)
- investigating individual interests through exploratory educational experiences.

This assistance should include the ongoing personal guidance of a member of the school staff for the student.

### *Parent Collaboration*

The success plan must be developed in collaboration with the student and his or her parent and must be implemented until the student completes the eighth grade or achieves a score at level 3 or above in reading on the FCAT, whichever occurs first.

The success plan must minimize paperwork, and information to parents about the PMSSP may be incorporated into a parent/teacher conference included as part of a progress report or report card, included as part of a general orientation at the beginning of the school year, or provided by electronic mail or other written correspondence. Schools have flexibility in determining the best approach to this collaboration. Parents must be encouraged to participate in the development of their child's PMSSP. However, a parent cannot refuse for his or her child to have a PMSSP or the services delineated therein.

In addition to the possibilities listed above from the law, schools are encouraged to provide written general information to appropriate parents of sixth graders to explain the purposes of the success plan and share information about the student's performance, then follow up with a face-to-face meeting to discuss the plan and regularly provide progress toward meeting the plan to the parent through progress reports or report cards.

### *Required Elements of the Plan*

The personalized middle school success plan must

- identify **educational goals and intermediate benchmarks** for the student in the core curriculum areas (language arts, including reading, mathematics, science and social studies) that will prepare the student for high school (Goals might include attendance at a community college or university after high school graduation to pursue a career in education. Intermediate benchmarks are accomplishments that will show the student is on track to meeting goals, such as completed pre-algebra. Since students with a PMSSP are not reading on grade level, specific goals and benchmarks should be stated specifically for each area of reading deficiency based on appropriate diagnostic assessments.)
- be based on **academic performance data** and an identification of the student's strengths and weaknesses (Academic performance data might include FCAT scores, scores from other tests, and report card grades. In addition, diagnostic tests might be used to pinpoint specific deficiencies.)
- include **academic intervention strategies** with frequent progress monitoring (Intervention strategies should be proven effective by scientific research and focused on specifically diagnosed deficiencies. The guidelines in Section 1008.25, Florida Statutes, and district policies regarding an academic improvement plan would be helpful in determining the intervention strategies needed.)
- provide **innovative methods to promote the student's advancement** which may include but not be limited to flexible scheduling, tutoring, focus on core curricula, online instruction, an alternative learning environment, or other interventions that have been shown to accelerate the learning process.

The personalized middle school success plan must be incorporated into any individual student plan required by federal or state law, including the academic improvement plan (AIP), an individual educational plan (IEP) for a student with disabilities, a federal 504 plan, or an ESOL plan (see comparison chart in appendix A).

The Department of Education will provide technical assistance for districts, school administrators, and instructional personnel regarding the development of personalized middle school success plans. The assistance will include strategies and techniques designed to maximize interaction between students, parents, teachers, and other instructional and administrative staff while minimizing paperwork.

### *Implementation Ideas*

A school might consider the personal middle school success plan as a more general, long-range plan for improving student achievement throughout the middle grades and preparing the student for success in high school. The plan may address such components as coursework and extracurricular activities designed to prepare the student to meet his or her goals. Districts may consider developing an academic improvement plan (AIP) for level 2 students as the foundation for their PMSSP.

The AIP is a more specific, shorter-range plan identifying areas to be addressed by remediation, including areas of deficiency; diagnostic assessment of the causes of the deficiency; prescriptions of research-validated intervention strategies to remedy the diagnosed deficiencies, how intervention will be delivered, by whom, when, for how long; and the nature and frequency of progress monitoring.

The focus on reading and mathematics in the PMSSP must be on the need for remediation as well as the courses needed to prepare the student for a high school program that meets the student's goals. The focus on science and social studies in the PMSSP should be on the courses needed to prepare the student for more rigorous courses in high school to help the student meet his or her goals.

It is expected that level 1 and level 2 students will be scheduled into an intensive course for remediation in reading and/or mathematics in addition to a regular, ongrade level language arts and/or mathematics course. However, care should be taken that the PMSSP does not become a tracking device that plans a path that holds students in lower-level coursework. Additional instruction in reading should supplement, not supplant, regular language arts courses. All students need to have opportunities to be exposed to and grow into rigorous, challenging academic study.

### **Assistance to Schools and School Districts**

To assist school districts in meeting the requirements related to the school improvement plan, rigorous reading requirement, and the personalized middle school success plan, the department included these required components in district and school improvement web-based reporting tools at [www.osi.fsu.edu](http://www.osi.fsu.edu).

#### *District Improvement and Assistance and Intervention Plan Reporting Database*

This database includes a section requiring a description of the rigorous reading requirement implemented in the school district. A listing of the schools in the school district that must implement the rigorous reading requirement is provided on the first page of the database.

#### *School Improvement Plan Reporting Database*

This database includes a section required for any public school in the district serving middle grade students, including charter schools, with fewer than 75 percent of its students reading at or above grade level in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade as measured by a student scoring at level 3 or above on the FCAT Reading during the prior school year to incorporate a rigorous reading requirement for reading and language arts programs as the primary component of the school improvement plan. Additionally, any school serving sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students in which fewer than 75 percent are reading at or above grade level must report the required information related to the personalized middle school success plan.

## Questions and Answers

### Rigorous Reading Requirement

**1. What is the purpose of the rigorous reading requirement?**

The purpose of the rigorous reading requirement is to assist each student who is not reading at or above grade level (level 3 or higher on the FCAT Reading) to do so before entering high school.

**2. If a school does not meet the standard for the rigorous reading requirement in one grade (less than 75% of students on grade level), must they implement the Rigorous Reading Requirement in all grades?**

Yes, the rigorous reading requirement as addressed in the school improvement plan must be implemented for all level 1 and level 2 students in grades six, seven, and eight.

**3. How does the rigorous reading requirement differ from reading components usually included in the school improvement plan?**

The rigorous reading requirement requires schools to provide much greater detail about the specific plan to remediate those students scoring at levels 1 and 2 on FCAT.

**4. What type of information should be contained in the quarterly reports to the superintendent?**

Districts are responsible for creating the reporting format. The report may include progress monitoring data (disaggregated by grade and achievement level 1 and 2) from Comprehensive Core Reading Programs (CCRP); Supplemental Reading Programs (SRP); and classroom assessments, all of which should use measurable data; and teacher professional development conducted. The final report should include data from the FCAT. Quarterly reports required for the middle school reading coach grant will incorporate the same information.

**5. What are examples of “research-based reading activities?”**

Research-based reading activities are those that align with the Florida Formula. This formula and suggested activities can be viewed in the diagram on page 3 of this document. You may also wish to access additional information on the Florida Center for Reading Research website at [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org) or the Just Read, Florida! website at [www.justreadflorida.org](http://www.justreadflorida.org).

**6. What role should content area teachers other than reading teachers play in the rigorous reading requirement?**

While the priority for intervention will be reading, teachers of other subject areas can address reading through content area strategies. Therefore, there should be ongoing communication between all subject area teachers regarding how they can help the student not reading on grade level to improve his or her skills. Reading coaches can play an integral role in the ongoing communication between reading teachers and other content area teachers.

## Assistance to Schools and School Districts

- 7. To assist schools in meeting the requirement related to the school improvement plan, rigorous reading requirement, and the personalized middle school success plan, the department included these required components in the district and school improvement web-based reporting tools. How do districts and schools access the rigorous reading requirement template?**

The template for all three required components can be found at <http://osi.fsu.edu>. Districts are required to submit using the link, *District Improvement and Assistance and Intervention Plan*. Schools must submit using the link, *School Improvement Plan*. All schools required to have a plan have a middle grades reading link within their plan template on the website.

- 8. Which schools must complete and submit the rigorous reading requirement?**

Each public school serving middle grade students with fewer than 75 percent of its students reading at or above grade level in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade as measured by a student scoring at level 3 or above on the FCAT Reading during the prior school year must incorporate a rigorous reading requirement for reading and language arts programs as the primary component of the school improvement plan.

This information is available on the web-based template at <http://osi.fsu.edu/> under the link: "School Improvement Plan (School Required)." Only schools that are required to submit the rigorous reading requirement will have a section under "Goals" identified as "Middle Grades Reading." In addition, the District Improvement and Assistance and Intervention Plans have a section that identifies all schools in the district that are required to have a rigorous reading requirement. Please refer to DPS Memo # 05-009, dated July 29, 2004, and DPS Memo # 05-013, dated August 6, 2004, for additional information.

- 9. Does the requirement apply only to middle schools?**

No, all schools with grades six, seven, or eight that have fewer than 75 percent of the students reading at or above grade level in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade as measured by a student scoring at level 3 or above on the FCAT during the previous school year must submit a rigorous reading requirement.

- 10. Which schools are required to complete the entire School Improvement Plan (SIP) template on the OSI website?**

All Title I schools "in need of improvement" or schools with a school grade of "F" must complete the entire SIP template. If the school does not fall under either of these categories, the school is not required to complete the entire SIP template, but must submit the rigorous reading requirement.

- 11. When is the rigorous reading requirement due?**

The rigorous reading requirement portion of the SIP is due October 1, 2004.

## **Personalized Middle School Success Plan (PMSSP)**

- 12. The new legislation requires each principal of a school with a middle grade to designate certified staff members at the school to develop and administer a personalized middle school success plan for each student entering sixth grade who scored below level 3 in reading on the most recently administered FCAT. Who are the most appropriate people to develop, implement, and monitor a student's PMSSP?**

Designated staff must be certified and might include administrators, teachers, reading and math coaches, library/media specialists, guidance counselors, and other student services personnel as appropriate. The intent is that the staff member will assume a case management role for the individual students assigned. A team approach involving appropriate administrators, teachers, and student services staff is encouraged for analyzing student performance data and determining activities appropriate for the student to meet his or her goals. A staff member, however, must be responsible for the plans of a group of students, ensuring that all eligible students have an appropriate and implemented plan.

- 13. Which students must have a plan?**

Beginning in the 2004-2005 school year, all students entering sixth grade who have scores below level 3 in reading on their most recently administered FCAT must have a PMSSP. A student who scores below level 3 only in mathematics is not required to have a plan, although a school may wish to consider developing and implementing a plan for him or her.

- 14. What if a student does not have an FCAT score?**

It is recommended that a plan be developed for any student in sixth grade who is not reading on grade level.

- 15. Is the school required to develop and implement a PMSSP for students who were retained in sixth grade?**

Yes, a student who is retained in sixth grade and not reading on grade level as demonstrated by scoring below level 3 in reading on the FCAT should have a PMSSP.

- 16. When must the PMSSP be completed?**

The PMSSP must be developed for each eligible student by the end of the first grading period.

- 17. What constitutes reasonable collaboration with parents in the development of a PMSSP?**

Reasonable collaboration includes providing parents with information regarding:

- the requirement to have a plan
- students' strengths and weaknesses
- the opportunity to provide input into the development of the plan through a variety of methods, such as individual conferences, telephone conferences, exchange of information via electronic mail message, or other forms of written communication.

- 18. How long must a plan be implemented and maintained?**

A student's PMSSP must be implemented and maintained until he or she scores at level 3 on FCAT reading or is promoted to ninth grade. This includes frequent monitoring and adjustment of the PMSSP in order to revise academic interventions that may not be successful for the student.

**19. How can a PMSSP be developed without additional paperwork?**

Paperwork in the development and implementation of the PMSSP can be minimized by incorporating the required components of the PMSSP into existing plans required by federal and/or state law, such as AIP, IEP, 504 plan, and ESOL plan. In addition, paperwork can be minimized by including information to parents in other existing documents.

**20. The law requires a PMSSP to identify educational goals and intermediate benchmarks for the student in the core curriculum areas which will prepare the student for high school. What are intermediate benchmarks?**

For the purpose of this legislation, benchmarks do not refer to the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks but rather to milestones or markers of expected achievement by the student to indicate that he or she is on track for meeting the goals and objectives of the PMSSP. Benchmarks might be established and recorded on the PMSSP for such components as work completion, FCAT and other assessment score levels, grade point average, and courses taken.

**21. What are the core curriculum areas that must be addressed on the PMSSP?**

Although a deficiency in reading qualifies a student for a PMSSP, the plan must address success in the core curriculum—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—but especially reading. The plan must be designed to guide a student through courses, remediation, and other supports to prepare the student for academic success in high school. Attention must be paid to a student's course schedule to ensure appropriate remediation and progress through the middle grades to facilitate successful preparation for the more rigorous requirements in high school.

**22. What academic performance data should be used in determining a student's strengths and weaknesses?**

The district must identify reliable and valid diagnostic assessment(s) to measure the student's current academic performance level. Curriculum based measurement (CBM) is an example.

**23. How frequently must students' progress be monitored?**

Students' progress must be monitored as often as needed to provide teachers with accurate, up-to-date information needed to differentiate instruction based on that data and to determine if the intervention is working. It is recommended that a student's progress be monitored at a minimum of once each grading period. This will enable the teacher, counselor, or case manager to determine if the academic intervention and support is effective and if not, to convene the team to revise the plan to reflect a different intervention.

**24. What is meant by flexible scheduling to promote advancement?**

School districts might review district policies related to promotion and retention. There are many strategies that allow students to accelerate the earning of credits such as computer-assisted instruction, competency-or performance-based instruction, and course modifications. An example of a policy that results in a barrier to accelerated earning of credits is to retain a student in a grade level who fails one or two courses and require the student to retake all of the courses, including those he or she passed the previous year. Flexible scheduling could allow the retained student to take new courses in lieu of repeating those courses he or she already passed.

**25. Does the Middle School Reform Act require schools to pay for private tutoring for a student?**

No, schools may use trained teachers or volunteers during or before and after the regular school day to provide tutoring for a student. However, districts are not prohibited from contracting with private providers for tutoring, remediation, or supplemental education services. It should be understood that tutors do not take the place of remediation by a highly qualified instructor in reading.

**26. What does “focus on core curriculum” mean? Can a district suspend all other curriculum requirements, such as physical education, health, and other elective courses?**

Core curriculum means reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. A school has the authority to suspend all other curriculum requirements for a student, but this decision should be carefully considered. The intent of the new legislation is to prepare students for successful transition into high school, which includes requirements to earn credits in elective courses for graduation. In addition, instruction to help students maintain health and well being are also important to success in high school and in life.

**27. What constitutes an alternative learning environment as an innovative method to promote a student’s advancement?**

The design of an alternative learning environment is determined by the school district but must ensure that a student’s academic program is different than the program he or she previously experienced and different than the traditional program. The program should be designed to help students achieve proficiency and should

- be designed based on the individual student’s needs in the areas of reading mathematics, science, and social studies
- be designed to address the individual student’s learning style
- provide intensive academic intervention that includes appropriate and targeted instruction provided by appropriately trained staff
- provide for frequent monitoring of student’s progress toward meeting the goals identified in the plan.

**28. How could a PMSSP be incorporated into an AIP, IEP, 504 plan, or ESOL plan?**

Many of the required components of a PMSSP are similar to the required components in the other plans. The attached chart compares the essential components of each plan and provides assistance in this area.

**29. Must districts or schools develop or purchase a common assessment instrument to collect data regarding students’ progress toward increased reading achievement?**

A school or district has the authority to develop or purchase an assessment instrument to monitor and report students’ progress toward increased reading achievement. However, the district may wish to consider the cost and possible mobility of students when determining whether or not a common assessment instrument will be the most effective and efficient method of monitoring and reporting student progress. Schools should use a progress monitoring instrument that is measurable, indicative of performance in the five elements of reading instruction, and correlates with student performance on the FCAT.

**30. How should progress in reading be measured and reported?**

Measures should cover the five elements of reading instruction, specifically those in which diagnostics have shown areas of deficiency for individual students. Evaluation can also be measured by using developmental scale score gains from FCAT.

**Appendix A**  
Comparison of Individual Student Plans

### Comparison of Individual Student Plans

| Plan Element                        | Personalized Middle School Success Plan (PMSSP)  | Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)  | Individual Educational Plan (IEP)   | Section 504 Plan  | English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Plan   | Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP)  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Authority                           | Section 1003.415(7), F.S.  | Section 1008.25(4), F.S.   | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Rule 6A-6.03028, FAC  | Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973   | Consent Decree, <i>LULAC et. al. v. State Board of Education</i> (1990)   | State Board of Education policy for F and repeating F schools   |
| Purpose                             | To assist the student in meeting state and school district expectations in academic proficiency and to prepare the student for a rigorous high school curriculum | To assist the student in meeting state and district expectations for proficiency for promotion in reading, writing, mathematics, and science   | To communicate the school district's commitment to addressing the unique educational needs of a student with a disability to ensure a free and appropriate public education | To provide accommodations within the general education environment to allow eligible students an equal opportunity to participate in school activities  | To ensure the provision of appropriate services to students with limited English proficiency                                | To assist the student in developing an action plan with goals to meet the state and school district expectations in academic proficiency and be prepared for future success |
| Target Audience/Student Eligibility | Students entering sixth grade in 2004-2005 and beyond who scored below Level 3 in reading on the most recently administered FCAT                                 | Students who do not meet specific levels of performance as determined by the district school board in reading, writing, science, and mathematics for each grade level, or who do not meet specific levels of performance as determined by the Commissioner of Education on statewide assessments at selected grade levels (below Level 2 on reading and math; below a score of 3 on writing; science not yet determined) | Students who meet the eligibility requirements under IDEA and State Board of Education Rules must have an IEP developed and implemented                                     | Students with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, or a record or history of such impairment, or regarded as having such an impairment | Students identified through a home language survey and further oral and written assessment to be limited English proficient | Students attending an F or repeating F school   |

### Comparison of Individual Student Plans (cont.)

| <b>Plan Element</b> | <b>Personalized Middle School Success Plan (PMSSP)</b>   | <b>Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)</b>  | <b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP)</b>   | <b>Section 504 Plan</b>  | <b>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Plan</b>   | <b>Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP)</b>  |
|---------------------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| Goals               | Identify educational goals and intermediate benchmarks for the student in the core curriculum areas which will prepare the student for high school | Identification of the desired level of performance in area(s) of deficiency; in reading, specifically in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary | Identification of measurable annual goals to address the student's priority educational needs  | n/a  | Develop as effectively and efficiently as possible each child's English language proficiency and academic potential                          | For the student, parent, and school staff to work in partnership taking an active part in contributing to the success of the student. All shall agree on a contract to facilitate promotion to the next school level |
| Basis               | Be based on academic performance data and an identification of the student's strengths and weaknesses  | Identify the student's specific area(s) of deficiency; in reading, specifically in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary                       | Identify present levels of educational performance (effects of the disability) including the strengths of the student and how the disability affects his or her progress in the general education curriculum | Determination of reasonable accommodations based on the individual needs of the student  | Identification of eligible students through a home language survey and subsequent oral and written (grades 4-12 only) assessments            | Identification of all students attending Assistance Plus targeted schools  |
| Monitoring          | Include academic intervention strategies with frequent progress monitoring   | Schools must also provide for the frequent monitoring of the student's progress in meeting the desired levels of performance  | Statement of how progress toward annual goals will be measured   | Periodic reevaluations are required, but no specific timeframe is provided   | Until reclassified as English proficient using same or comparable assessment, procedures, or standards as at entry; also two years post-exit | Support team leader will review and monitor the progress of identified goals in the plan   |
| Parent Involvement  | The success plan must be developed in collaboration with the student and his or her parent   | The school must develop the AIP in consultation with the student's parent   | Parents are integral members of the student's IEP team; documentation is required demonstrating that the parent was afforded the opportunity to participate  | Parents are not required members of the 504 Committee, although best practice dictates that they have involvement in the evaluation and placement process, and receive the notices required by the procedural protection provision | Parent involvement shall be promoted by the establishment of Parent Leadership Councils at the school or district level                      | The individual success plan shall be developed and agreed upon by the student's parent   |

**Comparison of Individual Student Plans (cont.)**

| <b>Plan Element</b> | <b>Personalized Middle School Success Plan (PMSSP)</b>  | <b>Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)</b>  | <b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP)</b>   | <b>Section 504 Plan</b>  | <b>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Plan</b>  | <b>Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP)</b>   |
|---------------------|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| Service Delivery    | Provide innovative methods to promote the student’s advancement which may include but not be limited to flexible scheduling, tutoring, focus on core curricula, online instruction, an alternative learning environment, or other interventions that have been shown to accelerate the learning process | Identification and provision of the instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance   | Identification and delivery of special education and related services, accommodations, and/or modifications  | Individualized based on the student’s required accommodations and/or modifications | Intensive English language instruction and instruction in basic subject areas that is understandable based on the student’s English proficiency level and equal and comparable to that provided to English proficient students in scope, sequence, etc. | The school to provide, the student to attend and actively participate in, and the parent to support the child’s attendance and participation in instructional delivery systems that include innovative methods to promote the student’s advancement which may include but not be limited to flexible scheduling, tutoring, focus on rigorous core curricula, online instruction, an alternative learning environment, or other interventions that have been shown to accelerate the learning process. |
| Combinations        | For students who do not meet the eligibility requirements for an AIP, IEP, Section 504 Plan, ESOL Plan, or ISSP, a PMSSP should be developed pursuant to the requirements established in Section 1003.415(7), F.S.  | For students eligible for an AIP but not an IEP, the elements of the PMSSP must be included in the AIP when possible. The AIP may be combined with the ISSP if the contract required in the ISSP is included. | For students eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, it is considered best practices to have only an IEP, with AIP components as necessary; elements of the PMSSP must be included in the IEP when appropriate. | n/a  | n/a   | Based on the individual academic needs of students, the elements of the PMSSP may be combined with the ISSP for middle school students.   |

**Comparison of Individual Student Plans (cont.)**

| <b>Plan Element</b> | <b>Personalized Middle School Success Plan (PMSSP)</b>  | <b>Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)</b>  | <b>Individual Educational Plan (IEP)</b>   | <b>Section 504 Plan</b>  | <b>English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Plan</b>   | <b>Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP)</b>                |
|---------------------|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|                     | The PMSSP must be incorporated into any individual student plan required by federal or state law, including the AIP required in Section 1008.25, F.S., an individual education plan (IEP) for a student with disabilities, a federal 504 plan, or an ESOL plan.   | District school boards shall assist schools and teachers to implement research-based reading activities that have been shown to be successful in teaching reading to low-performing students. | An IEP may suffice for an AIP if it contains the required components of the AIP; if a quality IEP is written, it should generally already contain the required components of the AIP, eliminating the need for two separate documents. | There are no specific requirements for the content of a Section 504 plan; the plan identifies the services or accommodations to be provided to the eligible student. | The LEP or ESOL student plan may be included in or attached to an existing student's plan, IEP, etc., or may be a separate document for a given student or students. | The ISSP must be developed within the first month of school. |
| Other Requirements  | Each principal of a school with a middle grade shall designate certified staff members at the school to develop and implement the plan for each entering sixth grade student who scored below Level 3 in reading on the most recent FCAT; the plan must be implemented until the student completes eighth grade or scores at Level 3 or above in reading on the FCAT. | Remedial instruction provided during high school may not be in lieu of English and mathematics credits required for graduation.   |  | Students eligible for a Section 504 plan may also have an AIP if they are experiencing academic difficulties.  |  |  |
|                     | The PMSSP must minimize paperwork and may be incorporated into a parent/teacher conference, included as part of a progress report or report card, included as part of a general orientation at the beginning of the school year, or provided by electronic mail or other written correspondence.  |   |  |  |  |  |