

Differentiated Accountability (DA) Bill FAQs

Specific Questions regarding the DA Bill

- 1. Why is statutory authority required to implement the DA Plan if it was submitted and approved by the US Department of Education (USDOE) this past summer?**

Since the USDOE approved the implementation of the DA Pilot after the 2008 legislative session, the Department is seeking statutory authority from the legislature to continue implementation of DA as part of the state's permanent accountability system.

- 2. How will the bill(s) change Florida's assessment and accountability plan?**

The DA bill will have no effect on the way A++ is implemented. Currently, all D and F schools are included in the DA matrix, regardless of Title I status. The proposed legislation will add all A, B, and C non-Title I schools that have missed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). A school's placement in the matrix will depend on the number of years the school has missed AYP and the percentage of AYP criteria the school has met. However, no A, B, or C school will ever fall into the INTERVENE category. A school must receive a D or an F or receive four Fs in six years, with the most recent F received during the most recent year, to potentially be included in the INTERVENE category.

- 3. Is it true that the original Differentiated Accountability Plan only included Title I schools?**

No, non-Title I D and F schools were included in the DA Plan for year one. This was consistent with the way in which the Department assisted low-performing schools under Assistance Plus.

- 4. Why does the Department want to include all schools under the Differentiated Accountability Plan?**

The change would bring fairness and uniformity to the accountability process and ensure that all students, in all schools, regardless of Title I or non-Title I standing, receive adequate intervention, monitoring, and support.

Funding

- 5. In the DA bill analysis, why did the Department indicate that the costs associated with the suggested changes were difficult to analyze?**

An analysis of these items would have been unrealistic because each district and school possesses unique circumstances whereby a general analysis would be misleading. However, it should be noted that the vast majority of interventions required of DA schools were previously required under federal and state statute or Assistance Plus.

6. How can current funds be used to fund DA requirements in non-Title I schools while preventing supplanting issues if non-Title I schools are added to DA?

Please see the memorandum from Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Operations, dated December 16, 2008, for guidance on supplement versus supplant.

7. Can federal stimulus funds be used to help cover the costs of implementing DA requirements in non-Title I schools?

Yes, stabilization funds can be used to help cover these costs. Under certain and limited circumstances, IDEA American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds might be used to assist in costs directly related to students with disabilities and/or at risk students. Additionally, districts using the IDEA flexibility to reduce required maintenance of effort may be able to use some of the funds made available by this flexibility to help cover the costs of DA in non-Title I schools. Title I ARRA funds can only be used in Title I schools. Although Non-Title I schools are not eligible to receive financial support from the Title I ARRA funds, additional Title I funding presents an opportunity for districts to include more schools under the Title I program that have 35% or more of free or reduced priced lunch students.

8. How can districts use funds to implement some of the more expensive requirements such as Supplemental Educational Services (SES), Choice with Transportation, and coaches in non-Title I schools?

The requirements for SES and Choice with Transportation only apply to Title I schools. Non-Title I schools would not be required to adhere to federal requirements such as SES and Choice, Corrective Action, and/or Restructuring as provided in the Title I statute. Coaches are only required in the lowest performing schools- Intervene and D and F Correct II schools.

9. How should districts meet the requirement that “the school board shall provide funds to schools for developing and implementing school improvement plans”?

It is assumed that district school boards currently provide funds to schools in need of improvement. This requirement should not require districts to do anything that they are not already doing. Title I funds may be used for the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans for Title I schools, and additional IDEA funds will help better support the needs of ESE students. Additionally, School Advisory Councils are scheduled to receive \$5 per FTE. If there are insufficient funds to fully provide \$5 per FTE to the SACs after school recognition awards are paid, the available funds shall be pro-rated.

(Revised 5/11/09)

10. Shouldn't stimulus funds be used to prevent layoffs and not fund DA requirements?

Title I ARRA funds should be used to support the four key principles of the Act. While saving and creating jobs is one of the principles, school reform is also a guiding principle for ARRA funds. The requirements of DA support systemic and whole school reform, which is in alignment with the intents and purposes of the education stimulus package. Given the significant infusion of funding from ARRA over the next two years through the stabilization and targeted Title I and IDEA funds, it should be possible for districts to prevent layoffs while also addressing the needs of struggling schools through DA.

11. Why not put funds towards the A++ Plan and not DA?

DA does not replace the A++ Plan. Please keep in mind that FCAT scores still determine AYP standing. Investing in the DA required interventions is also an investment in the A++ Plan. DA's intent is to streamline the A++ Plan with NCLB and to provide targeted support to schools.

12. Isn't the cost associated with performance/differentiated pay and coaches too much of a burden on districts?

Interventions such as performance and differentiated pay are strategies that should have been in place in districts and schools prior to DA. DA now ensures that these strategies are in place and that their effectiveness is monitored. The requirement for instructional coaches and performance/differentiated pay is only required for Intervene and D and F Correct II schools.

13. At what point will the Department decide to withhold funds from districts not meeting DA requirements?

At the start of each school year, the Regional Executive Directors (REDs) will visit each district to discuss the requirements of DA and district plans for compliance. Only in the most egregious situations where a district continually refuses to implement strategies, and as a result negatively affects the improvement process of schools, will funds be withheld. It is important to note that the REDs have all served as administrators in struggling schools and in district offices and are sensitive to the obstacles to school reform. The Department will ensure ongoing communication with districts and assistance in meeting the DA requirements prior to withholding funds.

Grading and the Addition of non-Title I schools in the DA

14. How will non-Title I schools be included in the DA matrix?

Currently, all D and F schools are included in the DA matrix, regardless of Title I status. The proposed legislation will add all A, B, and C non-Title I schools that have missed AYP. A school's placement in the matrix will depend on the number of years the school has missed AYP and the percentage of AYP criteria the school has met. However, no A, B, or C school will ever fall into the INTERVENE category. Intervene Selection Criteria involves:

Intervene Selection Criteria

- Current "F" schools that have earned at least four "F" grades in the last six school years.
- "D" or "F" schools that meet three of the four following conditions:
 - The percentage of non-proficient students in reading has increased over the past five years.
 - The percentage of non-proficient students in math has increased over the past five years.
 - 65 % or more of the school's students are not proficient in reading.
 - 65 % or more of the school's students are not proficient in math.

15. How will the DA bill change the way schools are assigned letter grades?

The proposed legislation will not change the way schools are graded.

16. Is there a bias against lower socioeconomic schools as the result of the DA bill?

No. The expansion of DA places all schools under the same expectations for performance, regardless of a school's socioeconomic status (i.e., Title I status).

17. Will the DA bill unequally impact diverse schools that have many subgroups?

NCLB requires that every public school and every school district make AYP towards state proficiency goals. All public schools must be held to the same criteria, and all students must be included in the determination of AYP. If a school has a large enough population of students in a subgroup (30 or more students representing more than 15 percent of the school's population in tested grades, or at least 100 students), the school will be held accountable for the performance of that subgroup.

18. Under the proposed model, one student can make the difference in an entire letter grade. There is potential to penalize a school up to 5 times for one at-risk student. One of our elementary schools had 79% of their cells proficient. If one more student had scored at proficiency in writing, this same school would have had 97% of their cells proficient. We understand that every calculation has a tipping point, but does one student represent the performance of the entire school? How do we mitigate these effects?

The focus of NCLB is on the performance of all students. Therefore, every effort should be made to improve the performance of all students.

19. How will subgroup performance be integrated into school grades if the DA bill passes?

The proposed legislation will not change the way schools are graded. Subgroup performance will not impact a school's grade.

20. Is annual assessment in writing being considered in these changes?

There is no change in the factors that are included in the calculation of School Grades and AYP. Therefore, writing performance will remain a component of School Grades and AYP.

21. When would the timeline for determining AYP for non-Title schools begin (09-10 or retroactively)?

The timeline for determining the number of years a non-Title I school has missed AYP will begin in 2002-2003, the first year AYP was calculated. This will also be the case for Title I schools for the purpose of placing schools within the DA matrix. Regardless of Title I status, schools have received AYP designations since that time. AYP results by school are readily available at <http://schoolgrades.fl DOE.org>.

22. My district has a non-Title I high school that has been an A or B school for years but has never made AYP. In addition, our AYP criteria met is below 80%. By adding non-Title I schools to DA, is it possible that this high school will now be an Intervene school?

In this situation, the high school would be a Correct II school. Intervene schools are only D or F schools that have not demonstrated improvement in reading and math over a 5 year period and/or 65% or more of students are non-proficient in reading and/or math. Four Fs in six years with one of the Fs being received in the most recent year would also place a school in the Intervene category. Very few schools will ever fall in this category. In fact, last year only 13 schools in the State were Intervene schools.

General DA Questions

23. Why are coaches required under DA?

For low-performing schools to improve, onsite and sustainable professional development is required to improve the quality of instruction. Research has indicated and the Department has found that if a school possesses effective coaches who are actively supported by the principal, their assistance can significantly raise student achievement. It should also be noted that effective coaches with the active support of principals were found to be important in the turnaround process under Assistance Plus. Therefore, the coaching requirement is not a new requirement for low-performing schools in the Department's strategy to improve school performance.

24. Although many districts support the concept of the DA bill, why expand DA during this fiscal crisis?

Despite a challenging financial situation, it is important that our accountability system is fair and treats all schools equally by applying the same standards and expectations. It is also important to ensure that all schools implement strategies to assist and support struggling students.

25. How does the DA bill affect collective bargaining requirements?

Under the current state statute (6A-1.09981), a district may declare an emergency to renegotiate collective bargaining agreements that impede the school reform process specifically related to issues associated with curriculum and instruction. Also, some districts are considering the process of creating Memos of Understanding (MOUs) between unions to suspend aspects of the contract that impede the improvement of chronically low-performing schools.

26. For which schools will Community Assessment Teams (CAT) be required?

A CAT is required for districts with F schools in Correct II or Intervene schools. Only one CAT is required per district; however, a district can create additional CATs if they find this will better represent their schools' and communities' needs.

27. Is there flexibility in the members that comprise the CAT Team?

Yes; however, the composition should meet the minimum requirements in the statute (S.1008.345, Florida Statutes), including a department representative, parents, business representatives, educators, representatives of local governments, and community activists, and should be representative of the demographics of the community from which they are appointed. The details of your plan can be discussed with your district's RED.

28. It has been suggested that districts use learning gains to determine teacher effectiveness for performance pay. The database to conduct this analysis is too costly. How can this be done?

Districts receive an electronic file that can provide them a value score for their grade 4-10 teachers in reading and/or math. Districts can calculate a teacher's effectiveness using either the mean value of all the teacher's students in the INDV file or the percent of the teacher's students making learning gains. These calculations can be done in an Excel spreadsheet. Districts should also consider generating information on the percent of students making learning gains. The Department can provide technical assistance in the calculation, if necessary.