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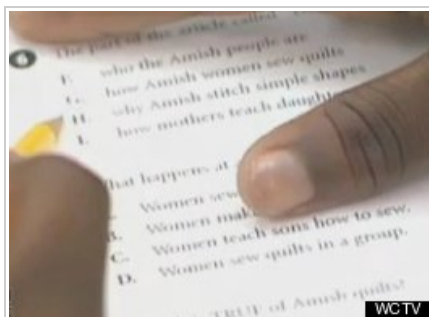
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## Florida Gives Wrong Grades To Hundreds Of Public Schools, Challenge Accountability

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The Florida Department of Education has announced that it miscalculated grades for hundreds of schools across the state, further fueling public distrust in the state's accountability system.

State officials say that 40 of the 60 districts were affected, mis-grading 8 percent, or 213, of the initially graded 2,586 schools as a result of [omitting one piece of a complex, newly revised grading formula](#), according to the Associated Press. Grades for affected schools have since been revised to reflect gains in student learning, as the new formula sought to give schools extra credit if low-performing students made large improvements on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

As a result, 116 schools saw their grades rise from a B to an A, 55 schools' grades rose from a C to a B, 35 jumped from a D to a C and seven schools went from failing to a D

grade, [according to state officials](#).

"School grades are important to students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators and the community," Commissioner of Education Gerard Robinson said in a statement Friday. "And, while I am pleased that the continuous review process has resulted in better grades, we will continue to look for ways to improve the grade calculation process."

School grades, based largely on the FCATs -- high-stakes state standardized tests in reading, math writing and science -- are used annually to determine financial rewards for top performing schools and sanctions for failing ones.

The state lowered standards earlier this year for the FCAT writing test [because too many students failed the new, more rigorous exams](#): 73 percent of Florida's fourth graders and 67 percent of eighth graders failed. Lowering the passing grade allowed 80 percent of fourth graders, 77 percent of eighth graders and 84 percent of tenth graders to pass.

Controversy over the move continued as critics pointed to the case of Rick Roach, [a 63-year-old educator who took the 10th grade FCATs](#) and made his results public: 62 percent on reading and 17 percent on math. Roach has two master's degrees and serves on the Orange County School Board.

"It seems to me something is seriously wrong," he said at the time. "If I'd been required to take those two tests when I was a 10th grader, my life would almost certainly have been very different. I'd have been told I wasn't 'college material,' would probably have believed it, and looked for work appropriate for the level of ability that the test said I had."

And while superintendents and principals are happy about this week's grade bumps for their schools, the revisions challenge the state's student countability system.

Leon County School Superintendent Jackie Pons told WCTV that the changes to school grades are evidence that the state must ["set the standards, leave them alone, and let the teachers get us over the bar."](#)

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho has [called the mistake "inexcusable,"](#) noting that it has led to fallen morale at some schools, WPLG reports.

"We support accountability, but accountability gone awry is dangerous and it is insulting," Carvalho said.

Broward County Public Schools saw increases to grades in 17 of its schools, Superintendent Robert Runcie announced, but noted that the new grading system serves as a "wake up call" that students must still be prepared to compete globally.

"Moving forward, we need to focus our attention on the quality of the work produced and student achievement, not just a letter grade," Runcie said in a statement.