

Section II

Middle Grades 6-8

GENERAL EDUCATION: MIDDLE SCHOOLS GRADES 6-8

A. Admission and Placement of Students

1. Admissions
 - a. Evidence that the student resides in the school's designated zone is required for each student enrolling in the Alachua County school system (e.g., utility bill, bill of sale or deed for the house, lease agreement, rent receipt, homestead exemption receipt, or verification through a home visit by a school official).
 - b. A birth certificate or other evidence of age is required for enrollment.
 - c. Students transferring from an out-of-state school must provide a certificate of immunization or a valid certificate of exemption.
 - d. Students transferring from an out-of-state school must provide a health certificate completed within twelve (12) months prior to enrollment or HRS Form 681 completed by the parent or guardian requesting exemption on religious grounds.
 - e. The parent or guardian must complete a student emergency card when enrolling a student and will be asked to provide the student's social security number. Since a parent is not always able to be reached by phone, the number of an available emergency contact is mandatory.
2. The grade placement of any student new to a middle school is determined by the principal and staff on the basis of results of tests administered by the school and other appropriate considerations. A principal may request a student to present a report card or other evidence of school attendance to facilitate proper placement of a student in the school.
3. To be enrolled in middle school, students must register for and attend a complete schedule of classes at the school unless they are home education students attending a regularly scheduled class period at the zoned school or are participating in one of the district's approved educational options.

B. Course of Study Requirements and Offerings

1. Regular Program Requirements:
 - Language Arts
 - Reading
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Studies
 - Physical Education
2. Electives:
 - Career and Technical Education
 - Computer Education
 - Fine Arts
 - Foreign Languages
 - Performing Arts

3. Magnet Programs:

The district offers academic magnet programs at the middle school level. Admission is by application only. Selection criteria are available from each program. Priority for admission will be given to students currently enrolled in district-run Alachua County Public Schools.

4. Advisor/Advisee:

It is recommended that each middle school conduct a student advisement program in grades 6 – 8. The nature of the advisement program is determined by each middle school based on student needs.

5. Teachers will teach the Sunshine State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Expectations as established by the State of Florida

Instruction will include age-appropriate study of the history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including national sovereignty, natural law, self-evident truth, equality of all persons, limited government, popular sovereignty, and inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property and how they form the philosophical foundation of our government. Instruction will also include the United States Constitution, flag education (proper flag display and flag salute), elements of civil government, the history of the Holocaust, African–American history, the history of the state, the study of Hispanic contributions to the United States, the study of women’s contributions to the United States, character education, Veteran’s Day, free enterprise and consumer education.

For a complete list of state curriculum mandates, see item N. in General Procedures for Promotion section.

C. Student Promotion and Retention

1. Pupil promotion is based on evaluation of each student’s achievement of the Sunshine State Standards. Each student’s progression from one grade to another is based, in part, upon proficiency in reading, writing, science, and mathematics. Parents must be informed of their students’ progress in meeting academic standards. [s. 1008.25 (1) F.S.] Each student who does 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 does not meet specific levels of performance as determined by the commissioner on statewide assessments at selected grade levels, must be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student’s difficulty and areas of academic need.

Beginning with students entering grade 6 in the 2006-2007 school year and thereafter, promotion from middle school to high school requires that all students successfully complete the following academic courses:

- Three middle school or higher courses in English. These courses shall emphasize literature, composition, and technical text.
- Three middle school or higher courses in Mathematics.
- Three middle school or higher courses in social studies, one semester of which must include the study of state and federal government and civics education.

- Three middle school or higher courses in science.
- One course in career and education planning, to be completed in 7th or 8th grade.

Evaluation of proficiency of the Sunshine State Standards includes scores on district and statewide assessments, classroom performance, daily observations, and formal and informal assessments of competency in reading, writing, and mathematics. The primary responsibility for recommending grade placement for the next year is that of professional staff members, subject to review and approval of the principal and Superintendent.

Participation in the FCAT is mandatory for all students attending public school, except as otherwise prescribed by the Commissioner of Education. Each student must participate in the statewide assessment tests required by s. 1008.22 F.S. If a student does not participate in the statewide assessment, the district must notify the student's parent and provide the parent with information regarding the implications of such nonparticipation. If modifications are made in the student's instruction to provide accommodations that would not be permitted on the statewide assessment tests, the district must notify the student's parent of the implications of such instructional modifications. A parent must provide signed consent for a student to receive instructional modifications that would not be permitted on the statewide assessments and must acknowledge in writing that he or she understands the implications of such accommodations. [s. 1008.25 (3) (c)(6) F.S.]

Beginning with the 2008 – 2009 school year, each public school is prohibited from suspending a regular program of curricula for purposes of administering practice tests or engaging in other test-preparation activities for the FCAT. However, schools may engage in the following test-preparation activities:

- Distributing to students the sample test books and answer keys published by the Department of Education
- Providing individualized instruction in test-taking strategies, without suspending the school's regular program of curricula, for a student who scores Level 1 or Level 2 on a prior administration of the FCAT
- Providing individualized instruction in the content knowledge and skills assessed, without suspending the school's regular program of curricula, for a student who scores Level 1 or Level 2 on a prior administration of the FCAT or a student who, through a diagnostic assessment administered by the school district, is identified as having a deficiency in the content knowledge and skills assessed.
- Incorporating test-taking exercises and strategies into curricula for intensive reading and intensive mathematics intervention courses.
- Administering a practice test or engaging in other test-preparation activities for the FCAT which are determined necessary to familiarize students with the organization of the FCAT, the format of the test items, and the test directions, or which are otherwise necessary for the valid and reliable administration of the FCAT as set forth in State Board of Education rule.

2. Progress monitoring is required for any student who scores level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Reading or Mathematics. The school in which the student is enrolled must develop, in consultation with the student's parent, and must implement a progress monitoring plan designed to assist the student in meeting state and district expectations for proficiency.

A student who is not meeting proficiency in reading and/or math (FCAT Level 3 or higher) shall be covered by one of the following plans to target instruction and identify ways to improve his/her academic achievement:

- A federally required plan such as an IEP
 - A school-wide system of progress monitoring for all students
 - An individualized progress monitoring plan
- a. Indicators of the student's proficiency include teacher assessment, norm-referenced tests, statewide tests, diagnostic assessment, and grade point average (GPA).
 - b. Remediation options may include strategies within the regular class, tutorial support, extended school year, extended day activities, home strategies, contracted academic services, drop-out prevention coursework, and intensive math, science, reading, writing/language arts courses.
 - c. The progress monitoring plan must be designed to assist the student in meeting expectations for proficiency.
 - d. If the student has been identified as having a deficiency in reading, the K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan shall include instructional and support services to meet the desired levels of performance.

The district may require low-performing students to attend remediation programs held before school, after school, or during the summer if transportation is provided.

3. Reading Requirement

For each year in which the student scores a level 1 on FCAT Reading, the student must be enrolled in and complete an intensive reading course the following year.

A student who scores Level 2 on FCAT Reading shall be placed in an Intensive Reading class or a content area course in which reading strategies are delivered, as determined by a diagnosis of the student's reading needs.

Student progress toward increased reading achievement must be reported three times per year. The school shall use research-based reading activities that have been shown to be successful in teaching reading to low-performing students.

4. High School Credit

Each middle school must offer at least one high-school level mathematics course for which students may earn high school credit. Middle schools may offer additional high-school level courses for credit with approval from the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

High school credit may be granted only for those students completing a full year of study. No half credit will be awarded.

6. Middle school students taking high school courses for high school credit who get a grade of C, D, or F, may retake the same or comparable course and replace their original grade with a grade of C or higher earned in the same or comparable course. Only the new grade shall be used in the calculation of the student's grade point average.
7. Students in grade 6 who are enrolled in a school that contains one or more elementary grades shall be provided 150 minutes each week of physical education (at least 30 consecutive minutes per day on any day when physical education is conducted).

Beginning with the 2009 – 2010 school year, the equivalent of one class period day of physical education for one semester of each year is required for students enrolled in grades 6-8.

The requirement for physical education shall be waived for any student who meets one of the following criteria:

- The student is enrolled or required to enroll in a remedial course
- The student's parent indicates in writing to the school that:
 - The parent requests the students enroll in another course from among those courses offered as options.
 - The student is participating in physical activities outside the school day which are equal to or in excess of the mandated requirements.

Each school shall notify the student's parents of the options available before scheduling the student to participate in physical education.

8. Retention Criteria

Middle school students may be retained for one or more of the following reasons:

- a. Scoring Level 1 on FCAT Reading and/or Math
- b. Receiving failing grades in two or more academic subjects
- c. Achieving less than a 2.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale)
- d. Missing more than fifteen days per semester (students may be retained for lack of attendance unless a medical excuse is presented to the principal from a competent medical authority to excuse absences in excess of fifteen days; or there are extenuating circumstances as determined by the principal based on recommendations of teachers, counselors, or Student Services personnel.) [Board policy 5.21]

Students entering grade 8 for the first time in 2008 – 2009 and thereafter must meet the middle school promotion requirements to be promoted to high school.

9. Parents or guardians may appeal a promotion or retention decision made by the school at the end of the current school year to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. This appeal process shall be completed before the start of the Extended School Year program.

9. No Limited English Proficient (LEP) student will be retained based solely on his/her language proficiency in English.
10. Promotion/retention decisions are made at the end of the regular 180-day school year. The options for each 6 – 8 student are as follows:
 - a. Promote to next grade level.
 - b. Remediate before the beginning of the next school year and promote.
 - c. Promote for good cause, and remediate during the following school year with more intensive intervention and remediation strategies specified in a revised progress monitoring plan.
 - d. Retain and remediate in a different program.

11. No student may be assigned to a grade level based solely on age or other factors that constitute social promotion.

12. Resource Allocation

The allocation of remedial and supplemental resources for students shall occur in the following priority:

- ◆ Students who are deficient in reading at the end of grade 3.
- ◆ Students who fail to meet performance levels required for promotion consistent with the district’s plan for student progression.

13. Graduation Options

Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, each district school board shall provide each student in grades 6-8 and their parents with information concerning the three-year and four-year graduation options.

D. Grading System for Grades 6-8

The following scale is used to convert quantifiable achievement to alphabetic symbols in middle school courses. Grades will be calculated mathematically for each term.

% Achievement of Course Objectives	Grade Points	Progress Level
A = 90-100	4.0	Outstanding
B+ = 87-89	3.0	
B = 80-86	3.0	Above Average
C+ = 77-79	2.0	
C = 70-76	2.0	Average
D+ = 67-69	1.0	
D = 60-66	1.0	Lowest Acceptable
F = 0-59	0.0	Failure
I = 0	0.0	Incomplete

Students may not be exempted from academic performance requirements based on practices or policies designed to encourage student attendance. A student’s attendance record may not be used

in whole or in part to provide an exemption from any academic performance requirement. [s.1003.33 (2)]

E. Class Conduct Grades 6-8

The following symbols are used to denote class conduct in grades 6-8:

- S = Satisfactory
- N = Needs Improvement
- U = Unsatisfactory

No national origin minority or limited English proficient student shall be subjected to any disciplinary action solely because of his/her use of a language other than English. This does not abrogate any rules, standards, or guidelines as specified in the School Board of Alachua County Code of Student Conduct.

F. Workforce Preparation

All schools K-12 should document the manner in which they have prepared students to enter the workforce, including information regarding the provision of accurate, timely career and curricular counseling to students. This information shall include:

1. information about available career opportunities;
2. educational requirements associated with each career;
3. educational institutions that prepare students for each career;
4. student financial aid;
5. school procedures for identifying individual student interests and aptitudes;
6. recommended high school coursework that prepares students for success in college coursework;
7. availability of applied instruction;
8. availability of support services to help students who need assistance to successfully complete instruction necessary to enroll in postsecondary education or enter the workforce;
9. availability of technical instruction and workplace-based learning.

[s. 1006.02]

G. Report Cards and Student Progress Reports to Parents

The district school board must report to the parent the student's results on each statewide assessment. The final report card for a school year shall indicate end-of-year status regarding performance or nonperformance at grade level, acceptable or unacceptable behavior and attendance, and promotion or non-promotion. [s. 1003.33 (1) F.S.] Progress reporting must be provided to the parent in writing in a format adapted by the district school board. Progress reports will be issued to students during each marking period.

H. Extended School Year

The board may sponsor an extended school year program. Low-performing students may be required to attend extended school year programs if transportation is provided.

Exceptional Student Education Middle School

Student Rights for Instruction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 states that students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. Modifications to the general curriculum occur only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that mastery of the general curriculum with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. In addition, children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education, related services, and accommodations or modifications designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living. The needs and services of the student are documented on the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Promotion and Placement

Grade placement for students with identified disabilities is first determined by the same criteria for promotion and placement as for all students, with some additional considerations. A student with a disability who does not meet criteria for promotion may be exempted from mandatory retention after considering the procedures for good cause exemption that apply to all students with the following additional options.

- ◆ A student with disabilities whose IEP indicates participation in the Florida Alternate Assessment is more appropriate may be considered for good cause exemption from mandatory retention.
- ◆ Students with disabilities who take the FCAT and have an IEP that reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than 2 years but still has a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in K, grade 1, or grade 2 or 3 may be considered for good cause exemption from mandatory retention.

Reporting Student Progress

Report Cards/Grading Procedures

Report card grades for students with disabilities are first determined by the same criteria for grades for all students, with some additional considerations. Students with disabilities may receive report card grades in general education or special education classes that are based on instructional level rather than grade placement if determined appropriate by either the IEP team or individual classroom teachers. Accommodations/Modifications to the general curriculum are documented on the student's IEP as appropriate. The standard report card is used for a vast majority of students

with disabilities. However in limited cases, the IEP team may opt to use an alternate report card when the standard report card would be ineffective in communicating the progress of the student.

Parent Notification of Student Progress

Parents of students with disabilities will be regularly informed as to their student's progress toward the annual goals of the IEP and the extent to which the progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goals by the end of the year. Progress towards IEP goals and statement of likelihood of attainment is sent home with the report card.

Guidelines for Determining Appropriate Accommodations/Modifications For Students with Disabilities

Accommodations to the General Curriculum

Consistent with the accountability requirements of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004(IDEA)* the vast majority of students with disabilities in Florida are expected to demonstrate mastery of the Sunshine State Standards, participate in the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), and graduate high school with a standard diploma. In order to achieve this expectation, students with disabilities must be provided access to the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible with appropriately designed instruction and accommodations. An accommodation is intended for those students who would be denied meaningful participation in instruction and assessment without the accommodation. Accommodations allow a student with a disability the same access to instruction and assessment as students without disabilities. Accommodations for instruction and assessment are determined at the IEP meeting and indicated on the student's IEP.

The following guidelines will be considered when making individual accommodation decisions:

- ◆ Accommodations are adjustments made to the way skills and concepts are taught and assessed but do not affect the expected outcomes in relation to the Sunshine State Standards.
- ◆ Accommodations should facilitate an accurate demonstration of what the student knows or can do:
- ◆ Accommodations should remove or neutralize the limiting effects of the student's disability by altering the presentation, response, schedule, setting, use of assistive devices, or test administration in appropriate ways.
- ◆ Accommodations should not change the intent of the test (i.e., the educational goal or skill measured by the test):
- ◆ Accommodations should not be used to compensate for lack of achievement;
- ◆ Accommodations should not provide the student with unfair advantage or interfere with the validity of the test. They must not change the underlying skills that are being measured by the test:

- ◆ Test accommodations must be the same or nearly the same as accommodations used by the student in completing the classroom instructional and assessment activities.
- ◆ Accommodations must be necessary to allow the student to demonstrate knowledge, ability, skill, or mastery required by the assessment.

Testing Accommodations

Rule [6A-1.0943, FAC] permits test accommodations for any student with a disability who has a current IEP. Expanded accommodations on state and district assessment are authorized for students with disabilities through executive order. Allowable accommodations are detailed in the test administration manuals under the following categories:

- Flexible Presentation
- Flexible Responding
- Flexible Scheduling
- Flexible Setting
- Use of Assistive Technology

Parent Notification of Testing Accommodations

A parent must provide signed consent for a student to receive instructional accommodations and/or modifications that would not be permitted on the statewide assessments and must acknowledge in writing that he or she understands the implications of such accommodations and/or modifications.

Modifications to the General Curriculum

Modifications are changes in the way skills and concepts are taught and assessed, AND modifications are changes in expected outcomes and curricular standards. When students are unable to meet the expectations of the general curriculum, the expectations are modified. Modifications to the curriculum are generally used in coordination with an assessment that is compatible with the modified expectations. The general education curriculum may be modified to meet the student's needs. All modifications are addressed in the student's IEP.

The following guidelines should be considered when making modifications decisions:

- Curricular modifications should be considered only after all types of accommodations have been exhausted.
- The IEP team must consider the long-term impacts of lowering the expectations for students.
- Students with a disability who are not challenged to reach the same level of achievement as the non-disabled classmates in elementary or middle school may find that they are not ready for a program that leads to a standard diploma in high school.
- A student's priority educational needs may be different from the general curriculum specific in the Sunshine State Standards for the academic subject areas. For example, a student with a moderate or severe disability may need to learn how to care for personal needs and develop interpersonal communication skills. The student's annual goals would reflect the student's needs in personal

care, socialization, and interpersonal communication, and not the academics of the regular school program.

- Students who require modified standards or an alternate curriculum may meet the criteria for exemption from FCAT and therefore be required to participate in the Florida Alternate Assessment through grade 11.

Guidelines for Exemptions of Selected Students from State or District Assessment

In order to be excluded from FCAT, a student must meet the following requirements according to Rule [6A-1.0943, FAC]:

- The student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents the student from completing required coursework and achieving the Sunshine State Standards, even with appropriate and allowable course accommodations, and
- The student requires extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer of skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure and vocational activities.

When deciding whether a student should or should not participate in FCAT, the Florida Department of Education has suggested that IEP teams consider the following:

- Is the student unable to master the Sunshine State Standards, even with appropriate and allowable accommodations?
- Is the student's demonstrated cognitive ability the primary reason for the inability to master these standards?
- Is the student participating in a modified or functional curriculum based upon competencies in the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma for all academic areas?
- Does the student require extensive direct instruction in functional academics and vocational competencies as well as domestic, community living, and leisure activities?
- Does the student have deficits in adaptive behavior as demonstrated by the inability to function effectively and independently in everyday living skills (interpersonal and social interactions) across a variety of settings?

If the IEP team cannot answer "yes" to all of the questions, the student should participate in the FCAT, with allowable accommodations, as appropriate. If the IEP team determines that the student meets the criteria for exemption from FCAT, the student must participate in the Florida Alternate Assessment.

Extended School Year

The need for extended school year services is determined by an IEP committee.

For students eligible for Exceptional Student Education, the need for Extended School Year (ESY) services is determined at an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) conference and documented on the IEP. Multiple criteria for eligibility for ESY services, as defined by DOE, may include but are not limited to:

consideration of the likelihood of regression/recoupment, critical points of instruction, emerging skills, nature or severity of disability, interfering behaviors, rate of progress, or special circumstances.

IEP conferences to consider extended school services are held prior to May 1, in order to allow sufficient notice to families regarding the decision for extended school year services.