



FACT Report

**House Bill 7029: Florida Approved Courses and Tests Initiative
2015-2016**

Florida Department of Education
February 2014 Report

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Executive Summary

House Bill (HB) 7029 passed during the 2013 legislative session, created the Florida Approved Courses and Tests (FACT) Initiative. This legislation's goal is to further expand student choice and courses to include the dynamic world of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). MOOCs are an innovative and exciting trend in the delivery of curriculum and instruction. While MOOCs were traditionally designed and implemented as a tool to enhance the classroom experience by providing an alternative to traditional classroom settings, they are increasingly being evaluated and implemented as tools to deliver credit-bearing academic content to large numbers of participants.

While certainly a challenging proposition, implementation of the FACT Initiative is achievable if structures of accountability are maintained, proactive evaluation and research plans are followed and sound implementation practices are adhered to. There should also be a heavy reliance on utilizing existing effective systems to accomplish the FACT Initiative goals.

The following overarching recommendations summarize critical elements for the FACT Initiative and cover each of the required areas of the legislation. Some critical elements are relevant to both postsecondary and secondary levels.

Competency-Based Courses

- ✓ A postsecondary taskforce will be established by the Commissioner of Education to make recommendations for the creation of competency-based bachelor degree program(s) aligned with workforce needs, and will address the feasibility of statewide application for federal financial aid eligibility for such programs.
- ✓ FACT Initiative courses will align with content and standards contained in approved course descriptions and the approved Florida Standards; students will be required to show mastery of the approved Florida Standards as a result of having completed any online course.
- ✓ Approved test item specifications for each course should continue to be used to ensure that the content of any online course aligns with content to be tested in the statewide end-of-course assessment. Test item specifications will need to be developed for courses that do not already have them.

Improving Access to Online Courses

- ✓ The department will continue to seek ways to increase student access to online programs. Statutory changes related to eligibility criteria for virtual education would be necessary.

Funding for MOOCs and Online Courses

- ✓ The department will utilize the existing framework established for funding the virtual instruction program through the Florida Education Finance Program.
- ✓ School districts would report student data from the online providers to the department throughout the year.

Accountability

- ✓ The department will fully incorporate measures of accountability, consistent with Florida Statutes and State Board of Education rules.
- ✓ The department will maintain and, as needed, develop accountability models (e.g. annual progress, monitoring, performance metrics) specific to the FACT Initiative with a focus on performance, outcomes and cost effectiveness.

Credit-Bearing Structures

- ✓ FACT Initiative courses, including MOOCs and online courses, must be fully aligned to the current approved course descriptions for each course, as listed in the Course Code Directory for the current school year.
- ✓ FACT Initiative courses must provide students with a means to complete required statewide end-of-course or other department-approved assessments.

Assessments

- ✓ Students will have to show mastery of the approved Florida Standards as a result of having completed any online course.
- ✓ The department will utilize existing statewide end-of-course assessments for Algebra 1, Biology 1, Geometry and Civics, with adherence to statutory requirements for each assessment.
- ✓ The department will ensure all course providers demonstrate the capability to develop, administer and score high-volume curriculum-aligned assessments and subassessments through the use of department-approved test sites at a reasonable cost to the state.

Virtual Learning Platforms Delivered in Modules or Segments

- ✓ The department will encourage districts and schools to provide local support (i.e. blended learning environments) and technical assistance for their students taking MOOCs. District representation and input, as well as consistent communication with the postsecondary task force, will be a part of this effort.
- ✓ Registration for MOOCs should be handled by local schools for children under the age of 13 in order to remain in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which are federal law regulations.

Provider Requirements

- ✓ The department will require that course providers adhere to s. 1003.499(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.), related to non-sectarianism; antidiscrimination; teacher-student, teacher-parent and student-student interaction; student attendance and participation; student assessment requirements; Internet use and safety and technical support; the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 508 requirements; and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements.
- ✓ FACT Initiative courses developed by providers must adhere to strict accreditation standards observed by the state of Florida.
- ✓ Course curriculum plans are required for each MOOC and must align to state-approved standards. Each course offered by the provider must demonstrate prior successful experience, using quantified student learning gains in each grade level and subject.

FACT Report

Florida Approved Courses and Tests (FACT)

I. Competency-Based Courses

Current Status

K-12. All courses currently taught in traditional school settings and virtual programs are aligned to the current approved course descriptions. Test item specifications outlining the content to be tested for each statewide end-of-course assessment have been developed for several of the courses delineated as MOOC subject areas: Algebra 1, Biology 1, Geometry and Civics. Traditional school settings currently do not utilize competency-based courses; however, courses offered through Florida Virtual Schools are formatted into modules for competency-based learning.

Postsecondary. The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges – Commission on Colleges is the regional accreditation agency that accredits Florida’s postsecondary degree granting institutions. They have issued a policy statement for distance and correspondence education, and it is anticipated that a policy statement will also be issued for direct assessment or competency-based programs in the near future. There have been no Florida postsecondary institutions approved by the United States Department of Education for college credit-bearing, competency-based programs; however, there is high interest in exploring the option.

The first postsecondary institution to receive approval from the United States Department of Education to receive federal financial aid for a self-paced, competency-based online program was Southern New Hampshire University through its “College for America” program. This is the first program to be approved by the United States Department of Education that is not based on completion of credit hours in terms of federal financial aid eligibility.

On March 19, 2013, the United States Department of Education issued a letter providing guidance to institutions regarding direct assessment (competency-based) programs’ eligibility for federal financial (Title IV) aid. The letter outlines how institutions can have competency-based programs approved under the current regulations on direct assessment programs. Southern New Hampshire University was the first to receive approval for a Title IV eligible competency-based program.

Broward College is currently offering a competency-based Computer Systems Specialist Associate in Science degree. The degree allows students to demonstrate competency through prior learning and work experience through assessment. The program is self-paced, meaning that students can accelerate completion of the program. This program has been supported by a Department of Labor grant in cooperation with several other postsecondary institutions.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ **K-12.** Online courses must align with content and standards contained in approved course descriptions. These courses must contain the same content as the courses listed in the current approved Course Code Directory. The approved test item specifications for each course should continue to be used to ensure that the content of any online course aligns with content to be tested in the statewide end-of-course assessment. Test item specifications will need to be developed for courses that do not already have them.

Postsecondary. The process for approval is new and lengthy, so collective discussions and exploration regarding Title IV approval may result in more postsecondary institutions developing competency-based courses and programs. Establishment of a postsecondary taskforce to make recommendations for the creation of competency-based bachelor degree program(s) aligned with workforce needs, as well as to report feasibility of statewide application for federal financial aid eligibility for competency-based degree programs will be necessary. The financial aid component of the FACT Initiative is critical and needs to be fully researched as some institutions may see it as a barrier to the expansion of these credit-bearing programs.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

K-12. A review of online course content will need to be conducted by the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support for alignment with approved course descriptions and test item specifications. Further intensive study and research related to K-12 competency-based courses is also warranted.

Postsecondary. The Commissioner of Education will need to establish and appoint members of a taskforce to develop timelines and organize representation for the submission of recommendations of changes to legislation, rules and statutes. Support for such a taskforce would include provisions for travel costs for in-person taskforce meetings, and the department/Board of Governors staff support. Funding will need to be provided to assist in the implementation process. Taskforce members should be a diverse group of stakeholders with a clear understanding of the FACT Initiative environment.

II. Improving Access to Online Courses

Current Status

Florida has more virtual education options than any other state and is the only state that has full-time and part-time options at all grade levels (see Florida Virtual Education Options 2013-2014 table, p. 6). All virtual schools, programs and courses are school choice options for Florida families. Students may take courses from the Florida Virtual School, as well as virtual courses offered by any school district in the state, regardless of their residential location in Florida. The department is in the process of developing an online course catalog so that families will have clear and streamlined access to all of the virtual instruction options available for their students.

For the 2013 calendar year, the department is required to monitor school district compliance with school choice laws and report its findings to the Florida Legislature and State Board of Education, in accordance with the General Appropriations Act. This report will include information about Florida's

current compliance status related to the accessibility of multiple educational options to Florida students. Based on these findings, a report will be made available in April 2014. This report may serve as an informative “next steps” guide for expansion of online accessibility in the FACT Initiative environment.

There are certain limitations on student access to virtual learning specified in s. 1002.455, F.S.; not all students can participate in all virtual options due to student eligibility criteria. These criteria vary based on the virtual education options and grade levels addressed. There are no options available for grades 2-5 students who want to participate in one of the virtual education options on a part-time basis, unless they meet one of the eligibility criteria (see virtual options table below).

Florida's Virtual Education Options 2013-2014			
Virtual Program/School	Type of Program	Grade Levels Served	Student Eligibility
State Level			
Florida Virtual School Part Time	Part Time	Grades K-1 and 6-12 Grades 2-5	All students* Eligibility per s. 1002.455**
Florida Virtual School Full Time	Full Time	Grades K-12	All Students
District Level			
District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP)	Full Time	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455**
	Part Time	Grades K-1 Grades 2-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455**
District Franchise of Florida Virtual School	Same as Florida Virtual School	Same as Florida Virtual School	Same as Florida Virtual School
District Virtual Course Offerings	Part Time	Grades K-1 Grades 2-12	All students Eligibility per s. 1002.455**
	Full Time	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455**
Virtual Charter School	Full Time	Grades K-5 Grades 6-12	All Students Eligibility per s. 1002.455**

*All students = Public, private and home education students

**Students must meet one of the following criteria: prior year in a Florida public school, sibling of a virtual student enrolled in current and end of previous year, military dependent recently moved to Florida, student in grades K-1, student in grades 2-5 enrolling in a full-time virtual program.

Statutory language regarding eligibility criteria, which may be found in s. 1002.455(2), F.S., *Student eligibility for K-12 virtual education*, is provided below:

- (2) A student is eligible to participate in virtual instruction if:
 - (a) The student spent the prior school year in attendance at a public school in the state and was enrolled and reported by the school district for funding during October and February for purposes of the Florida Education Finance Program surveys;
 - (b) The student is a dependent child of a member of the United States Armed Forces who was transferred within the last 12 months to this state from another state or from a foreign country pursuant to a permanent change of station order;

- (c) The student was enrolled during the prior school year in a virtual instruction program under s. 1002.45, F.S., the K-8 Virtual School Program under s. 1002.415, F.S., or a full-time Florida Virtual School program under s. 1002.37(8)(a), F.S.;
- (d) The student has a sibling who is currently enrolled in a virtual instruction program and the sibling was enrolled in that program at the end of the prior school year;
- (e) The student is eligible to enter kindergarten or first grade; or
- (f) The student is eligible to enter grades 2 through 5 and is enrolled full-time in a school district virtual instruction program, virtual charter school, or the Florida Virtual School.

Districts are required to provide access for district students who want to take Florida Virtual School courses on a part-time basis. This may include computer resources and supervision on the school campus if a student takes a Florida Virtual School course as part of his or her school-day schedule. In addition, districts are required to provide technology for district full-time virtual students if they are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches and do not have the necessary technology in their homes to successfully participate in and complete the virtual course. The Foundation for Florida Virtual School collaborates with families and community groups to assist in providing equal access to the necessary technology required for virtual courses.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ The department will seek ways to increase opportunities for students to access online programs. Statutory changes related to eligibility criteria for virtual education would be necessary. As the FACT Initiative progresses, the department will continue to identify and examine methods to develop and further evaluate any potential opportunities for the advancement of online programs.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

The department will need to work with legislature to repeal or amend s. 1002.455, F.S., in order to provide more student options and reduce confusion related to varying and unequal eligibility requirements. Also, any concerns that will be raised in the Florida Department of Education School Choice Compliance Report (April 2014) regarding access to virtual education options will need to be addressed by the department in order to ensure successful implementation of the FACT Initiative. The department should use these findings to inform the implementation steps of the FACT Initiative and continue to engage in proactive efforts to complete the implementation and ensure proper maintenance of the online course catalog.

III. Funding for MOOCs and Online Courses

Current Status

Currently, there are several virtual instruction options funded through the Florida Education Finance Program. The largest is the Florida Virtual School, which is funded directly by the state and treated as a school district for funding purposes. For all other virtual instruction options, funding flows through the district to a provider, or to the district for a district-developed virtual instruction program. In the 2012-13 school year, there were more than 43,000 full-time equivalent students in virtual programs. All virtual instruction programs are guaranteed a minimum of \$5,200 per full-time equivalent student. Florida Education Finance Program funding is distributed to each district on a bi-monthly basis.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ The department should utilize the existing framework established for funding the virtual instruction program through the Florida Education Finance Program. Funding would flow through the school districts for student course completions delivered by a department-approved provider that holds a contract with the school district. Funding would be distributed to districts based on the full-time equivalent student membership associated with the online course. To do this, the statutory definition of a full-time equivalent student will need to be amended to include MOOCs. The district would distribute funds to the provider based on the contracted or state-determined rate. For part-time virtual instruction programs, full-time equivalent status is based on six full-credit course completions. School districts would report student data from the online providers to the department throughout the year. Funding would be based on estimated completions until actual completions are available.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

The definition of a full-time equivalent student in s. 1011.61, F.S., would need to be amended to include MOOCs. Funding provisions specific to MOOCs online instruction would need to be established in the Florida Education Finance Program, s. 1011.62, F.S.

IV. Accountability

Current Status

The department currently maintains accountability systems compliant with the requirements in statute and State Board of Education rule (ss. 1002.45, 1003.42, 1008.22, 1008.31, 1008.34, 1008.341 and 1008.3415, F.S., and State Board of Education Rules 6A-1.09981, 6A-1.099822 and 6A-1.099828).

For current virtual education systems, district and provider-operated virtual schools receive a school grade similar to that of public schools; however, provider-operated virtual schools receive a statewide school grade or a school improvement rating based on their students' state assessment results. Applicants and approved providers must disclose student, educator and school performance accountability outcomes, as well as completion rates and promotion rates on a website accessible to the public. An approved full-time provider that receives a school grade of "D" or "F," or a school

improvement rating of “Declining” must file a school improvement plan and in collaboration with the department, develop a corrective action plan. An approved provider’s contract must be terminated if the previously described situation occurs for two years during a four-year period.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

✓ In addition to compliance with Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rule, the FACT Initiative environment measures of accountability will include close monitoring and reporting of various data and customer service points of interest. These include but are not limited to:

- enrollment numbers;
- course completion and successful completion rates;
- attrition rates;
- technological delivery success;
- teacher/student ratios;
- customer service metrics
- curricular alignment to state-approved standards;
- pass rates for various associated tests; and
- overall production quality.

Overall, this includes the maintenance and oversight of an effective delivery system for educating students, promotion of student achievement, compliance with all program oversight and developed performance metrics based on access, delivery, cost effectiveness and performance. The department must maintain and further develop as needed a strict prescriptive accountability model for the FACT Initiative with an accountability focus on performance, outcomes and cost effectiveness, which would be proposed to the legislature for incorporation into statute.

The accountability process for the FACT Initiative will remain focused on student success, efficiency and quality, measurability, transparency, intervention identification and alignment with other relevant measures. The department will seek further opportunities and partnerships to further identify and enhance accountability structures in this expanded environment.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

The department will need to propose statutory language related to accountability and school grades to clarify appropriate accountability for all public virtual schools and full-time programs offering online courses and MOOCs. Additional funding to meet personnel needs may be necessary to continue to maintain and/or enhance existing accountability systems while handling the input, monitoring and manipulation of data required for the implementation of another data set into the accountability system.

MOOC assessment data irrespective of providers will utilize the same data definitions to satisfy the requirements of ss.1001.02 and 1008.31, F.S., in relation to the collection, transmission and storage of student data. Also, language will need to be developed, and a process will need to be specified for

receiving enrollment, participation and assessment data for student participation in state-approved MOOCs.

Per s.1003.499, F.S., *Florida Approved Courses and Tests (FACT) Initiative*, department-approved providers must ensure instructional and curricular quality through a detailed curriculum and student performance accountability plan that addresses every subject and grade level it intends to provide through contract with the school districts. Providers must also participate in the statewide assessment program and in the state's education performance accountability system. Part-time provider student assessment results are reported by the department showing the percentages of students making learning gains on statewide assessments, passing end-of-course assessments, taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams and scoring 3 or higher on AP exams. Further clarification from the legislature is needed on the "detailed curriculum and student performance accountability plan" articulated in statute.

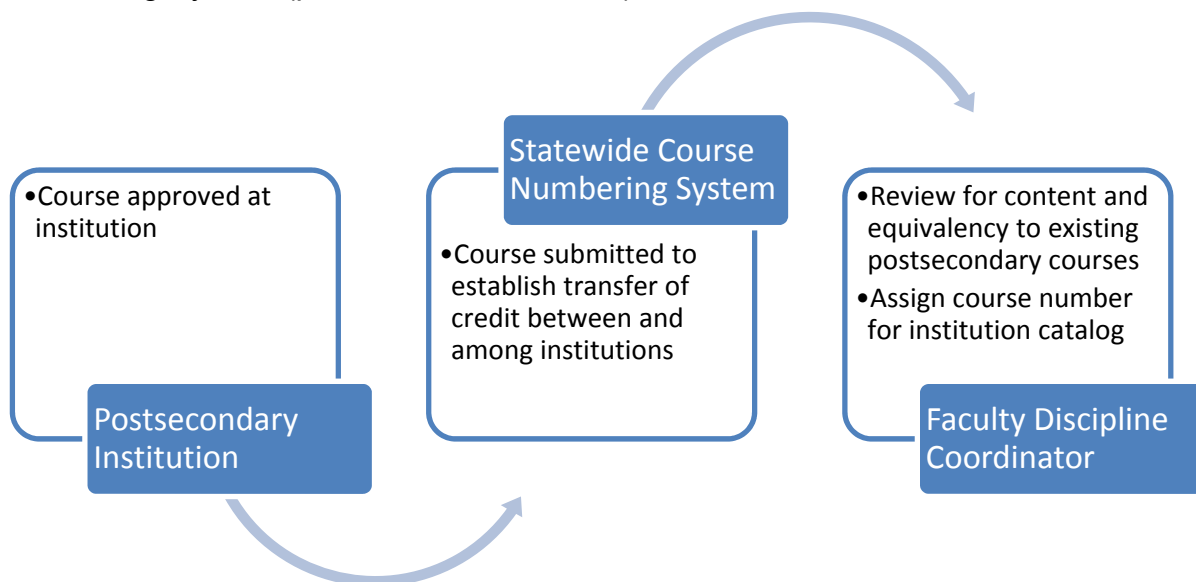
The department should maintain current data systems and outcome requirements for courses developed or adopted for the FACT Initiative. These include, but are not limited to, full provider access to longitudinal data for the purposes of conducting studies, reporting all data points and student outcomes and data sharing for the improvement of college and career readiness for students.

V. Credit-bearing Structures

Current Status

K-12. All courses currently taught in traditional school settings and virtual programs are aligned to the current approved course descriptions. Test item specifications outlining the content to be tested for each statewide end-of-course assessment have been developed for several of the courses delineated as MOOC subject areas: Algebra 1, Biology 1, Geometry and Civics. The test item specifications for Algebra 1 and Geometry, however, must be revised to align with the statewide end-of-course assessments that will be administered beginning in the 2014-15 school year. Upon successful completion of the end-of-course assessment, educational credit may be awarded to the student, under the Credit Acceleration Program (CAP) pursuant to s. 1003.4298, F.S. Credit-bearing courses for MOOCs at the secondary level are a new concept not only for Florida, but for the nation as a whole.

Postsecondary. At the postsecondary level, all courses are maintained in the Statewide Course Numbering System (please see chart below).



Florida College System institutions have the authority to award credit for experiential learning which includes MOOCs, military training, work experience, credit-by-examination and other demonstrations of competency. The following table delineates the ways students can earn credit for prior learning.

Credit Awarding Options		
Method	Options/Details	Award of Credit
Credit-by-Exam (s. 1007.27, F.S., <i>Articulated accelerated mechanisms</i> ; Rule 6A-10.024, <i>Articulation between and among universities, community colleges and school districts</i>)	Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) and College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)	Institutions are required to award the minimum credit for passing scores recommended by the Articulation Coordinating Committee exam equivalencies list
	DSST Examinations (formerly DANTES Subject Standardized Tests)	Institutions are not required to initially award credit, but are required to accept credit in transfer if another institution awarded credit based on the Articulation Coordinating Committee list of equivalents
	Excelsior College Examinations	Institutions are not required to initially award credit, but are required to accept credit in transfer if another institution awarded credit based on the Articulation Coordinating Committee list of equivalents
	Institutional/Departmental Examinations	Exams given and credit awarded at the discretion of the institution

Credit Awarding Options		
Method	Options/Details	Award of Credit
Credit for Industry Certification (s. 1007.23(1), F.S., <i>Statewide articulation agreement</i> ; Rule 6A-10.0401, <i>Gold standard career pathways articulation agreements</i>)	Gold Standard Career Pathways	Institutions required to award credit towards an AAS/AS degree program for industry certifications earned pursuant to the Gold Standard Career Pathways Statewide Articulation Agreement
Credit for Military Service (s. 1004.096, F.S., <i>College credit for military training and education courses</i> ; Rule 6A-14.0432, <i>Credit for military service</i>)	Credit for military training, experience or coursework recognized by the American Council on Education	Institutions required to have a policy relating to the award of credit for military experience using the American Council on Education guidelines
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)	Credit awarded for prior learning and experience through other means is at the discretion of the institution	Credit awarded for a portfolio assessment is at the discretion of the institution; institutions may review portfolios internally or use an external resource such as the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL)

The following table further delineates the policies pertaining to the award of experiential and prior learning credit hours.

Experiential/Prior Learning Credit Options	
Source	Policy
Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation 3.5.2	At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree must be earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree.
Rule 6A-10.024(7), <i>Articulation between and among universities, community colleges, and school Districts</i>	Transfer of credit by examination per the ACC's exam equivalencies list is guaranteed for up to 45 credits. Transfer of examination credit over 45 credits is at the discretion of the receiving institution.

MOOC programs around the nation have sought to solve the postsecondary credit-bearing question by utilizing programs such as the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service. This group closely evaluates content, scope and examinations and recommends whether credit should or should not be awarded. For MOOCs, the American Council on Education has evaluated and recommended the award of college credit for five courses on the Coursera MOOC platform. These courses include Pre-Calculus from the University of California, Irvine; Introduction to Genetics and Evolution from Duke University; Bioelectricity: A Quantitative Approach from Duke University; Calculus: Single Variable from the University of Pennsylvania; and Algebra from the University of California, Irvine (developmental).

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ **K-12.** FACT Initiative courses, including MOOCs and online courses, must be fully aligned to the current approved course descriptions for each course as listed in the Course Code Directory for the current school year. These courses must provide students with a means to complete required statewide end-of-course or other department-approved assessments. Consistency with the current process of course review will be maintained. Statutory changes pertaining to the award of credit for MOOCs and tasks of the Articulation Coordinating Committee will need to be implemented and are described in the implementation steps on page 14.
- Postsecondary.** Upon rule approval by the State Board of Education, the Articulation Coordinating Committee must establish protocol for rule implementation. Components of the rule should include the establishment of a faculty review process; the annual publication of competency-based online courses, including MOOCs; the development and implementation of accountability measurement and reporting; and the monitoring of credit-awarded and student-persistence/completion data.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

K-12. FACT Initiative course providers must submit formal proposals for approval by the department. An intensive process will be developed to comprehensively review and approve the course content for both MOOCs and online courses. The Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support will lead these efforts to ensure quality and strong alignment with approved course descriptions.

In addition, the department will need to work with legislature to do the following.

- Add a measure to s. 1008.38, F.S., *Articulation accountability process*, that addresses the award of credit on the basis of competency-based online courses, including MOOCs.
- Add a provision to s. 1007.01(3), F.S., *Articulation; legislative intent; purpose; role of the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors; Articulation Coordinating Committee*, requiring the Articulation Coordinating Committee to annually publish a list of competency-based online courses, including MOOCs, that have been identified as a result of the established State Board of Education/Board of Governors rules pursuant to s. 1004.0961, F.S., *Credit for online courses*.

State Board of Education rules pertaining to how MOOC and FACT Initiative credit-bearing and accountability systems will be established and approved prior to the 2015-16 school year, pursuant to s. 1004.0961, F.S. Upon rule approval by the State Board of Education, the Articulation Coordinating Committee must establish protocol for rule implementation. Components of the rule should include the establishment of a faculty review process; the annual publication of competency-based online courses, including MOOCs; the development and implementation of accountability, measurement and reporting; and the monitoring of credit-awarded and student-persistence/completion data.

Postsecondary. The following steps need to be taken for implementation.

- Establish State Board of Education rules prior to the 2015-16 school year, pursuant to s. 1004.0961, F.S.
- The Articulation Coordinating Committee must establish protocol for implementing the rules.
- A faculty review process must be established.
- An annual list of competency-based online courses, including MOOCs, must be published.
- Accountability measures and reporting criteria must be determined and implemented.
- Credit awarded and student persistence/completion data must be monitored.

VI. Assessments

Current Status

Statewide end-of-course assessments, called Florida End-of-Course Assessments, are currently administered for the following courses delineated as MOOC subject areas: Algebra 1, Biology 1, Geometry and Civics. These assessments are aligned to the approved state standards. Students enrolled in these courses, or their equivalents, are required to participate in the corresponding assessment. Each student receives a scale score for the entire assessment. There are no subsections for any of the currently developed end-of-course assessments at this time.

For the subjects listed in House Bill 7029, students must complete a statewide end-of-course assessment.

The department is currently undergoing development for an Algebra 2 End-of-Course Assessment, which will be aligned to the new Florida Standards. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, two additional mathematics end-of-course assessments (Algebra 1 and Geometry) will be aligned to the new Florida Standards, and will replace the existing Algebra 1 and Geometry assessments (retake administrations will continue to be offered for students who still need to take the assessments aligned to the approved state standards). The end-of-course assessments for Biology 1 and Civics, as well as U.S. History, which is not currently identified as a MOOC subject area, will continue to be aligned to the approved state standards.

The department is currently utilizing third-party test sites for the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations, Florida Educational Leadership Examination and General Education Development testing programs. These test sites are positioned throughout Florida and the nation in private sector locations. In addition, there are numerous test sites located at state colleges and universities throughout Florida. Third-party sites may play a significant role in the delivery of assessments aligned with the FACT Initiative courses.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ Students will have to show mastery of the approved educational standards outlined in the course description as a result of having completed any online course. For the subjects listed in the legislation, this would need to include interim assessments as well as the required statewide end-of-course assessments.

Utilize existing statewide end-of-course assessments for Algebra 1, Biology 1, Geometry and Civics, with adherence to statutory requirements for each assessment.

Procuring the use of third-party test sites to administer the MOOC assessments may be necessary. These sites should apply strict conditions, such as test security requirements, technology platforms, testing volume, best practice in educational testing and compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 508 requirements. Third-party test sites have already been addressed within State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.042. Expansion of test sites may be necessary to meet demand if other factors impact the expansion of testing availability (restrictions on district/college sites).

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

Procure, develop or adopt existing assessments capable of accurately measuring students' mastery of content learned via an online learning platform, including MOOCs. A passing score on the assessment as set by the State Board of Education may result in educational credit being awarded. If MOOC options are expanded to include subject areas not currently listed in statute, other assessments may be used to satisfy the end-of-course requirements. Studies will need to be conducted to establish passing scores that are comparable to the established passing scores for statewide end-of-course assessments. The approved assessments must be aligned to approved

Florida standards, and must meet the requirements of the department, State Board of Education rules, Florida Statutes and the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, as prescribed by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA) and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). These requirements include best practices in development, administration, scoring and reporting of large-scale assessments. Assessments and all instructional programs must also be developed and administered consistent with the requirements covered under Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Districts would use the existing state-developed interim assessment item bank. Should there be a need for additional items or to develop and/or approve MOOC assessments, an intensive procurement and vendor approval process must take place. A sufficient timeframe will need to be allowed for the test development process before exam implementation and administration. Funding for the development (if needed) and administration of all MOOC assessments will need to be specified and appropriated accordingly.

Explore the possibility and utility of extending the defined MOOC subject areas to include U.S. History and Algebra 2, since there is an existing U.S. History End-of-Course Assessment and Senate Bill 1076 passed during the 2013 legislative session requires the implementation of a statewide end-of-course assessment in Algebra 2. Additionally, new procurement activities will likely be required for an expansion of providers for the existing end-of-course assessments. If there is an extension of MOOC subject areas beyond the subject areas listed, unique examinations by subject area would need to be developed and/or approved. This process may require a full procurement process. Typical test development cycles are 3-5 years.

Current and future end-of-course assessment designs the department currently has under contract do not include scorable subsections. For statewide assessments, subsections would need to be established and new requirements would have to be implemented regarding the scoring and stakes of these sections. This would require a significant scope change to current and planned work. In addition, if scorable subsections were to be established, current statutory requirements for students taking end-of-course assessments should be revised to align with FACT requirements (i.e., passing requirements/stakes must be uniform for all students for statewide end-of-course-required subjects). Additionally, psychometric studies related to reliability and validity in a subsection environment would need to be carefully conducted. Establishing subsections may also result in an increase in cost and the duration of test administration.

Best practices would include local interim assessments during the duration of the course at various intervals. All assessments would be aligned to the educational standards outlined in the course description and a plan for the administration of these assessments would be required.

VII. Virtual Learning Platforms Delivered in Modules or Segments

Current Status

K-12. Courses currently taught in traditional school settings or virtual programs may not be presented in stand-alone modules. Students may, however, complete a statewide end-of-course assessment without completing any or all of the approved courses. The latter option is similar to what the FACT Initiative is promoting: competency-mastery driven education rather than seat-time driven education.

All district and state online courses are currently offered, completed and funded based on semester segments. Grades are issued at least quarterly, and are based on grades for more discreet mastery-based units. Florida Virtual School courses, specifically, are formatted into modules designed for competency-based learning. While these learning platforms currently exist, they will need to be further defined to fit the specific needs of MOOCs.

Research from existing K-12 MOOC modular-learning platforms indicates that building trust and relationships in an open environment through social interaction and collaboration are important for student engagement and success in virtual learning platforms.

Postsecondary. At the postsecondary level, course-delivery mechanisms and strategies are at the discretion of the postsecondary institution and faculty. Florida College System institutions are actively engaged in redesigning the traditional classroom-lecture courses to utilize technology to enhance student success. In addition, Florida College System institutions have been in the business of delivering courses and programs online for years. Sound instructional design and effective teaching and pedagogy are paramount to student success, and Florida College System institutions are maintaining high quality while providing delivery options to their diverse student population. For the past several years, Florida College System institutions have been restructuring developmental education courses to accelerate transition to college-level coursework, including modularizing the curriculum. Lastly, Florida College System institutions have protocols in place for the award of college credit for experiential learning, competency demonstration and transfer of credit from other institutions, public and nonpublic, which could include MOOCs.

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations

- ✓ Research pertaining to MOOCs at the K-12 level is limited; therefore, local school support or blended learning environments for K-12 MOOCs should be utilized, when possible. K-12 student experience more success if their local schools provide face-to-face support for their students taking MOOCs. This could include providing learning coaches, teachers, aides and other classroom resources. Adding these face-to-face supports to the online learning taking place in the MOOCs creates a blended learning environment. Additionally, local school support and registration for MOOCs must be required for children under the age of thirteen in order to remain compliant with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which are federal law regulations.

How "subparts" are defined and incorporated into the accountability system in terms of funding will need to be addressed in statute.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

Any proposed modules will need to be reviewed by the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support in order to ensure alignment with approved course descriptions.

Section 1003.499, F.S., will need to be updated to define "subparts" and specify whether funding will be tied to "subparts" of a course and implementation guidelines. Currently, funding of virtual courses allows for semester segments, at minimum; however, this platform may not be suitable for the FACT Initiative. Modules must align with standards contained in approved course descriptions. Students should be encouraged to complete all modules or segments necessary to complete instruction

required by approved course descriptions. State Board of Education rule will also need to enhance the definition of “subparts” for uniformity, demonstration of mastery and funding.

In addition to the MOOC requirements set by House Bill 7029, schools and districts may encourage the use of MOOCs for purposes other than earning credit for a whole course. For example, a MOOC could be used as part of a course, supplemental to a course for more in-depth learning or for the opportunity to interact with experts about specific topics.

Continual research will need to be conducted to examine findings related to promoting student engagement and success at the K-12 level. The department will need to communicate with MOOC providers and other interested parties to continually develop and revise guidelines according to contemporary research. This research is critical to ensuring that continual innovative processes are utilized to maximize student success in MOOCs; the rate of success is directly related to the security of funding. It will also be beneficial to incentivize postsecondary institutions and associated faculty to explore and innovate in the areas of online learning, MOOCs, blended learning and other tools delivered in modules or segments by providing a dedicated funding source. A targeted funding source for the development and delivery of new, innovative online course delivery, including MOOCs, will need to be identified. This will also be a function of the taskforce delineated in earlier sections of this report (see page 5).

VII. Provider Requirements

Current Status

The department currently has an approval process in place for Virtual Instruction Providers at the state and district levels. This process involves the approval of full- and part-time virtual program providers through a rigorous application process (vendor applications are submitted and reviewed each fall). Beginning in 2014, there will be two separate applications: one for full-time and one for part-time providers. Prior to the commencement of the approval process, a department review team is assembled, and members are assigned to review sections of the application based on their areas of expertise. Department leadership make the final decisions regarding approval/denial based on recommendations provided by the review team. Upon initial denial, a second application window is opened to allow applicants who were not granted approval status to submit additional information to be reviewed by the department. The final approval/denial decision is made by department leadership.

Current Virtual Instruction Provider qualifications are outlined in s. 1002.45(2), F.S., and include:

- nonsectarian programs and policies;
- antidiscrimination policies (employment, enrollment);
- Florida administrative office/staff;
- Florida-certified teachers;
- employee background screening;
- provision of specific teacher, administration and technical support contact information online for each course for student and parent access;
- prior, successful experience offering online courses as indicated by student learning gains in each subject and grade level;
- accreditation by the regional accrediting agency;

- instructional and curricular quality through a detailed curriculum and student performance accountability plan (in which all courses are reviewed to determine if they meet state and national standards);
- specified disclosure requirements published online for the public;
- an annual financial audit;
- technology and technical support; and
- database reporting.

In the event that additional assessments in whole or subsections need to be developed, assessment providers will be required to adhere to prescriptive standards including, but not limited to, those delineated within the Assessment section of this report (see pages 15).

Department FACT Initiative Recommendations



In order to align to state law, the department must mandate that MOOC providers adhere to the department policies related to non-sectarianism; antidiscrimination; teacher-student, teacher-parent and student-student interaction; student attendance and participation; student assessment requirements; Internet use and safety and technical support; and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements.

Whether existing or newly developed, all MOOCs must adhere to strict accreditation standards observed by the state of Florida, and all individuals acting as instructors must hold valid Florida teaching certificates. Course curriculum plans are required for each MOOC and must align to state-approved standards. Each course offered by the provider must demonstrate prior successful experience and using quantified student learning gains in each grade level and subject.

Providers must demonstrate the capability to develop, administer and score high-volume MOOC assessments and subassessments through the use of the department-approved test sites, to include the use of third-party test sites. These assessment activities must adhere to strict conditions, such as test security requirements, technology platforms, testing volume, best practices in educational testing and Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 508 compliance capabilities. As such, it is necessary that providers have the capability to transmit relevant student achievement and assessment data to the state in a secure, confidential and timely manner.

All FACT Initiative services must be rendered at a reasonable cost to the state, to include potential assessment development, scoring and administration activities.

Legislative action will need to be taken to address funding for implementing the FACT Initiative.

Required Implementation Steps and Program Needs

A new State Board of Education rule must be drafted, routed and approved to provide consistency with the implementation of s. 1003.499, F.S., pursuant to HB 7029. Also, the existing provider approval applications will need to be modified to address the requirements of the FACT Initiative. If modifications to the existing applications are not sufficient, new applications will need to be drafted and approved.

The department will determine scope, responsibilities and roles of potential vendors before the approval process can be fully modified to meet the needs of the FACT Initiative. The department will also need to determine whether one vendor will be utilized, or if multiple vendors will be allowed for course and assessment development and administration, consistent with the procurement laws in place. The existing approval process should be reviewed and revised, as needed. Funding source(s) and processes for the FACT Initiative will need to be determined. This may include additional/revised legislation to allow modified funding processes or additional funding to accommodate the implementation.

In accordance with HB 7029, the FACT Initiative is due to become active in the 2015-16 school year; therefore, the approval process and revisions should conclude no later than summer 2014.

The approval process should include language related to adherence to federal and state education and assessment guidelines.

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