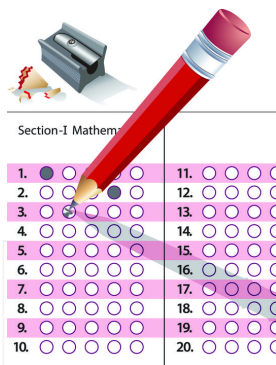


State's testing system was hacked, DOE says

BRANDON LARRABEE, THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA 6:44 p.m. CDT March 9, 2015



(Photo: Creative Outlet)

TALLAHASSEE — State officials announced Monday they were investigating a cyber attack against Florida's online-testing program for public schools, while the House Education Committee approved its version of legislation meant to scale back the amount of time students spend on exams.

In a joint statement, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Department of Education said the FDLE had launched an investigation into the attacks on the testing platform operated by American Institutes for Research, a non-profit group that signed a six-year, \$220 million deal to design the tests.



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Testing fallout felt locally; exams to be reduced

[\(http://www.pnj.com/story/news/education/2015/03/04/testing-fallout-felt-locally/24379891/\)](http://www.pnj.com/story/news/education/2015/03/04/testing-fallout-felt-locally/24379891/)

The news came after the rollout for the new Florida Standards Assessment was plagued by slow logins and other technical glitches.

In announcing the investigation Monday, Education Commissioner Pam Stewart said that "some of the delays in testing late last week" were caused by the attack — but she also noted that concerns about an attack did not emerge until Thursday morning, well after the highest-profile problems for the system.

"Our highest priority is to make sure students can complete their tests, and we will continue to work with AIR to ensure their system operates effectively," Stewart said. "It is important to point out that AIR has reported that while access to the test has been delayed because of the cyber attacks, no student data has been compromised."



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School districts experience delays on first day of test

[\(http://www.pnj.com/story/news/education/2015/03/02/school-districts-experience-delays-first-day-new-test/24287973/\)](http://www.pnj.com/story/news/education/2015/03/02/school-districts-experience-delays-first-day-new-test/24287973/)

The attack added another dimension to calls for the state to rethink its move to the Florida Standards Assessment, particularly when it comes to using the results on state-issued report cards for schools. Some educators, parents and lawmakers have urged the state to suspend the school-grading system and disregard or de-emphasize the use of the test when it comes to decisions about teacher contracts and student promotion for at least a couple of years.

"It doesn't serve anybody's purpose to do this," Florida Education Association President Andy Ford said of the attack. "If it's true, it's the wrong approach. And it just shows that not only weren't you ready, but you're vulnerable to the outside world, and the DOE really needs to take a look at what they've done and what they've built and try to make sure that in the future it can't be attacked."

Meanwhile, the House Education Committee unanimously approved a measure (PCB EDC 15-04) meant to ease the testing burden on students, teachers and schools.

The proposal would eliminate an 11th-grade language arts test that Gov. Rick Scott has suspended. It would also bar final exams in classes for which the state or a local school district has end-of-course tests, and make a college-readiness test given to some students optional.

The measure would reduce how much of a teacher's evaluation is tied to student performance, from 50 percent to a third. And it would require the Department of Education to publish a testing calendar that districts can use, along with their own schedule, to inform parents about when students will be tested.

It would also provide local districts more flexibility when it comes to testing.

The bipartisan approval for the bill came in contrast to a vote last week in the Senate PreK-12 Education Committee, which passed a testing measure on a party-line vote.

Ford also indicated that his group preferred the House legislation, even if problems remain.

"But we're still concerned about the total amount of time that testing consumes in a school year," Ford said. "We are also concerned, as parents and students are, about the rocky implementation that took place last week."

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