

Effect of Florida Legislator's Change in FCAT Testing Dates on Future Florida District of Key Club Conventions

Background

The Florida legislature has mandated that the FCAT testing be moved from March to mid-April beginning in 2011. In most of our school districts and especially in our largest districts, public schools are required to "blackout" overnight field trips anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months before FCAT testing. In other words, no overnight field trips will be allowed for most schools from at least March through April 15, 2011.

In order to secure for its conventions an appropriate date and lock in reasonable room and food costs, the Florida District of Key Club contracts with the convention hotel(s) several years in advance (now through 2016). While these contracts obligate the hotel to charge us an agreed upon cost, they also obligate Florida Key Club to pay a minimum of about \$300,000 for rooms and meals. This minimum must be paid regardless of attendance.

The 2011 District Convention is scheduled for April 7-10. The 2012-2016 conventions are scheduled for various dates in the month of April. As a result of the Legislature's actions, all of the contracted dates for conventions through 2016 now fall either during FCAT testing or during the blackout period.

Decision and Rationale

Due to the changed dates of FCAT, we have decided to change the dates of already contracted future Florida District Conventions as outlined below:

<u>Current Date</u>	<u>New Date</u>
April 7-10, 2011	May 5-8, 2011
April 11-15, 2012	May 10-13, 2012
April 17-21, 2013	May 9-12, 2013
April 23-27, 2014	May 8-11, 2014
April 15-19, 2015	May 7-10, 2015
April 13-17, 2016	May 5-8, 2016

These new dates were the *earliest dates available* after FCAT testing at the contracted hotels. We cannot cancel our contracts with the hotels without incurring the minimum cost of \$300,000 per year. District convention attendance would clearly be unacceptably low if we left the dates as they were. We are actually fortunate that these May dates were still available.

FAQ's

Q: Why don't you go to another hotel on more favorable dates?

A: We likely could not find suitable hotels with available dates at this point. In addition, we would be obligated to pay the hotels we now contract with about \$300,000 each year for canceling our contracts. We obviously cannot afford to do this.

Q: Why don't you change the dates with the current hotels to the last weekend in April?

A: Those dates are not available; other events are booked at that time. The May dates are the earliest available dates after FCAT.

Q: Why don't you get dates in February or March?

A: Early February is too early for Key Club to have its convention for several reasons including the need to elect Lt. Governors at Spring Rallies. It also does not give enough time to meet registration deadlines without a conflict with winter break. Finally, any time after mid-February would be during the overnight field trip blackout period that is due to the new FCAT dates?

Q: FCAT testing and blackouts do not affect all schools, so why don't we just keep the current dates?

A: FCAT's affect 85% of the schools where we have Key Clubs. The remaining 15% cannot produce enough attendees to keep us from losing money. In addition, we do not want to deprive the vast majority of our schools from the opportunity to attend this very important event.

Q: Since FCAT affects field trips, can't students attend without it being a field trip?

A: For some schools this is possible and is done now. However, in the vast majority of schools, the Faculty Advisor would not be able to attend if this was not an approved school trip as well as several other legal or procedural reasons why this option would not work.

Q: Some schools cannot go on overnight field trips in May, the last month of school, and many Key Club members have proms, Advance Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) testing during some of the May dates, won't these have a negative impact on attendance?

A: Yes, however, while some schools and students will not be able to attend, the numbers affected by these reasons are far less than the numbers affected by the FCAT. We must minimize our losses the best we can.

Q: I hear that there won't be any FCAT in a couple of years. Why are you moving the dates of conventions in 2012-2016?

A: While it may very well be that FCAT will not be around as we know it, there is no guarantee of this or that some other testing program won't be implemented with similar blackout dates. If we wait, we will likely lose the dates we now are able to move to and be locked into our current dates. That is a chance we cannot financially afford to take.