
ECP 3510 Spring 2026 Practice Exam 2

This exam is closed book and closed notes. Collaboration by any means is strictly prohibited. Once you leave the classroom, your exam will be considered complete, and you will not be permitted to return. A calculator is permitted. Answer each question in the space provided. Be concise. Clarity matters more than length.

All questions on this exam refer to the attached article “Alachua County School Board Ends Rawlings’ Year-Round Schedule, Expands Summer School,” published in *The Independent Florida Alligator*.

Name: _____

By completing this exam, you agree that you will abide by the University of Florida’s Student Honor Code, that you will not accept or provide help that has not been expressly permitted by the instructor, and that you understand that failure to comply with these policies will result in disciplinary action.

Question 1 (20 points)

Rawlings Elementary received a “D” grade in both 2022–2023 and 2023–2024. A large percentage of students scored at the lowest performance level in reading and math, and science proficiency was 57% (vs. 70% district-wide). Nearly 46% of teachers were “inexperienced” (fewer than four years), 13 percentage points above the state average.

(a) (6 points) Using Neal and Schanzenbach (2010), explain why Rawlings is likely to remain low-performing under a proficiency-count system.

(b) (7 points) Science proficiency at Rawlings (57%) is well below the district average (70%), even though science is not a primary accountability metric. Use Holmström-Milgrom (1991) to explain this gap.

(c) (7 points) Board member Plavac said the year-round program “set these kids up for failure” due to first-year teachers. Using Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2014a,b) explain why the concentration of inexperienced teachers at Rawlings is costly.

2. **Question 2 (25 points)**

Enrollment at Rawlings fell nearly 20% after the year-round schedule began. Florida's Empowerment Scholarship provides an \approx \$8,000 voucher, and there are 12 voucher-accepting private schools in Alachua County. Consider the Epple-Romano (1998) model, where school quality depends on the mean ability of enrolled students ($\theta_s = \bar{b}_s$), and private schools can set individualized tuition.

- (a) (5 points) In the Epple-Romano model, which students do private schools most want to admit? How do they use tuition to attract these students? Explain the economic logic.
- (b) (5 points) When high-ability students leave for private schools, what happens to θ_{pub} at the public school? Explain why this creates a self-reinforcing cycle that makes it harder for Rawlings to improve.

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- (c) (5 points) Suppose the state introduces a universal voucher of $v = \$8K$. If private schools can price discriminate, who captures most of the voucher value? What happens to students who remain at Rawlings?
- (d) (3 points) Given the cream-skimming prediction, would you expect the 20% enrollment decline at Rawlings to be random, or concentrated among particular types of families? Explain using the model.
- (e) (7 points) A community member argues that Rawlings should be closed and the students should be reassigned to nearby charter schools, citing Abdulkadiroğlu et al. (2011) as evidence that charter schools boost student achievement. Is this a strong argument? Explain why the findings in Abdulkadiroğlu et al. (2011) would or would not apply in this case.

3. **Question 3 (30 points)**

Rawlings is in northeast Gainesville, a lower-income area, while west Gainesville schools serve more affluent families. Suppose education is funded by a proportional income tax t . Households have utility:

$$U_i = (1 - \alpha) \ln(c_i) + \alpha \ln(e), \quad c_i = (1 - t)y_i, \quad e = t\bar{y}$$

The tax rate is chosen by majority vote. In the East sub-district: $\bar{y}^E = \$40,000$, $\alpha^E = 0.08$. In the West sub-district: $\bar{y}^W = \$80,000$, $\alpha^W = 0.12$.

- (a) (10 points) Derive t^* chosen by majority vote separately in East and West. Calculate per-pupil expenditure, e , in each sub-district.
- (b) (7 points) Suppose the state provides the East sub-district with an unrestricted block grant $G = \$4,000$ per pupil. Derive the new spending level and explain why the grant is partially crowded out.
- (c) (4 points) Now suppose instead the state implements power equalization with guaranteed tax base y_0 . What y_0 equalizes East's spending at \$9,600? What is the per-pupil cost to the state? Why is there no crowd-out?

(d) (5 points) Using findings from Jackson, Johnson, and Persico (2016), explain why redirecting a dollar of spending from the West sub-district to the East sub-district could improve *both* equity and efficiency.

(e) (4 points) Biasi, Lafortune, and Schonholzer (2025) study school capital spending. State their test for whether capital spending is efficient. If voters in northeast Gainesville passed a school bond and home prices *increased*, what would this tell us?

4. **Question 4 (25 points)**

The School Board voted 3–2 to end the year-round pilot. Rawlings remains in Tier 2 turnaround with a D grade.

- (a) (15 points) Identify the **two most important** economic mechanisms explaining why Rawlings has remained persistently low-performing despite the year-round intervention. For each, state: (a) the relevant course concept, (b) evidence from the article, and (c) why the year-round pilot did not address it.

- (b) (10 points) Propose **one** policy intervention grounded in a paper or framework from the course. Explain why it works through the relevant model and give one limitation.

The Alachua County School Board discontinued Rawlings Elementary’s year-round school year and approved summer school opportunities in a meeting Tuesday night.

The meeting was also the first for new board member Janine Plavac, who was appointed to the District 5 seat by Gov. Ron DeSantis, filling a four-month vacancy.

Rawlings Elementary

The ACSB discontinued Marjorie K. Rawlings Elementary’s year-round school year in a 3-2 vote, with Janine Plavac and Leanetta McNealy in dissent.

Rawlings was among only five schools in Florida participating in the Year-Round School Pilot Program, under a state law passed during the 2023 legislative session. The school year started in July to reduce learning loss over the summer.

The northeast Gainesville elementary school received a “D” grade for both the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 school years. Less than 4% of all Florida schools received a “D” grade in the 2023-2024 school year.

Rawlings’ grades place it in a “Tier 2” status, labeling it a target of additional support and improvement. It has been in a turnaround plan since August.

During the meeting, survey data about Rawlings from both parents and teachers was presented to the board.

Parents surveyed in April 2024 mostly supported the year-round change, with 70% planning to keep their children enrolled. Supporters cited academic improvements as positives, while those choosing to leave pointed to scheduling difficulties and worries about academics.

By Spring 2025, 71% of staff reported satisfaction with the year-round model, but only 34% of parents expressed satisfaction.

About 60% of staff said they would recommend the year-round schedule, compared with 37% of parents.

Enrollment at Rawlings showed a significant decline since the schedule change, with a nearly 20% drop in full-time students between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years.

Attendance rates at Rawlings improved slightly, rising from just over 86% in 2024 to nearly 89% in 2025, but it’s still below district averages.

Academic data showed challenges remain. A large percentage of K-5 students scored at the lowest performance level in reading and math assessments, with projections suggesting many students may struggle to reach proficiency by 2025.

Science proficiency was notably low at 57%, well below the district’s overall 70%.

The board deliberated the decision for over an hour.

District 5 board member Janine Plavac said the program “set these kids up for failure” due to the high percentage of first-year teachers at the school.

“First year teaching is the worst thing for you in the world,” she said. “You don’t know what is up or what is down, and then you’ve got kids you’re trying to engage, and you’re trying your hardest, but you’re book learning together.”

Nearly 46% of Rawlings Elementary teachers were “inexperienced,” or had taught for less than four years during the 2022-2023 school year. The number of inexperienced teachers was nearly 13% higher than the statewide average, according to the FLDOE.

Kelly Shiohira, a Gainesville resident, spoke in support of keeping Rawlings year-round.

“I’m frankly really shocked that following the presentation that we just had, we had a motion to discontinue this,” she said. “It is good that you’re taking community input and acting on it, but you’re misinterpreting what you’re hearing.”

District 4 board member Leanetta McNealy said she disagreed, noting one year wasn’t enough time to measure success.

“I’m not happy with this decision to seem as if this full year has not been successful,” she said. “It was necessary at the time that we would change the process, change the model, and that’s what this staff has tried to do.”

P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School in Gainesville was also approved as a year-round school.

While Board Chair Sarah Rockwell said she

agreed with Plavac regarding the inexperienced teachers, she also said P.K. Yonge’s pilot program doesn’t start until next year because the school took a year “just to plan it out.”

“I think that really should have been the requirement from the state of Florida,” she said. “What I’m seeing is we’re scrambling to try to fit a mold from the state of Florida that is not having a huge benefit, but is taking a huge amount of staff work.”

Summer school opportunities

The ACSB also approved its 2025 Extended School Year programs, focusing on combating summer learning loss.

The ESY programs include Voluntary Prekindergarten, elementary literacy camps, STEAM exploration programs, English for Speakers of Other Languages support, middle

and high school credit recovery options and extended special education services.

Transportation services will be provided for eligible students, and all enrolled participants receive breakfast and lunch during the summer session.

Beyond academics, the district is offering enrichment opportunities including Camp Crystal, a residential summer camp for students in grades second through ninth, and the Extended Day Enrichment Program, which features themed activities designed to foster social-emotional growth and creativity.

Career and technical education options such as Driver Education and the Career & Technical Education Land Lab will also be offered.

— *Sara-James Ranta. April 16, 2025.*