



May 4, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Judith Klinek
Chief Academic Officer

THROUGH: William F. Malone
Acting Superintendent

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF FY2011 FCAT WRITING RESULTS: ALL STUDENTS TESTED

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has released the FY2011 FCAT Writing results for all students tested.¹ In February of 2011, a total of 38,809 students took the FCAT Writing test in the School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) at grades 4, 8, and 10.

"In 2010, each essay was scored by one rater. In previous years, two raters were used and the scores were averaged. Prior to 2010, a student could have received a half-point score, such as 4.5; whereas in 2010 no half-point scores are possible. Additionally, in 2010, each student within the same grade level was required to write an essay using the same mode of writing (narrative, expository, or persuasive). In previous years, with the exception of grade 10 in 2008, there were two modes assessed at each grade level with half of the students responding to each mode. For example, the 2010 Grade 4 FCAT Writing required all students to write a narrative essay. In 2009, half of the students wrote a narrative essay, and half of the students were required to write an expository essay. While the Department and other experts have certified the validity of the 2010 FCAT Writing results, comparisons to previous years' writing scores should be avoided for these reasons." (Source: FDOE)²

In FY2011 the prompt mode used at grades 4, 8, and 10 was expository. In FY2010, only grade 8 had an expository prompt mode; whereas grade 4 was narrative and grade 10 was persuasive. As a result, grade 4 and 10 analyses are limited to comparisons with the State; while at grade 8 year-to-year change comparisons can also be made.

Overall, the District FCAT Writing results have improved and the District continues to outperform the State.

- In FY2011, the District scored significantly higher than the State at all tested grade levels in the percentage of students scoring 4 or higher.³
- In FY2011, at grade 8, the District and the State showed significant improvement (six percentage points).
- From FY2010 to FY2011, at grade 4, the District's increase was significantly greater than that of the State's; while at grade 10 the increase was the same as that of the State's.

¹ This data is based on all students tested, and not on the group of students used in the calculation of school grades and AYP. The State has not provided disaggregated data at this time.

² Therefore we are restricting our analysis to the FY2010 – FY2011 FCAT Writing results.

³ Scores on the FCAT writing test range from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). The percentage of students scoring 4 or higher is analyzed here because it is used by the State for school grading purposes and by the District to track Key Results in FCAT Writing.

Table 1 reports the percent of students scoring 4 or higher for the SDPBC and the State. Results for individual SDPBC schools are available on the Department of Research and Evaluation website at <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/dre/FCAT.asp>.

Table 1: FCAT Writing – Percent of Students Scoring 4 or Above

Year	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	SDPBC	State	SDPBC	State	SDPBC	State
FY2010	70 (N)	68 (N)	80 (E)	76 (E)	79 (P)	72 (P)
FY2011	85 (E)	81 (E)	86 (E)	82 (E)	82 (E)	75 (E)

Note: "In 2010, each essay was scored by one rater. In previous years, two raters were used and the scores were averaged. Prior to 2010, a student could have received a half-point score, such as 4.5; whereas in 2010 no half-point scores are possible. Additionally, in 2010, each student within the same grade level was required to write an essay using the same mode of writing (narrative, expository, or persuasive). In previous years, with the exception of grade 10 in 2008, there were two modes assessed at each grade level with half of the students responding to each mode. While the Department and other experts have certified the validity of the 2010 FCAT Writing results, comparisons to previous years' writing scores should be avoided for these reasons." (Source: FDOE)

(N) = narrative mode; (E) = expository mode; (P) = persuasive mode

These results will be shared with appropriate staff to provide direction for improvement in curriculum and instruction. In addition, schools have received reports regarding their FCAT Writing results and will use this information in the school improvement planning process.

Should you have questions about the FCAT Writing results, please contact Mark Howard, Director of Research and Evaluation, at 432-6376. If you have questions about instruction and FCAT Writing, please contact Constance Tuman-Rugg, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Curriculum, at 357-1113. If you have questions about individual school efforts and FCAT Writing, please contact the appropriate area superintendent or school principal.

WFM/JK/MB/MH

- c: Academic and Operating Chiefs
- Area/Assistant Superintendents
- Academic Executive Directors/Directors
- Principals