


May 18, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Janis Andrews, Ed.D.
Chief Academic Officer 

THROUGH: E. Wayne Gent
Superintendent 

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF FY2012 FCAT WRITING RESULTS: ALL STUDENTS TESTED

On May 18, 2012, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) released the FY2012 FCAT Writing results for all students tested.¹ In February of 2012, a total of 38,148 students took FCAT Writing in the School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) at grades 4, 8, and 10.

An analysis of the FY2012 FCAT Writing results in Table 1 revealed the following major finding:

- In FY2012, the SDPBC outperformed Florida at all tested grade levels in the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher.

Table 1. FCAT Writing – Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Higher

Year	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	SDPBC	Florida	SDPBC	Florida	SDPBC	Florida
FY2012	85 (N)	81(N)	84 (P)	78 (P)	89 (P)	84 (P)

Note: (N) = narrative prompt; (E) = expository prompt; (P) = persuasive prompt

We have focused our analysis on the FY2012 results for students scoring 3 or higher. In FY2012, the number of scorers, the prompt types, and the accountability measures² are different than in previous years. Additionally, in FY2012, the FDOE applied more stringent scoring methods. This included an increased emphasis on the correct use of standard English conventions, such as sentence structure, mechanics, usage, punctuation and spelling, and attention to the quality of details requiring use of relevant, logical, and plausible support.

As a result of changes in FY2012, there were unexpected and unprecedented drops in the percentage of students scoring 4 or higher³ (with the drops ranging from 33 to 54 percentage points), making comparisons to previous years inappropriate. Recognizing this, on May 15, 2012, the Florida State Board of Education held an emergency meeting to adopt a new performance level standard for FCAT Writing. The performance level standard used for the purpose of calculating school grades for FY2012 will be a 3.0 on a scale of 6.0. The emergency rule awards credit to schools towards their school grades based upon the percentage of students scoring 3.0 or higher instead of 4.0 or higher on FCAT Writing.

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

² In FY2010, the accountability measure was the average of the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher and the percentage of students scoring 4 or higher; while in FY2011, it was the percentage of students scoring 4 or higher; and in FY2012, it is the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher.

Results for individual SDPBC schools are available on the Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment website at: <http://www.palmbeachschools.org/dre/FCAT.asp>

These results will be shared with appropriate staff to provide direction for improvement in curriculum and instructional practices. 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, Evaluation and Assessment at 434-8781. If you have questions about instruction and FCAT Writing, please contact Keith Oswald, 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.

EWG/JA/MB/MH

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

³ **FCAT Writing – Percent of Students Scoring 4 or Higher**

Year	Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 10	
	SDPBC	Florida	SDPBC	Florida	SDPBC	Florida
FY2011	85	81	86	82	82	75
FY2012	32	27	40	33	49	38