

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. *When will FCAT 2.0 Writing be administered for the last time?*

The department plans to administer FCAT 2.0 Writing for the last time in spring 2014, which is scheduled to occur on February 25, 2014 (February 26 is the makeup day). Florida will transition to a new assessment of English Language Arts/Literacy in the 2014-15 school year.

### 2. *What is the passing score for a student?*

On January 21, 2014, the State Board of Education established passing scores for all FCAT 2.0 assessments, as required by Section 1008.22(3)(d)3., Florida Statutes. Although state law does not require students to pass FCAT 2.0 Writing for student progression or graduation purposes, the State Board has established a score of 3.5 as the passing score for the writing assessment. Students scoring at 3.5 or above are used in the proficiency calculation for school grades. Students receive scores on a 1.0 to 6.0 point scale. Information regarding holistic scoring is available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/rubrcpag.asp>.

### 3. *Why did the name of the assessment change to FCAT 2.0 Writing?*

In the 2012-13 school year, the test name became FCAT 2.0 Writing to indicate changes to the assessment. Higher scoring expectations were implemented in 2012, and the test administration time was increased to 60 minutes, both of which will continue through spring 2014.

- In addition to the elements of *focus*, *organization*, *support*, and *conventions* described in the rubrics, which will continue to be used through spring 2014, scorers now pay greater attention to the correct use of standard English conventions and the quality of details, requiring relevant, logical, and plausible support. While the rubrics have always included expectations regarding the basic conventions of standard English, in the past, scoring of this element was applied leniently. Additionally, the quality of support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, relevance, and thoroughness. Responses earning high scores must include specific and relevant supporting details that clarify the meaning, i.e., the point of the paragraph or the central theme of the response. Rote memorization or overusing compositional techniques, such as rhetorical questions, implausible statistics, or pretentious language, is not appropriate for quality writing at any grade level. Responses are scored holistically as draft writing, but basic conventions and support quality are scored more stringently.
- Students will have 60 minutes to respond to the writing prompt. The 2012 FCAT Writing comment forms showed that Florida educators observed that students needed more time to respond to writing prompts in order to satisfy higher scoring expectations. The FCAT 2.0 Writing Content Advisory Committee, composed of Florida educators, recommended increasing the time.

Sample student essays for each score point for FCAT 2.0 Writing are available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcat2/wcsg.asp>.

**4. How are the tests scored?**

Two trained scorers independently score each student response using a holistic scoring method. Scorers cannot see any student data or demographic information, only the writing responses. If the scores awarded by each scorer differ by one score point, the score reported is the average of both scorers' scores. If the scores awarded by each scorer differ by more than one score point, a third scorer will independently score the writing. Students receive scores on a 1.0 to 6.0 point scale. Information regarding holistic scoring is available at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/rubrcpag.asp>.

**5. Will the scoring rubrics be changed to mode-specific scoring rubrics?**

No. The scoring rubrics will not be changed to mode-specific rubrics. Scoring will continue to be aligned to the 2012 Calibration Scoring Guides, posted at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/fcats2/wcsq.asp>.

**6. Do misspelled words in a student's response affect the score?**

Spelling is one aspect of demonstrating knowledge of standard English conventions. Spelling is considered in scoring and a large number of misspelled **commonly used** words can impact the score. If a student takes a compositional risk by including words that are not commonly used at his or her grade level, however, and such words are misspelled, scoring will not be affected negatively. For example, if a grade 4 student generally spells commonly used words correctly and chooses to write about a rhinoceros but misspells this word throughout the response, the scoring will not be negatively affected. Students should allow time for proofreading to correct inadvertent misspellings and edit for incorrect use of other conventions of standard English.

**7. What are the expectations for high scores on the writing assessment?**

The quality of the response, rather than the appearance or length of the response, is part of Florida's scoring criteria. Although responses receiving high scores are not perfect, the writing demonstrates overall control of the following elements:

- efficient planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- clear and consistent focus on the topic that establishes and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point in the response;
- effective organization for the writing purpose, including internal transitions that help the reader understand how paragraphs work together, reference one another, and build to a larger point;
- sufficient, specific, and relevant development of support, i.e., elaboration that includes concrete details and pertinent information that helps the reader construct mental images;
- clear, precise word choice that provides a natural, reasonable, and consistent tone to the response, rather than sudden bursts of elevated, contrived use of vocabulary, or discordant use of creative writing strategies;
- various sentence structures and styles that add compositional facility and rhythm to the response, allow emphasis of critical points, and create interest for the reader;
- overall control of the basic conventions of standard English; and
- purposeful use of elements that promote the intended narrative, persuasive, or expository purpose for writing.

**8. Which organizational format is preferred for FCAT 2.0 Writing?**

A critical part of effective writing is clear, logical organization. Florida's scoring criteria do not mandate a particular style, number of paragraphs, or organizational structure. Before deciding which organizational structure would be the most effective way to present information, the student should think about the purpose for writing and who will be reading the response. Although some methods of organization lend themselves to a particular purpose for writing (such as chronological order for narration and order of importance for persuasion), such patterns are not exclusive to those writing purposes. The choice of organizational pattern and transitional devices should provide order to the information presented and allow the reader to understand connections between and among ideas.

**9. Where can educators, students, and the public find a resource that illustrates scoring expectations?**

Examples of student responses are available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/13writing.asp> and <http://fcat.fldoe.org/writing-prompts.asp>. Developed in collaboration with Florida educators, the FCAT 2.0 Writing Calibration Scoring Guides, 2013 FCAT 2.0 Writing Anchor Sets, 2012 FCAT Writing Anchor Sets, and 2012 FCAT Writing Exemplar Sets on these pages illustrate how scorers will base their decisions for FCAT 2.0 Writing through 2014.

**10. What expectations are there for students now that there is more time for the writing assessment?**

For the 60-minute timed writing assessment, students are expected to read the prompt independently and plan the response according to the topic and purpose for writing (grade 4 narrative or expository, grades 8 and 10 persuasive or expository). After planning, the student should draft the response revising it as he or she continues, checking to be sure the writing is clear and effective. Finally, the student should proofread the response and edit it for correct use of standard English conventions.

**11. Will the planning sheet be scored? Will the writing folder contain more pages on which to write?**

No. The planning sheet will not be scored. It is provided as a tool to allow the student to think about the prompt and the purpose for writing and then plan the response accordingly.

There will not be additional pages in the FCAT 2.0 Writing folder.

**12. Whom should I contact for additional information about FCAT 2.0 Writing?**

If you have questions about FCAT 2.0 Writing, please contact Renn Edenfield, FCAT 2.0 English Language Arts Coordinator, at 850-922-2584, extension 230, or [edenfieldr@leonschools.net](mailto:edenfieldr@leonschools.net).