

2008 FCAT Writing+ Fact Sheet

General

- For the past 16 years, Florida has administered a writing assessment.
- The FCAT Writing+ is given to students grades 4, 8 and 10.
- The assessment asks students to write an essay in response to an assigned topic and answer 44 multiple-choice questions.
- The multiple-choice component was added in 2006 and will not be on the 2009 assessment because of budget constraints.
- The essay score of 3.5, used for the purpose of school grading, became effective in 2005.
- Combined scores reflect the average scores of students who completed both the essay and multiple-choice portions of the exam.

2008 Achievement Level Results

- Beginning last year, students received Achievement Level scores as part of their FCAT Writing+ results.
- Achievement levels reflect a student's combined score on the essay and multiple-choice portions of the exam.
- This year, the percent of students in all grade levels scoring at or above Achievement Level 3 (grade level) increased over the previous year.
 - Grade 4 – 61 percent of students scored at or above Achievement Level 3, a one percentage point increase from last year (60 percent in 2007).
 - Grade 8 – 50 percent of students scored at or above Achievement Level 3, a five percentage point increase from last year (45 percent in 2007).
 - Grade 10 – 53 percent of students scored at or above Achievement Level 3, a four percentage point increase from last year (49 percent in 2007).
- At the same time, the percent of students scoring below grade level (Achievement Level 3) decreased at every grade assessed.

2008 Scale Score Results

- Students also receive an FCAT Writing+ scale score, ranging from 100 to 500, which is a combination of the essay and the multiple-choice items.
- Scale scores are used to calculate students' Achievement Levels.
- The 2008 statewide average scale scores increased at all grade levels (4, 8 and 10).
 - Grade 4 – the average scale score is 304, up two points from 302 last year.
 - Grade 8 – the average scale score is 300, up nine points from 291 last year.
 - Grade 10 – the average scale score is 302, up six points from 296 last year.

2008 Essay Results

- Essays are graded on a six-point scale.
- This year, the average writing essay score increased at grade 8 (from 4.1 last year to 4.2 this year), and remained about the same for grades 4 and 10 (3.8 for grade 4 and 3.9 for grade 10).
- An essay score of 3.5 is the standard used in the grading of schools.
- The results indicate the percent of students scoring 3.5 and above increased in grade 8 and slightly decreased for grades 4 and 10.
 - Grade 4 – 77 percent of students scored 3.5 and above, a slight decrease from 78 percent last year and an increase of 43 percentage points since 1999 reflecting a positive 10-year data trend.
 - Grade 8 – 88 percent of students scored 3.5 and above, a two percentage point increase from 86 percent last year and a 37 percentage point increase since 1999 reflecting a positive 10-year data trend.
 - Grade 10 – 78 percent of students scored 3.5 and above, a slight decrease from 79 percent last year and an increase of 18 percentage points since 1999 reflecting a positive 10-year data trend.

Graduation Requirement

- In April 2008, the State Board of Education approved a recommendation to remove the multiple-choice items from the FCAT Writing+ tests and delay its use as a graduation requirement because of budget constraints and technical issues related to the combination of essay and multiple-choice items into a single score.
- Recently passed legislation would reintroduce the multiple-choice portion of the FCAT Writing+ test in 2012-2013 if signed into law by Governor Crist.
- High school students are still required to earn passing scores on the grade 10 Reading and Mathematics FCAT in order to graduate with a standard diploma.

###