

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What is the passing score for a student?*

There is no “passing” score for FCAT 2.0 Writing. Students receive scores on a 1 to 6 point scale. The percentage of students scoring at 3.5 or above is used as a component to calculate school grades.

2. *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 students receive more time to respond to the writing prompt than in previous years.

- 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, support quality 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.
- In 2013, students have 60 minutes to respond to the writing prompt instead of 45 minutes. The 2012 FCAT Writing comment forms showed that Florida educators observed 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/wcsq.asp>.

3. *Will the scoring rubrics be changed to mode-specific scoring rubrics in 2013?*

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://fcat.fldoe.org/fcat2/wcsq.asp>.

4. *Do misspelled words in a student’s response affect the score more negatively than in the past?*

Spelling is one aspect of demonstrating knowledge of standard English conventions. Although spelling is considered in scoring, 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, and such words are misspelled, that will not affect scoring 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.

5. *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.

6. *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.

7. *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/writing-prompts.asp>. Developed in collaboration with Florida educators, the FCAT 2.0 Writing Calibration Scoring Guides, 2012 FCAT Writing Anchor Sets, and 2012 FCAT Writing Exemplar Sets on that site illustrate how scorers will base their decisions for FCAT 2.0 Writing through 2014.

8. *Should educators use the 2012 FCAT Writing Anchor Sets on the department's website for 2013 staff development purposes?*

Yes. The 2012 FCAT Writing Anchor Sets are aligned to the FCAT 2.0 Writing Calibration Scoring Guides and can be used as an additional resource for staff-development purposes. The responses in each anchor set are based on prompts administered in 2012 and provide an understanding of student scores for narrative (grade 4) and persuasive (grades 8 and 10) writing purposes.

9. Are the skills expected for Florida's writing assessment aligned to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) and to Florida's implementation plan of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts?

Yes. Both the NGSSS and the CCSS describe what students should know and be able to do in writing. Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, educators began implementing CCSS with kindergarten students, followed by grade 1 in 2012-13, and grade 2 in 2013-14. In 2013-14, the instructional focus for grades 3–12 include blending the appropriate NGSSS with the CCSS so that students are prepared for the last testing cycle of FCAT 2.0 as well as common core assessments in English Language Arts. You can see Florida's Common Core State Standards implementation timeline at <http://www.fldoe.org/BII/pdf/CCSS-ImplementationTimeline.pdf>.

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/FCAT 2.0 English Language Arts Coordinator, at (850) 922-2584, extension 230, or edenfieldr@leonschools.net.