

Guidance on Content Area Scores

Content area scores are the actual number of questions answered correctly within each reporting category. These scores are also known as raw scores. Reporting categories represent groups of similar student skills, or benchmarks that are assessed within each subject area. The state mean for each reporting category is provided on Individual Student Reports, and aggregated files are provided to districts to allow for comparisons to average performance statewide.

It is important to identify the comparisons at the content area score level that yield valid interpretations of student performance, so educators may gather reliable information from the assessments. When comparing content area scores, it is important to keep in mind that there are multiple test forms for each assessment. Mean content area scores for each test form might be different; therefore, content area scores should not be compared across test forms. The comparisons described in the following paragraphs can be applied in school- and district-level evaluations.

One valid comparison is of performance on a given content area score for a specific test form between schools, districts, and the state. For example, a school's content area score results for Form A can be compared to other schools', districts', or the state's content area score results for Form A. District results can be compared to other district results and state results for the same test form. Since students in any group (school, district, or state) will take the same set of test questions for the same test form in a given year, their results are comparable regardless of varying item difficulty at the content-area level.

In Table 1, students in two schools (Sunshine and Evergreen) and students in the district (Coastal) can be compared to students in the state, based on their performance on the 2014 Algebra 1 EOC Assessment Form A, Reporting Category 1.

**Table 1: Mean Percentage Correct for the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment Form A, Reporting Category 1
2014 School Year (mock data)**

Sunshine High School (mock data)	Evergreen High School (mock data)	Coastal District (mock data)	State of Florida (mock data)
48%	62%	64%	57%

In Table 2 below, 2014 mock results for Evergreen High School are compared to both the district (Coastal) and the state.

**Table 2: Mean Percentage Correct for the Algebra 1 EOC Assessment Form A, 2014 School Year
Comparison of School to District and School to State (mock data)**

Reporting Category	Evergreen High School (mock data)	Coastal District (mock data)	School/District Difference (mock data)	Evergreen High School (mock data)	State of Florida (mock data)	School/State Difference (mock data)
Reporting Category 1	62%	64%	-2%	62%	57%	5%
Reporting Category 2	64%	57%	7%	64%	63%	1%
Reporting Category 3	70%	72%	-2%	70%	64%	6%

This presentation of data provides another perspective of student performance and program effectiveness. For example, in Reporting Category 2, Evergreen High School had a higher mean percentage correct statistic than the Coastal District on Form A (64 percent versus 57 percent, respectively); however, Evergreen High School's results were comparable to the state's on Form A (64 percent versus 63 percent, respectively). If this variance remains consistent over time when comparing the same test form, there would be evidence to support identifying and sharing best practices at Evergreen High School with the rest of the district.

Another meaningful finding from Table 2 is illustrated in Reporting Category 3 results. In this content area, Evergreen High School had a slightly lower mean percentage correct on Form A than Coastal District (70 percent versus 72 percent, respectively); however, this same statistic was higher than that of the state (70 percent versus 64 percent, respectively). It would be easy to miss the fact that, while Evergreen High School's performance on Reporting Category 3 was lower than that of the district, the performances of both were substantially higher than the state's performance. If this is the case for all three test forms, then it is likely that targeting additional resources to improve performance in Reporting Category 3 should be a lower priority.

The Florida Department of Education encourages educators to use assessment results in any way that is statistically appropriate. The comparisons that have been described in this section provide possibilities for evaluation at the school and district levels.