

FCAT

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

In the mid-1990's, a group of Florida teachers got together and created a set of academic standards for Florida's public schools. In other words, they asked themselves, "What do we think our students need to learn in school, before they move on? What do we want them to know about math? About science? What kind of reading and writing skills should they have?" In answering these questions, the group of teachers created a list of what Florida's students need to know, which became known as the Sunshine State Standards (SSS).

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is a test to determine whether students are learning the Sunshine State Standards. The questions on the test are written for each grade level to determine whether students mastered the Sunshine State Standards in reading, math, writing, and now science.

Students in grades 3-10 take the FCAT each spring. Third-graders are tested in reading and mathematics. Their scores fall into one of five levels: Level 5 is the highest; Level 1 is the lowest. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the FCAT Writing Test. The FCAT Science Test is given to students in grades 5, 8, and 10.

Beginning last year, third graders who score Level 1 in reading on the FCAT must repeat the third grade, unless there is other evidence that proves these students can read on grade level. Students who are retained must be given intensive instruction in reading to help them catch up.

The purpose of the FCAT is to make sure that students are learning the basic skills they are supposed to be learning in school. These basic skills are called the Sunshine State Standards, and were created by teachers in the mid-1990's.

FCAT scores fall into one of five levels: Level 5 is the highest; Level 1 is the lowest. Students who receive a Level 1 on the third grade reading portion of the FCAT must improve their reading skills before they can move on to fourth grade.

What does Level 1 mean?

A score of Level 1 on the FCAT means that the student has shown little success in meeting the basic skills they are supposed to know at their grade level. That means that third graders who score Level 1 may not be able to recognize or sound-out new words or know the meaning of them. They would also have trouble answering questions that identify a story's main idea, main characters, and the correct order of story events. Chances are that these students can't correctly use information from charts, graphs, or maps to answer specific questions.