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FCAT

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

DRAFT
FCAT Writing+
Test Item
Specifications

GRADE 8



FCAT Writing+ Test Item Specifications, Grade 8, Version 1 [Draft]

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INTRODUCTION

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) measures achievement in reading and mathematics for Florida students in Grades 3 through 10, in science at Grades 5, 8, and 11, and in writing at Grades 4, 8, and 10 by assessing student progress on benchmarks identified in the Sunshine State Standards (Standards). These writing standards contain the following expectations for student achievement: The students will use the writing process effectively and will write to communicate ideas and information effectively. The benchmarks for the standards represent a cumulative body of knowledge that tells what students should know and be able to do at the end of developmental grade levels (PreK–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12). The writing assessment, FCAT Writing+, measures the learner expectations of the designated writing benchmarks.

This document, *FCAT Writing+ Grade 8 Test Item Specifications (Specifications)*, provides details about the portion of the FCAT designed to assess the writing benchmarks and includes information about the Standards, the stimulus types, and the test items (prompts and multiple-choice questions).

Origin and Purpose of the *Specifications*

The Florida Department of Education (the DOE) and committees of experienced Florida educators developed and approved the specifications documents. The *Specifications* is a resource document that defines the content and format of the test items for item writers and reviewers. Each grade-level specifications document indicates the alignment of items with the Standards. It also serves to provide all stakeholders with information about the FCAT.

Scope of this Document

The *Specifications* for Grade 8 provides both general and specific guidelines for the development of all test content used in Grade 8 FCAT Writing+. Two additional documents provide the same information for FCAT Writing+ at Grades 4 and 10.

The *General Specifications* section provides an explanation of the writing elements assessed by the test. This section addresses cognitive complexity levels as well as the review processes used to ensure the quality of the stimuli and test items. The section *Development of FCAT Writing+ Test Content* explains the criteria for the selection of prompts for the performance task and includes general guidelines for selection and development of stimulus types and multiple-choice items. The section *Benchmark Details* contains specific information about each benchmark. This section identifies the manner in which each benchmark is assessed at Grade 8, provides content limits and sample stimulus attributes for each benchmark, and gives specific information about content, item types, and response attributes.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

Writing Elements

FCAT Writing+ measures the writing elements of *focus*, *organization*, *support*, and *conventions*, which are integral to the Sunshine State Standards writing benchmarks. These writing elements function as reporting categories for the test. The content within each benchmark is correlated to the writing element(s) being addressed. These writing elements are defined below:

Focus includes planning for writing by grouping related ideas and identifying the purpose for writing and refers to how clearly a central idea (topic), theme, or unifying point is presented and maintained.

Organization refers to the structure or plan of development and the relationship of one point to another to provide a logical progression of ideas. It also refers to the use of transitional devices to signal both the relationship of the supporting ideas to the central idea, theme, or unifying point and the connections between and among sentences.

Support refers to the quality of details used to explain, clarify, or define. The quality of the support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, relevance, and thoroughness. Support may be developed through the use of additional details, anecdotes, illustrations, and examples that further clarify meaning.

Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure.

Item writers must be familiar with the reporting categories assigned to each benchmark. Appendices B and D provide further information about the relationship of reporting categories to benchmarks.

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity is the cognitive level associated with an item. The classification of items by cognitive complexity focuses on the expectations of the item, not the abilities of the students. To identify the level of thinking required by an item, the DOE has adopted a new classification system called Cognitive Complexity, based on “Depths of Knowledge” levels designed by Dr. Norman L. Webb.¹

The cognitive complexity of an item is constant; it does not vary depending on the students’ ability or demonstration of mastery. To determine the level of cognitive complexity, consider the cognitive demand of the item as a function of what the item requires students to know and be able to do at the specified grade level. The demand on thinking that the item makes is determined with the assumption that the students are familiar with the task posed by the item. The complexity categories—low, moderate, and high—form an ordered description of the demands an item may make on students.

¹ Webb, N.L., 1999, *Alignment Between Standards and Assessment*, University of Wisconsin Center for Educational Research.

Educational standards and assessments can be aligned based on the category of content covered by each and also on the complexity of knowledge required by each. The complexity of FCAT items must be identified and recorded to ensure that it reflects an appropriate academic standard that is characterized by the following.

- Goal 3, Standard 4 of Florida’s *System of School Improvement and Accountability*: “Florida students use creative thinking skills to generate new ideas, make the best decisions, recognize and solve problems through reasoning, interpret symbolic data, and develop efficient techniques for lifelong learning.”
- Goal 3 also states, “Students successfully compete at the highest levels nationally and internationally and are prepared to make well-reasoned, thoughtful, and healthy lifelong decisions.”
- In addition, Florida students are expected to use appropriate language, graphic representations, styles, organizations, and format suited to the subject matter, purpose, and audience.

Low Complexity

This category relies heavily on the recall and recognition of previously learned concepts and principles. Demonstrating knowledge of writing at this level does not include complex synthesis or analysis but involves understanding of simple facts. Low complexity items require the recognition of traits that distinguish something as a member of a category. For a low complexity item, students are expected to demonstrate simple skills or abilities. The item might involve the prewriting process of grouping ideas or words (as in a brainstorming activity), simple spelling or vocabulary tasks, or composing simple sentences. Low complexity items require students to perform familiar, mechanical tasks and require a basic understanding of the writing process.

Skills required to respond to low complexity items include

- categorizing information;
- inserting end punctuation in a sentence; and
- adding an *-s* to change from the singular to the plural form.

Moderate Complexity

Items in this category move beyond simple recall and involve more flexibility of thinking and choice among alternatives. They require a response that goes beyond the habitual and is not specified. The students are expected to decide what to do. Moderate complexity items may include the assessment of students’ abilities to apply knowledge about the elements of writing by asking students to process and manipulate text.

Skills required to respond correctly to moderate complexity items include

- determining the relevance, placement, or quality of detail;
- applying the purpose for writing to the task; and
- applying knowledge of conventions.

High Complexity

High complexity items make heavy demands on student thinking. Students may be encouraged to explain, generalize, or make multiple connections. High complexity items involve abstract reasoning and planning. These items require students to consider the elements of focus, organization, support, and conventions to demonstrate understanding of the writing as a prerequisite to recognizing and producing effective writing. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of writing that is insightful and involved with the subject. High complexity items often require students to apply skills to accomplish a new task, such as a demand writing situation in which the prompt is unknown to the student beforehand. These items require students to support their thinking as they write. Such writing tasks call for a mature command of language and complex sentence structures, showing synthesis and analysis. The tasks also necessitate the integration and evaluation of appropriate compositional elements.

Items may involve analyzing the presentation and maintenance of a central theme, topic, or unifying point and may make a complex inference within or across compositions. The standard at this level may be an extended activity, with additional time provided for completing it; however, the extended time period is not a distinguishing factor if the work is only repetitive and does not require the application of significant conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking.

Skills required to respond correctly to high complexity items include

- evaluating the effectiveness of a written response according to audience and purpose;
- developing a composition using the writing process; and
- analyzing and applying complex conventions.

While an item can have low cognitive complexity, it can still be difficult for students. The complexity of an item is generally not dependent on the multiple-choice distractors. The options may affect the difficulty of the item, not the complexity of the item. The intent of the item writer weighs heavily in determining the complexity of an item.

Item Difficulty

The difficulty of FCAT multiple-choice items is initially estimated by educators participating in Item Content Review meetings each year. As each test item is reviewed, committee members make a prediction of difficulty based upon their knowledge of students at the given grade level. The classification scheme used for this prediction of item difficulty is based on the following.

Easy: More than 70 percent of the students are likely to respond correctly.

Average: Between 40 percent and 70 percent of the students are likely to respond correctly.

Challenging: Fewer than 40 percent of the students are likely to respond correctly.

After an item appears on a test, item difficulty refers to the actual percentage of students who chose the correct answer.

Universal Design

The application of universal design principles helps develop assessments that are usable by the greatest number of test-takers, including those with disabilities and non-native speakers of English. To support the goal of providing access to all students, the test maximizes readability, legibility, and compatibility with accommodations, and test development includes bias and sensitivity reviews.

The DOE trains both internal and external reviewers to revise items, allowing for the widest possible range of student participation. Item writers must attend to the best practices suggested by universal design including, but not limited to

- reduction of wordiness;
- avoidance of ambiguity;
- selection of reader-friendly construction and terminology; and
- consistently applied concept names and graphic conventions.

Universal design principles also inform decisions about test layout and design including, but not limited to, type size, line length, spacing, and graphics.

REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR FCAT WRITING+

Review for Test Content

The DOE and the test development contractor meet with Florida educators to review all test content proposed for use on FCAT Writing+ to ensure that each component of the test meets the *Specifications* requirements.

The item content review focuses on validity, which determines whether each item measures the designated Sunshine State Standards benchmark, as defined by the *Specifications*. Additional content reviews occur after the writing prompts (performance tasks) and multiple-choice items have undergone a pilot test and a field test.

Review for Potential Bias

Writing stimuli, items, and prompts are reviewed by groups of Florida educators who represent Florida's varied geographic regions and culturally diverse population. The content is reviewed for issues unrelated to the skill being measured that may result in an unfair advantage or disadvantage for a particular group of students. Considerations for bias review include gender, race/ethnicity, linguistics, religion, geography, socioeconomics, and accessibility. Experts are consulted during the review process. Field-test data provide item-by-item response patterns that are used to further analyze items for potential bias.

Review for Sensitivity Issues

Florida citizens review test content for issues of potential concern to community members. The goal of this review is to ensure that the primary purpose of assessing writing achievement is not compromised by inadvertently including material on the test that may be deemed inappropriate. Reviewers consider the variety of cultural, regional, philosophical, political, and religious backgrounds throughout Florida and then determine whether the subject matter will be acceptable within the community. After each stimulus has been judged to meet the criteria for use on FCAT, test items are written. These items are reviewed for sensitivity issues during the development cycle.

DEVELOPMENT OF FCAT WRITING+ TEST CONTENT

Performance Task

A writing prompt serves as the stimulus for the performance task (demand writing portion) of FCAT Writing+. The prompt presents a topic in a format that serves to encourage, stimulate, and evoke a written response. The format of the prompt is designed to appeal to the greatest number of students possible. The prompt identifies the intended mode or purpose for writing.

Prompts elicit writing for specific purposes, or modes: narrative or expository writing at Grade 4 and expository or persuasive writing at Grades 8 and 10. The prompt serves as a stimulus for writing by suggesting that the student think about some aspect of the topic's central theme. The subject matter must be grade-level appropriate, and the wording of each prompt is checked for clarity and readability.

General Style and Format Guidelines for Performance Task

The prompt tells the student the subject (topic) and purpose for writing. Prompts have two basic components: the *writing situation* and the *directions for writing*. The writing situation orients students to the subject, and the directions for writing set the parameters, such as identifying the audience to whom the writing should be directed. In Grades 8 and 10 the prompt components include the headings "Writing Situation" and "Directions for Writing." In Grade 4 these headings are omitted.

Specifications for Expository Prompts (Grades 4, 8, and 10)

Exposition is writing that gives information, explains how or why, clarifies a process, or defines a concept. Cue words that should be used in expository prompts are *why*, *how*, and *what*.

Below is an example of an expository prompt for Grades 8 and 10.

Writing Situation:

Most teenagers have chores.

Directions for Writing:

Think about why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Now write to explain why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Specifications for Persuasive Prompts (Grades 8 and 10)

Persuasion is writing that attempts to convince the reader that a point of view is valid and/or that the reader should take a specific action. Cue words that should be used in persuasive prompts are *convince*, *persuade*, and *why*. Persuasive prompts should avoid the term *how* because it tends to elicit narrative or expository writing.

Below is an example of a persuasive prompt for Grades 8 and 10.

Writing Situation:

The principal of your school has suggested that watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Directions for Writing:

Think about the effect watching TV has on your grades and your friends' grades.

Now write to convince your principal whether watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Quality of Performance Task

Prompts should be evaluated based on the following.

Interest Level

- Will students show an interest in writing about the prompt?

Bias

- Is the subject free of bias?
- Is the wording free of bias?
- Is the topic free of requiring specific prior knowledge?
- Is the prompt wording free of emotionally-charged content?

Purpose of Writing

- Will the prompt elicit writing for the desired purpose?

Wording

- Is the wording of the prompt clear?
- Is the readability appropriate for the majority of students?
- Are components, such as the writing situation and the directions for writing, compatible?

Organization of Response

- Does the prompt encourage different methods of organization?

Depth of Support

- Does the prompt allow for substantial development of the topic within the designated testing period?
- Is the prompt manageable within the designated testing period?

Rubric

The holistic scoring method is used to score the performance task. Trained scorers evaluate the overall quality of students' writing by using a six-point scoring rubric to assess the benchmark LA.B.1.3.2. (See Appendix F for the Grades 4 and 10 rubrics.) This rubric allows the readers to consider the integration of the four writing elements: *focus*, *organization*, *support*, and *conventions*.

RUBRIC FOR SCORING THE WRITING+ ESSAY

Score Points in Grade 8 Rubric

6 Points The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The paper demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject, clarity in presentation of ideas, and may use creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.

5 Points The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. The paper conveys a sense of completeness or wholeness. The support is ample. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. There is variation in sentence structure, and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

4 Points The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness or wholeness. The support, including word choice, is adequate, although development may be uneven. There is little variation in sentence structure, and most sentences are complete. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

3 Points The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern has been attempted, but the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some support is included, but development is erratic. Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of the conventions of mechanics and usage is usually demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

2 Points The writing is related to the topic but includes extraneous or loosely related material. Little evidence of an organizational pattern may be demonstrated, and the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Development of support is inadequate or illogical. Word choice is limited, inappropriate, or vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure, and gross errors in sentence structure may occur. Errors in basic conventions of mechanics and usage may occur, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

1 Point The writing may only minimally address the topic. The paper is a fragmentary or incoherent listing of related ideas or sentences or both. Little, if any, development of support or an organizational pattern or both is apparent. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Gross errors in sentence structure and usage may impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of mechanics and usage, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

Development of Stimuli for Multiple-Choice Items

Four different stimulus types, each serving a specific purpose, are developed for the multiple-choice portion of this assessment. Each type provides the stimulus for generating items used to assess the writing benchmarks identified by the Sunshine State Standards. The four stimulus types are **writing plans**, which assess prewriting; **writing samples**, which assess drafting and revising; and **cloze** and **stand-alone** stimuli, which assess the editing of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, usage, and sentence structure.

Contracted writers create original writing selections from which the multiple-choice items are generated. The selections are commissioned and customized exclusively for use on FCAT Writing+. During development, documentation from at least two reliable sources must be provided to the DOE to verify factual information presented in the selections. Each stimulus type must support test items measuring the scope of the benchmark(s) associated with that type. The modes are those commonly used for classroom instruction and for writing tasks. These include the following.

- **Narrative writing** tells stories and relates experiences. Narrative samples can be used to present fictional or factual material. Common formats include stories, letters, and essays.
- **Expository writing** informs readers about various topics of interest, explains processes, and answers questions proposed by others. Common formats may include newspaper articles, instructions, reports, and other informational texts.
- **Persuasive writing** convinces a person to accept a point of view or to take a particular action. Common formats include essays, letters to the editor, and advertisements.
- **Descriptive writing** makes a scene or experience vivid to the reader. Common formats for sensory writing include descriptions of people, places, and things.

Format of Stimulus Types

The style and format of stimulus types model those commonly used in the classroom and/or those generally used as examples in state-adopted textbooks.

Writing plans provide a prewriting structure and must have a form and style that are easy to process, so presentation is a high priority. Visual cues should be employed to aid in processing the structure and the text. Prewriting structures (graphic organizers) may include charts, webs, diagrams, or any other grade-appropriate writing plan. Each writing plan should have a title (e.g. “John’s Writing Plan”). Writing plans should be no longer than one page. (See page 21 for an example.)

Writing samples simulate student-generated draft writing. The chart below lists formats for writing that may be used on FCAT Writing+. Some formats may be considered appropriate for more than one grade level.

The formats listed below represent recommendations only and do not include every possible format that may be considered for use on the test.

Formats for Writing Samples	
Advertisements	Notices
Applications	Posters
Directions/Instructions	Reports
Essays	Reviews
Interviews	Rules
Journal Entries	Scripts
Letters	Stories
Newspaper Articles	Summaries

Each writing sample is double-spaced, and each sentence is identified by a number appearing in a box, e.g., 1, before the first word of the sentence. In Grades 4 and 8, an arrow (→) to the left of the sample indicates the beginning of each new paragraph. Writing samples are introduced by directions to the student that indicate the sample is student-generated and contains errors that should be corrected.

Cloze selections contain high-interest material in a relatively short format that can be more literary or technical in nature than the text in the other sample types. Cloze samples are not presented as representative of student-generated work. On a test form, each cloze sample contains three to four numbered blanks used to measure the student’s knowledge of spelling or usage conventions. (See pages 43–44.)

Stand-alone contexts provide a succinct presentation of material for measuring knowledge of conventions. Currently, five formats for stand-alones have been developed for use in this assessment. The format of the first type presents three identically worded sentences that contain variations in punctuation or capitalization. (See page 45.) The format of the second type is a sentence with an underlined section containing an error in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, or usage. (See page 46.) Sentence structure is presented in three formats. Sentence combining presents several sentences and/or clauses that must be combined into one sentence. (See page 48.) Sentence parts present words and phrases that must be assembled to create a coherent sentence. (See page 47.) Sentence replication presents a sentence that must be imitated in meaning or structure. (See page 46.)

The following chart shows the formats, the conventions, and the grade levels associated with stand-alone contexts.

Stand-alone contexts								
Format	Convention					Grade		
	Capitalization	Punctuation	Spelling	Usage	Sentence Structure	4	8	10
Identical sentences	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Underlined sentence error	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sentence combining					✓	✓	✓	✓
Sentence parts					✓	✓	✓	
Sentence replication					✓		✓	✓

General Style Guidelines for Stimulus Types

Quality of Stimuli

All stimuli must be suitably engaging and conceptually appropriate for students in the specified grade. They should reflect a variety of interests and backgrounds and represent cultural diversity.

The writing standards are built on the expectation that effective writing is appropriate for the audience, purpose, and occasion and is focused, organized, supported, and error-free. Thus, submissions from contracted writers should reflect these high-quality standards. Errors embedded prior to item development are intended to test the student’s knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of writing in the areas of focus, organization, support, and conventions.

Content of Stimulus Types

The content of all stimulus types must be based on a topic that is within the purview of the students at the specified grade. Content should relate to the Sunshine State Standards topics or to those topics approved by the FCAT Writing+ Review Committees. (See FCAT Topics in Appendix A.) Most stimuli should have a heading or title.

The content should not create an advantage or disadvantage for any particular group of students. Measures are taken to eliminate bias, stereotyping, or offensive content from the stimuli. Controversial, confusing, or emotionally charged subjects are avoided. These include, but are not limited to, spiritual matters, evolution, sex, abortion, religion, religious holidays, politics, games of chance, gambling, death, the occult, and weapons. References to trademarks, commercial products, and brand names should also be avoided.

Artwork with Stimulus Types

Artwork may be included when necessary or appropriate to enhance student interest and promote understanding. Artwork can provide a framework for presenting materials to students in an understandable format that saves space and communicates meaning and purpose. When artwork is used, efforts are made to ensure that it is accessible to all students. Artwork should accompany all cloze selections.

Reading Level of Stimulus Types

The reading level of each stimulus should be one to two grades below the grade level for which the stimulus is intended. The writing should be designed to minimize the impact of reading proficiency and allow students to demonstrate knowledge of writing skills.

The appropriateness of the reading level for each stimulus is determined by the professional judgment of Florida educators. Individual words or phrases deemed above grade level are changed. Individual words or phrases are considered for replacement if they represent concepts unfamiliar to students at the intended grade level, to students whose native language is not English, or to students with sensory disabilities.

Word Counts for Stimuli Types

Writing Plans

The purpose of a writing plan is to communicate in a concise and simple manner ideas that promote successful completion of a writing task (either implicitly or explicitly stated in the plan). Complete sentences should be avoided whenever possible; however, each writing plan must be substantial enough to support at least three to four test items.

Writing Samples and Cloze Selections

Each writing sample should be substantial enough to support at least six items. Each cloze selection should provide context for the assessment of six spelling and usage conventions. (Six blanks should be inserted.) The chart below suggests word count ranges for writing samples and cloze selections. These are guidelines only and do not indicate absolute limitations.

Grade	Range of the Number of Words for Writing Samples and Cloze Selections
4	50–300
8	75–350
10	100–400

Stand-Alone Items

Stand-alone items should provide a succinct and practical context to test conventions. Each stand-alone essentially creates an item that assesses one skill associated with punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, or sentence structure. For Grade 4, each stand-alone sentence should be approximately 10–20 words in length. Each Grade 8 stand-alone sentence should be approximately 10–25 words in length, and for Grade 10, each stand-alone sentence should be approximately 10–30 words in length.

General Style and Format Guidelines for Multiple-Choice Items

Four-option multiple-choice

Four-option multiple-choice items are used with writing plans and writing samples. These items measure focus, organization, and support.

Three-option multiple-choice

Three-option multiple-choice items are used with cloze and stand-alone samples. These items measure conventions.

- Items should measure the knowledge and skills identified in the designated writing benchmarks with the underlying expectation that students demonstrate critical thinking.
- The items should be designed to measure a representative sample of the learning tasks of the designated benchmark.
- Items should be clear and concise (should not inflate readability without cause) and should use vocabulary and sentence structure appropriate for the grade level and task.
- An equal balance of male and female names should be used, including names representing different ethnic groups appropriate for Florida.
- Plural forms should be used where appropriate to avoid gender-specific pronouns.
- Item stems should be expressed as questions.
- Items should direct students to the sentence, paragraph, or section under consideration.
- When a paragraph from the sample is referenced in the stem, refer to the paragraph by its ordinal number (e.g., first paragraph).
- Avoid “Which of the following...” constructions; use “Which sentence (word, phrase, etc.)” instead.
- In stem wording, use “should” rather than “could” as a preference, and when applicable.
- Do not use “No change needed” or “Correct as is” as answer options.
- Students are not being tested on their knowledge of specific literary or grammatical terminology. Refer to the Glossary in Appendix G for guidance in the selection of terminology commonly used in Grade 8 FCAT Writing+ multiple-choice items.
- Refer to Content Limits for the scope of content knowledge that should be assessed.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR GRADE 8

Benchmark Details for Multiple-Choice Items

The following pages describe how each Sunshine State Standards benchmark is measured by FCAT Writing+ multiple-choice items.

Grade Range Information

For each benchmark assessed on FCAT Writing+ for Grade 8, the following information is given.

Strand	A strand is a category of knowledge. The strand assessed on FCAT Writing+ is writing.
Standard	Each writing standard is a general statement of expected student achievement within a strand. The standards are the same for all grade levels.
Benchmark	Benchmarks are specific statements of expected student achievement for each writing standard. Test items are written to assess the benchmarks.
Benchmark Clarifications and Content Codes	A clarification statement describing how students demonstrate achievement of the task(s) when responding to questions is provided for each benchmark. The content code provides a key word or words that further define the reporting category.
Content Limits	While benchmarks provide content guidance, content limits define the content knowledge that should or should not be assessed by multiple-choice items.

Grade-Specific Information

The different sections found in each of the individual benchmark specifications are defined as follows.

Item Types	The item type used to assess each benchmark at each grade level is identified.
Stimulus Attributes	The stimulus attributes define the kinds of stimulus materials that should be used for the items, including the appropriate use of graphic materials.
Response Attributes	This section gives specific descriptions of the distractors for multiple-choice items.
Sample Items	At least one sample item is provided for each item type used to assess each benchmark. The sample item is presented in the format used on the test. The correct answer for each multiple-choice item is indicated with a star.