

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

**DR. FRANK TILL  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

**Telephone: (754) 321-2600**

**Facsimile: (754) 321-2701**

*Approved memorandum with signatures is on file.*

April 26, 2004

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Katherine Blasik, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent  
Office of Research, Evaluation, Assessment & Boundaries

VIA: Frank Till  
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **RELEASE OF 2004 FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST  
(FCAT) WRITING AND NORM-REFERENCED TEST (NRT)  
ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Last week the Florida Department of Education released the results from the 2004 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for third grade overall and high school retakes. Those results indicated that Broward students have generally improved their FCAT scores from the previous years. Today the Florida Department of Education released school, district and state-wide results from the 2004 FCAT Writing Assessment, as well as the results for all grade levels on the Norm Referenced portion of the FCAT (NRT).

The FCAT Writing Assessment is administered annually to students at grades four, eight, and ten. Scores are reported on a scale ranging from 1.0 to 6.0, where a score of 3.0 demonstrates proficient writing skills. FCAT NRT scores are reported in percentile ranks, which allow for comparison of students' relative standing compared to a nationwide-norm group. The FCAT NRT is administered to students in grades three through ten.

### **FCAT Writing Results**

In the forthcoming pages, you will see that:

- Broward's students are either doing as well or better than students statewide in all areas of the Writing Assessment. At the tenth grade in the Expository writing subtest, Broward students earned the same mean score as students statewide (3.8). **At all other grade levels and in all other subtests, Broward students outperformed their counterparts throughout the state.**
- **Overwhelmingly, a majority of Broward students at all grade levels scored at or above the proficient level (Grade 4: 94%; Grade 8: 91%; and Grade 10: 92%).**
- Fourth grade students in Broward continue to make impressive gains in Writing. The percent of fourth grade students scoring at 3.5 or above rose from 73% in 2003 to 78% in 2004. At the tenth grade level, Broward students also showed gains from 2003 to 2004. This year, 1% more students scored at 3.0 or above and 2% more students scored

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at 3.5 and above. The percent of Broward eighth grade students scoring 3.0 and higher and 3.5 higher from 2003 yet the 2004 scores from these students are still higher than the statewide averages.

These results reflect students from all curriculum groups who took FCAT Writing this year, and therefore include students who participate in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs and/or have limited English proficiency (LEP). The FCAT Writing test is used in both Florida's A+ Plan (for school grading purposes) and as part of the calculation of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) relevant to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It is important to note that the results presented in this release do not directly correspond to school grading because Florida's A+ Plan uses a different subgroup of students, known as the standard curriculum group. The results below are for all students who participated in the FCAT Writing test, such that all subgroups have been combined together.

The fourth grade Writing Assessment directs students to write either in Expository or Narrative style. The eighth and tenth grade Writing Assessment directs students to write either in Expository or Persuasive style. Results are reported by grade level as mean scores for Expository and Narrative/Persuasive style, and also as Combined scores. Table 1 presents these results from the 2004 FCAT Writing Assessment.

<b>Table 1: Mean FCAT Writing Assessment Scores for 2002-04 For All Curriculum Groups</b>									
<i>Grade 4</i>	<u>Expository</u>			<u>Narrative</u>			<u>Combined</u>		
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>
	STATE	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.6
<i>Grade 8</i>	<u>Expository</u>			<u>Persuasive</u>			<u>Combined</u>		
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>
	STATE	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.9
<i>Grade 10</i>	<u>Expository</u>			<u>Persuasive</u>			<u>Combined</u>		
	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.9</b>
	STATE	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.8

For the third year in a row, Broward's fourth grade students slightly outperformed students across the state by .1 in the Expository section of the Writing assessment. Narrative writing among Broward fourth grade students showed a significant increase (from 3.8 in 2003 to 4.0 in 2004) and where the statewide average decreased by .1 from 2003 to 2004, Broward students made gains.

Table 1 further shows that at the eighth grade, Broward students and students statewide maintained high scores in Expository writing (Broward: 4.0 in both 2003 and 2004; Statewide:

3.9 in both 2003 and 2004). Both students in Broward and those throughout the state showed a slight decrease in Persuasive writing (Broward: 3.9 to 3.8 from 2003 to 2004; Statewide: 3.8 to 3.7 from 2003 to 2004). The Combined writing scores among Broward's eighth grade students were maintained from 2003 to 2004 (3.9), while the statewide Combined writing scores decreased (from 3.9 in 2003 to 3.8 in 2004).

At the tenth grade level, Broward students made overall gains in Combined writing from 2003 to 2004 (3.8 to 3.9), while the statewide average score did not change (3.8). The Expository writing scores showed a slight decrease from 2003 to 2004 (.1) but the 2004 scores are in line with the statewide average. Significant gains in Persuasive writing from 2003 (3.8) to 2004 (4.0) were achieved, representing a .2 point increase and still higher than the statewide average.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of Writing scores among fourth, eighth, and tenth grade students in Broward. The percent of students in each scoring point, for each grade level, is illustrated in the figure.

**Figure 1:  
Distribution of 2004 Writing Assessment Scores (Combined)**

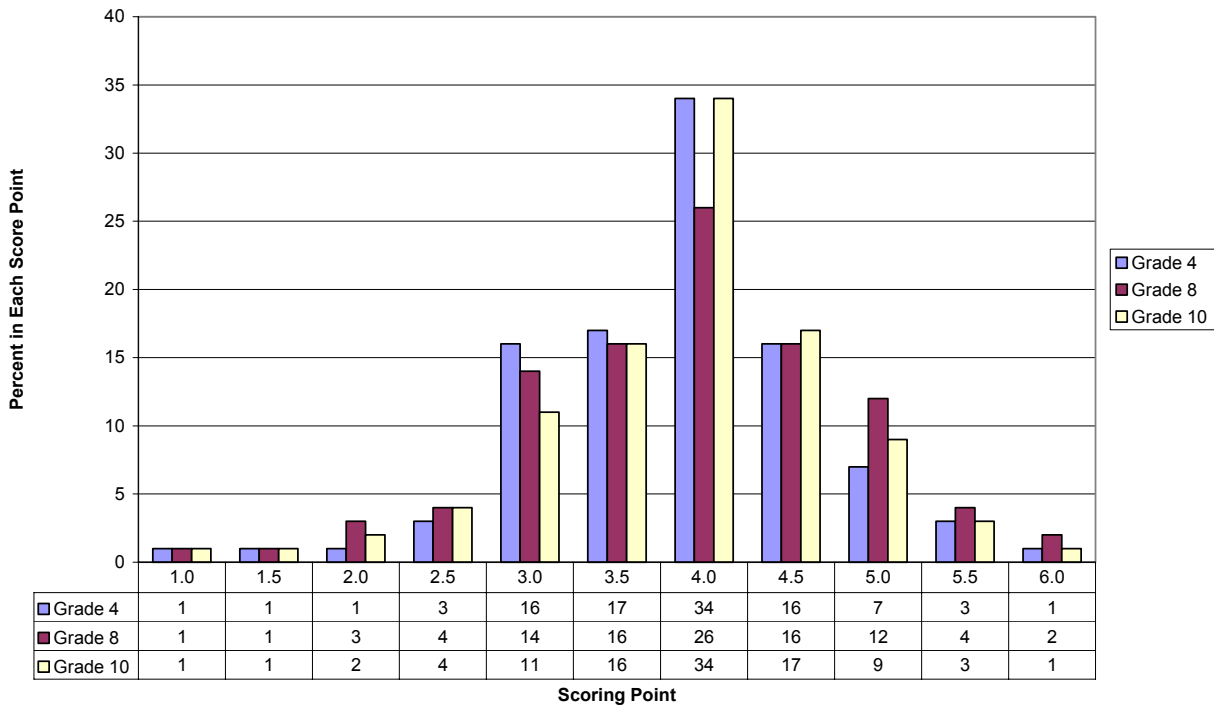


Figure 1 shows that the majority of Broward students are performing at or above the proficient level of the FCAT Writing Assessment. This figure assists in clarifying the results presented in Table 1. For example, it can be seen in Figure 1 that 34% of fourth graders, 26% of eighth graders, and 34% of tenth graders received a Combined Writing score of 4.0.

The Florida A+ Plan identifies FCAT Writing Assessment scores of 3.0 and above and 3.5 and above as the measures of successful writing for the school grade calculation. Table 2 presents the number of students at each grade level who earned a score of 3.0 or higher, and 3.5 or higher from 2002 through 2004.

<b>Table 2: FCAT Writing Assessment Results, 2002-2004*</b>		
	Percent at 3.0 or Above	Percent at 3.5 or Above
<b>Grade 4</b>		
2002	84%	56%
2003	93%	73%
2004	94%	78%
<b>Grade 8</b>		
2002	90%	75%
2003	93%	79%
2004	91%	77%
<b>Grade 10</b>		
2002	93%	81%
2003	91%	79%
2004	92%	81%

\*Note: Due to rounding procedures employed by the Florida Department of Education, these percentages may not sum to those results presented in Figure 1.

The percentage of fourth grade students who scored at 3.0 and above increased by 1% from the previous year, yet the percentage of these students who scored at 3.5 or above increased significantly by 5% from last year. This demonstrates that fourth grade students are continuing to achieve at high levels in Writing. Slight decreases are found among eighth grade students with 91% scoring at 3.0 or above in 2004 (down from 93% in 2003) and 77% scoring at 3.5 or above in 2004 (down from 79% in 2003). However these scores still represent improvement from 2002 and reflect that the vast majority of Broward eighth grade students are scoring at proficient levels on the Writing assessment. The percent of Broward tenth grade students who scored 3.0 or above increased by 1% from 2003 to 2004 (91% to 92%, respectively). Further the percent of students scoring 3.5 or above increased by 2% from 2003 to 2004 (79% to 81%).

Overall the results of the 2004 FCAT Writing assessment show that Broward students are performing at high levels of writing achievement. Students at grades four and ten are making impressive annual gains and demonstrating increased skill in writing at high levels.

### **NRT Results**

The FCAT NRT includes Reading and Mathematics subtests. These portions of the FCAT allow for comparisons of student performance to a national norm group, where a percentile rank of 50 is average. The FCAT NRT is not used in school accountability plans (either the A+ Accountability Plan used to determine school grades or as part of No Child Left Behind). However the results are useful in gauging how Broward's students may compare to students from across the country. The results from the FCAT NRT show that:

- Broward students at all grade levels performed well above average in Mathematics. Students in grades three through eight performed well above average in Reading, while Broward ninth and tenth grade students performed below average (grade nine median percentile rank in Reading: 43; grade ten median percentile rank in Reading: 46).

- Mathematics scores increased from the previous year at all grade levels. Reading scores also increased from 2003 levels at grades four, five, and eight and were maintained at grades three, six, seven, and nine. Among tenth graders in Reading, there was a decrease in scores from 2003 to 2004 (median percentile rank of 48 in 2003 to 46 in 2004).
- Fourth graders in Broward continue to evidence remarkable gains in both Reading and Mathematics. The median percentile rank among fourth grade students in Reading increased by four points from last year (2003: 59; 2004: 63) and in Mathematics, these scores increased by five points (2003: 66; 2004: 71).

Table 3 presents the median percentile ranks among Broward students for the Reading NRT subtest, from 2002 to 2004.

**Table 3: Broward FCAT Reading NRT Results for 2002-2004**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Median Percentile</b>
<b>3</b>	2002	59
	2003	62
	2004	62
<b>4</b>	2002	57
	2003	59
	2004	63
<b>5</b>	2002	54
	2003	56
	2004	57
<b>6</b>	2002	56
	2003	56
	2004	56
<b>7</b>	2002	59
	2003	61
	2004	61
<b>8</b>	2002	61
	2003	60
	2004	62
<b>9</b>	2002	42
	2003	43
	2004	43
<b>10</b>	2002	53
	2003	48
	2004	46

Table 3 demonstrates that on the Reading NRT portion of the FCAT, students in grades three through eight are performing at higher levels than students across the nation. Gains from the previous year can be seen among fourth grade students (+4 increase in median percentile rank), fifth grade students (+1 increase in median percentile rank), and eighth grade students (+2 increase in median percentile rank). Students in grades three, six, seven and nine maintained scores from the previous year. Tenth grade students showed a slight decrease in their Reading scores, from a median percentile rank of 48 in 2003 to 46 in 2004.

Table 4 presents the median percentile ranks among Broward students for the Mathematics NRT subtest, from 2002 to 2004.

**Table 4: Broward FCAT Mathematics NRT Results for 2002-2004**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Median Percentile</b>
<b>3</b>	2002	67
	2003	69
	2004	71
<b>4</b>	2002	64
	2003	66
	2004	71
<b>5</b>	2002	66
	2003	66
	2004	68
<b>6</b>	2002	68
	2003	69
	2004	70
<b>7</b>	2002	70
	2003	71
	2004	72
<b>8</b>	2002	67
	2003	68
	2004	69
<b>9</b>	2002	64
	2003	66
	2004	68
<b>10</b>	2002	69
	2003	68
	2004	69

It can be seen in Table 4 that at all grade levels, Broward students scored well above the national median percentile rank in Mathematics. The results further demonstrate that gains from the previous year were present at all grade levels, with the most significant gains reflected among students in grade three (+2 increase in median percentile rank); grade four (+5 increase in median percentile rank); grade five (+2 increase in median percentile rank), and grade nine (+2 increase in median percentile rank).

School-by-school results and District Reports can be found on the Department of Education website at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/>.

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If you have any questions regarding this release, **please contact me at (754) 321-2470 or Dr. Sean Leonard, Research Specialist, Student Assessment, at (754) 321-4250.**

FT/KB/AD:sl

cc: Senior Management  
Area Directors  
Principals  
Diane Carr, Executive, Director, Core Curriculum  
Frank Vodolo, Executive Director, Educational Programs  
PTA  
DAC