

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

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TO: School Board Members

FROM: Katherine Blasik, Ph.D., Associate Superintendent
Research, Evaluation, Assessment & Boundaries

VIA: James F. Notter
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **RELEASE OF 2008 FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST
(FCAT) WRITING+ ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Results from the 2008 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing+ Assessment were released today by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). The FCAT Writing+ Assessment is administered annually to students in grades four, eight, and ten. The assessment consists of: an essay written by the student with scores reported on a scale ranging from 1.0 to 6.0, where a score of 3.5 demonstrates proficient writing skills; and a multiple-choice section that measures students' abilities with regard to focus, organization, support, and conventions. The essay and multiple-choice sections both contribute to an overall reported score on a 100 to 500 point scale. For FCAT Writing+, students receive a whole-test scale score between 100 and 500 as well as a subscore on a rubric of 0 to 6 for the essay. The FCAT SSS Writing+ Achievement Levels are displayed in Table 1 with the corresponding scale score ranges.

Table 1
2008 FCAT Writing+ Achievement Levels

Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
4	100-239	240-289	290-364	365-426	427-500
8	100-249	250-298	299-355	356-415	416-500
10	100-249	250-299	300-341	342-402	403-500

The data summarized below encompasses all students who were tested this year, including exceptional student education (ESE) students and limited English proficient (LEP) students regardless of amount of time in the District. Therefore, these data include students who will not necessarily be included for school grade or adequate yearly progress (AYP) computations.

In the following pages you will see that:

- **The combined mean score for Writing among Broward students was 4.1 for Grade 4, 4.4 for Grade 8, and 4.1 for Grade 10. These scores exceeded the state averages.**
- **A majority of students in the fourth (87%), eighth (92%), and tenth grades (84%) scored at or above the proficient level of 3.5.**

- Broward students' mean Writing+ scale scores exceeded the state at all grade levels.
- Broward students equaled or exceeded student performance statewide on the multiple-choice portion of the Writing+ Assessment.

The essay portion of the fourth grade Writing+ Assessment directs students to write either in Expository or Narrative style while the eighth and tenth grade students are directed 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 2 presents these results from the 2008 FCAT Writing+ Assessment along with the results from the prior six school years.

Table 2

Mean FCAT Writing+ Essay Scores for All Curriculum Groups, 2002-2008

	Expository		Narrative/Persuasive		Combined	
	Broward	State	Broward	State	Broward	State
Grade 4						
2002	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.4
2003	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.6
2004	3.7	3.6	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7
2005	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.9	3.7
2006	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.0	3.9
2007	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.9
2008	4.0	3.8	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.8
Grade 8						
2002	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.8
2003	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9
2004	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.8
2005	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.7	3.9	3.8
2006	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0
2007	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.1
2008	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.2
Grade 10						
2002	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.8
2003	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8
2004	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8
2005	3.8	3.7	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.8
2006	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9
2007	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.0	4.1	3.9
2008	*	*	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.9

*Expository was not used for Grade 10 in 2007-08

For the seventh consecutive year Broward's fourth grade students outperformed students across the state, with this year's Broward Combined score at 4.1 compared to 3.8 statewide. Similarly, for the seventh consecutive year Broward's eighth and tenth grade students equaled or outperformed students across the state by 0.2 points, with this year's Broward Combined score at a 4.4 for grade 8 and 4.1 for grade 10. The performance of Broward fourth and eighth grade students increased compared to 2007 (0.1 point increase for each grade).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of essay scores among fourth, eighth, and tenth grade students in Broward. The percent of students in each point category, for each grade level, is illustrated in the figure. The percent of students attaining each score are provided in Table 3.

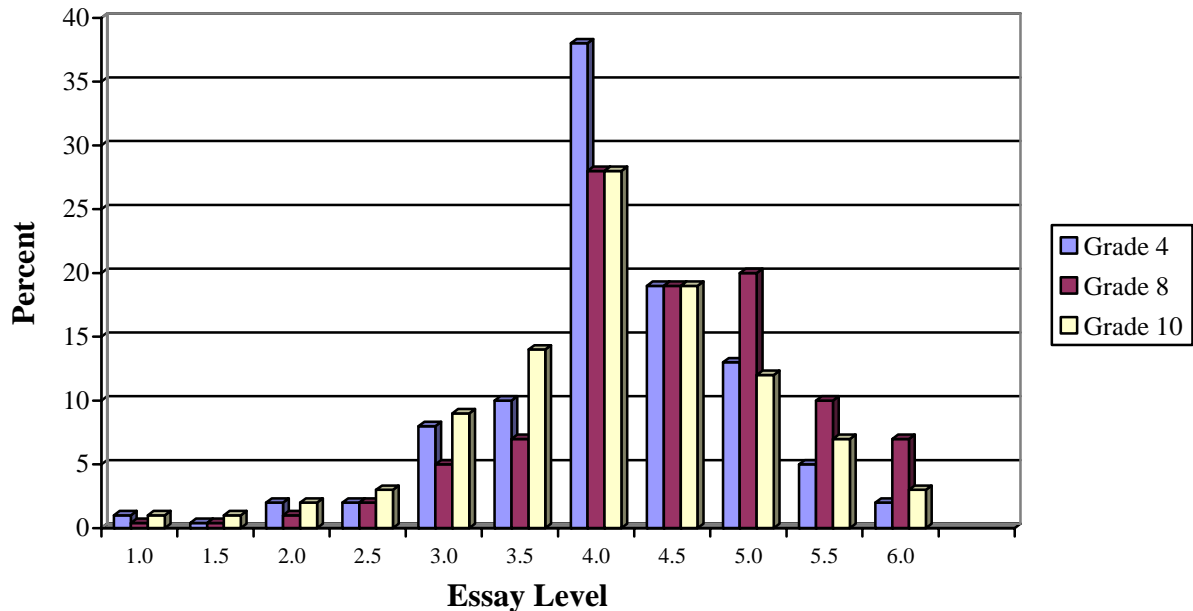


Figure 1. *Distribution of combined Writing+ essay scores, 2008.*

Table 3

Distribution of Broward County Students' FCAT Writing+ Essay Scores, 2008

	Essay Score										
	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.5	6.0
Grade 4	1	***	2	2	8	10	38	19	13	5	2
Grade 8	***	***	1	2	5	7	28	19	20	10	7
Grade 10	1	1	2	3	9	14	28	19	12	7	3

***Percentage is <0.5

Figure 1 and Table 3 show that the majority of Broward students scored at or above the proficiency level on the essay portion of the FCAT Writing+ Assessment (3.5). Furthermore, the modal Writing score among Broward students was 4.0, demonstrating that most student scored above the proficiency level.

Table 4 presents the percent of students at each grade level who earned a score of 3.0 or higher, and 3.5 or higher from 2002 to 2008. In addition, the percent of students at or above 4.0 from 2004 to 2008 is also provided. **Since 2002, the percentage of fourth grade students performing at 3.5 or higher in Writing has increased by 31 percentage points (from 56% to 87%).** The fourth grade students also registered a 16 percentage point increase in students scoring at 4.0 and above from 61% in 2004 to 77% in 2008. **The eighth grade students registered an increase of 17 percentage points in students scoring at or above 3.5 (75% in 2002 to 92% in 2008)** and an increase of 24 percentage points in students scoring at or above 4.0 (60% in 2004 to 84% in 2008). **The tenth grade students registered an increase of 3**

percentage points in students scoring at or above 3.5 (81% in 2002 to 84% in 2008) and an increase of 6 percentage points in students scoring at or above 4.0 (64% in 2004 to 70% in 2008).

Table 4

FCAT Writing Assessment Results, 2002-2008

	Percent at 3.0 or Above	Percent at 3.5 or Above	Percent at 4.0 or Above
Grade 4			
2002	84%	56%	
2003	93%	73%	
2004	94%	78%	61%
2005	93%	81%	64%
2006	93%	83%	72%
2007	97%	86%	75%
2008	95%	87%	77%
Grade 8			
2002	90%	75%	
2003	93%	79%	
2004	91%	77%	60%
2005	94%	81%	64%
2006	95%	86%	72%
2007	97%	90%	81%
2008	97%	92%	84%
Grade 10			
2002	93%	81%	
2003	91%	79%	
2004	92%	81%	64%
2005	91%	81%	66%
2006	89%	79%	63%
2007	93%	83%	69%
2008	93%	84%	70%

In addition to the essay, the FCAT Writing+ Assessment incorporates a multiple-choice section that measures students' abilities with regard to focus, organization, support, and conventions (content areas). Focus refers to how clearly a written passage presents and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point. Organization refers to the structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the relationship of one point to another. Support refers to the quality of details used to explain, clarify, or define. Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure. Table 5 summarizes student performance in each of the tested areas as the average number of points earned. The number of points possible is provided for reference. The multiple-choice section, along with the essay, contributes to an overall scale score and Achievement Level. In addition to the content areas, Table 5 provides the 2008 scale scores for Broward County and the State of Florida.

Table 5

Broward and State of Florida's 2008 FCAT Writing+ Mean Score and Mean Points Earned by Multiple-Choice Reporting Category

	Mean Writing+ Score (100-500)	Points	Mean Points Earned by Multiple-Choice Reporting Category			
			Focus	Organization	Support	Conventions
Grade 4						
		Possible	8	12	8	16
Broward	322	Mean Earned	5	8	5	11
State	304	Mean Earned	5	8	5	11
Grade 8						
		Possible	10	9	9	16
Broward	311	Mean Earned	6	6	6	10
State	300	Mean Earned	6	6	6	10
Grade 10						
		Possible	10	9	9	16
Broward	311	Mean Earned	7	6	6	10
State	302	Mean Earned	7	5	6	10

Review of the table reveals that in fourth, eighth, and tenth grade Broward students registered higher mean scores than did students statewide. **In fourth grade, Broward's students scored at 322, compared to 304 statewide. Broward's eighth grade students scored at 311, compared to 300 statewide. In tenth grade, Broward's students scored nine points higher than the state at 311 vs. 302.** With regard to performance in each of the reporting categories, Broward's students matched or exceeded students' statewide performance in all areas at all grade levels.

Table 6 summarizes overall student writing proficiency as reported by achievement level on the 2008 FCAT Writing+ assessment. The table displays results as the percent of students in each Achievement Level and combined for Achievement Levels 3 or higher. A review of these data reveals that a greater proportion of Broward students scored at proficiency (achievement levels 3, 4, and 5) than did students statewide. At fourth grade Broward students outperformed the state in proficiency rate by 10 percentage points. At the fourth grade, 71% of students scored at 3 or above compared with 61% statewide. Similarly, in eighth grade 56% of Broward students were proficient compared with 50% statewide. Broward's tenth grade students registered a proficiency rate of 59%, six percentage points higher than the state. As previously noted, Broward's students registered higher mean scores than did students statewide in grades 4, 8, and 10. Additionally, the percent of Broward students in Achievement Level 3 or higher was greater than the state in all grade levels.

Table 6

Broward FCAT Writing+ Results, 2008

	Mean Scale Score	Percent of Students in Each Achievement Level					
		1	2	3	4	5	3 or Higher
Grade 4							
Broward	322	12	17	43	21	6	71
State	304	17	22	42	15	4	61
Grade 8							
Broward	311	18	26	30	19	8	56
State	300	22	29	29	15	6	50
Grade 10							
Broward	311	17	24	27	23	9	59
State	302	20	27	27	20	7	53

Changes for Writing+. Changes for Writing+ for the 2008-09 school year and beyond are:

- (1) The requirement to pass FCAT Writing+ for graduation beginning with the 2009-10 class *has been delayed.*
- (2) Next year's writing test *will not include multiple-choice items.* Only the essay portion will be administered.

Tuesday, May 13, 2008, is the projected date that parents will be able to view students' FCAT Writing+ scores via the FCAT Parent Network (for further information, please see the FCAT Parent Network Web site at www.fcatparentnetwork.com). This secure site also includes detailed information on the meaning of the scores and provides resources to improve student performance in the future.

Overall, the results of the FCAT Writing+ Assessment show that Broward continues to make progress in this important area of academic achievement. Broward's students have equaled or exceeded performance of students across the State of Florida. This memorandum and a school-by-school report of FCAT Writing + scores are available at: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/studentassessment/AssessmentReleases.htm>. **If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me at 754-321-2470 or Paul Houchens, Director, Student Assessment & School Performance at 754-321-4257.**

JFN/KAB/PH

cc: Executive Leadership Team
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