

MEMORANDUM

May 4, 2011

**TO:** The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

**FROM:** Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools *AMC*

**SUBJECT:** STATE RELEASE OF RESULTS FOR THE SPRING 2011 FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST (FCAT) WRITING: GRADES 4, 8, AND 10

Today the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) released results from the Spring 2011 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing, administered to students in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The FCAT Writing reports released today provide summary data based on the scores of all students tested. **These results do not reflect the groupings that will be used by the State for accountability purposes.**

For FCAT Writing, students in Grades 4, 8, and 10 are required to write an essay on an assigned topic: either narrative or expository at grade 4, and either persuasive or expository at grades 8 and 10. In 2011, all three tested grade levels received expository prompts. Reported scores for FCAT Writing are traditional "rubric" scores, with four elements of writing (focus, organization, support, and conventions) evaluated using a holistic scoring method. Essay scores can range from a low of 1 to a high of 6. Under the federal No Child Left Behind determination of Annual Yearly Progress (NCLB AYP), a score of 3.0 or above is considered on-grade-level performance. However, beginning with the 2010-11 school year, it is expected that the criteria for the calculation of Florida School Grades will be raised to consider the percentage of students scoring 4.0 or above, rather than the criteria used in recent years (2009-10, the average of the percentage scoring 3.0 or above and the percentage scoring 4.0 or above; 2008-09, the percentage scoring 3.5 or above).

Nearly 78,000 Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) students in Grades 4, 8, and 10 participated in the Spring 2011 FCAT Writing assessment. Highlights of the results and District summary tables are attached. **Overall, over 95% of the District's students demonstrated on-grade-level performance, based on the NCLB AYP criteria of scores of 3.0 or above. In addition, the percentage M-DCPS students scoring at or above 4.0 on FCAT Writing increased from 2010 to 2011, with the District's elementary and middle school students' average essay scores meeting or exceeding this new high performance criteria.** Nonetheless, changes in the calculation of the Florida School Grades this year will result in fewer points being contributed by writing scores despite the efforts of students and staff.

Complete District, State, and school summary reports will be posted as they become available on the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) website at <http://fcat.fldoe.org>. School shipments of Individual Student Reports are being forwarded to schools as they are received.

Should you have any questions about the attached results, please contact Ms. Deborah Karcher, Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Services, at 305-995-3751, or Ms. Gisela Feild, Administrative Director, Assessment, Research, and Data Analysis, at 305-995-7512.

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Attachments

cc: School Board Attorney  
Superintendent's Cabinet  
Superintendent's Senior Staff

**Highlights of the Florida Department of Education's  
Spring 2011 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Summary Report  
Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)  
Grades 4, 8, and 10 FCAT Writing**

- Overall, M-DCPS students' performance on FCAT Writing improved from 2010 to 2011.
  - The percentage M-DCPS students scoring at or above 4.0 on FCAT Writing increased from 2010 to 2011.
    - 80 percent of all fourth grade students scored 4 or above on FCAT Writing in 2011, increasing from 73 percent in 2010.
    - 79 percent of all eighth grade students met this high level of achievement in 2011, increasing from 74 percent.
    - The percentage of tenth grade students scoring at or above 4.0 on FCAT Writing held steady at 73 percent in 2011 following an incredible 15 point gain over the previous year.
  - M-DCPS elementary and middle school students' average FCAT Writing scores increased from 2010 to 2011, with average District scores exceeding the new high performance criteria of 4.0 or above.
    - Elementary students' average scores were on par with those of students statewide in 2011, while those of middle and senior high school students were slightly lower.
- Despite the improvement seen in students' FCAT Writing scores in Miami-Dade and across the state in 2011, changes to the calculation of Florida School Grades this year will result in a reduction in the number of points contributed by writing scores.
  - The writing component for school grades is expected to change from the average of the percentage of students scoring at or above 3.0 and 4.0, to only the percentage scoring at or above 4.0.

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Summary of State and District Results for the**  
**Spring 2011 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)**  
**Grades 4, 8, and 10 FCAT Writing**

On May 4, 2011, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) released State and District summary data from the Spring 2011 administration of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing assessment. The summary data include results for all students tested in Grades 4, 8, and 10.

District Spring 2011 FCAT Writing results are based on the following numbers of students tested: 25,887 in Grade 4, 26,739 in Grade 8, and 25,140 in Grade 10, for a total of 77,766. These figures include students from all curriculum groups and do not represent the groupings that will be used by the State for accountability purposes.

In Spring 2010, the FLDOE instituted two changes to the FCAT Writing program due to budget limitations at the state level. First, only one prompt is now used at all grade levels: either narrative (writing to tell a story) or expository (writing to explain) at grade 4, and either persuasive (writing to convince) or expository (writing to explain) at grades 8 and 10. In addition, each writing essay has only one reader rather than two during performance scoring. As such, students will only be able to receive whole number scores (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) no longer will intermediate scores be assigned (ex. 3.5, 4.5). These scores range from 1 low to 6 high.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind determination of Annual Yearly Progress, a score of 3.0 or above is considered on-grade-level performance. However, beginning with the 2010-11 school year, the criteria for the calculation of Florida School Grades is expected to be raised. New this year, the writing portion of the Florida School Grade calculation would be the percentage of students scoring 4.0 or above. This would be a change from previous years: in 2009-10 the average of the percentage of students scoring at or above 3.0 and 4.0 in writing was used for the school grade calculation to approximate the percentage of students scoring 3.5 or above, as in prior years.

The following tables summarize 2011 FCAT Writing results for the State and District. Displayed are summaries of students' performance for 2009, 2010, and 2011 on the essay portion, including mean essay scores and the percentages of students scoring 3.0 or above, and 4.0 or above.

**Table 1  
FCAT Writing  
State and District, 2009, 2010, and 2011  
Mean Essay Scores**

	STATE				DISTRICT			
	2009 Mean Essay Score (N)	2010 Mean Essay Score (N)	2011 Mean Essay Score (N)	Difference 2010 - 2011	2009 Mean Essay Score (N)	2010 Mean Essay Score (N)	2011 Mean Essay Score (N)	Difference 2010 - 2011
Grade 4	4.0 (194,444)	3.8 (196,336)	4.0 (197,860)	+0.2	3.9 (25,947)	3.8 (25,986)	4.0 (25,877)	+ 0.2
Grade 8	4.3 (192,433)	4.1 (191,908)	4.2 (195,702)	+0.1	4.2 (25,240)	4.0 (26,241)	4.1 (26,739)	+ 0.1
Grade 10	3.8 (189,333)	3.9 (182,165)	4.0 (188,643)	+0.1	3.8 (26,171)	4.0 (23,158)	3.9 (25,140)	- 0.1

Note: Essay scores can range from 1 to 6. Results include all students tested, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

**Table 2  
FCAT Writing  
State and District, 2009, 2010, and 2011  
Percentages of Students Scoring at or above 3.0 and 4.0**

		STATE			DISTRICT		
		2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
Grade 4	≥3.0	94%	94%	97%	94%	94%	96%
	≥4.0	73%	68%	81%	72%	73%	80%
Grade 8	≥3.0	96%	96%	97%	95%	95%	96%
	≥4.0	80%	76%	82%	79%	74%	79%
Grade 10	≥3.0	90%	94%	94%	89%	94%	93%
	≥4.0	60%	72%	75%	58%	73%	73%

Note: Results include all students tested, including students with disabilities and English language learners.