

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Gerard Robinson  
Commissioner of Education

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

One of the most important ways we communicate with others is through writing. Writing well is important whether we are in school or at work, whether we are sending a message to a friend or writing a resume.

To help better prepare students for college and careers, the Florida Department of Education has transitioned to new standards that set expectations for what students need to learn by each grade level and in various subjects. New assessments measure a student's progress toward meeting the standards.

Your student's spring 2012 FCAT Writing score report is enclosed and the results reflect some changes in how your child's writing assessment was scored. There were two scorers this year instead of one, and they placed more emphasis on proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar, as well as the way your student included supporting details in the essay he or she wrote.

Since we were raising the bar for FCAT writing, we expected to see lower scores. However, when the preliminary results began coming in from around the state, they were markedly lower than projected. We had raised the bar. We were grading more stringently. We knew that our students' writing ability had not suddenly changed.

On May 15, the State Board of Education approved changing the writing performance-level standard used for school grades from 4.0 to 3.0 on a 6-point scale to allow time to review the results and the process. That also meant that lower scores would not have as significant an impact on school grades this year.

It is important to understand that Florida does not use the writing score to make decisions about your child's promotion. The state uses the score when it calculates school grades. (Your school district may take the writing score into consideration at a district level. You can check with your student's teacher or school to see whether that applies in your district.)

Raising educational standards and measuring a student's progress toward meeting them is the right thing to do. It works. Every time we have raised the bar in Florida, after dropping at first, scores have moved higher.

You can find more information about FCAT Writing on the Department's website at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fwinfopg.asp>. There is also a new website for parents where you can sign up to receive information about your child's education (<http://www.floridapathtosuccess.org>).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Gerard Robinson".

Gerard Robinson