


# MEMORANDUM

May 18, 2012

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

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

**SUBJECT: STATE RELEASE OF RESULTS FOR THE SPRING 2012 FLORIDA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST (FCAT) WRITING: GRADES 4, 8, AND 10**

Today the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) released results from the Spring 2012 administration of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing to students in Grades 4, 8, and 10. This release follows passage of an emergency rule by the Florida State Board of Education (SBOE) on May 15, 2012 to adjust the writing scores used in the calculation of Florida School Grades in 2012 to accommodate more stringent scoring requirements. However, despite the SBOE's decision to adjust scores, it is clear that there has been a marked decline statewide in the FCAT Writing scores from 2011 to 2012. **The decline in writing scores is exacerbated in Miami-Dade County given the disproportionate number of English Language Learners (ELL) served in our schools: approximately 70,000 students districtwide, or nearly three times the numbers served by other large districts in the State. Increased rigor in scoring will only depress the scores received by ELL students in their second year of instruction who require sufficient time to master the mechanics of a newly acquired language, and the adjustment enacted for the calculation of school grades will not rectify this systematic bias.**

During the administration of 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. 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. In Summer 2011, the FLDOE proposed increased rigor in the scoring requirements, reflecting higher expectations for students in their use of standard English conventions (i.e., grammar, spelling, punctuation) and supporting statements. Essay scores can range from a low of 1 to a high of 6; and because two readers scored each student essay in 2012, as opposed to only one in 2011, intermediary scores of 1.5, 2.5, 3.5, etc. are again possible.

Nearly 77,500 Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) students in Grades 4, 8, and 10 participated in the Spring 2012 FCAT Writing assessment. District summary tables are attached.

- Miami-Dade students' achievement on FCAT Writing paralleled that of students statewide.

- Just over 80% of District and State 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade students scored 3 or above in Writing in 2012, while about three-quarters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students met this criteria.
- This reflects a systematic decrease in scores statewide due to more rigorous scoring requirements that were introduced this year.
  - Application of the new scoring requirements called for students to have “almost perfect conventions” to get a 4 or above.
  - Teachers and students were challenged to meet this new mark quickly, on release of the FLDOE’s Calibration Scoring Guides in August.
- The percentage of M-DCPS’ students scoring 3 or above on FCAT Writing decreased from 2011 to 2012, following the same pattern as Florida’s students.
  - However, the District’s mean FCAT Writing scores dropped less than one point overall from 2011 to 2012, and just one-half point for students in Grade 10.
- The greatest discrepancies in the distribution of FCAT Writing scores for students in the State and the District from 2011 to 2012 were seen at the top end of the scale, with 5% or fewer students scoring between 5 and 6 in 2012, as compared to 25% or more in 2012.

Please note that 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. Complete District, State, and school summary reports will be posted as they become available on the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) website at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/mediapacket/2012/default.asp>. 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.

AMC:ig  
M1044

#### Attachments

cc: School Board Attorney  
Superintendent’s Cabinet  
Superintendent’s Senior Staff  
Ms. Gisela Feild

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Summary of District and State Results for the**  
**Spring 2012 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)**  
**Grades 4, 8, and 10 FCAT Writing**

On May 18, 2012, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) released District and State summary data from the Spring 2012 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 2012 FCAT Writing results are based on the following numbers of students tested: 25,283 in Grade 4, 26,595 in Grade 8, and 25,545 in Grade 10, for a total of 77,423. These figures include students from all curriculum groups and do not represent the groupings that will be used by the State for accountability purposes.

Since Spring 2010, only one prompt has been used at each grade level: 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 2011-12 students in Grade 4 responded to a narrative prompt, and students in both Grades 8 and 10 responded to a persuasive prompt. This year the State is returning to having each writing essay scored by two readers rather than one as was done in 2011. As such, students may be assigned intermediate scores (ex. 3.5, 4.5) rather than just whole number scores (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) as was done last year. FCAT Writing scores range from 1 low to 6 high.

However, new FLDOE Calibration Scoring Guides were provided in August 2011, establishing expanded expectations for students' essays. Specifically scoring will include increased attention to the correct use of standard English conventions and increased focus on specific support; more stringent scoring will be implemented beginning in Spring 2012.

On May 15, 2012, the State Board of Education passed an emergency rule to adjust the writing scores used in the calculation of Florida School Grades in 2012 to accommodate the new scoring requirements. The criteria used in the calculation of Florida School Grades has gradually become more stringent over time since the inception of the program, beginning with the percentage scoring 3.0 or above, and increasing to the percentage scoring 4.0 or above in 2011. In 2012, the criteria will be readjusted to the percentage scoring 3.0 or above to accommodate the change in scoring requirements. Also note that 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.

The following tables summarize 2012 FCAT Writing results for the District and State. Displayed are summaries of students' performance for 2010, 2011, and 2012 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  
District and State, 2010, 2011, and 2012  
Mean Essay Scores**

	DISTRICT				STATE			
	2010 Mean Essay Score (N)	2011 Mean Essay Score (N)	2012 Mean Essay Score (N)	Difference 2011 - 2012	2010 Mean Essay Score (N)	2011 Mean Essay Score (N)	2012 Mean Essay Score (N)	Difference 2011 - 2012
Grade 4	3.8 (25,986)	4.0 (25,877)	3.2 (25,283)	-0.8	3.8 (196,336)	4.0 (197,860)	3.3 (192,753)	-0.7
Grade 8	4.0 (26,241)	4.1 (26,739)	3.2 (26,595)	-0.9	4.1 (191,908)	4.2 (195,702)	3.3 (193,706)	-0.9
Grade 10	4.0 (23,158)	3.9 (25,140)	3.4 (25,545)	-0.5	3.9 (182,165)	4.0 (188,643)	3.4 (187,416)	-0.6

Note: Essay scores can range from 1 to 6. Results include all students tested, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Scores for 2012 reflect the FLDOE's more rigorous scoring requirements.

**Table 2  
FCAT Writing  
District and State, 2010, 2011, and 2012  
Percentages of Students Scoring at or above 3.0 and 4.0**

		DISTRICT			STATE		
		2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Grade 4	≥3.0	94%	96%	81%	94%	97%	81%
	≥4.0	73%	80%	26%	68%	81%	27%
Grade 8	≥3.0	95%	96%	75%	96%	97%	78%
	≥4.0	74%	79%	28%	76%	82%	33%
Grade 10	≥3.0	94%	93%	83%	94%	94%	84%
	≥4.0	73%	73%	36%	72%	75%	38%

Note: Results include all students tested, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Scores for 2012 reflect the FLDOE's more rigorous scoring requirements.

**Table 3**  
**FCAT Writing**  
**District and State, 2011 and 2012**  
**Percentages of Students Scoring at Each Score Point**

Percent Scoring at Each FCAT Writing Score Point														
			0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.5	6.0
<b>District</b>	Grade 4	2011	1	1	--	2	--	16	--	58	--	20	--	2
		2012	2	2	1	5	9	34	21	19	5	2	1	0
	Grade 8	2011	--	1	--	3	--	17	--	50	--	26	--	3
		2012	1	2	2	9	11	28	19	21	5	2	1	0
	Grade 10	2011	--	2	--	4	--	20	--	47	--	22	--	4
		2012	1	2	2	4	8	24	23	25	7	3	1	0
<b>State</b>	Grade 4	2011	1	1	--	2	--	16	--	56	--	22	--	3
		2012	1	1	1	6	9	33	21	19	5	2	1	0
	Grade 8	2011	--	1	--	2	--	15	--	47	--	30	--	5
		2012	1	2	1	8	10	26	19	23	6	3	1	0
	Grade 10	2011	--	1	--	4	--	19	--	46	--	24	--	5
		2012	0	1	1	5	8	24	22	26	8	3	1	0

Note: Results include all students tested, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Scores for 2012 reflect the FLDOE's more rigorous scoring requirements.