

Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) 2011/12 Important Information for Parents of Grades 4 & 7 Students



What is the Foundation Skills Assessment?

All students in Grades 4 and 7 in B.C. take part in the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), an annual assessment of reading comprehension, writing and numeracy (math skills). The assessments are based on the provincial curriculum and are developed by classroom teachers. The main purpose of the assessment is to help the Ministry of Education, school districts and schools track how well students are learning core academic skills. The information is used by the ministry, the district and by schools in planning for improvement.

The FSA provides a snapshot of how well students have learned important basic skills at a particular point in time. The information is best used together with teacher assessments and other school information.

When will FSA be administered?

FSA will be administered between January 16 and February 24, 2012. This year, due to job action by members of the British Columbia Teacher's Federation (BCTF), and in keeping with the Labour Relations Board (LRB) ruling, the FSA will be administered by Principals, Vice-Principals and other qualified district staff.

When do we see FSA results?

By the end of the school year, district and school-level results will be made available to schools and the public. **Individual student results, along with the answer booklets, will be sent home with students by the end of March. This will give parents the opportunity to see the assessment items and how their child responded.** Again, this is only a snapshot and does not provide a complete picture of your child's ability. The complete picture is best obtained from your child's teacher.

Does the FSA count toward students' marks?

No. The results show a student's skills at a particular point in time. They are not related to marks in a specific subject or grade level but show progress in the development of foundation skills across grades and curriculum areas. For example, students read in science and social studies as well as in language arts and they work with numbers in activities or subjects besides math.

Who writes the FSA?

As per the Ministry of Education requirements, all Grade 4 and 7 students are expected to write the FSA. The following exceptions to writing the FSA are identified by the Ministry of Education: a) students who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) documenting a disability that significantly impacts their performance in reading, writing or numeracy; b) students with IEPs who would need extensive adaptations (e.g., readers, scribes); or c) ESL students who have not yet reached a level of proficiency sufficient for them to provide meaningful responses. If it is recommended that your child be excused from one or more components, you will be contacted prior to the beginning of the assessment. In situations of student illness, family emergency or other extenuating circumstances, parents are asked to contact the school principal directly for discussion. As per Ministry guidelines, principals determine which students, if any, are excused and submit the list as required to the Superintendent of Schools.

Students are encouraged to do their best as this helps the province and school district make informed decisions about how best to provide resources to schools in order to support learners.

Where can I get more information?

Additional information is also available on the Ministry of Education's website <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/>, from your child's principal or David Vandergugten, Director of Instruction at 604-466-6279.

Jan Unwin, Superintendent of Schools