

# FCAT FAQ's

## **What is the FCAT?**

A: The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is the statewide assessment and accountability program. The test measures student performance on the Sunshine State Standards.

## **Q: What are the Sunshine State Standards?**

A: The state's core curriculum. The Sunshine State Standards are what a child should know and be able to do at every grade level. The standards cover seven content areas: social studies, science, language arts, health/physical education, the arts, foreign language, and mathematics and are divided into smaller units called "benchmarks."

## **Q: Who takes the FCAT?**

A: All public school students in grades three through 10 are required to take the FCAT. Eleventh-graders take the science portion of the test. Students who are home-schooled are tested if their parents or guardians select the FCAT as an evaluation option.

## **Q: What do results mean?**

A: FCAT helps to gauge the effectiveness of instruction and pinpoint problems. The test is used to determine whether third-graders can advance to fourth grade and whether high school seniors can graduate. Also, students who don't score well on the test are targeted for remedial classes.

## **Q: How does student performance affect a school?**

A: Based on how students perform on the exam, the state gives each school a letter grade. The results also are a factor in determining whether a school made adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. For schools who improve a letter grade or maintain an A grade, they are rewarded \$100 per student enrolled. The money can go to faculty bonuses or school supplies, but teachers and staff need to come to a consensus.

## **Q: When are test results expected?**

A: The results are usually sent to school districts in May. Results for third-graders and graduating high school seniors are prioritized and returned first.

## **Q: Who grades the FCAT?**

A: After each question is thoroughly reviewed by a group of qualified professionals, temporary workers score the test. A scorer needs to have a bachelor's degree and pass a qualifying exam.

## **TIPS FOR PARENTS**

Parents should make sure children:

- Arrive at school on time.
- Get adequate rest.

# FCAT FAQ's

- Eat a nutritious breakfast.
- Receive encouragement before the test.
- Dress comfortably on test days.

## TIPS FOR STUDENTS

- Read the directions carefully. Ask your teacher to explain any directions you do not understand.
- Be sure to fill in the answer bubbles correctly.
- Think positively.
- Relax and keep yourself focused.
- Check each answer to make sure it is the best answer for the question asked.

**Since the FCAT's inception, several successes and shortcomings have been attributed to it. Among them:**

## PROS

- Significant academic gains in early grades.
- Monetary rewards to high-achieving schools.
- Expanded bonuses for teachers tied to year-to-year improvement.
- Parents can see their children's progress

## CONS

- The number of "A" schools continues to climb, even at campuses where large percentages of students are not doing grade-level work.
- Middle school students who fail to pass FCAT continue to be promoted to high school.
- Increase in anxiety among students.

*Source: Florida Department of Education and staff reports*

To learn more about the FCAT, visit [www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm) or [www.fcatexplorer.com/](http://www.fcatexplorer.com/)

For sample test questions and previous tests, go to [www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatitem.htm](http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatitem.htm) or [www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/interact/index.html](http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/interact/index.html)