



Foundation Skills Assessment Backgrounder

Key facts

- FSAs are assessments of reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy administered yearly since 1999 to all BC students in Grades 4 and 7.
- The tests have been developed by BC teachers and link directly to BC's curriculum. They are designed to assess cumulative learning over previous and current school years. They are carefully screened for cultural and other biases that could disadvantage any student or group of students.
- The FSA results provide a snapshot of how well BC students are doing in these important subject areas. When results are viewed over several years as trends over time they can be valuable indicators of how well our province, school districts, and schools are doing in improving student outcomes.
- Classroom based tests developed individually by teachers are designed to determine the learning needs and progress of individual students, but they cannot help to analyze success beyond individual students and classrooms.
- FSA results can be used by schools and districts as one piece of information to plan for improvement. The results are not used as marks or grade promotion purposes for individual students, but can be used for discussion between teachers and parents.

Changes to the FSA as of 2009

- The FSA is being administered in January/February this year rather than May. The earlier implementation will provide parents and teachers more time to use the results to help individual and groups of students before the end of the school year.
- The multiple-choice portion of the tests will be done online using computers in each school.
- Marking of the written component will be done by teachers in school districts.
- Marked written responses will be sent to parents along with individual student results.

FSAs are not optional

- The Ministry of Education has made it clear to all boards and superintendents that writing the FSAs is mandatory for all Grade 4 and 7 students with very limited exceptions.
- Some students with exceptional needs and ESL students who have not developed basic English skills may be exempted from all or part of the FSAs. Schools have been sent guidelines by the Ministry on determining exemptions.
- Boards and teachers may not opt out of administering the tests.