



### ***What is FCAT Writing+?***

The writing portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) combines a writing essay, used since 1994, with multiple-choice items. The test is now known by a relatively new name, FCAT Writing+ (plus). The machine-scored, multiple-choice section of the FCAT Writing+ was first added in 2006 and represents a comprehensive assessment of writing knowledge and skills.

### ***What action did the State Board of Education recommend?***

On April 15, 2008, the State Board approved the Commissioner's recommendation to remove the multiple-choice questions from the FCAT Writing+ tests at all grades and to delay the use of the Grade 10 test as a graduation requirement for the foreseeable future.

### ***Why was this action recommended?***

There were two reasons prompting this recommendation, budget constraints and a technical consideration. During the budget reduction process, all testing programs were carefully scrutinized, and it was determined that the multiple-choice questions were something we could remove without affecting our state or federal accountability systems. Technical concerns about the use of the Grade 10 Writing+ test for graduation purposes also contributed to the final decision. The recommendation in April was important for minimizing the impact of these technical concerns on students. The rule-making process will be implemented to formalize this recommendation.

### ***How does FCAT Writing+ factor into a school's grade?***

In the school grades calculation, schools earn one point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring a 3.5 or higher on the essay portion of the writing assessment. Writing+ scale scores do not factor into a school's grade.

### ***How is FCAT Writing+ scored?***

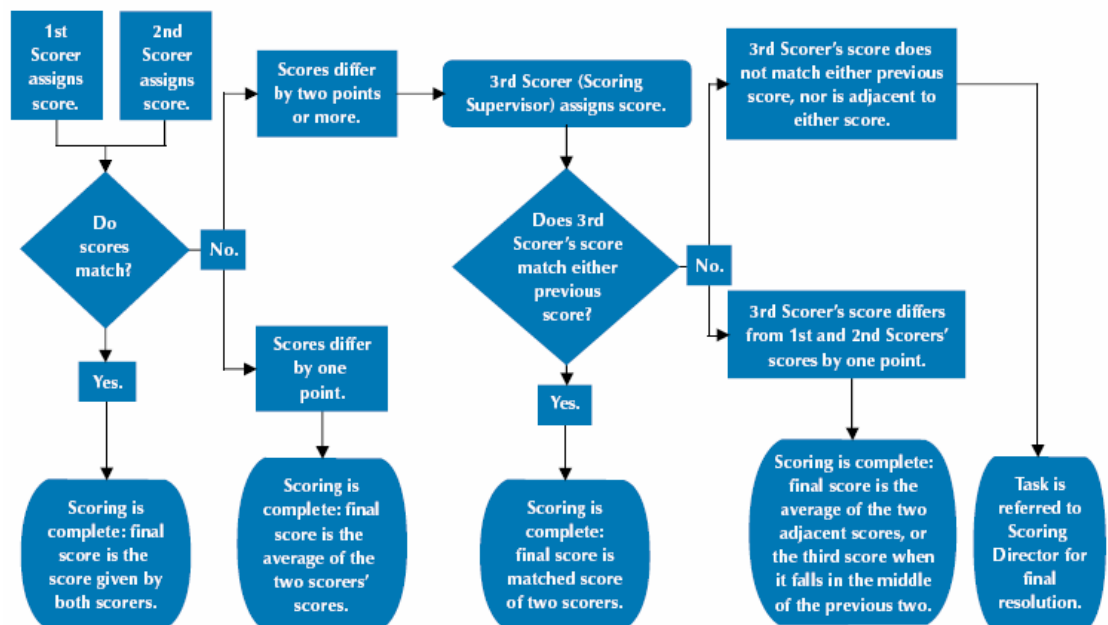
The multiple-choice portion of FCAT Writing+ is machine scored, and the essay portion is hand scored by professional scorers. These professional scorers include test contractor employees, educators who are not currently employed in the Florida public school system, retired teachers, part-time graduate students, and others who meet the necessary requirements. To be selected and eligible to score the FCAT, candidates must have at least a bachelor's degree in a related subject-area field. For hand scoring FCAT Writing+, examples of related subject-area fields include Journalism, Education, English, Literature, and Communications.

**How are scorers trained to hand score the FCAT Writing+ essay?**

The training involves developing an understanding of the scoring system and standards established by Florida educators. Scorers are trained during a thorough, multi-day training program. During this time, they are presented with model papers scored by Florida teachers. They read and practice scoring many papers under the supervision and instruction of an experienced scoring director and a Florida Department of Education content-area expert. Before they can score an actual student's FCAT, prospective scorers must first pass a qualifying examination. The qualifying examination is given at the end of the training program and includes papers previously scored by Florida educators. If prospective scorers do not pass, they must repeat the training. Those who cannot pass the exam after re-training are not accepted as scorers.

**What quality assurance measures are in place for the hand scoring of FCAT Writing+ essays?**

Each student's response is read and scored independently by at least two professional scorers. The student's essay score is the average of the two scores. If the scorers' two scores are not identical or adjacent, a third or fourth scorer, if needed, assigns a score without knowing the previous scores. The following flow chart outlines the hand scoring process for FCAT Writing+ essays:



The reliability and validity of the scores assigned by readers is also monitored at least daily throughout scoring and typically more often. If scorers cannot maintain scoring accuracy, they are dismissed. For information about additional quality assurance measures for the hand

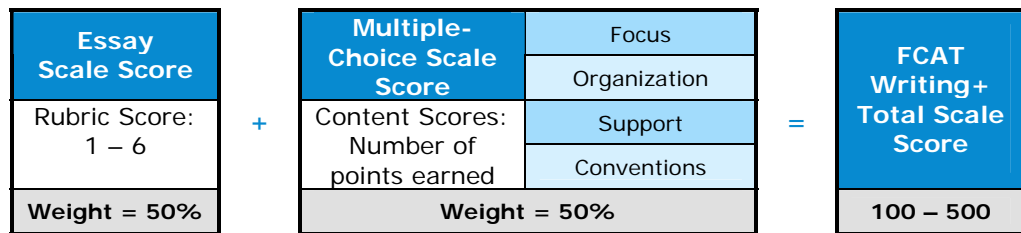
scoring process, consult the *FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators* (<http://fcap.fldoe.org/handbk/fcathandbook.asp>).

**What writing skills do the multiple-choice questions measure?**

The multiple-choice portion of FCAT Writing+ measures the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks that address prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. These questions assess the elements of the writing process. To be successful, students must answer questions related to focus, organization, support, and conventions. Multiple-choice questions measuring conventions have three answer choices; items measuring focus, organization, and support have four answer choices. The multiple-choice section of the test includes *writing plans* that measure student knowledge of focus and organization in prewriting; *writing samples* that simulate student-generated draft writing and measure student knowledge of focus, organization, and support; *cloze* selections containing numbered blanks that measure student knowledge of spelling and usage conventions; and *stand-alone* structures that provide a succinct context for measuring student knowledge of the conventions of spelling, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. The *FCAT Writing+ Test Item Specifications* for Grades 4, 8, and 10 are available electronically at <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp>.

**How are the FCAT Writing+ scale scores determined?**

For FCAT Writing+, students receive a total scale score between 100 and 500 that combines the scores for the essay and multiple-choice portions. The Achievement Level scores are based on the total scale score. Students also receive five sub-scores. The first sub-score is for the essay portion of the FCAT Writing+. It is scored on a scale from one to six, with six being the highest score. To view the scoring rubrics for FCAT Writing+ for Grades 4, 8, and 10, go to <http://fcap.fldoe.org/rubrcpag.asp>. The other four sub-scores are for each writing element assessed: focus, organization, support, and conventions. These four sub-scores are based on the multiple-choice questions and are the number of points earned (number of correct answers) in each area. The multiple-choice and essay portions of FCAT Writing+ weigh equally into a student’s final scale score. The score that each student receives on the essay portion is converted to a scale score, as are the points earned on the multiple-choice questions. The overall score is derived as an average of the two (see the example below).



***What are the Achievement Level standards for FCAT Writing+?***

Achievement Level standards for FCAT Writing+ and the graduation standard for the class of 2010 and beyond were established by the State Board of Education on January 25, 2007. The Spring 2007 FCAT administration marked the first time FCAT Writing+ performance was reported by Achievement Levels based on the following scale scores:

FCAT Writing+ Scale Scores					
Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
4	100-239	240-289	290-364	365-426	427-500
8	100-249	250-298	299-355	356-415	416-500
10	100-249	250-299	300-341	342-402	403-500

***What was the planned FCAT Writing+ high school graduation requirement?***

The class of 2010, or students who were ninth graders for the first time in 2006-07, was to be the first group of students required to earn a passing score of 300 or higher on the FCAT Writing+ in order to graduate from high school (Section 1008.22 (5), Florida Statutes). This requirement was in addition to the requirements for passing scores in FCAT Reading and Mathematics. On April 15, 2008, the State Board approved the Commissioner's recommendation to delay the use of the Grade 10 FCAT Writing+ test as a graduation requirement for the foreseeable future.

**Planned Implementation Prior to SBE Recommendation**

- 2006-07** Achievement Levels and Graduation Requirement Set  
Grade 9 students notified of Graduation Requirement
- 2007-08** **Grade 10 FCAT Writing+ scores were supposed to count for graduation**
- 2008-09** Retake opportunities for 11<sup>th</sup> Graders
- 2009-10** Retake opportunities for 12<sup>th</sup> Graders
- 2010** **First graduating class with FCAT Writing+ Passing Requirement**

**NOTE:** On April 15, 2008, the State Board approved delaying the use of the Grade 10 FCAT Writing+ test as a graduation requirement for the foreseeable future.