

2006

FCAT

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test®

REPORT ON THE 2006 FCAT WRITING+ ASSESSMENT

FLORIDA *Writes!*



GRADE
8

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Florida Writes!
Report on the
2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment

Grade 8

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

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Preface

To improve statewide assessment in Florida and to test students' writing achievement, the 1990 Florida Legislature mandated the assessment of students' writing in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The Florida Writing Assessment Program was established in response to this legislative action.

The development of this assessment began in 1990. The Assessment and School Performance section of the Department of Education (DOE) reviewed the latest advances in writing assessment and conferred with writing and curriculum consultants from Florida and from other states with established writing assessment programs. The DOE, with the assistance of advisory groups of teachers, school and district administrators, and citizens, developed the writing prompts (topics) and the scoring rubric (description of writing at each score point) and selected student responses to represent each score point.

For this assessment, each student is given a prompt and has 45 minutes to read the prompt independently, plan the response, and write the draft. A separate sheet is provided for planning and prewriting activities (e.g., outlining, clustering, mapping, and jotting down ideas). Within each classroom, students are randomly assigned one of two prompts. Fourth grade students respond to a prompt asking them to explain (expository writing) or tell a story (narrative writing); eighth and tenth grade students respond to a prompt asking them to explain (expository writing) or persuade (persuasive writing). Students are not allowed to use a dictionary or other writing resources during the assessment. (See Appendix B for examples of the assessment directions, answer book, and planning sheet.)

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8 is designed for educators who are involved in developing, implementing, or evaluating curriculum in middle schools. This publication describes the content and application of the Grade 8 writing performance task and offers suggestions for activities that may be helpful in preparing students for the assessment.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4 and *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10* provide information about the writing prompts administered to fourth and tenth grade students in 2006. *Florida Solves! Report on the 2006 FCAT Mathematics Released Items*, *Florida Reads! Report on the 2006 FCAT Reading Released Items*, and *Florida Inquires! Report on the 2006 FCAT Science Released Items* provide information about the mathematics, reading, and science performance tasks featured on the FCAT 2006 student reports. Additional information about FCAT reports can be found in *Understanding FCAT Reports 2006* on the Florida Department of Education web site at <http://www.fldoe.org>. (See Appendix G for further information on FCAT Publications and Products.)

If you have questions, please ask your school or district coordinator of assessment for assistance. The Office of Assessment and School Performance is also available to respond to questions concerning the writing assessment and this publication.

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The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test: FCAT Writing+

Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability

Florida's writing assessment was designed to assess Standard 2 of Goal 3 from *Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability*: "Record information in writing; compose and create communications; accurately use language, graphic representations, styles, organizations, and formats appropriate to the language, information, concept, or idea and the subject matter, purpose, and audience; and include supporting documentation and detail." These competencies are integral to all aspects of writing instruction and, with the Sunshine State Standards, describe the writing skills expected of students.

Florida's Writing Assessment

The DOE has supplemented the FCAT Writing+ performance task with multiple-choice items. The first round of multiple-choice items was field tested last year as part of the February 2005 administration of FCAT Writing+ (performance task plus multiple-choice items). With the addition of the multiple-choice component, the writing assessment was renamed "FCAT Writing+." Scores for FCAT Writing+ were reported for the first time in May 2006.

FCAT Writing+ includes a performance-based assessment known as demand writing. Demand writing assessment involves assigned topics, timed writing, and scored responses. The demand writing approach is used by many teachers during classroom instruction, by some employers during the job interview process, and in large-scale assessments, such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP); the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); the American College Testing Program (ACT); and the Florida College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). The strength of a large-scale assessment is that all student papers can be judged against a common standard. The result is a source of statewide information that can be used to characterize writing performance on a consistent basis.

The FCAT Writing+ assessment has adopted demand writing as an efficient and effective method of assessing eighth graders. Students are expected to produce a focused, organized, well-supported draft in response to an assigned topic within a 45-minute time period.

Effective Writing

How can teachers affect dramatic improvements in their students' writing? First, teachers must recognize instructional practices that have not produced quality writing for the majority of Florida's students.

Teachers must recognize the limitations of presenting, and accepting as correct, one organizational plan over all others. While a formula may be useful for beginning or novice writers who need scaffolding in organizational techniques and in the crafting of elaboration, it should not be an outcome expectation for student writers at any grade level.

Additionally, rote memorization of an essay component, such as an introduction or lead paragraph, is a practice that lends itself to the production of dull or confusing content. Using another writer's work in an

FCAT Writing+ response may be considered a violation of test administration rules. An explicit requirement of FCAT Writing+ is that the work must be the student's original writing.

According to the FCAT Writing+ scoring rubric, the student should be engaged with the writing, and the response should reflect the student's insight into the writing situation and demonstrate a mature command of language. Modeling the sentence styles and techniques of excellent writers may help a student achieve the characteristics demonstrated in purposeful, high-quality writing.

A skillful writer incorporates elements of composition in such a way that a reader can experience the writer's intended meaning, understand the writer's premise, and accept or reject the writer's point of view. Effective writing exhibits such traits as:

- a clear focus on the topic;
- detailed presentation of relevant information;
- an organized structure, including a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- appropriate transitional devices that enable the reader to follow the flow of ideas;
- elaborated support that incorporates details, examples, vivid language, and mature word choice;
- demonstrated knowledge of conventions of standard written English in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage; and
- varied sentence structure.

The best way to teach writing is to engage students in a recursive writing process that includes planning, writing, revising, and editing. A curriculum that consistently emphasizes reading and the use of spoken and written language in all subject areas and at all grade levels affords students the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes, thereby enhancing a student's success in writing.

Design of FCAT Writing+

Descriptions of the Writing Prompts

Each student taking the FCAT Writing+ assessment is given a booklet in which the topic for writing, called a prompt, is printed. The prompt serves as a stimulus for writing by presenting the topic and by suggesting that the student think about some aspect of the topic's central theme. The prompt does not contain directives concerning the organizational structure or the development of support.

Prompts are designed to elicit writing for specific purposes. For instance, expository prompts ask students to explain why or how, while persuasive prompts require students to convince a person to accept a point of view or to take a particular action. Prompts have two basic components: the writing situation and the directions for writing. The writing situation orients students to the subject, and the directions for writing set the parameters, such as identifying the audience to whom the writing is directed.

The prompts for the FCAT Writing+ assessment are selected to ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for eighth grade students. In addition, prompts are reviewed for offensive or biased language relating to religion, gender, and racial or ethnic backgrounds. All prompts are reviewed by members of the Eighth Grade Writing Assessment Advisory Committee and are pilot tested on a small group of students, then field tested on 1,000 students statewide. The DOE annually writes, reviews, pilot tests, and field tests prompts for potential use. (See Appendix C for further information on the procedures used to write and review prompts.)

Example of an Expository Prompt

Below is an example of an expository prompt. The first component presents the topic: jobs or chores. The second component suggests that the student think about various jobs or chores, and write about the reasons he or she does a particular job or chore.

Writing Situation:

Most teenagers have chores.

Directions for Writing:

Think about why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Now write to explain why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Example of a Persuasive Prompt

In the prompt below, the first component (the topic) focuses on the effect watching television has on students' grades. The second component suggests that the student think about these effects, then persuade the principal to accept the student's point of view.

Writing Situation:

The principal of your school has suggested that watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Directions for Writing:

Think about the effect watching TV has on your grades and your friends' grades.

Now write to convince your principal whether watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Scoring Method and Rubric

Holistic Scoring

The scoring method used to score the FCAT Writing+ essay is called holistic scoring. Trained scorers judge the total piece of writing in terms of pre-defined criteria. Holistic scoring assumes that the skills that make up the ability to write are closely interrelated and that one skill cannot be separated from the others. Scorers do not grade the response by enumerating its mechanical, grammatical, or linguistic weaknesses. To assign a score, scorers for FCAT Writing+ consider the integration of four writing elements: focus, organization, support, and conventions. This scoring method results in greater attention to the writer's message, staying closer to what is essential in realistic communication.

Focus refers to how clearly the paper presents and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point.

- Papers receiving low scores may contain information that is loosely related, extraneous, or both.
- Papers receiving high scores demonstrate a consistent awareness of the topic and avoid loosely related or extraneous information.

Organization refers to the structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the relationship of one point to another. Organization refers to the use of transitional devices to signal both the relationship of the supporting ideas to the main idea, theme, or unifying point, and the connections between and among sentences.

- Papers receiving low scores may lack or misuse an organizational plan or transitional devices.
- Papers receiving high scores demonstrate an effective organizational pattern.

Support refers to the quality of details used to explain, clarify, or define. The quality of the support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, relevance, and thoroughness.

- Papers receiving low scores may contain little, if any, development of support, such as a bare list of events or reasons, or support that is extended by a detail.
- Papers receiving high scores generally provide elaborated examples, and the relationship between the supporting ideas and the topic is clear.

Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure. These conventions are basic writing skills included in Florida's Sunshine State Standards.

- Papers receiving low scores often contain errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage, and may have little variation in sentence structure.
- Papers receiving high scores generally follow the basic conventions of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage, and various sentence structures are used.

Score Points in Rubric

The rubric provides a scoring description for each score point. The rubric used to score papers is shown below. Appendix E contains instructional implications for each score point.

6 Points The writing is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative. The paper demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject, clarity in presentation of ideas, and may use creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. Few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, and punctuation.

5 Points The writing focuses on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a progression of ideas, although some lapses may occur. The paper conveys a sense of completeness or wholeness. The support is ample. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. There is variation in sentence structure, and, with rare exceptions, sentences are complete except when fragments are used purposefully. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

4 Points The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern is apparent, although some lapses may occur. The paper exhibits some sense of completeness or wholeness. The support, including word choice, is adequate, although development may be uneven. There is little variation in sentence structure, and most sentences are complete. The paper generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling.

3 Points The writing is generally focused on the topic but may include extraneous or loosely related material. An organizational pattern has been attempted, but the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some support is included, but development is erratic. Word choice is adequate but may be limited, predictable, or occasionally vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure. Knowledge of the conventions of mechanics and usage is usually demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

2 Points The writing is related to the topic but includes extraneous or loosely related material. Little evidence of an organizational pattern may be demonstrated, and the paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Development of support is inadequate or illogical. Word choice is limited, inappropriate, or vague. There is little, if any, variation in sentence structure, and gross errors in sentence structure may occur. Errors in basic conventions of mechanics and usage may occur, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

1 Point The writing may only minimally address the topic. The paper is a fragmentary or incoherent listing of related ideas or sentences or both. Little, if any, development of support or an organizational pattern or both is apparent. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Gross errors in sentence structure and usage may impede communication. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of mechanics and usage, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

Unscorable The paper is unscorable because

- the response is not related to what the prompt requested the student to do;
- the response is simply a rewording of the prompt;
- the response is a copy of a published work;
- the student refused to write;
- the response is written in a foreign language;
- the response is illegible;
- the response is incomprehensible (words are arranged in such a way that no meaning is conveyed);
- the response contains an insufficient amount of writing to determine if the student was attempting to address the prompt; or
- the writing folder is blank.

Examples of unscorable student responses do not appear in this report.

Scoring of the Assessment

Student papers are scored following administration of the FCAT Writing+ assessment each February. Prior to each scoring session, members of the Writing Rangefinder Committee (comprised of Florida educators) read student responses and select papers to represent the established standards for each score point. The scoring contractor uses these papers to train the scorers to score FCAT Writing+ essays. A scoring guide (or anchor set) containing the rubric and example papers for each score point provides the basis for developing a common understanding of the standards recommended by the committee. A skilled scoring director and team leaders are responsible for training, assisting, and monitoring readers throughout the training and scoring process. All scoring is monitored by Florida Department of Education staff.

Scorers are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, preferably in education, English, or a related field, and must write an essay as part of the application process. To qualify as a scorer for FCAT Writing+, each candidate must also complete intensive training and demonstrate mastery of the scoring method by accurately assigning scores to the sample responses in a series of qualification sets. (See Appendix D for the bias issues discussed with the scorers.)

During scoring, scoring directors and team leaders verify the scores assigned to papers and answer questions about unusual or unscorable papers. Additional methods are used to ensure that all scorers are adhering to scoring standards. This includes having at least two scorers score each student response and having scorers score sets of papers pre-scored by the Writing Rangefinder Committee.

Suggestions for Preparing Students for the FCAT Writing+ Performance Task

The assessment of writing, by its nature, incorporates the assessment of higher-order thinking skills because students are required to generate and develop ideas that form the basis of their written responses. Instructional programs that emphasize higher-order thinking skills in all subjects and grade levels will have a positive influence on a student's writing proficiency.

A strong relationship exists between reading and effective writing. An active reader, one who analyzes passages and makes logical predictions before and during reading, uses the higher-order thinking skills associated with effective writing.

Improvement in writing can be made when students receive feedback or explanations about their writing. For example, if a student is not told that effective writing creates images in a reader's mind, then a student may continue to simply list rather than elaborate on reasons or arguments.

Recommendations for District and School Administrators

Administrators have the unique opportunity to directly influence the establishment and maintenance of writing programs. Administrators can provide leadership to writing instruction programs by

- ensuring that *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8* is available to all junior high or middle school teachers;
- bringing teachers together to discuss how to use *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8*;
- maintaining a literacy program that sets high standards for writing across all subject areas and grade levels;
- bringing teachers together to discuss interdisciplinary approaches and articulation of writing instruction across (and within) all subject areas and grade levels;
- arranging educational and professional growth opportunities for teachers;
- modeling the importance of effective written communication;
- assisting teachers in developing school-level writing expectations and assessment programs, such as portfolio assessment or schoolwide assessment of writing samples;
- scheduling in-service writing instruction and holistic scoring workshops for teachers and parents;
- emphasizing that writing should not be used as punishment;
- providing a print-rich environment in every classroom;
- including reference materials on writing in the schools' professional libraries; and
- encouraging the use of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and celebrating student writing.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers' daily contact with students gives them many opportunities to directly influence student attitudes toward writing. Instruction in writing should regularly involve the full writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Displaying or publishing student writing acknowledges their successes.

Real-world writing often requires demand writing (writing a response to a topic in a short period of time). As a part of writing instruction, students should work independently to read a topic, plan for writing, and formulate a response within a specified time frame. Analysis of writing that includes constructive feedback for students is a necessary step to enable students to improve their writing skills.

Teachers can prepare students for the performance task through a number of teacher-generated activities that include asking students to

- write responses to questions as an alternative to selecting correct responses on a multiple-choice test;
- read passages and create summary questions;
- write their views on current events before or after the events have been discussed in class;
- critique written pieces (e.g., published works and student writings);
- read and analyze different types of writing (e.g., biographies, science fiction, fantasies, historical accounts, speeches, and news reports);
- write letters to explain views on a particular issue or to refute the views of another person;
- write stories about real or imagined events;
- write descriptions of how things look, smell, taste, sound, and feel;
- write endings for unfinished fictional and nonfictional stories;
- write personal anecdotes and incorporate them into writing that either explains or persuades;
- maintain subject-area writing portfolios or participate in a long-term writing project; and
- review student responses in *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8*.

Recommendations for Parents and Guardians

Parents' and guardians' daily contact with children provides them the unique opportunity to be involved with their children's education inside and outside the classroom. Parents and guardians can encourage their children to write by

- discussing what the children have read and written at home and at school;
- having children write letters to friends and relatives;
- writing notes to children with instructions for chores;
- speaking with teachers about children's writing development;
- promoting writing for a variety of purposes in their children's school curriculum;
- displaying stories, essays, or other written work at home on the refrigerator or a bulletin board; and
- demonstrating the value of writing in real-life situations (e.g., letters to the editor of the local newspaper; letters of inquiry, complaint, or application; and letters to family and friends).

Expository Responses from the 2006 Assessment

Definition of Expository Writing

The purpose of expository writing is to inform, clarify, explain, define, or instruct by giving information, explaining why or how, clarifying a process, or defining a concept. Well-written exposition has a clear, central focus developed through a carefully crafted presentation of facts, examples, or definitions that enhance the reader's understanding. These facts, examples, and definitions are objective and not dependent on emotion, although the writing may be lively, engaging, and reflective of the writer's underlying commitment to the topic.

Summary of the Expository Responses Written in 2006

The annotated papers in this section represent responses to a prompt that directed students to choose something from nature they like and explain why they like this object in nature. Students responding to this prompt generally chose something from nature and explained why they like it. A paper was scorable if the student selected something he or she likes in nature and provided an explanation for the choice. Papers that focused on the topic, displayed an organizational pattern, contained elaborated support, showed variety in sentence structure, and generally followed the conventions of writing were scored in the higher ranges of the scale.

Suggestions for Use of the Annotated Responses

Teachers may use the responses on the following pages to improve student writing skills and help students understand the scoring criteria. Each response in this publication is annotated to explain why it was assigned a particular score. Personal information has been removed or fictionalized to protect the identity of the writer. Teachers can delete the scores and annotations and make transparencies or copies of the responses. Additional instructional uses of the responses include the following:

- rank ordering the responses from highest to lowest scores;
- highlighting words and phrases that provide an organizational structure and develop the supporting ideas in a response;
- listing the strengths and weaknesses of a response;
- revising and editing a response based on either a student-generated list of the strengths and weaknesses or the annotation beneath the response (this activity might include improving the introduction and conclusion, adding transitional devices, providing more details and examples, refining word choice, and varying sentence structure); and
- using the rubric and skills above to score student responses to similar prompts.

My mom always says, "Nature should be appreciated for what it is, not what people want it to do." I absolutely agree with her. There are many things in nature that I like because it is calming and soothing. The thing that I like most about nature is the weather.

I love any form of rain, whether it be a light drizzle or a heavy thunderstorm. When there is a steady rain outside, I love going into my parents' room, curling up on the bed with a book or a homework assignment, and having the beating of the rain in the background. For some reason, the rain helps me concentrate better, having that never-changing rhythm. When I am lucky and the rain does not come with thunder and lightning, I get together with my friends and go to the park that is down the street from my house. We put on old clothing, and slide down the huge slide, landing in the wet sand at the bottom. We dance around in the rain until we are soaked through to the bone. The rain, in any form, gives me so much pleasure.

There is nothing better than to turn on the television set in the morning and hear the weatherman reporting a cold front ^{that} blowing in. On a Saturday morning, I love waking up and going to basketball practice in the freezing cold weather. Taking a run around the outdoor courts is the most refreshing thing to me. I also love doing the total opposite of that: sleeping. It is a mystery to me, but it

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seems as if cold weather contributes to a good night's sleep. When my mom comes into my bedroom early in the morning, it is always so hard for me to wake up in the wintertime. This is not because I must begin a new day, but because it is so warm and cozy piled underneath all of the blankets on my bed. When the weather outside is freezing cold and you must pile on the long-sleeved shirts and jackets, it is very refreshing to feel.

The weather is unpredictable, no matter what the weatherman says. I love the cold weather in the winter time, and especially the drizzling of the rain. Any kind of weather gives me the utmost pleasure, and is one thing that I adore most about nature.

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This response clearly focuses on the weather as the student’s favorite thing in nature. An organizational plan with effective transitional devices provides for a logical progression of ideas. Support is consistently provided for each reason, and supporting details are substantial and relevant: “When there is a steady rain outside, I love going into my parents’ room, curling up on the bed with a book or a homework assignment, and having the beating of the rain in the background. For some reason, the rain helps me concentrate better, having that never-changing rhythm.” The writer’s use of personal anecdotes contributes to a sense of commitment to and involvement with the subject: “When I am lucky and the rain does not come with thunder and lightning, I get together with my friends and go to the park that is down the street from my house. We put on old clothing, and slide down the huge slide, landing in the wet sand at the bottom.” A mature command of language with precise word choice and freshness of expression is evident. Sentence structure is varied. Few convention errors occur.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could balance the “basketball practice” explanation with the longer “good night’s sleep” explanation.

I may never see all seven wonders of the world in my lifetime. I may never hear, up close, the cascading waters of Niagara Falls. I might miss out on seeing the sunset on the edge of the Grand Canyon, but those things don't mean much to me. The thing in nature that matters to me the most are mountains, any kind, all shapes and sizes. I love mountains because they are a change from my normal setting, and the free feeling I get on them.

Growing up in a city of skyscrapers and beaches, and living on a manmade island, the closest thing to a mountain is an art pile in the downtown park. I never knew the joy of a mountain setting until about four years ago, when my family went on a ski trip to Colorado. I immediately fell in love with the overbearing feeling they placed upon me. The feeling was so different from how _____ made me feel, and when I flew down that mountainside, I was on top of the world. Nothing in Florida could make me feel like that.

Something a little strange happens to me in the mountains. When the air around me starts to thin out and the safety of the ground is thousands

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of feet below me, my heart kind of leaps. My soul feels a little whimsical and my brain clears out. I feel free. Pressures from school and friends, and parents have no affect on me. The fresh air infiltrates through my lungs, leaving me refreshed. The twists and turns of bumpy roads do nothing to me. Nothing can hurt me up there. Their disarming beauty takes care of me. Never have I felt more alive. At the camp I have been attending for years is on top of _____ Mountain, in _____

That is my favorite place in the world to be. I feel more like myself in the mountains than anywhere else. I'll be okay if I miss out on seeing a few things in life. That won't change my life dramatically. I will still be the same person, but one thing is for sure, I wouldn't be the same without mountains. I love the mountains because of the change of scenery and the free feeling I get. I can be myself and love my life. I'm just more "me" in the mountains.

SCORE POINT
6

This writer focuses on mountains as “The thing in nature that matters to me the most.” The organizational plan and substantial support convey a sense of completeness. Support is specific, relevant, and illustrative: “I feel free. Pressures from school, and friends, and parents have no affect on me. The fresh air infiltrates through my lungs, leaving me refreshed.” Precise word choice and freshness of expression contribute to support for the writer’s commitment to and involvement with the subject: “Growing up in a city of skyscrapers and beaches, and living on a manmade island, the closet thing to a mountain is an ant pile in the downtown park.” Sentence structure is varied, and some occasional convention errors do not interfere with understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could more logically connect his or her feelings about the mountains to actual personal experiences. For example, the writer could use an effective comparative strategy to further explain the differences between living in one city and camping in another state. Correction of occasional convention errors would also enhance this response.

"Isn't this beautiful?"

"It sure is and I know I couldn't be anywhere else. But the best thing about being around nature is the trees!"

"They are very delicate yet such helpful things but why do you like trees in nature?"

To me, trees just don't get the credit they deserve.

Trees provide us with useful items and by-products that help our environment as well as being the center of nature, it creates the scenery. Most of all, trees are homes to many animals. When you think about nature, trees should automatically come into mind! Why? I'll show you!

To get the ball rolling, everyone has something that trees have helped create. The first thing that comes to mind would be oxygen. Over 90% of the world's oxygen, even more, comes from plants but 75% of that comes from mother nature's creation, the tree. But, besides oxygen, trees gives all living creatures something to be happy about. Such as wood and paper to help build houses and to write to family with pencil and paper. Not even the trees knew they could do all this!

Second of all, when you go to a park, a farm, a zoo, or even a forest, you're always going to see trees making a scene. In a garden, you'll see flowers and exotic plants but you'll always see a brown or black trunk reaching out its arms to touch the sky holding all the leaves in its hands. My mom said she always wanted to live in a tranquil place

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with trees. That's how I wanted it to!

Finally, trees help animals and humans find homes. How many times have you find a squirrel or a bird nesting in a tree, delving deep for shelter and food? That's what trees do for animals like monkeys as well. I remember a time when my family took a boat excursion to this island with all types of exotic animals and plants. But the monkeys I saw played and helped each other and the tree is where it began! That's how important trees are to me!

To conclude, trees are only one thing I like about nature because they provide us with useful items, especially animals and plants, they create our wonderful scenery and provide homes for any living thing. Next time a person asks you about one thing you like about nature, just reply, "What has a green wig but brown from head to toe?"

SCORE POINT
5

This writer thinks that “trees just don’t get the credit they deserve.” The writer’s choice of trees as the favorite thing in nature is supported by consistently elaborated reasons: “useful items and by-products,” “creates the scenery,” and “provide homes for any living thing.” The response is clearly focused, and its organizational plan includes some effective transitional devices: “When you think about nature . . . To get the ball rolling . . . The first thing that comes to mind . . . But, besides oxygen . . . Not even . . .” The writing conveys a sense of completeness through its organizational plan and ample support. The writer uses facts to illustrate the importance of trees to humans: “Over 90% of the world’s oxygen, even more, comes from plants but 75% of that comes from mother nature’s creation, the tree.” A mature command of language, including precise word choice, is sometimes demonstrated. Sentence structure is varied, and occasional convention errors do not impede meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: More fully elaborated support could be provided. For example, the student could use specific details or anecdotes about how we use things made from wood. What did the writer mean by “tranquil place”? How do trees contribute to a feeling of tranquility? The writer could explain more fully about how trees provide food and shelter for animals. Correction of sentence structure and basic convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Nature is one of the worlds many gifts to man. There are many things about it you can enjoy. The thing I like best about nature, that no man can make, is the beautiful night sky. It glistens, and welcomes you with open arms. I love the night sky for the moon, stars, and its sense of wonder.

The night sky would be nothing without the moon. It shines brightly every night, lighting up the cold, dark soil. Every night when you walk outside, you always see the moon staring back, any where you are. But the best thing about the moon is the way it make you feel good when you see it high in the sky looking upon you. The moon is one of the best things about night, and it is an awesome gift.

My favorite gift of all from nature is the amazing stars. Stars are beautiful creations that twinkle in the sky. Early people thought they were so amazing, that they spent hours looking at them, eventually making constilations. The best thing about stars and I know everyone's done it, is wishing upon them. Stars are wonderful things that I think no one should take advantage of, and give

GO ON 

them a glance every once in awhile.

The night sky is full of mystery, wonder and excitement. The mystery of knowing that it never ends. The wonder of how something could be so vast and so beautiful. And the excitement that it brings to us just by looking at it in aw. It contains many emotions and feelings, that can be kept forever.

With all that said, I find the night sky to be one of the best things about nature. With the beautiful moon, amazing stars, and many emotions. The thing about the moon is you always knows it's going to be there. It's a wonderful thing that can be enjoyed by everyone if you take the time.

SCORE POINT
5

This writer chooses the “beautiful night sky” as the favorite thing in nature. The response is organized, and some effective transitional devices provide for a progression of ideas. Support is ample, and each reason is consistently elaborated. A mature command of language is demonstrated, including the purposeful use of fragments: “The night sky is full of mystery, wonder and excitement. The mystery of knowing that it never ends. The wonder of how something could be so vast and so beautiful. And the excitement that it brings to us just by looking at it in aw.” Word choice is sometimes precise, and sentence structures are varied. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific facts, examples, or illustrations to support the choice. For example, the writer could describe a particular time when he or she wished upon a star or explain more fully the many emotions and feelings that the night sky evokes. Correction of sentence structure and basic convention errors also would enhance this response.

What is your favorite thing in nature?
Mine is the ocean. Let me tell you my 3 reasons
surfing Preety water, and the animals that live
in it

My first reason I like the ocean is
because, surfing. I love to surf, it feels like
your on top of the world! You stand-up,
and you look around and all of the other
surfers are looking at you! Once when
I was surfing at _____ Beach, I
got the biggest wave I got so far!
It was B.I.G. But I got up and surfed
It all the way in. You are like connected
with the Ocean.

My Second reason is the preety
Blue water! The water is so preety! It look
like some one put Blue food coloring in the
water! I took a cruise to the _____
before and the water looked turquoise! If
you take some in a glass it looks clear.

My third and final reason is about
the animals that live in it! My favorite
animal is a dolphin! They are so graceful
and kind. Once when I went to Busch
Gardens, I was 8 years old and I was sitting
in the stands at Timbucto Theater, and

GO ON 

a lady that works at Busch Gardens asked me if I wanted to be in a dolphin show, so I said yes and it was so fun! I played with dolphins and fed them fish.

Now you know why my favorite nature thing is the ocean. The surfing, pretty water, and the animals that live in it.

SCORE POINT
4

This response focuses on the writer’s favorite thing in nature, the ocean. An organizational pattern is apparent; however, more effective transitional devices would help the reader better understand the writer’s meaning by providing necessary connections between and among the ideas. Adequate supporting details are provided for each reason, but development is uneven. The “surfing” and “animals” reasons are developed with some specific details and anecdotes; however, the writer fails to provide logical connections for the list-like ideas in the “pretty water” reason: “It look like some one put Blue food coloring in the water! I took a cruise to the _____ before and the water looked turquoise! If you take some in a glass it looks clear.” The organizational plan and adequate support contribute to a sense of completeness. Word choice is adequate. Errors in sentence structure and basic conventions do not interfere with the writer’s meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: More effective transitional devices could be employed to connect the ideas. Fully elaborated support with more precise word choice could be provided. For example, the writer could further explain what is meant by being “connected with the ocean.” More specific information also could be given about the surfing adventure and the Busch Gardens experience to help the reader understand the writer’s choice. Correction of errors in sentence structure and basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

EXPOSITORY STUDENT RESPONSE

If you take a walk outside or in the woods you might notice something amazing, like plants, or weather but when I go outside I notice animals. I love animals, I think the coolest thing in the world, because, there just like people, there cute, and there pretty smart.

To start off with, I like animals because there just like people. Some walk some crawl and some slither. They all have there own way of getting around. They also are like people because they have 2 eyes, a nose, a mouth, and have bones.

Next I like animals because I think there the cutest thing in the world. There covered with soft curly fur and some are so cute they dont look real. There are some with out fur, like elephants but I still think there cute.

GO ON 

Last but not least I like animals because there smart. They have there own language they have ways of getting around and they can hunt for there food alot better than any human can. There smart and dont even go to school. some birds even fly. I know humans cant. They'r also great fighters, they can defend them self. humans need a poloice force.

To conclude I like animals most in nature because there like people. there cute and there smart. If you just took a walk outside and seen an animal you'd know what I'm talking about.

SCORE POINT
4

This response focuses on why the writer thinks animals are “the coolest thing in the world.” An organizational pattern is apparent, but transitional devices are sometimes lacking or used ineffectively. Although supporting details are provided for each reason, the development of the support is uneven. While the “just like people” and “cute” reasons are extended with little bits of information, the “smart” reason is elaborated with more specific details: “There smart and dont even go to school. Some birds even fly. I know humans cant. They'r also great fighters, they can defend them self. humans need a poloice force.” Although errors occur in basic sentence structure, variation is attempted. Word choice is adequate, and conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Effective transitional devices could be used to connect the ideas logically. More fully elaborated support could be provided for each reason. For example, the writer could use more concrete examples when comparing animals and humans. Does the writer have a smart or cute pet? Has the writer ever trained an intelligent animal? Corrected and more varied sentence structure, more precise word choice, and better control of conventions would also strengthen this response.

Some people like plants, some people like animals, and others love weather. But my favorite thing about nature is the flowers.

One reason why I like flowers the most is they come in so many colors. Like roses, for instance, they come in all the colors, red, white, purple, yellow and pink. Sunflowers are yellow and brown in the middle, not a lot of color, but still beautiful.

Another reason why I love flowers is the many different shapes. All flowers have a different shape, that's what makes each and every one flower unique.

The last reason why my favorite thing about nature is the flowers is all the types. SO, SO many different types of flowers. There are so many to count, and so little time to do it. Roses, daisies, tulips, sunflowers...

I don't think there is anything more beautiful and sweet and fragrant than a flower. That is why flowers are my favorite thing about nature. They come in many different colors, shapes, and so many different types that I cannot name them all. Thank you Mother Nature for the flower.

SCORE POINT
3

This response focuses on flowers as a favorite thing about nature. The predictable organizational pattern includes a brief beginning, a list-like middle, and a repetitive conclusion. The writer chooses three reasons for liking flowers: “They come in many different colors, shapes, and so many different types that I cannot name them all.” Each reason is extended with brief list-like examples. The “colors” reason contains a few specific details: “Like roses, for instance, they come in all the colors, red, white, purple, yellow and pink. Sunflowers are yellow and brown in the middle, not a lot of color, but still beautiful.” Word choice is adequate, and some sentence structure variation is attempted. Knowledge of conventions is demonstrated.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Effective transitional devices could be used. Elaboration of support could be provided. For example, the writer could use specific examples, illustrations, or anecdotes to explain which flowers he or she likes best and why. The writer might recall details about seeing or planting a flower garden or about picking wildflowers. More precise word choice, better use of conventions, and more variation in sentence structure would also strengthen this response.

The thing I like most in nature is an animal. I like the Florida black Bear. I like this animal because its color, strength, and natural beauty. These things make the Florida black bear very interesting. I would have one even as my pet.

To begin with, the Florida black bear is the animal that I like in nature. One reason I like this animal is because of its color. The black of Its fur is so beautiful.

Secondly, I like this animal because of its strength. It has so much power, but most of them won't even harm a person. With all that strength and they won't even use it for Evil, you have to love them for that.

Finally, I like this animal because of Its natural born beauty. You could look at this animal and you would see a beautiful Black velvet color.

In Conclusion, I like the Florida black bear for my favorite thing in nature because of its color, strength, and natural beauty.

SCORE POINT
3

The writer focuses on the Florida black bear, and an organizational pattern is attempted; however, the development of support is list-like, non-specific, and repetitive: “One reason I like this animal is because of its color. The black of Its fur is so beautiful . . . You could look at this animal and you would see a beautiful Black velvet color.” The “strength” reason is the most developed with a little vague information: “most of them won’t even harm a person. With all that strength and they won’t even use it for Evil, You have to love them for that.” Word choice is adequate but sometimes vague and predictable. Some variation of sentence structures is attempted, and knowledge of basic conventions is demonstrated.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Specific supporting details are needed for the reader’s understanding. For example, facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes could be used to explain why the writer thinks the black bear won’t use its strength “for Evil.” Has the writer ever seen a black bear? Precise word choice, varied sentence structure, and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

Something that I have come to like in nature is Animals. The Reasons For this are because they are very interesting, and also because you will never know what they will do next.

Animals are Interesting to me because there are all different kinds of them and they are all different, so that makes them more interesting. They eat different foods, they all look different, And they all act different. Since these animals are all different they all have different Personalities and another thing that makes them interesting is you will never know what they are going to do, that is the exciting thing about animals.

I also like animals because it is very easy to learn and find information on them. That is also why most people would say that their favorite thing in nature is animals. Well I hope you enjoyed what I have told you, and thank you for listening.

SCORE POINT
2

This response focuses on animals as an interesting component of nature. An organizational pattern is attempted, including a brief beginning, a middle, and a one-sentence conclusion. Development of support is inadequate and list-like. The writer's overuse of the word "different" is distracting to the reader: "They eat different foods, they all look different, And they all act different. Since these animals are all different they all have different Personalities . . ." The ineffective and extraneous conclusion offers no additional information: "Well I hope you enjoyed what I have told you, and thank you for listening." The student does not pause to clarify these differences for the reader. Although some errors occur, knowledge of conventions is demonstrated.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should employ an organizational plan with effective transitional devices. All reasons could be consistently extended or elaborated with supporting details. For example, which foods do the animals eat, how do they look and act, and how do their personalities differ? Has the writer done some research on animals? Improved word choice and more varied sentence structures are needed. Correction of convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Something that I like in nature are monkeys. Monkeys are animals in witch people can not make. People can not make any animal because they come naturally.

I like monkeys because they are cute and are alot like humans. There for they eat, drink, sleep, and play and can even express there feelings.

I wrote about monkeys out of all the natural occuring things because they are what most interest me. They have an outdoors invioument and they can do most things humans can. Those reasons are why I choose to make my entry on monkeys.

SCORE POINT
2

This response is generally focused on monkeys as a favorite part of nature, and an organizational pattern is attempted; however, the introduction includes some loosely related information: “Monkeys are animals in witch people can not make. People can not make any animal because they come naturally.” The writer fails to provide adequate support. The limited support is developed through extended and repetitive ideas: “I like monkeys because they are cute and are alot like humans. There for they eat, drink, sleep, and play and can even express there feelings . . . They have an outdoors invioument and they can do most things humans can.” Word choice is adequate, and sentence structure variation is attempted. Knowledge of conventions is demonstrated.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide a more effective organizational plan to connect the ideas logically. Facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations are needed to enhance the reader’s understanding. For example, how does a monkey express its feelings? The writer could provide more specific information about why monkeys are interesting. Precision of word choice, variation of sentence structures, and improvement of basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

I think The way I feel about nature. it's pretty much good for us, because it's mostly every where. and if we did not have nature it would be bad. But the thing I like about nature is,

The animals because there mostly every where. and I love animals I like when they run for their pray. when they hide from people. they hide in bushes.

one of my favorit wild animal is. cheetah because it's very fast. and they look cool. like their colors look good. and their

EXPOSITORY STUDENT RESPONSE

SCORE POINT
1

The writer chooses animals as a favorite part of nature. An organizational pattern is attempted by providing vague information about nature in general, then a favorite element of nature—animals, followed by the writer’s favorite animal—the cheetah. Some vague, confusing, and list-like support is provided. The most developed support is given for why the writer likes cheetahs: “One of my favorit wild animal is, cheetah Because it’s very fast, and They look cool. Like their colors look good.” Word choice is limited and predictable, and errors occur in sentence structure and basic conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should provide an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Supporting details could be elaborated with facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations. For example, has the writer ever watched an animal chase prey or hide from people? Has the writer ever seen a cheetah? More precise word choice, more varied sentence structure, and improved basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

I like nature, Because the Wild life like Bears, tiggers, and insects. I like nature Because Plants like Flowers, tree, Fruit, I like nature Because the Weather like rain, fog, snow, sun.

I like it Because of the Wild life like Tiggers there Fast men animals. like insects hof they fly around. like Bears ther so tall and Big.

Plants I like them Because the Sade, liketrees ther Fun to kilme ben, Flowers are Buetful cool. Fruit trees are the Best Decase wen you got on the tree you are the Eating fruits.

Weather on the Wild life. like the rain Fraste it all was raining

SCORE POINT
1

This brief response minimally addresses the topic. An organizational pattern is attempted. Support consists of a list repeating the three elements of nature mentioned in the writing prompt: “I like nature, Because the Wild life like Bears, tiggers, and insects. I like nature Because Plants like Flowers, tree, Fruit. I like nature Because the Weather like rain, fog, snow, sun.” The writer attempts to develop the support with slightly vague and sometimes incoherent information: “Like Tiggers there Fast mean animals. like insects hof they fly around. like Bears ther so tall and Big.” Word choice is limited and sometimes inappropriate, and convention errors sometimes impede the reader’s understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The focus of the response could be clarified. The writer should provide an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Support could be developed with examples, illustrations, and anecdotes. For example, the writer could recall a time when he or she climbed a tree or saw tigers, insects, and bears. Does the student enjoy playing in the rain? Word choice could be more precise, and sentence structure could be more varied. Correction of basic convention and sentence structure errors would also strengthen this response.

Persuasive Responses from the 2006 Assessment

Definition of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader to accept a particular point of view or to take a specific action. Anticipating counterarguments is important; in fact, the writer may choose to clarify his or her position by refuting counterarguments. The unmistakable purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader. In well-written persuasion, the topic or issue is clearly stated and elaborated to indicate understanding and conviction on the part of the writer.

Summary of the Persuasive Responses Written in 2006

The annotated papers in this section represent responses to a prompt that directed students to persuade the principal whether students should work in groups to do all their school work. Students responding to this prompt generally provided arguments supporting whether students should or should not work in groups to do all their school work. A paper was scorable if the student supported his or her position regarding students working in groups to complete school work. Papers receiving scores in the higher ranges of the scale focused on the topic, displayed an organizational pattern, contained developed support, showed variety in sentence structure, and generally followed the conventions of writing.

Suggestions for Use of the Annotated Responses

Teachers may use the responses on the following pages to improve student writing skills and help students understand the scoring criteria. Each response in this publication is annotated to explain why it was assigned a particular score. Personal information has been removed or fictionalized to protect the identity of the writer. Teachers can delete the scores and annotations and make transparencies or copies of the responses. Additional instructional uses of the responses include the following:

- rank ordering the responses from highest to lowest scores;
- highlighting words and phrases that provide an organizational structure and develop the supporting ideas in a response;
- listing the strengths and weaknesses of a response;
- revising and editing a response based on either a student-generated list of the strengths and weaknesses or the annotation beneath the response (this activity might include improving the introduction and conclusion, adding transitional devices, providing more details and examples, refining word choice, and varying sentence structure);
- using the rubric and skills above to score student responses to similar prompts;
- identifying how the writer tailors the response to his or her intended audience; and
- identifying the student's position or opinion.

During school hours, you always see friends conversing and working together. Sometimes, that's okay; to work together. The principal is trying to decide if student's school work should all be done in groups. I think that is a wonderful idea. It can increase schoolwork efficiency, it allows students to be with friends, and it allows for a better way to keep track of work. Solitary work is fine, but as my grandma always says, "Two heads are better than one!"

When students work alone on their assignments, it can be tough. All they have is themselves and the book. Plus, their only "checkers" for their work are their parents or the teacher (of course, once it goes to the teacher, it's too late to correct it). Working with other students can get the job done twice as fast. If one loses their textbook, there's another person willing to share their's. Students also have another assignment proof-reader they can count on, another student! If one person is having trouble comprehending something, there's always someone there to help them understand. As my ever-wise grandmother once told me, "Work that is twice as hard can be done twice as fast, with twice the workers."

I'm sure teachers have seen students talking as friends when they're supposed to be working. When they are separated, however, they don't complete their schoolwork as good. Establishing student work groups can help students be with their friends. I can do my work fine enough when I am alone, but I can work faster if I have a friend who has the same workload as me. I've surprised myself ~~at~~ how fast my assignments are completed. "How does having friends work with you help?" you might ask? Well, if you're working with a friend who is doing an equal amount of work, you feel comfortable as you know there's somebody else that I can relate to with the stress of my schoolwork. You can get to talking with the other students while working and it really does calm your nerves. I've seen it,

GO ON 

and experienced it.

Student groups can be beneficial to teachers, too. Almost every teacher has dealt with a slack-off student who comes into class with a lame excuse about why they don't have their homework. For teachers, it can be like having an itch on your chin while wearing a beard of bees (very annoying). If students worked in groups, they wouldn't have a good excuse. If they got an assignment, and every other person in the group did it except him, he would not have a legitimate explanation for their failure of their homework's completion. There is another part to this. For students, having a group can help by having a "assignment time-keeper". For instance, if one student misses a day of school, they can just contact their group to get the assignment. It works out for everybody!

Many benefits can stem from the creation of school-wide student groups. It helps increase work-rate, it allows students to be with friends, and it can help teachers and students alike. I say, why save groups for only projects, let's have groups for all of our work. Truly, only good things can come from it.

SCORE POINT
6

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer clearly focuses on the position that students should be allowed to work in groups. The organizational plan includes effective transitional devices that provide for a logical progression of ideas. A sense of completeness is conveyed through the organizational plan and substantial support. Three arguments are presented and consistently elaborated through facts, examples, and pertinent anecdotes. While the first two arguments explain how group work affects students, the third argument asserts that group work benefits teachers, too: "Almost every teacher has dealt with a slack-off student who comes into class with a lame excuse about why they don't have their homework . . . If students worked in groups, they wouldn't have a good excuse." A commitment to and an involvement with the subject are demonstrated by quotations from the writer's grandmother: "As my ever-wise grandmother once told me, 'Work that is twice as hard, can be done twice as fast, with twice the workers.'" The writer concludes with a brief summary of the arguments. Word choice is precise, and freshness of expression is demonstrated: "For teachers, it can be like having an itch on your chin while wearing a beard of bees (very annoying)." Sentence structure is varied, and few convention errors occur.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific elaboration of some of the supporting details. For example, the writer could recall a particular time when working with others made the work go faster or explain how talking during the group process helps to "calm your nerves." Correction of the occasional basic convention and sentence structure errors would also enhance this response.

"There's a crowd." Everyone says it I even think there's a TV show named that. So why is our principal even considering letting all of the students work in groups for all their assignments? Students can and will quickly get off task and most students enjoy working alone. Let me explain.

I cannot tell you how fast students will drop their grade when they're given the chance to do it in groups. They will quickly just start carrying on a conversation as loudly as if they were in the lunchroom. Therefore, if there are indeed some groups actually working the other groups will annoyingly interrupt their groups work. Not to mention the group won't do their work. They'll be talking about skateboarding or sports. Or the girls might start coloring or exchanging make-up. Obviously, anything **BUT** what they're supposed to do. So what if they're not talking and goofing around? Then, chances are with so many people working in one group they're likely to mess up. Working so fast and with so many people can and will possibly do that to you. I can recall a time where my younger brother, _____, was doing a math project with a few friends. Sure, they had been messing around but now they were diligently working. When they encountered a problem they had not expected they started arguing about it. As it turns out, the problem never got solved. No one was doing anything but arguing over it. They ended up getting a **F-D** all because of that one little problem! Do we really want that sort of thing happening to us?

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On a more brighter side of this conflict, most teenagers LIKE to work alone. For one thing, we can accomplish almost any timely task 75% quicker. When you count it up, that's awfully quick. And it's mainly because we don't have to think out a problem with our group, have the whole group check it, then make sure it's written down on everyone's paper. That's very time-consuming when you think about it. Not to mention, but working alone is more peaceful for us. There is no one around us talking or making a commotion for us to be distracted by. While working alone there is no one around us to be egging us on to goof off or stop our work. Being that way we are not interrupted and therefore work better without breaking our crucially need concentration.

I'm sure I am one of the only living beings to think in this state of mind. But, I must say I have my reasons. I personally think we get off task working within groups and we work a whole great deal better by our selves. I think that you best consider this choice you are making a little more closely before you say yay or nay.

SCORE POINT
6

This writer takes the position that the principal should not allow students to do all their work in groups. An organizational pattern with some effective transitional devices is provided. The student's introduction is imaginative: "'Three's a crowd.' Everyone says it I even think there's a TV show named that. So why is our principal even conidering letting all of the students work in groups for all their assignments?!" Support is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and illustrative. The student offers specific examples and facts to explain how group work may cause lower grades and consume too much time: "Not to mention the group won't do their work. They'll be talking about skateboarding or sports. Or the girls might start coloring or exchanging make-up. Obviously, anything BUT what they're supposed to do," and "we can accomplish almost any timely task 75% quicker . . . we don't have to think out a problem with our group, have the whole group check it, then make sure it's written down on everyone's paper. That's very time-consuming when you think about it." A mature command of language with freshness of expression is demonstrated. Errors in conventions occur, but they do not interfere with the writer's meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more effective transitional devices to connect the ideas logically both between and among the arguments. For example, the writer leaps too quickly from stating that working together is too time-consuming to "working alone is more peaceful." Further explanation of the ways group work can consume too much time and a smoother transition from one idea to another are needed to enhance the reader's understanding. Correction of convention errors would also enhance this response.

Individual work can not only be boring and hard. You have to do the whole project by yourself. I know I'd much rather work in groups with my peers. I'd like to work in a group because it would give me a chance to meet and work with new people. Working in a group would also provide extra help from my peers. It would also divide up the responsibility from me having to do everything myself.

First off, working in groups would give students a chance to work with not only their friends, but with some of their other peers. This would give students a chance to experience working with new people. It will also give students an opportunity to make new friends. From personal experience, I know working in a group can spark new friendships. Before working in a group with my friend _____, I didn't really know her that well. After the project we became good friends.

Another benefit to working in a group is that the student can get extra help from their peers. Instead of doing work and not knowing whether you're right or wrong, students can go over work together. Students could also ask their group members for help with work. I can recall times when I felt stupid for asking the teacher a question about a problem I couldn't figure out. Getting help from a friend might also motivate a

5

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student to do better.

Then, working in groups would divide the responsibility of the task. When working in a group, the great thing is that its not only one person. The students could assign each group member a job. This would also put less stress on one student. Instead of worrying over the whole thing, they would have others to help. Dividing up the responsibility would also provide more time for the group, they could get more done. It would give the group members more time to focus on specific things.

In conclusion, I think it would benefit students to work in groups. It would provide the students with an opportunity to work with new people. It would also give them an extra chance to get help. Last, it would divide up the responsibility and put less stress on the students.

SCORE POINT
5

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

The student takes the position that group work is beneficial. A predictable organizational pattern is provided, including some effective transitional devices. Support is consistently developed for the benefits of group work. The writer explains why he or she prefers group work: “it would give me a chance to meet and work with new people . . . provide extra help from my peers . . . would also divide up the responsibility from me having to do everything myself.” Personal anecdotes are provided: “From personal experience, I know working in a group can spark new friendships. Before working in a group with my friend, _____, I didn’t really know her that well. After the project we became good friends.” A mature command of language and precision in word choice is sometimes demonstrated. Although some errors occur in sentence structure, an attempt to vary sentence structure is demonstrated. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Support for the “divide the responsibility” argument is somewhat vague. Further information is needed to explain the writer’s meaning. For example, the writer could provide a stronger link between the experience of working in a group and how that experience relieves stress or results in “more time to focus on specific things.” More precise word choice and varied sentence structure would also strengthen this response.

Students should not work in groups! There would be too much talking, people would copy, and someone would feel secluded from the group. Students should definitely not be put into groups.

First, there would be too much talking. People would talk to their friends. They will talk about the weekends, boyfriends, girlfriends, and the movies. Once, I was in a group where all they did was talk about their boyfriends. Nothing would ever get done. They will get around their friends, and want to talk. It took _____ and I 3 hours to work on a math worksheet with 5 problems! It will also bother other people. It will be too noisy to concentrate! The peer pressure will cause everyone to talk. Once, we all had groups, and I couldn't concentrate because it was so loud.

Next, people will copy each other. There is no reason to do any work. You could just copy someone. Why should you waste your time. In one group, _____ did the work one night, the _____ would do it the next night. Some people just won't do anything. It really wouldn't matter, they could just copy. One person could do all the work. Once, there was 5 of us, _____, _____, _____, and I didn't do anything, while _____ worked. There would also be a lot of peer pressure. They will act

GO ON 

LIKE they are someones friend, just so they can get answers. once I had a person begging me to give them my English homework.

Also, someone will get secluded. People will get around their friends, then they will only help each other. once I was in a group with _____, _____, and _____, and they wouldnt help me with 5 problems in Science. People will talk to the ones of the same gender. They guys will talk about sports, the girls will talk about makeup. I was in a group in History with _____ and _____, and they wouldnt talk to _____, _____, and I. People will talk about their interests. They'll talk about pets, favorite movies, music, and sports. others will have nothing to say. I was in math, and in a group with _____, _____, and _____, and they only talked about Band, that im not in.

In conclusion, we shouldnt be in groups. There is to much taking, people will copy, and one will be secluded from the group. so that is why students should not be in groups in all of their school work and activities.

SCORE POINT
5

This writer's position is that students should not work in groups. The organizational plan includes some effective transitional devices: "Once, I was," "Why should you," and "In one group." Supporting arguments are developed through examples and anecdotes: "People will talk about their interests. They'll talk about pets, favorite movies, music, and sports. Others will have nothing to say. I was in math, and in a group with _____, _____, and _____, and they only talked about Band, that im not in." A sense of completeness is conveyed through the organizational plan and ample support. Word choice is sometimes precise. Although occasional errors occur, the basic conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific facts, examples, or illustrations to support all the arguments. For example, the writer could describe more fully what happens to the group when people only talk to "ones of the same gender" or when people beg others to do their work. Expanding word choice and correcting convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Principal, I have heard that you are trying to decide if students should work in groups to do all of their school work. I think it is a bad idea. Students working in groups to do all their work is a bad idea because there is a likely chance that the students will do an unequal amount of work, it does not show the ability of each individual student, and the students may not want to do group work and do their work individually.

First of all, there are usually people with different levels of intelligence in the group. Most likely, the smarter students of the group will do more work than the other students. Doing so, it would be unfair for the students to do unequal amounts of work.

Next, working in groups does not show the ability of each individual student. A project, for example, may be assigned and the students have different jobs. If one of the students in the group fails to do their job, it would lower the grade for the entire group. Another example is the groups are assigned with one problem, and the students who do not know how to work out the problem, instead of learning how to do so, just copy of other students' work that do know how to do the work.

Lastly, the students may not even like working in groups. Many students like doing individual work. Sure, working in groups is fun for some students, but others may prefer to work alone. Students may not like the people they are working with and may not like the sharing of an grade.

GO ON 

In conclusion, I think we should not work in groups to do all our school. The reason for this are: students might do an unequal amount of work, it does not show the ability of individual students, and the students may not like working in groups. I suggest you make a poll whether or not we should work in groups to do all our school work, so the students can decide.

SCORE POINT
4

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

This writer takes the position that doing all school work in groups is a bad idea. The organizational pattern is apparent and helps to provide a sense of completeness to the response. Some support is presented for each argument. However, the most specific support is given for the “ability of each individual student” argument: “A project, for example, may be assigned and the students have different jobs. If one of the students in the group fail to do their job, it would lower the grade for the entire group . . . groups are assigned with one problem, and the students who do not know how to work out the problem . . . just copy of other students’ work . . .” The student concludes with a suggestion for making the decision about group work: “I suggest you make a poll whether or not we should work in groups to do all our school work, so the students can decide.” Word choice is adequate, and some variation in sentence structure is evident. Convention errors do occur, but they do not interfere with meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could use more effective transitional devices. More specific support could be provided for each argument. For example, why does the writer think that “smarter students” will do most of the work? The writer could recall personal group work experiences to illustrate his or her assertions. The response needs more precise word choice and varied sentence structure. Better use of basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

In school you probably like to do your own work and be by your self when it comes down to school work. If not, that's not good. You should be able to do your own work, not unless you were assigned to a group project. Once your away from mom, dad and friends - off to college, you'll know what I mean.

To begin with, you shouldn't work in groups because there's always that group where that one person doesn't do any work. It's very seldom, when they do any work in class. They always go from excuse to excuse on why they can't do their work. Then someone else in the group ends up doing the work. I personally think they don't do work because that's not the group they want to be assigned to.

Another thing is when they don't know what their doing and put any answer. I would want to be graded on my own work and answers. I wouldn't want to be counting on someone to do the work right so we get a good grade. I want to do my work, so I know that I'm doing the best I can and getting the rightful grades.

Last but not least, groups causes problems. Your teacher may assign the wrong group together. Meaning you don't get along or both students are very poor in the same subject. There's always the one who dose not do any work, like I said already. So just keep it plain and simple.

In conclusion, sitting students in groups to do all of their school work would be a very bad idea. When you sit us in groups it already lowers your academic grade, effort towards work and conduct in class. Therefore^{sp?}

GO ON 

take my advice and don't put the students to do
all of their school work.

SCORE POINT
4

The writer takes the position that working in groups “lowers your academic grade, effort towards work and conduct in class.” An organizational pattern is apparent. Although supporting details are provided for each argument, the development of that support is uneven. More specific support is provided for the “lowers your academic grade” and “effort towards work” arguments: “I would want to be graded on my own work and answers. I wouldn’t want to be counting on someone to do the work right so we get a good grade. I want to do my work, so I know that I’m doing the best I can and getting the rightful grades.” The last argument contains some vague and repetitive ideas: “Theres always the one who dose not do any work, like I said already. So just keep it plain and simple.” Word choice is adequate, sentence structure is sometimes varied, and basic conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Effective transitional devices could be employed to connect the ideas logically. The student could elaborate each argument with facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations. For example, the student could further explain the negative effects of group work by recalling times when he or she had to work with others. Precise word choice, varied sentence structure, and corrected basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

I think that kids should be in groups because they can have more hands on activities. Kids will know all about the other kids. Teachers will be able to help groups and there will be more one on one with the kids. The kids will be more courage about doing the work because they see people in their group and they think if they can do so can I. So they work harder and listen more.

Some kids just don't care and they make it hard for other kids to learn. So it holds up the class. If they make it to groups I think it will be much better. You can split up the kids and the teacher can help the ones that are having a hard time of understanding things.

But some kids like to cheat and copy other kids. What they don't know is that it will hurt them when they are older and can't read and add, subtract. I wish they would go to groups and if you don't want to get an education stay home and be a couch potato. It will take a lot of stress off the teachers and kids. If we went to groups I think it will keep kids busy and they will want to do the work and participate more. That's what my opinion is to have the groups and less individual work.

SCORE POINT
3

The response states that “kids should be in groups because they can have more hands on activities,” but the lack of further information concerning the hands-on activities detracts from this focus. An organizational pattern is attempted, but transitional devices are not used effectively. Some loosely related information is included: “But some kids like to cheat and copy other kids. What they don't know is that it will hurt them when they are older and can't read and add, subtract.” Although supporting details are provided for each argument, the support is non-specific. Word choice is limited and sometimes inappropriate: “The kids will be more courage about doing the work . . .” Some errors occur in the basic conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could maintain a clear focus and enhance the organization with effective transitioning. The writer could add specificity with facts, examples, or anecdotes to substantiate how some classmates “make it hard for other kids to learn” and to show how group work would help this situation. Precise word choice and better use of conventions would also strengthen this response.

I really like to work in groups. I get to be w/my friends and we have fun. But I am a very intellectual person and sometimes I just need to do things on my own. Especially, this time because I know this won't be good for my learning because I'll get distracted w/my friends, I'll get distracted being w/my friends, and also other groups in the class might be being very loud. I just don't think this is a good idea.

I love being w/my friends their so funny and all we do is laugh when were together. But I really need to concentrate on what Im doing at school and I cant do that if were in groups cause all my attention will be on them and not what I am suppose to be doing.

I know other people will be talking to so even if Im not other people will and I still wont be able to focus on what I need to be doing.

There will also be an awful lot of copying going on and I dont want to be getting in trouble, doing it myself and not be learning anything, or letting people copy off of me. I really dont think this is a good idea.

In conclusion I dont think this is going to work out cause there will be copying, talking, and distraction

SCORE POINT
3

This writer asserts that group work is not a good idea because “there will be copying, talking, and distraction.” An organizational pattern is attempted, but some lapses occur. Each argument is extended by little bits of information; however, the greatest development of support is provided in the second and third paragraphs for the “distraction” and “talking” arguments: “I love being w/my friends their so funny and all we do is laugh when were together. But I really need to concentrate on what Im doing at school and I cant do that if were in groups cause all my attention will be on them and not what I am suppose to be doing” and “I know other people will be talking to so even if Im not other people will and I still wont be able to focus on what I need to be doing.” Support for the “copying” argument is minimal and vague. Word choice is limited and predictable. Although an attempt is made to vary sentence structure, there are basic errors in the structure of the sentences. Errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling do not impede understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: A stronger organizational plan could be employed with effective transitional devices. Elaborated support for each argument is needed to further understand the writer’s meaning. For example, the writer could recall a specific time when working with a group hindered his or her work process. Precise word choice, varied sentence structure, and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

I have three reasons why students should work in groups at school. One is that the student would get better grades. Second students would learn more on the groups. My last opinion is that every student would do well on test.

To begin I think that the student's grades would be really good grades if they work in groups.

Next most students would learn more in group because in group they can talk out what they don't understand.

Last but not least is that each and every student would do well on their finals and on test. When it comes time for them to study they are gonna know everything.

To close please let us work in groups so grades are gonna be the best and our FCAT were gonna do it like never before.

SCORE POINT
2

The writer takes the position that students should work in groups. The attempt to organize includes an introduction listing three weak arguments, a middle with some bare and extended information, and a brief conclusion. The “get better grades” argument is not developed, and the “learn more” and “do well on tests” arguments consist of vague extensions: “because in group they can talk out what they don’t understand” and “every student would do well on their finals and on test. When it comes time for them to study they are gonna know everything.” Word choice is limited and predictable. Although errors occur in sentence structure, some knowledge of conventions is demonstrated.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should enhance the organization with effective transitions. Support for each argument should be developed through facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations. For example, the writer could recall a time when group work helped him or her get better grades, learn more, or do well on a test. Precise wording and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

To start with, I think that the principal should let students work together in groups. Working in Groups is a much faster way to do our work and teaches students how to cooperate in groups, and it is a way of fun. The principal can decide wheather students work together or do our own separate work, Sometimes kids or Teens can take a vote on it or have a strike for it. If students work together they can finish twice as fast, and in there groups they can introduce themselves to other students. In conclusion, if our principal Mr. B lets us do our school work in groups, The students will be grateful to him and he will treat us kindly.

The End

SCORE POINT
2

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

The writer takes the stand that students should be allowed to work in groups because “Working in Groups is a much faster way to do our work and teaches students how to cooperate in groups, and it is a way of fun.” Little evidence of an organizational pattern is demonstrated, and the paper lacks a sense of completeness. Development of support is inadequate and at times loosely related: “The principal can decide whether students work together or do our own separate work, sometimes kids or Teens can take a vote on it or have a strike for it.” Word choice is limited and vague, and errors occur in sentence structure. Convention errors do not interfere with understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could more clearly focus on the topic and employ an organizational plan with effective transitional devices. Relevant facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations should be included to support the arguments. For example, the writer could use specific details or personal anecdotes to explain how working in groups helps the students complete their work “twice as fast” or recall a time when students made new friends during group work. Precision of word choice, variation of sentence structure, and improvement of basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

I think if we tell to the principal that a students should work in groups to do all their school work. I think that we can convince him because we tell to the principal that we can do better work, better notes and we can do much better and can be learning more and others things a think that is better for all the school.

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

SCORE POINT
1

This sparse response minimally supports the position that students should work in groups to do all their schoolwork. There is little, if any, evidence of an organizational plan. Support consists of a vague and somewhat confusing list of arguments: “we can do better work, better notes and we can do much better and can be learning more and others things . . .” Word choice is limited, and gross errors occur in sentence structure and basic conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should provide an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Consistent support for each argument should be provided and further developed with facts, examples, anecdotes, and illustrations. For example, the writer could tell how working together would help the students do better work and take better notes. Word choice should be more precise. Correction of sentence structure and basic convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Appendix A

Glossary

Census Writing Assessment – testing of all students in a particular grade level to measure the writing proficiency of students and schools

Conventions – commonly accepted rules of edited American English (e.g., spelling, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure)

Draft – preliminary version of a piece of writing that may need revision of details, organization, and conventions

Expository Writing – writing that gives information, explains why or how, clarifies a process, or defines a concept

Field Test – testing a representative sample of the state’s student population to determine the effectiveness of an assessment instrument

Focus – relationship of supporting details to the main idea, theme, or unifying point

Loosely Related – only slightly related

Extraneous – not related

Holistic Scoring – method by which trained readers evaluate the overall quality of a piece of writing according to pre-defined criteria

Narrative Writing – writing that recounts a personal or fictional experience or tells a story based on a real or imagined event

Organization – structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the transitional devices used to arrange the ideas

Transitional Devices – words, terms, phrases, and sentence variations used to arrange and signal the movement of ideas. For example, “next, and then, in the end, another reason, after that we went, another way to look at it” are transitional devices.

Performance Task – test item (prompt) that requires a student to write a response instead of choosing one from several choices

Persuasive Writing – writing that attempts to convince the reader that a point of view is valid or that the reader should take a specific action

Prompt – writing assignment that states the writer’s task, including the topic and purpose of the writing

Rangefinders – student responses used to illustrate score points on the rubric

Response – writing that is stimulated by a prompt

Rubric – scoring description for each score point of the scale

Scorer – person trained to score student responses

Support – quality of details illustrating or explaining the central theme

Bare – use of a detail or a simple list that focuses on events or reasons. For example, “I like to go to school because it is fun.”

Extended – use of information that begins to clarify meaning. For example, “I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs.”

Layered – use of a series of informational statements that collectively help to clarify meaning. For example, “I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs. We learned what kinds of foods frogs like to eat by offering them flies, worms, and seeds. We observed the frogs during the morning and afternoon to determine when they were more active. We also compared frogs to other amphibians to see what characteristics they share.”

Elaborated – use of additional details, anecdotes, illustrations, and examples that further clarify meaning. Information that answers the question, “What do you mean?” For example, “I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs instead of just reading about frogs in books. Experiments allow us to have the fun of discovering for ourselves how far and how fast frogs can jump and what kinds of foods frogs like to eat.” Elaboration could also provide a detailed description of the experiments.

Writing Process – recursive steps of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and sharing used in the development of a piece of writing

Appendix B

FCAT Writing+ Performance Task Assessment Directions, Answer Book, and Planning Sheet

Assessment Directions

The following is a synopsis of the directions test administrators read to students for the essay portion of the assessment:

Today you are going to complete a writing exercise and it is important for you to do as well as you can. Your scored response will be returned to your school as part of your school record.

The prompt on page 2 of your answer book explains what you are going to write about and gives you some ideas for planning your writing. You may use the planning sheet for jotting down ideas and planning and organizing what you will write.

After planning what you will write, begin the writing that will be scored on page 3. You may continue your writing on page 4. You do not have to fill up both of these pages, but you should respond completely to the prompt.

The writing should be easy to read and show that you can organize and express your thoughts clearly and completely.

Your writing may be about something real or make-believe, but remember you are to write ONLY about the prompt on page 2 of your folder.

You may give your writing a title if you would like, but you do not have to title your writing.

You may NOT use a dictionary. If you do not know how to spell a word, sound the word out and do the best you can.

You may either print or write in cursive. It is important to write neatly.

Remember, you must first read your prompt and then plan what you will write. I cannot read your prompt to you or help you plan what to write. You must read and plan yourself.

You have a total of 45 minutes to read, plan, and respond to your prompt. I will let you know when you have 10 minutes left.

If you finish early, check your work and make corrections to improve your writing.

PROMPT



SAMPLE

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE.

Appendix C

FCAT Writing+ Prompt Specifications and Prompt Evaluation Form

Specification for Expository Writing Prompts

The purpose of prompt specification is to ensure that the prompt tells the students the subject (topic) and purpose of writing. Prompts are developed to elicit writing for a desired purpose. One such purpose is exposition. Exposition is writing that gives information, explains how or why, clarifies a process, or defines a concept. Though objective and not dependent on emotion, expository writing may be lively, engaging, and reflective of the writer's underlying commitment to the topic. The unmistakable purpose of expository writing is to inform, clarify, explain, define, and/or instruct.

Cue words that should be used in expository prompts are *why*, *how*, and *what*.

Prompts contain two types of statements: Writing Situation and Directions for Writing. Each element of the prompt may be one or several sentences long.

Writing Situation The writing situation statement directs the student to write about a specific topic described by a key word or phrase. This topic serves as the central theme of the student's written response. The statement provides examples or definitions of the topic. The intent is to provide a common understanding of the topic by expanding, restating, or clarifying it for the student. The intent is not to preclude the student's narrowing or restating of the topic to suit his or her own plan.

Example:

Most teenagers have chores.

Directions for Writing The directions for writing include a strategy statement that suggests an approach for those students who might have some difficulty getting started.

Example:

Think about why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Now write to explain why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Specification for Persuasive Writing Prompts

The purpose of prompt specification is to ensure that the prompt tells the students the subject (topic) and purpose of writing. Persuasive prompts are developed to elicit writing for a desired purpose and audience. Persuasion is writing that attempts to convince the reader that a point of view is valid and/or that the reader should take a specific action. If it is important to present other sides of an issue, the writer does so, but in a way that makes his or her position clear. The unmistakable purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader.

Cue words that should be used in persuasive prompts are *convince*, *persuade*, and *why*. Persuasive prompts should avoid the term *how* because it tends to elicit narrative or expository writing.

Prompts contain two types of statements: Writing Situation and Directions for Writing. Each element of the prompt may be one or several sentences long.

Writing Situation The writing situation statement directs the student to write about a specific topic described by a key word or phrase. This topic serves as the central theme of the student's written response. The statement provides examples or definitions of the topic. The intent is to provide a common understanding of the topic by expanding, restating, or clarifying it for the student. The intent is not to preclude the student's narrowing or restating of the topic to suit his or her own plan.

Example:

The principal at your school has suggested that watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Directions for Writing The directions for writing include a strategy statement that suggests an approach for those students who might have some difficulty getting started.

Example:

Think about the effect watching television has on your grades and your friends' grades.

Now write to convince your principal whether watching television causes students' grades to drop.

FCAT Writing+ Prompt Evaluation Form

Prompt ID _____ **Grade Level** _____ **Date** _____

INTEREST LEVEL

Yes No 1. Will the topic be of interest to students at this grade level?

Comments

BIAS

- Yes No 2. Is the topic free of bias?
- Yes No 3. Is the wording free of bias?
- Yes No 4. Is the topic general enough to be readily accessible to students at this grade level?
(Would most students know something about the topic?)
- Yes No 5. Will students be able to respond without becoming overly emotional or upset?

Comments

PURPOSE OF WRITING

Yes No 6. Is the prompt well-suited for the desired purpose?

Comments

WORDING OF PROMPT

- Yes No 7. Is the wording of the prompt clear?
- Yes No 8. Is the readability appropriate for the majority of students?
- Yes No 9. Are components, such as the writing situation and the directions for writing, compatible?

Comments

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE

Yes No 10. Does the prompt allow for student preference in the choice of an organizational plan?

Comments

DEPTH OF SUPPORT

- Yes No 11. Will the prompt discourage list-like support?
- Yes No 12. Is the prompt manageable within the 45-minute testing period?
- Yes No 13. Will the prompt allow for substantial development of the topic?

Comments

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Yes No 14. Should the prompt be used as it is written?

Comments

Reviewer's Signature _____

Appendix D

Scorer Bias

Scorer bias refers to factors that have no basis in the scoring criteria or rubric but have an effect on a scorer's perception of a student response. Scorers are trained to avoid these biases because research indicates that biases can interfere with consistent application of the scoring rubric.

1. **Reactions to Writing Criteria from Other Assessments, Previous Experience with Writing**

Instruction, or the Use of the Test or Test Scores. Do you prefer the scoring criteria of another project, state, or grade level? Do you have an issue with writing instruction, the appropriateness of the rubric, or the soundness of the administration or use of the assessment? Do you have expectations about the kind of writing students should be doing? Your role is to score the responses according to the scoring standards rather than to react to the scoring criteria, administration procedures, or the use of the assessment.

- Appearance of Response.** How does the paper look at first glance? How long is the response? Length and development of support or quality of writing are not the same things. You should not be influenced by handwriting, neatness, and margins. Handwriting ability and writing ability are not the same things. Length and legibility are not scoring criteria; therefore, you may not consider these aspects of "writing" in the evaluation of a student's writing ability. The quality of the response, rather than the appearance of the response, is part of Florida's scoring criteria.
- Knowledge of Topic.** Are you knowledgeable about the topic? When evaluating student responses, you should consistently adhere to the scoring standards, regardless of your expertise (or lack of expertise) about the topic.
- Reactions to Style.** Does the student begin sentences with "And" or "But"; use an informal tone; use first person; use clichés; place the thesis statement in the conclusion rather than in the introduction; use one-sentence paragraphs; or choose a formulaic, a traditional, or a non-traditional organizational structure? Does the use of a particular stylistic or organizational method prejudice your scoring? Are you unduly influenced by the use of one well-turned phrase in what otherwise is a non-illustrative response? Florida's scoring criteria do not mandate a particular style or organizational structure.
- Reactions to Content.** Has the student used vulgar or violent content? Is the response mundane? Does the student include information that either subtly or directly identifies the student's culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual preference, or exceptionalism? Does the student come across as brash, shy, cute, honest, willing to take a chance, or being like (or unlike) you were at that age? Your views about any of the preceding should never influence your scoring. You should judge the student's ability to communicate, not the student's personality or voice. All scores must reflect the scoring standards.
- Transference in Scoring.** Have many responses looked a great deal alike? Is your scoring prejudiced by previously scored responses? In spite of the sameness or uniqueness of responses, an individual student wrote each response. You are responsible for applying the scoring criteria to each response as if it is the only response. Your judgment of a paper should never be influenced by the characteristics and quality of a previously scored paper.
- Well-being of Scorer.** Is your physical or mental state impeding your scoring accuracy? Each student's score must reflect the scoring standards and not your state of mind, state of health, or state of rest.

Appendix E

Instructional Implications for Each Score Point

Grade 8

6 Points According to the rubric, the writing is tightly focused, logically organized, and amply developed. It demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. Sentences vary in structure, and conventions are generally correct.

A score of 6 does not mean that the paper is perfect. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- organizing internal elements (using a beginning, middle, and end for each idea and not just for the total paper);
- elaborating on supporting ideas using precise language;
- correcting convention errors; and
- achieving the intended purpose for writing.

5 Points According to the rubric, the writing is focused, and supporting ideas are adequately developed. However, lapses in organization may occur. Word choice is adequate. Sentences vary in structure, and conventions are generally correct. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- strengthening the organizational pattern to ensure that no lapses occur and that transitional devices move the reader from one sentence, argument, or explanation to the next;
- elaborating on the supporting ideas;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting convention errors; and
- achieving the intended purpose for writing.

4 Points According to the rubric, the writing is focused but may contain extraneous information, may lack internal organization, and may include weak support or examples. Word choice is adequate. Sentences vary in construction, and conventions are generally correct. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing extraneous information;
- strengthening the organizational pattern to ensure that no lapses occur and that transitional devices move the reader from one sentence, argument, or explanation to the next;
- developing the supporting ideas through extensions, elaborations, or both;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting convention errors; and
- presenting and maintaining the intended purpose for writing.

3 Points According to the rubric, the writing is generally focused but may contain extraneous information, a simplistic organizational pattern, and undeveloped details or examples. Word choice is adequate. Most sentences are simple constructions, and convention errors may occur. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing extraneous information;
- developing an organizational pattern to include transitional devices and a logical progression of ideas;
- developing the supporting ideas through extensions, elaborations, or both;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting convention errors; and
- targeting the intended purpose for writing.

2 Points According to the rubric, the writing may show little relationship to the topic, little evidence of an organizational pattern, and little relevant support. Word choice is limited. Most sentences are simple constructions, and convention errors may occur. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- focusing on the assigned topic;
- developing an organizational pattern that includes a beginning, middle, end, and transitional devices;
- extending supporting ideas;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure errors; and
- identifying and addressing the writing purpose.

1 Point According to the rubric, the writing minimally addresses the topic. There is no organizational pattern and little or no support. Word choice is limited. Most sentences are simple constructions, and convention errors may occur. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- focusing on the assigned topic;
- developing an organizational pattern that includes a beginning, middle, and end;
- extending supporting ideas;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure errors; and
- identifying and addressing the writing purpose.

Unscorable: Insufficient Response or Response Not Related to Assigned Topic According to the rubric, the writing addressing the topic was insufficient or did not address the assigned topic. The writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- familiarizing students with the structure of the prompt;
- identifying the purpose for writing as stated in the prompt;
- planning effectively and efficiently;
- establishing a beginning, a middle, and an end; and
- developing support.

Unscorable: No Response or Unreadable Response According to the rubric, the writing folder is blank, or the response is illegible. The writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- arranging words so meaning is conveyed.

Appendix F

Recommended Readings

Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Mechanically Inclined is the culmination of years of experimentation that merges the best of writer's workshop elements with relevant theory about how and why skills should be taught. It connects theory about using grammar in context with practical instructional strategies, explains why kids often don't understand or apply grammar and mechanics correctly, focuses on attending to the "high payoff," or most common errors in student writing, and shows how to carefully construct a workshop environment that can best support grammar and mechanics concepts.

Atwell, Nancie. *Coming to Know: Writing to Learn in the Intermediate Grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.

This is a book for teachers who are ready to put writing to work across the curriculum—to abandon the encyclopedia-based approach and ask their students to write as literary critics, scientists, historians, and mathematicians.

Atwell, Nancie. *Lessons That Change Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

In this book, teachers can access the author's comprehensive writing lesson plans. Included are mini-lessons for Grades 5–9: a yearlong writing workshop curriculum.

Baines, Lawrence and Anthony J. Kunkel, Editors. *Going Bohemian: Activities That Engage Adolescents in the Art of Writing Well*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000.

This book is a collection of "tried and true" lesson plans from classroom teachers and university faculty. The activities often advocate using innovative strategies, competitive games, interdisciplinary methods, art and multimedia, and indirect approaches to teaching some of the difficult lessons of writing.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1999.

This book strives to help teachers create a classroom community infused with real-life conversations among students and offers ways to organize the curriculum around these essential conversations. It also provides practical methods to create the necessary intellectual and emotional environments which allow important discussions to take place.

Burke, Jim. *Writing Reminders: Tools, Tips, and Techniques*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

This book is designed for educators to read at any time: between periods, while planning, even while teaching, to make every minute count in the classroom, and to help educators work smarter and more effectively.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick and Shelly Harwayne. *Living Between the Lines*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.

This is an invitation to bring new life into reading-writing workshops. This book weaves insights, practical suggestions, references, and anecdotes into an inspirational story.

Carnicelli, Thomas. *Words Work*. With a foreword by Jim Burke. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2001.

The premise of this book is that students would read, write, and perhaps even think better if they knew more about words. With this in mind, this text, successfully tested in middle and high schools, contains activities which allow students to explore words and develop their language arts and thinking skills.

Clark, Roy Peter. *Free to Write: A Journalist Teaches Young Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987.

This book offers hundreds of practical ideas on how to turn elementary and middle school students into better writers and learners.

Cole, Ardith Davis. *Better Answers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Better Answers is an outgrowth of Cole's work with students who have not met state standards in English language arts. Cole has developed an easy-to-implement, step-by-step protocol, the "Better Answer" formula, which helps students focus on the task at hand. It is a process that begins with teacher modeling, invites increasing amounts of student participation, and eventually moves students into independent response writing.

Cunningham, Patricia M., Sharon Arthur Moore, James W. Cunningham, and David W. Moore. *Reading and Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New York City, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, 2000.

The four authors of this book have created a resource offering teachers new strategies and observations regarding elementary reading and writing. The book features pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activities.

Davis, Judy and Sharon Hill. *The No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

The authors of this book describe the organization of a successful year long writing workshop, including an abundance of specific how-to details.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Through a broad spectrum of ingenious ideas, this book shows how to develop students' natural writing ability.

Fiderer, Adele. *Mini-Lessons for Teaching Writing*. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic, 1997.

Using excerpts from favorite children's authors' work, this book, aimed at Grades 3–6, takes its reader through the essentials of good writing. The succinct mini-lessons address elements such as choosing meaningful topics, organizing ideas, punctuating dialogue, and much more.

Fletcher, Ralph and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

This book was written primarily for new teachers and others who are unfamiliar with the writing workshop. It is a practical guide providing all of the elements a teacher needs to develop and implement a writing workshop—and to empower young writers.

Florida Department of Education. *Florida Writes!* Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, 2006.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4; Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8; and Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10 describe the development, purpose, content, and application of the writing assessment program, and they suggest activities that are helpful in preparing students for the assessment.

Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell. *Guiding Readers and Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

This resource book explores all the essential components of a quality upper elementary literacy program (Grades 3–6).

Hansen, Jane. *When Writers Read*. Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

When Writers Read is about what students can do to become better evaluators of themselves as writers and readers, and how their teachers can help. The book is organized around five concepts that are central to an effective writing-reading program: voices, decisions, time, response, and self-discipline.

Harris, Karen and Steve Graham. *Making the Writing Process Work: Strategies for Composition and Self-Regulation*. With a foreword by Donald Meichenbaum. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999.

This book focuses on strategies to help students think about and organize their writing while they manage overall writing content and organization. The methods introduced in this book are particularly appropriate for struggling writers.

Jago, Carol. *Beyond Standards: Excellence in the High School English Classroom*. With a foreword by Sheridan Blau. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2001.

Packed with detailed classroom anecdotes, *Beyond Standards* explores ways teachers can select books, design lessons, and inspire discussions that can lead their students to produce excellent work. This book offers vivid examples of student work and concrete suggestions about how to foster student commitment to achievement in the classroom.

Jenson, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

This innovative book balances psychological research of brain functioning (related to such things as emotion, memory, and recall) with practical, easy-to-understand concepts regarding learning and the brain. It also offers successful tips and techniques for using that information in classrooms, producing an invaluable tool which can allow educators to better reach students.

Johnson, Bea. *Never Too Early to Write: Adventures in the K–1 Writing Workshop*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing, Inc., 1999.

This book shows teachers, administrators, and parents how to have a successful year-long writing program. It demonstrates that a very valuable literacy tool is not expensive. It utilizes reading-readiness materials already in use and requires no special teaching aids.

Jorgensen, Karen. *The Whole Story: Crafting Fiction in the Upper Elementary Grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

The author takes you inside her classroom, demonstrating how she gives lessons, conducts conferences, and facilitates sharing to help writers develop and refine stories.

Kropp, Paul and Lori Jamison Rog. *The Write Genre*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishing, 2005.

Build a foundation for writing with effective lessons that are the key to powerful writing workshops. These practical lessons explore the main elements of writing, with explicit strategies for teaching the major styles: informational writing, poetry and personal writing, and narrative. The authors also provide more than 30 effective tools that are ready to copy and use in the classroom—writing checklists, rubrics for assessment, graphic organizers, tips for proofing, and much more.

McCarrier, Andrea, Gay Su Pinnell, and Irene C. Fountas. *Interactive Writing: How Language & Literacy Come Together; K–2*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.

This guide offers a powerful teaching method designed to accelerate and support children’s critical understanding of the writing process. *Interactive Writing* is specifically focused on the early phases of writing and has special relevance to pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and Grade 1 and 2 teachers.

Moats, Louisa Cook. *Speech to Print*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2001.

The language essentials offered in this book will enable teachers to identify, understand, and solve the problems students with or without disabilities may encounter when learning to read and write.

Mueller, Pamela N. *Lifers: Learning from At-Risk Adolescent Readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Twenty-two high school students are introduced to readers as “lifers”—students who have spent all their lives in remedial programs. Unwilling to accept that they will remain “lifers,” Pamela Mueller offers her own solutions through three reading workshops she and her colleagues implemented, which are fully described in this book.

Muschla, Gary Robert. *The Writing Teacher's Book of Lists: With Ready-To-Use Activities and Worksheets*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991.

This book is divided into six sections containing a total of seventy-four lists. The teaching suggestions that accompany each list provide valuable information, methods, and techniques for teaching writing, while the activities enable students to improve their writing skills as they apply the knowledge gained from the lists.

Noguchi, Rei R. *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991.

Some research indicates the formal study of grammar does not improve student writing and, in fact, takes time away from writing activities. To make more time available for writing activities, the author suggests reducing the length and breadth of formal grammar instruction and instead introduces the concept of a streamlined "writer's grammar."

Overmeyer, Mark. *When Writing Workshop Isn't Working*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005

When Writing Workshop Isn't Working provides practical advice to overcome common problems and get your writing workshop back on track. Acknowledging the process-based nature of the writing workshop, the author does not offer formulaic, program-based, one-size-fits-all answers; rather, he presents multiple suggestions based on what works in real classrooms.

Ray, Katie Wood. *The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts)*. With Lester L. Laminack. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

In this book, Katie Wood Ray offers a practical and comprehensive guide about the writing workshop for both new and experienced teachers. She offers chapters on all challenging aspects of the writing workshop, including day-to-day instruction, classroom management, and many other topics.

Ray, Katie Wood. *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

Drawing on stories from classrooms, examples of student writing, and illustrations, Katie Wood Ray explains in practical terms the theoretical underpinnings of how elementary and middle school students learn to write from reading.

Reid, Janine and Jann Wells. *Writing Anchors*. Peterborough, NH: Crystal Springs Books, 2005.

This comprehensive handbook shows how to build a foundation for writing with effective lessons that are key to powerful writing workshops. It provides information about creating a supportive classroom, modeling writing experiences, and generating enthusiasm for writing among students. Includes explicit strategies for teaching these major forms of writing: informational writing, poetry and personal writing, and narrative writing.

Strong, William. *Coaching Writing*. With a foreword by Tom Romano. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

This book presents a “coaching approach” to writing instruction: an approach that centers on working smarter, not harder, to reduce the risk of teacher burnout. Chapters in the book offer a variety of educator resources ranging from Strong’s own experiences with basic writers to successfully managing the paper load.

Thompson, Thomas C., ed. *Teaching Writing in High School and College*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002.

An illuminating collection of encouraging narratives and studies suggesting that secondary-postsecondary partnerships and exchanges can significantly improve students’ ability to succeed at college-level writing tasks.

Tsujimoto, Joseph. *Lighting Fires: How the Passionate Teacher Engages Adolescent Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2001.

This book contains writing assignments, exercises, a few adult examples, and student writings collected by the author over the years. It shows specific ways that the author motivated students to write.

Wollman-Bonilla, Julie. *Family Message Journals: Teaching Writing through Family Involvement*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

This book follows the development of emergent and beginning writers as they explore the power and joy of written communication. Wollman-Bonilla’s analysis of how two primary grade teachers implement *Family Message Journals* in their classrooms illustrates that the journals are a workable, realistic, and effective strategy for literacy and content-area learning.

Worsham, Sandra. *Essential Ingredients: Recipes for Teaching Writing*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

This book shows that the kind of writing that successful writers do is the kind of writing we should be teaching in school. It details the characteristics of effective writing and implications for use in the classroom.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well, 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001.

This is a helpful and readable guide to writing. With more than a million copies sold, this book has stood the test of time and continues to be a valuable tool for writers and would-be writers.

Appendix G

FCAT Publications and Products

The Department of Education produces many materials to help educators, students, and parents better understand the FCAT program. A list of FCAT-related publications and products is provided below. Additional information about the FCAT program is available on the FCAT home page of the DOE web site at <http://www.fldoe.org>.

About the FCAT Web Brochure

This web-based brochure is found on the DOE web site in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole and provides information about FCAT Reading, Writing+, Mathematics, and Science for Grades 3–11. It is designed to provide a summary, as well as detailed information, across grades and subject areas and to link the reader to other helpful DOE web resources.

Assessment & Accountability Briefing Book

This book provides an overview of Florida's assessment, school accountability, and teacher certification programs. FCAT topics include frequently asked questions, content assessed by the FCAT, reliability, and validity. This booklet can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators

This publication provides the first comprehensive look at the FCAT including history, test content, test format, test development and construction, test administration, and test scoring and reporting. Educator involvement is emphasized, demonstrating how Florida teachers and administrators participate in reviewing test items, determining how standards should be assessed, finding ranges of scores, and providing input on aspects of the test administration process. The PDF version is available on the DOE web site.

FCAT Myths vs. Facts

By providing factual information about the FCAT program, this brochure addresses common concerns about the FCAT that are based on myths. It is also available in Spanish and can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

FCAT Performance Task Scoring—Practice for Educators (publications and software)

These materials are designed to help teachers learn to score FCAT Reading, Writing, and Mathematics performance tasks at Grades 4, 5, 8, and 10. *A Trainer's Guide* includes instructions for using the scoring publications and software in teacher education seminars and workshops. The publications mirror the scorer training experiences by presenting samples of student work for teachers to score.

FCAT Posters

Newly designed 17" by 23" elementary, middle, and high school FCAT Reading, Writing+, Science, and Mathematics posters have an instructional focus. Two additional posters provide information about achievement levels and which FCAT tests are given at each grade. A high school poster reminds students about the graduation requirement to pass the FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests and the multiple opportunities available to retake the tests. New posters were delivered to districts in August 2005 and are available at district assessment offices.

FCAT Released Tests

Reading, Grades 4, 8, and 10

Mathematics, Grades 4, 8, and 10

In 2005, the DOE released previously-used full tests of FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics for Grades 4, 8, and 10. This web-based release included not only the tests, but also several other important documents including answer keys, *How to Use the FCAT Released Tests*, *How to Score the FCAT Released Tests*, and *Frequently Asked Questions about the FCAT Released Tests*. These supplemental materials provide many details about the FCAT that are informative for all audiences, especially the range of correct answers and points needed for each achievement level. All materials are available on the DOE web site.

FCAT Results Folder: A Guide for Parents and Guardians

This folder is designed for parents and guardians of students in Grades 3–11. It provides information about FCAT student results and allows parents to store student reports for future reference. Spanish and Haitian Creole versions are available. Delivery coincides with spring delivery of student reports.

FCAT Test Item Specifications

Reading, Grade Levels 3–5, 6–8, and 9–10

Mathematics, Grade Levels 3–5, 6–8, and 9–10

Science, Grades 5, 8, and 10

Writing+ draft versions, Grades 4, 8, and 10

Defining both the content and the format of the FCAT test questions, the *Specifications* primarily serve as guidelines for item writers and reviewers, but also contain information for educators and the general public. The *Specifications* are designed to be broad enough to ensure test items are developed in several formats to measure the concepts presented in each benchmark. These materials can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

Florida Reads! Report on the 2006 FCAT Reading Released Items (Grades 4, 8 & 10)

Florida Solves! Report on the 2006 FCAT Mathematics Released Items (Grades 5, 8 & 10)

Florida Inquires! Report on the 2006 FCAT Science Released Items (Grades 5, 8 & 11)

These reports provide information about the scoring of the FCAT Reading, Mathematics, and Science performance tasks displayed on the 2006 student reports. *Florida Reads!* combines Grades 4, 8, and 10 in one document; *Florida Solves!* covers Grades 5, 8, and 10; and *Florida Inquires!* includes Grades 5, 8, and 11. The reports are available each May.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10

Each grade-level publication describes the content and application of the FCAT Writing+ tests and offers suggestions for activities that may be helpful in preparing students for the assessments. The reports are available each May.

Frequently Asked Questions About FCAT

This brochure provides answers to frequently asked questions about the FCAT program and is available on the DOE web site.

Keys to FCAT, Grades 3–5, 6–8, and 9–11

These booklets are distributed each January and contain information for parents and students preparing for FCAT Reading, Writing+, Mathematics, and Science. *Keys to FCAT* are translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole and are available, along with the English version, on the DOE web site.

Lessons Learned—FCAT, Sunshine State Standards and Instructional Implications

This document provides an analysis of previous years' FCAT results and contains analyses of FCAT Reading, Writing, and Mathematics state-level data through 2000. The analysis will assist educators in interpreting and understanding their local FCAT scores, which will help improve instruction in the classroom. The PDF version is available on the DOE web site.

Sample Test Materials for the FCAT

Reading and Mathematics, Grades 3–10

Science, Grades 5, 8, and 11

Writing+, Grades 4, 8, and 10

These materials are produced and distributed each fall for teachers to use with students. The student's test booklet contains a list of the different kinds of FCAT questions, practice questions, and hints for answering them. The teacher's answer key provides the correct answer, an explanation for the correct answer, and also indicates which Sunshine State Standards benchmark is being assessed by each question. These booklets are available in PDF format on the DOE web site.

The New FCAT NRT: Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT10)

This brochure outlines differences between the previous FCAT NRT (SAT9) and the current FCAT NRT (SAT10) and provides specifications of the classifications and composition of the reading and mathematics NRT assessments. It is available in PDF format on the DOE web site.

Understanding FCAT Reports

This booklet provides information about the FCAT student, school, and district reports for the recent test administration. Samples of reports, explanations about the reports, and a glossary of technical terms are included. Distribution to districts is scheduled to coincide with the delivery of student reports each May. The booklet can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

What every teacher should know about FCAT

This document provides suggestions for all subject-area teachers to use in helping their students be successful on the FCAT. It can be downloaded from the DOE web site.



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