FCAT

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test®

lessons learned

FCAT Writing Lessons Learned:
2001–2008 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications

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Lessons Learned
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to *FCAT Writing Lessons Learned:* *2001–2008 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications*

Purpose

The purpose of the *FCAT Writing Lessons Learned* report on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) is to provide a summary and analysis of the trends in student achievement of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in writing (Grades 4, 8, and 10) from 2001–2008. The goals of this report are to inform education stakeholders of the academic progress made by Florida students in the area of writing and to provide guidance for educators that can be used to create positive change and enhance program effectiveness. This is the second *Lessons Learned* report about FCAT Writing. The first *FCAT Lessons Learned* publication covered FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics data from 1998–2000 and FCAT Writing data from 1993–2000. In 2007, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) released separate *FCAT Reading Lessons Learned* and *FCAT Mathematics Lessons Learned* reports covering FCAT Reading and Mathematics data from 2001–2005. In 2008, the *FCAT Science Lessons Learned* report covering FCAT Science data from 2003–2006 was also released. All previous volumes in the *Lessons Learned* series are available online at http://fcat.fldoe.org/lessonslearned.asp. Unless otherwise indicated in this publication, *Lessons Learned* refers to this FCAT Writing volume.

The information in this report provides Floridians who are interested in education with a comprehensive view of student achievement in Florida. Postsecondary educators working in teacher education will also benefit from the insights of this report. Other persons for whom these insights may be meaningful include parents, students, legislators, media representatives, and business organizations; however, the report places the highest priority on supporting those charged with improving student performance in Florida: teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, school advisory councils, and district leaders.

Rationale

The phrase *lessons learned* implies a historical look at student achievement with thoughtful consideration given to how well students have learned the content of the assessed standards and how these results could be improved. This was accomplished by producing FCAT results and identifying trends, then convening a representative group of Florida educators to interpret the trends and identify instructional implications. The objective of this report is to translate this information into insights about student progress within Florida classrooms and schools. The insights provided in this document may be used to identify and implement modifications in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

Historical Background

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 DOE Office of Assessment 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.

In 1996, the Florida educational community identified a core body of knowledge and skills all Florida students should acquire. This body of knowledge, called the Sunshine State Standards (SSS), spanned seven content areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, foreign language, and the arts). By adopting the SSS in May 1996, the Florida Board of Education defined a clear set of standards upon which to build an equitable system of student assessment and school accountability.

In 1995 and 1996, the Florida Educational Reform and Accountability Commission recommended the development of a statewide assessment system. These recommendations, called the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Design, led to development of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT). The development of FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics questions began in 1996, and questions were field tested in 1997 for Grades 4, 8, and 10 (Reading) and Grades 5, 8, and 10 (Mathematics). In 1998, the first results of these assessments were reported to students and schools. In 1999, the law related to student assessment was revised to require an annual assessment of all students in Grades 3–10. This legislation, called the A+ Plan for Education, required that tests in reading and mathematics be developed for the grades not tested; therefore, assessments were developed for Grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9 (Reading) and for Grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 (Mathematics).

The A+ Plan also required a science assessment for students in Grades 5, 8, and 10. Development of science test items began in 2000, and a field test of these items was conducted in a representative sample of Florida schools in Spring 2002. The first operational assessment and reporting of student scores took place in Spring 2003. Beginning in Spring 2005, FCAT Science was administered in Grade 11 instead of Grade 10. This change was in response to requests by Florida science educators to allow an additional year for students to receive high school-level science instruction.

In February 2005, the DOE supplemented the FCAT Writing essay test with multiple-choice (MC) items. Items were field tested on all eligible Florida students in Grades 4, 8, and 10. When the MC component was added, the test was renamed "FCAT Writing+" (plus). The first operational administration of FCAT Writing+ (essay plus MC items) took place in February 2006.

The purpose of adding the MC section to FCAT Writing+ was to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the writing benchmarks at the tested grades, which would also satisfy the state's graduation requirements. The FCAT Writing Content Advisory Committee recommended that a 100–500 whole-test scale score be reported, as well as a subscore (a rubric score of 0 to 6) for the essay and raw scores (number correct out of number possible) for the categories of Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions for MC. Student scores on FCAT Writing+ were reported for the first time in May 2006.

With the 2001 FCAT administration, the need to track student growth across grades led to the creation of Developmental Scale Scores (DSS) for reading and mathematics. The DSS place scale scores for all grades on one vertical scale, allowing educators to track longitudinal growth and more accurately compare results across grades. The appropriateness of using the DSS for reading and mathematics is due to the number of adjacent grade levels assessed (e.g., Grades 3–10). Because the writing test is currently assessed only in Grades 4, 8, and 10, the DSS would provide little, if any, useful information about the longitudinal growth across these grades; therefore, DSS have not been developed for writing.

The State Board of Education approved revisions to the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in Language Arts in January 2007. Although the process of aligning the *FCAT Writing+ Test Item Specifications* to the approved SSS began immediately, item development for the new SSS had not occurred during data collection for analysis in this publication; thus, the numbering system and benchmark wording included in this publication reference the SSS prior to the 2007 revisions.

A detailed chronology of the FCAT program is included in the *FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators* published in 2005. The online version is available on the Department of Education's website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/handbk/fcathandbook.asp.

Lessons Learned
**REPORT
DEVELOPMENT**

FCAT Writing Lessons Learned Report Development

Lessons Learned Task Force

For this *Lessons Learned* volume, the DOE analyzed data and identified statewide trends in student writing performance based on FCAT Writing scores for Grades 4, 8, and 10 from 2001–2008. In January 2009, the DOE convened a task force of Florida educators to review the data analyses from the 2001–2008 FCAT administrations, review test items and prompts, make observations, and generate implications for student instruction. The task force included classroom teachers, curriculum supervisors, resource teachers, and school administrators. For the purpose of data analysis and test item and writing prompt review, the larger task force was divided into elementary, middle, and high school focus groups. All task-force members had extensive experience with the SSS, the FCAT, and classroom instruction. The work of the task force included reviewing overall test results, results for reporting categories, and question/prompt-level results. DOE staff and the DOE's test development contractor assisted task-force members in examining student performance data and facilitated the production of the report. Additional details of the report development process are outlined in the Statistical Considerations sections of this publication.

This report contains results and implications for instruction derived from the synthesis and analysis of three types of data:

1) the performance of students on the writing prompts for 2001–2008;
2) the mean percent correct by multiple-choice reporting category (i.e., average percentage of points obtained on each reporting category) for 2006–2008; and
3) the percent of students at Achievement Levels 3, 4, and 5 for 2006–2008 (FCAT Writing+).

The analyses of the writing prompts cover all years from 2001–2008; however, the other two types of data are only from 2006–2008, when the Writing+ assessment contained MC items in addition to writing prompts.

For the writing prompts, the mean (average) student performance and the percentage of students scoring at or above rubric score 3 and at or above rubric score 4 are presented in this report. The scores on the writing prompts are used as a stand-alone index of student writing; therefore, writing-prompt scores are not communicated in terms of "mean percent correct" or "performance by achievement level." Readers are reminded that a rubric score on the prompt is *not* equivalent to the FCAT Writing+ Achievement Level, which involves the student's combined performance on both the prompt and the multiple-choice sections. Achievement Levels are discussed in more detail on pages 100–113 in this document.

Standards for the writing Achievement Levels were recommended by Florida teachers and district administrators in the fall of 2006 and subsequently adopted by the Florida Board of Education, but the Spring 2007 FCAT Writing+ test administration marked the first time that the student writing performance was reported by Achievement Levels based on scale scores. For trend purposes, this report uses those 2007 standards to retrofit the student performance on the Spring 2006 Writing+ test on to the Achievement Level metric; thus, this document is the first reporting of the Spring 2006 Writing+ test results by Achievement Level. The data presented in this report are from the FCAT Writing test administrations from 2001–2008; however, special ad hoc analyses of these data were conducted specifically for *Lessons Learned* and have not been reported previously.

The following table illustrates the student populations that were included in the previous *Lessons Learned* report (2002), this *Lessons Learned* report, and the state-level score reports for regular FCAT administrations.

Table 1: Student Populations in *Lessons Learned*			
Student Populations	*Lessons Learned* **(2002)**	*Lessons Learned* **(2010)**	**FCAT Regular Administration State-Level Results**
Standard Curriculum ELL[1] for more than 2 yrs Nondisabled ESE[2] Gifted Speech Impaired Hospital/Homebound	✓	✓	✓
ESE[2]	✓	✓	✓
ELL[1]	✓	✓	✓
[1] English Language Learner (ELL) [2] Exceptional Student Education (ESE)			

Premises

The results contained in this document are based on several important premises that the users of this report should consider carefully.

- The first premise is that this kind of data analysis project could be conducted accurately. The authors presumed that if professional Florida educators were provided the opportunity to examine the FCAT test results and the FCAT prompts and test questions, meaningful conclusions related to student learning could be reached. The task force's conclusions contained in this document validate this premise.

- The second premise is that Florida educators and others want to know what the FCAT results reveal about education in the state. The authors recognized that classroom teachers continually seek to improve student learning and to help students meet the challenging expectations presented in the SSS. The structure and content of *FCAT Writing Lessons Learned* are intended to facilitate these processes.

- The third premise concerns the FCAT data. The authors presumed that overall student effort after the field-test year remained constant (i.e., that students were consistently giving their best performance on the state assessments). Any variations in performance from year to year should not be explained as the result of varied student effort but as the result of other factors, such as decline or improvement in student learning.

- The final premise about the FCAT data is that the content assessed by the test remains stable from year to year. Supporting the presumption of year-to-year stability, it is important to note that the FCAT consistently measures the same writing concepts drawn from the SSS, even though individual prompts and test items vary. Year-to-year comparability at the overall test level is further supported by the use of sophisticated statistical models that account for any variance in test difficulty.

Structure of *FCAT Writing Lessons Learned*

This volume of *Lessons Learned* is organized into sections: FCAT Writing, FCAT Writing+ Multiple-Choice Analysis, and FCAT Writing+ Total Score Analysis.

The FCAT Writing section provides statewide achievement results for the writing prompt. Included are observations about students' academic strengths and weaknesses related to the prompt portion with examples of student responses and commentary to illustrate relevant findings about student performance. The rubric score assigned to the student response is provided. Instructional implications and strategies for improving writing skills are also provided.

The FCAT Writing+ Multiple-Choice Analysis section provides statewide achievement results for the multiple-choice items by grade and reporting category with observations about students' academic strengths and weaknesses related to the MC portion. This section includes sample questions that reflect the kinds of skills students are expected to demonstrate as well as instructional implications with strategies to help teachers move students toward greater mastery.

The FCAT Writing+ Total Score Analysis section provides statewide achievement results for the writing prompt and the multiple-choice items combined and includes information concerning trends in the statewide achievement results. Through 2005, FCAT Writing was administered as a single-item test; the writing prompt contributed 100% of the test's raw score points. With the addition of MC items in 2006, the raw score points for the writing prompt were adjusted to contribute 50% to the overall test score; the MC items contributed the other 50%. The following table provides the approximate percent distribution of raw score points across writing reporting categories by grade level from 2006–2008.

Table 2: Approximate Percent Distribution of Raw Score Points across FCAT Writing+, by Grade Level					
Grade	Writing Prompt	Focus	Organization	Support	Conventions
4	50%	9%–11%	9%–14%	9%	18%–20%
8	50%	11%–15%	7%–10%	10%–11%	17%–19%
10	50%	10%–13%	9%–10%	10%	18%–20%

Limitations

Analysis of the writing student performance data was limited by a number of conditions. Salient to the findings of this report, these limitations are noted below.

- The analyses reported herein are based on state-level data and are not intended to provide specific classroom, school, or district interpretations; however, this presentation of findings may provide a model that can guide data analysis at those levels. The results may also be used by teachers to compare their knowledge about students' writing performance to the average performance of students across the state.
- The difficulty of the prompt may vary somewhat from year to year and from prompt to prompt. Prompts within a grade are selected each year so that variance in performance between the prompts is minimized.
- From 2001–2005, the writing assessment was a one-item test (prompt only). The student's score reflects the student's performance on this assessment under specific testing conditions and does not purport to reflect the totality of the student's knowledge of the entire writing process.
- Narrative writing occurs only at Grade 4 for FCAT Writing; therefore, changes in narrative writing can be noted only at Grade 4 for each successive group of students tested. This analysis, then, cannot chart progress in narrative writing with the group of students as they move from Grade 4 to Grades 8 and 10.
- Persuasive writing was the only mode of writing assessed at Grade 10 in 2008; therefore, performance in persuasive writing cannot be compared to expository writing for Grade 10 students in 2008.

- The student responses chosen for this report represent a limited sample of student writing on the assessment. Students earning the same score point can respond to the prompt using a variety of techniques and a range of skills that are not captured by this document.

- It should be noted that the nature of holistic scoring addresses the writing elements of Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions as an interrelated body of evidence. These elements are not scored separately or analytically.

- For the multiple-choice analysis, the task force evaluated the questions that were particularly challenging to students and identified persistent areas of concern without attempting to evaluate student results on every question.

- Results are reported for multiple-choice items at the reporting-category level only, not for the benchmark clarifications (see page 113) that comprise each category. The task force provided instructional implications at the reporting-category level based on examination of items. When FCAT questions are selected each year, the most important consideration is content representation. Consistent content is maintained from year to year by selecting questions for the various reporting categories and benchmarks assessed. Each year's test includes *operational items* that count towards students' scores, *field-test items* that are used only to gather data, and *anchor items* that ensure that scores can be made comparable from year to year. During the process of assembling the test, question and test statistical characteristics are compared for the total test, the anchor items, and the reporting categories. Using these preequating methods, similar characteristics are maintained for the reporting categories from year to year. Test equating, conducted during the test scoring process, is used to generate the total test scores.

- The statistic used to report performance by reporting categories is called the *mean percent correct*. The mean percent correct is calculated in a manner analogous to finding the percent of points a student earned on the questions within each reporting category. It is the mean number of points earned by the entire group of students divided by the number of points possible. For example, if there are 12 questions within a reporting category, and each of five students correctly answers 8, 6, 6, 9, and 12 questions, respectively, the average number of questions answered correctly is 8.2. This translates to an overall mean percent of 68% (i.e., 8.2 divided by 12).

Lessons Learned
FCAT WRITING
2001–2008

Information about Writing Performance Tasks

Prompt

For FCAT Writing, the SSS benchmarks provide the foundation of the scoring criteria (rubrics). Within the Writing Process Standard, the *drafting/revising* benchmarks provide the basis for the rubrics used in the scoring of the writing performance tasks. The benchmarks for *prewriting* and *final* document production, however, are also marked as being assessed by the writing prompt (WP) in the FCAT Writing References section. This designation illustrates the interrelatedness of the essential writing elements of Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions to the stages of the writing process. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade level.)

FCAT Writing prompt performance tasks require students to apply their writing skills by planning and drafting a response to one of two randomly assigned topics. Each prompt has two parts: *the writing situation* and *the directions for writing*. The writing situation orients the students to the topic, and the directions for writing guide the students to think about the topic before they begin to write. Students respond, within a 45-minute time period, to an assigned topic and are expected to produce a focused, organized, well-supported draft with standard English conventions. The writing folder contains the prompt and two pages for the student's response. A separate planning sheet is provided. The planning sheet is collected but is not scored; thus, the prewriting benchmarks are indirectly assessed by the performance tasks. Grade 4 students respond to a prompt that asks them either to explain (expository writing) or to tell a story (narrative writing); students in Grades 8 and 10 respond to a prompt that asks them either to explain (expository writing) or to persuade (persuasive writing).

Example of a Narrative Prompt (Grade 4):

Writing Situation:

Everyone has done something that he or she will always remember.

Directions for Writing:
Think about a time you did something special that you will always remember.
Now write a story about the time you did something special that you will always remember.

Example of an Expository Prompt (Grade 8):

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 (Grade 10):

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.

Holistic Scoring

A holistic scoring method is used to score FCAT Writing. For the purpose of scoring and describing the quality of student essays, the integration of the four writing elements inherent in the writing process and benchmarks are considered. These elements are listed below:

Focus includes planning for writing by grouping related ideas and identifying the purpose for writing. It also refers to how clearly a central idea (topic), theme, or unifying point is presented and maintained.

Organization refers to the structure or plan of development and the relationship of one point to another to provide a logical progression of ideas. It also refers to the use of transitional devices to signal both the relationship of the supporting ideas to the central idea, theme, or unifying point and the connections between and among sentences.

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. Support may be developed through the use of additional details, anecdotes, illustrations, and examples that further clarify meaning.

Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure.

The holistic scoring rubric establishes the criteria for each possible score point from 1 to 6, 6 being the highest score. Student responses that are unscorable are assigned a score of 0. Some types of unscorable responses include the refusal to write, illegibility, and writing that is off-topic or in a foreign language. (See the FCAT Writing References section for the holistic scoring rubrics.)

Statistical Considerations for FCAT Writing

Data Analysis Process

The writing task force examined and analyzed writing assessment data from 2001–2008 to clarify statewide writing trends. An examination of the data revealed the extent to which students were achieving the assessed standards. The findings added a new dimension to what was already known about the meaning of FCAT Writing results and enabled the task force to suggest instructional strategies for improvement of student performance on FCAT Writing.

The statewide trends in writing performance are presented in several different ways within *Lessons Learned.* One type of presentation displays, in graphical form, mean scores on the 2001–2008 writing prompts by grade level. This analysis shows the combined mean scores on both writing prompts by grade level, as well as the mean scores on the individual writing prompts by grade level. This section of analyses includes sample papers and a statement on how each sample response fits into the overall achievement of student writing for that particular grade and year.[1] The student responses featured in this book have been typeset, but contain the student's original wording, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. Personal information has been removed to protect the identity of the writer. (See the FCAT Writing References section for the holistic scoring rubrics.)

Another type of presentation displays the percentage of students by grade level who achieved a rubric score of 3 or above for each type of writing prompt along with a display of the percentage of students by grade level who achieved a rubric score of 4 or above. The school accountability or school grading process includes a calculation based on the writing prompt rubric scores to evaluate schools regarding the level of writing performance. Under the A+ Plan for Education issued in 1999, the school grading formula calculation for the writing assessment was based on the percentage of writing prompt rubric scores at or above 3 as part of the accountability process; in 2003–2004, the school grade calculation was based on averaging the percent of students scoring 3 and above with the percent of students scoring 3.5 and above on the writing prompt to yield the percent meeting minimum and higher standards. Beginning 2004–2005, the school-grading formula for the writing prompt increased to calculating the percent of students who score 3.5 and above. Details on the school accountability system are presented in "Grading Florida Public Schools," which can be accessed under "Press Materials" at http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/.

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[1] The data analysis is based on FCAT demographic data that can be found online at https://app1.fldoe.org/FCATDemographics/.

Effect Size and FCAT Writing Prompt Results

Effect size is a statistical method often used in research. This statistic quantifies change relative to the spread of the distribution. For example, although a small difference may be statistically significant with large sample sizes, it may mean very little with regard to the practical size of that difference. The effect-size statistic captures the fact that this difference may, from a practical standpoint, be quite small. A discussion of effect size and how it is used in research to quantify statistical change is also provided for the prompt and multiple-choice items combined in the FCAT Writing+ Total Score Analysis section on pages 97–109 of this report. The information below provides context on how effect size can be used to evaluate FCAT Writing prompt results.

> *Effect size is a statistical method [that] . . . quantifies change relative to the spread of the distribution.*

The following text from Jacob Cohen identifies the categories of change most often used when describing variance in effect-size statistics.[2]

Effect Size	Qualifier
$d < 0.2$	Negligible
$0.5 > d \geq 0.2$	Small
$0.8 > d \geq 0.5$	Medium
$d \geq 0.8$	Large

Although the effect size can be computed as a negative value, its interpretation is based on its absolute value; therefore, a negative effect size should not be interpreted as a negligible change.

A small effect size implies a change that is insubstantial. For example, if the mean writing prompt score increases by 0.1 of a rubric score point, the effect size (d) will be 0.10 (0.1 divided by 1, assuming 1 is the pooled standard deviation of the writing prompt scores). This increase in the mean writing prompt score is small with regard to effect size. By contrast, an increase of 0.8 of a rubric score point would yield an effect size of 0.8. This would be a large effect size, indicating that relative to the standard deviation of the writing prompt scores (1) there was a substantial change in the mean writing prompt score. From a program evaluation standpoint, the implications of medium or large effect sizes warrant more serious consideration than those of small effect sizes. A small difference or change in score is equivalent to a small effect size or no effect size.

It should be noted that the effect-size qualifiers suggested by Cohen are general and that many researchers advocate thoughtful consideration of the evaluated content. For example, a "medium" effect-size change may be considered large in a social science, such as education. For the purposes of this report, the general parameters proposed by Cohen will be utilized.

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[2] Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Technically, effect size is the ratio of change to the standard deviation. For this report, a pooled standard deviation was used.[3] The pooled standard deviation is used typically when there are two samples being compared with varying *n*-counts. The effect-size ratio can vary from 0 (no change) to infinity.

$$d = \frac{\overline{\mu}_{new} - \overline{\mu}_{old}}{\sqrt{(n_{new}\sigma^2_{new} + n_{old}\sigma^2_{old})/(n_{new} + n_{old})}}$$

In this equation, $\overline{\mu}_{new}$ represents the mean of the new writing prompt scores, $\overline{\mu}_{old}$ is the mean of the old writing prompt scores, n is the sample size, and σ^2 is the squared standard deviation.[4] The effect sizes for each grade and prompt are presented in the next few sections of this report.

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[3] Yen, W.M. (1986). The choice of scale for educational measurement: An IRT perspective. *Journal of Educational Measurement,* 23, 299–325.

[4] Ibid.

Statewide Achievement Results for the Writing Prompt (2001–2008)

Analysis of Grade 4 FCAT Writing Prompt Results

Overall Grade-Level Performance for Grade 4

Graph W-1 shows the mean scores for Grade 4 students from 2001–2008. It represents the combined mean scores for the expository and narrative prompts for all fourth graders tested. The data indicate that the mean scores of Grade 4 students increased by 0.4 of a rubric score point, from 3.4 in 2001 to 3.8 in 2008. This is a small change in writing performance over time, with an effect size (d) of 0.4. In other words, relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008, the change in the mean writing scores is small.

**Graph W-1
Writing Grade 4
Both Prompts Combined
Mean Scores**
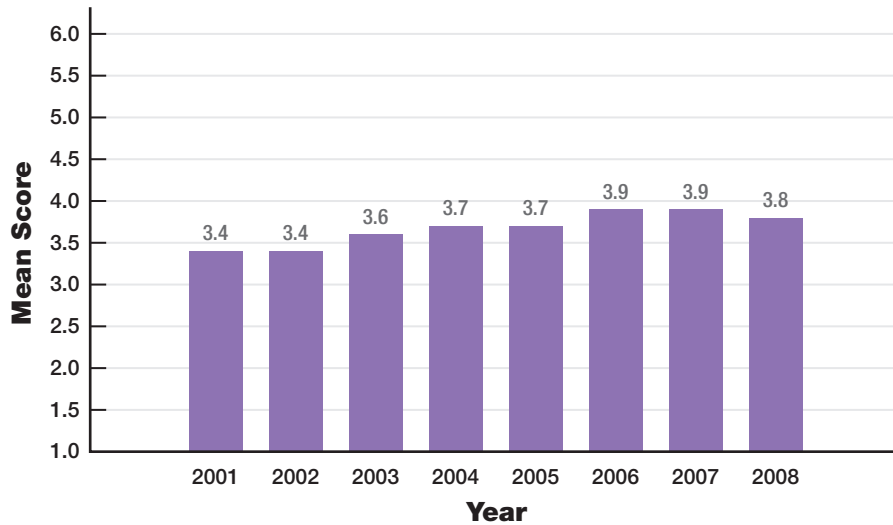
Grade 4 Expository Writing Assessment Data

Graph W-2 shows the mean scores of Grade 4 students on expository prompts across years. The overall performance increased by 0.3 of a rubric score point, from 3.5 in 2001 to 3.8 in 2008. This is a statistically small change in expository writing performance over time, with an effect size (d) of 0.3. Similar to the combined mean writing scores shown in Graph W-1, the change of mean expository prompt scores is statistically small relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008. From an instructional standpoint, however, educators may view the overall increase of a rubric score point of 0.4 and 0.3 for the combined prompt mean writing scores and for the expository prompt mean scores, respectively, as a definitive improvement.

Prompt Grade 4

Graph W-2
Writing Grade 4
Expository Prompt
Mean Scores
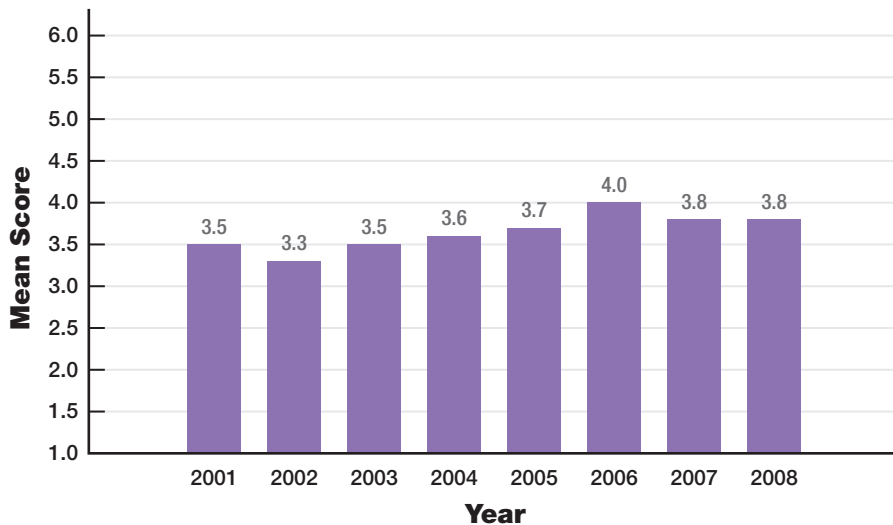
From 2001 to 2008, the mean scores of Grade 4 students on expository prompts indicate performance approaching or reaching the rubric score 4. The paper below illustrates the level of writing indicative of an expository response earning a rubric score 4. The prompt directed students to choose something fun to do outside and explain what makes this activity fun. The response below is focused, and an organizational plan is apparent. Reasons are previewed in the introduction and then explained in the body of the response. Development of the support is mostly list-like and is somewhat uneven in quality; however, the "tricks" and "more than one rope" reasons contain some specific examples and anecdotes. Word choice is generally adequate. Some errors occur in basic sentence structure, although some variation is included. Knowledge of conventions is generally demonstrated.

> Do you like to jump rope? I do. One of my reasons why I like to jumprope is because you can do different tricks also, you can jumprope with more than one rope. finally, if you like to jumprope you can keep on learning new tricks.
>
> First of all, if you like to jumprope you can do different tricks. One of the tricks that I know is called "skeing." it is fun because you get to jump side to side. When I learned how to jump rope my mom teached me it. I fell alot of times but I got up back again.
>
> Additionly, if you know how to jumprope you can use more than one rope. When it was easy for me to jump with one rope I tried with two. I fell alot of times and the rope got tangled with my feet but I kept on trying until I got it right.
>
> Finally, if you like to jumprope you can always keep on learning. When I learned to jumprope very good. I learned alot of new things like I learned how to jump with one foot.
>
> now you know why it is fun to jumprope, because you can do different tricks also, you can use more than one jump rope. finally, if you like to jumprope you can keep on learning new things. And that is why I like to Jumprope. My advice to you is to try to jump rope you will like it.
>
> **Score Point 4**

Another way to evaluate improvements in student achievement is to look at the percentage of students who scored at or above rubric score point 3. Graph W-3 indicates the percentage of Grade 4 students whose performance on expository prompts was a rubric score point 3 or above. Graph W-4 indicates the percentage of Grade 4 students whose performance on expository prompts was a rubric score point 4 or above.

Graphs W-3 and W-4
Writing Grade 4
Expository Prompt
2001–2008

Graph W-3
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3

Graph W-4
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4
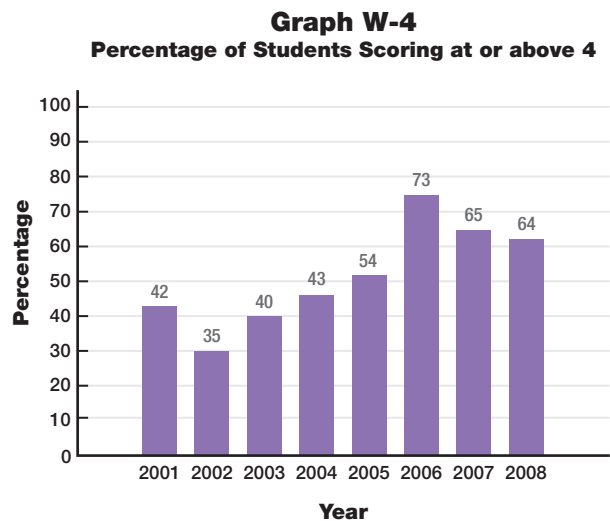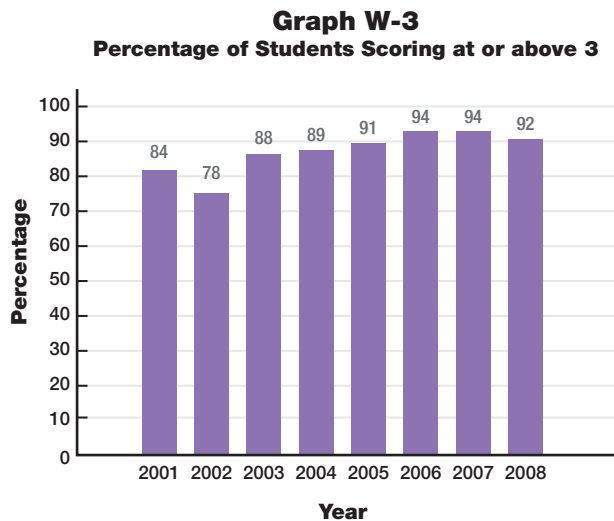
Although the percentage of students scoring at or above 3 (Graph W-3) shows positive growth across the years, Graph W-4 indicates that from 2001 through 2008 fourth grade students showed considerable progress in constructing expository essays earning a rubric score of 4 or above.

Another valuable indicator of overall student performance on the prompt over time can be seen in the changes in the score point distribution. Table 3 on the next page illustrates the percentage of Grade 4 students at each score point on the expository prompt from 2001 to 2008.

Prompt Grade 4

Table 3: FCAT Writing Grade 4 Expository Prompt Percentage of Students at Each Score Point 2001–2008															
Year Tested	**Number Tested**	**Mean**	**Percentage of Students at Each Score Point**												
			0	**1**	**1.5**	**2**	**2.5**	**3**	**3.5**	**4**	**4.5**	**5**	**5.5**	**6**
2001	94,048	3.5	1	3	1	7	5	28	14	24	8	8	1	1
2002	95,628	3.3	1	3	1	10	6	32	12	20	5	7	1	1
2003	95,510	3.5	1	1	1	3	5	26	23	26	10	4	1	0
2004	87,345	3.6	1	1	1	3	5	26	21	24	11	5	2	1
2005	97,245	3.7	1	1	1	3	4	18	20	32	13	6	2	1
2006	91,518	4.0	0	1	1	2	2	9	12	34	19	15	3	1
2007	97,904	3.8	1	1	1	2	3	14	14	37	16	9	2	0
2008	95,930	3.8	1	1	1	3	4	12	16	39	15	7	2	1

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

From 2001 to 2008, the aggregated percentage of students at score point 3 and below decreased from 45% to 22%. Over the same time span, the aggregated percentage of students at score point 3.5 and above increased from 56% to 80%. While there is only a small change in the mean score between 2001 and 2008, there is a more substantive change in the percentage of students scoring at 3.5 and above and that of students scoring at 3 and below. The most substantive changes within the percentage distribution occur in the 3 to 4.5 score point range. This may indicate a strong instructional focus targeting the criteria associated with rubric score point 4.

Grade 4 Narrative Writing Assessment Data

Another set of data for Grade 4 students gives information about narrative writing. Graph W-5 illustrates the change between the mean score of 3.4 in 2001 and the mean score of 3.8 achieved in 2008. This is a small change in narrative writing performance over time, with an effect size (d) of 0.4. Similar to the mean writing scores in expository writing, the change of mean narrative prompt scores is small relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008. From an instructional standpoint, however, educators may view the overall increase of a rubric score point of 0.4 for the narrative prompt mean scores as a definitive improvement.

Graph W-5
Writing Grade 4
Narrative Prompt
Mean Scores

Year	Mean Score
2001	3.4
2002	3.5
2003	3.8
2004	3.7
2005	3.7
2006	3.7
2007	3.8
2008	3.8
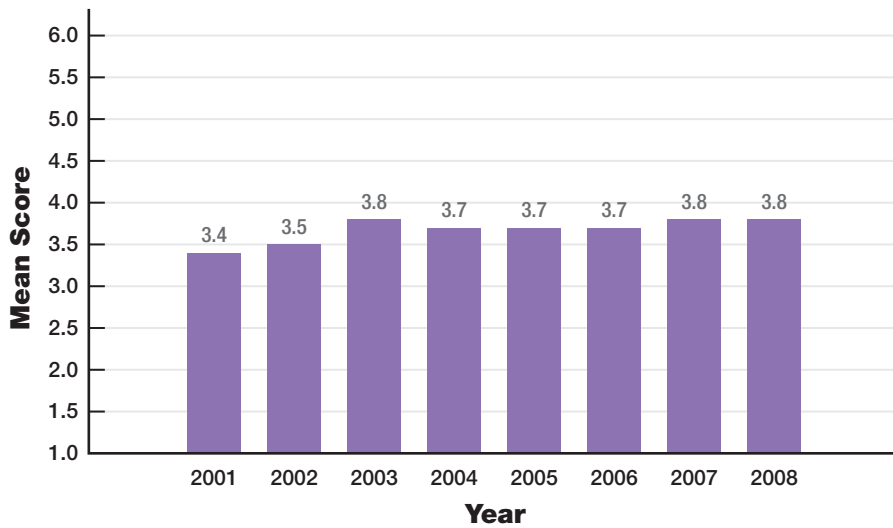
The narrative response below earned a rubric score point 4 and illustrates the approximate level of narrative writing characteristic of fourth grade performance from 2003–2008. The prompt directed students to write a story about what happens on a field trip to a special place. The response below is focused on the topic. The narrative organizational plan includes some effective transitional devices to move the story along, but the story line seems rushed at times. The story abruptly moves from one idea to another without pausing to provide details that would enhance reader understanding. The development of the supporting details is uneven in quality. Although each event is extended with list-like information, the "eating pizza at the park" event does contain some elaboration. Word choice is adequate, and sentence structures are varied. Some errors occur in the basic conventions.

Ahha, I woke up at 7:30 because I have school today. Also all 4th grade has a feild triptoday. So I got dressed and went down stairs. I ate my flap jacks and got on my bike and went to school.

When I got to school I parked my bike and went to my class room. When I got to my class room I saw [Kyle], [James] [Luis], and [Kenny]. I said hi to everyone and then sat down. When the bell rang we all went in and sat down at our seats. After about an hour and a half we went on the bus to go to pizza conastion and the _____ Library.

When we got to the library we all sat down a waited. After a few minutes a ladie came and inderdosed her self. She also read a book to us. When she was don we got a free book and a gummy worm.

When we were don at the library we went to the park to eat our pizza from pizza conastion. When everyone was don everyone was playing. People we swinging, sliding, and clibing. We also had to be careful because little kids had a feild trip there too. We played there for like two hours it seem but it was only about an hour and a half.

After we were don we went back to school and did math, writing and clear time. That sher was a great feild trip.

The End.

Score Point 4

Graph W-6 indicates the percentage of Grade 4 students whose performance on narrative prompts was a rubric score point 3 or above. Graph W-7 indicates the percentage of students whose performance on narrative prompts was a rubric score point 4 or above.

Graphs W-6 and W-7
Writing Grade 4
Narrative Prompt
2001–2008

Graph W-6
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3

Graph W-7
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4
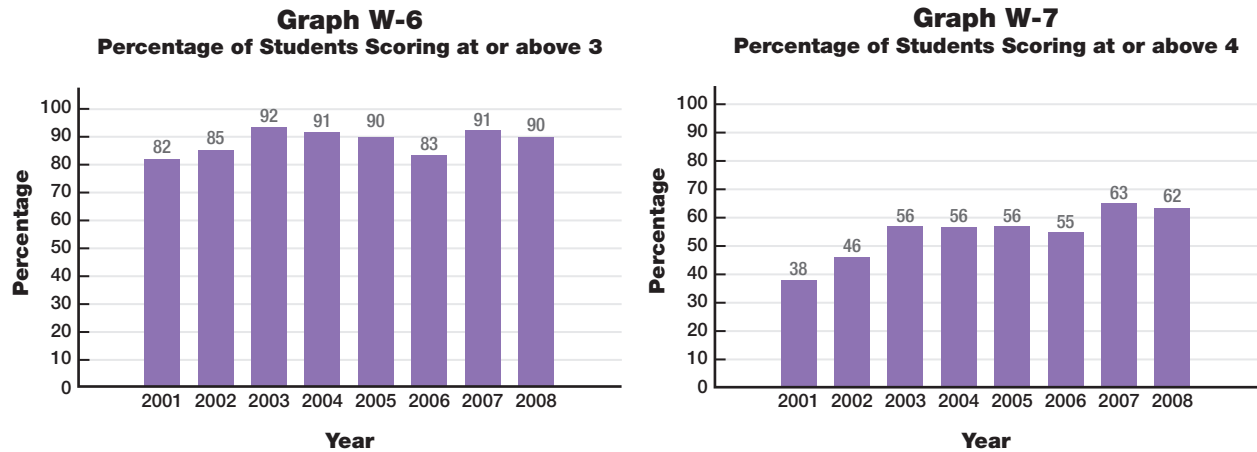
Graphs W-6 and W-7 show an overall increase in scores at or above 3 and 4 (respectively); however, the increase is more apparent for students scoring at least at the rubric score point of 4.

A valuable indicator of overall student performance on the prompt over time can be seen in the change in score point distribution. Table 4 below illustrates the percentage of Grade 4 students performing at each score point on the narrative prompt from 2001 through 2008.

Table 4: FCAT Writing Grade 4 Narrative Prompt Percentage of Students at Each Score Point 2001–2008														
Year Tested	Number Tested	Mean	Percentage of Students at Each Score Point											
			0	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6
2001	93,906	3.4	1	4	1	8	5	32	12	22	6	9	1	1
2002	95,636	3.5	1	3	1	7	4	26	13	25	9	10	1	1
2003	96,333	3.8	1	1	1	2	3	17	19	31	14	6	3	1
2004	87,978	3.7	1	1	1	3	4	16	19	32	14	6	3	1
2005	97,416	3.7	1	1	1	3	5	15	18	33	14	6	2	1
2006	99,840	3.7	0	1	1	7	7	16	13	28	14	10	2	1
2007	97,871	3.8	0	1	1	3	4	14	14	37	14	8	3	1
2008	95,760	3.8	0	1	1	4	5	17	11	35	13	8	4	2

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

From 2001 to 2008, the aggregated percentage of students at score point 3 and below decreased from 51% to 28%. Over the same time span, the aggregated percentage of students at score point 3.5 and above increased from 51% to 73%. As with Grade 4 expository, there was a small change in the mean score between 2001 and 2008, yet a more substantive change in the percentage of students scoring at 3.5 and above and that of students scoring at 3 and below. Similar to performance on the expository prompt, there are notable changes in the distribution percentages in the 3 to 4.5 score point range over this time. For the narrative prompt, increases at score points 5.5 and 6 along with decreases at score points 1 and 2 are noteworthy. This indicates not only improvements at the center cluster of scores (from 3 to 4), but also distributional shifts toward the higher score point ranges and away from the lower score point ranges.

While Graph W-5 indicates a small change in mean scores of narrative writing, Graph W-7 shows that the percentage of students earning a rubric score of 4 and above has increased significantly from 2001–2008. The fourth grade narrative response on the next page, a rubric score point 6, illustrates the level of writing indicative of students who are most successful on FCAT Writing. The prompt directed students to write a story about what happens when someone plays a game with family or friends. In the response below, the writing is focused on the topic of playing a board game, and the organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of events. There is ample development of supporting ideas. Dialogue is used effectively to advance the story line and to provide detail. Word choice is generally precise, and various sentence structures are used. Conventions are generally followed.

It was a windy Saturday afternoon. My brother [Joel], mom, dad and I were playing a board game called "METROPOLIS" at our home. My brother whipped the dice into the air, a great toss. CRASH! But they dice had fallen onto our glass table and broke in two! How could we play our game!?

We all stared at the two halves of our dice, longing to continue our great game. But thinking quickly a idea burst into my mind. "I'll tape the dice!" SWOSH! Before you could say, "dice," I was at the tape drawer. I jerked it open, only to find there was no tape! "Ugh," I moaned. I slopped back into our dice-less living room and thought deeply into my mind. AHA!

I soon had whipped up myself another clever idea! I speed to my desk and grabbed some supplies. Paper, markers, scissors all that stuff. I raced back to the living room and began making cards for us to pick up and move with. "I can make us some cards!" I proudly announced. But by the 5th card, I was just too worn out. I had to stop. I groaned and sat down on the stiff floor, too tired to move.

After a bit though, that feeling had disapeared. "We can find some more dice!" I shouted. Everyone grinned, and began to search. Here and there, high and low untill… "I found It!" I blurted with dice in my hand. We jumped back into our living room and began to play our game again. I was proud! Plopping in my bean bag. I rolled a five.

"Yes!" I shouted to the heavens. I twirled back into my seat and grinned. I was superhero for the day. That was one surprising game.

Score Point 6

Observations about Grade 4 Writing

The task force examined the characteristics of student writing across the score point distributions. From this examination they summarized the strengths and weaknesses of student writing based on the four elements of writing represented in the scoring rubric: Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions.

Their observations are as follows:

Focus (staying on topic and maintaining a main idea or theme):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- understand that a topic must be addressed and maintained;
- exclude extraneous information; and
- show evidence of planning for a purpose from beginning to end of the paper (e.g., control the topic and purpose for writing).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- maintaining a tightly focused response (e.g., not including loosely related or off-topic information);
- committing to the topic and presenting or maintaining a central idea, theme, or unifying point without repeating wording from the prompt;
- developing an identifiable story line to achieve the narrative writing purpose; and
- concluding a response appropriately.

Organization (implementing a plan for a progression of ideas with a beginning, middle, and end):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- apply a logical organizational structure according to the purpose for writing (e.g., create a clear story line for narrative writing or a clear organizational pattern for expository writing);
- use transitions between and within paragraphs (e.g., use phrases, words, and internal transitions); and
- use varied and purposeful transitions.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- sustaining an organizational plan;
- using effective transitions;
- creating an evident story line (e.g., showing progression of events through time or sequencing of events);
- arranging details to create a logical progression of ideas;
- choosing the appropriate organizational pattern for narrative and expository writing; and
- employing an organizational format other than the five-paragraph structure.

Support (using specific details and precise word choice to explain, clarify, or define meaning):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- add specific details to support reasons;
- include a variety of methods for elaboration, such as anecdotes, character development, descriptions, and examples;
- show effective use of writer's craft (e.g., include sensory details, specific details, and appropriate figurative language);
- use precise, specific, and varied word choice that is authentic, natural, and intentional;
- include purposeful, ample, and balanced development throughout the paper; and
- create a sense of completeness and wholeness.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- providing adequate and/or logical development of support, rather than including sparse or erratic details or simple lists; and
- using specific and appropriate word choice to clarify meaning.

Conventions (demonstrating knowledge of basic skills of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- capitalize and punctuate appropriately;
- vary sentence structure; and
- demonstrate use of correct verb tense and subject/verb agreement.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- punctuating with commas, question marks, and exclamation marks;
- using complete sentences, rather than including run-on sentences or fragments;
- capitalizing proper nouns;
- punctuating and capitalizing dialogue;
- spelling frequently used words;
- varying sentence structure, rather than overusing simple sentences; and
- using homophones correctly.

Grade 4: Implications for Instruction for Writing

In order to reach the expectations described in the SSS, the task force recommends instruction that includes reading aloud and discussing specific compositional elements in various genres of writing (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, poetry). In order to recognize compositional strengths and weaknesses, students need opportunities to reflect on and analyze their own writing as well as the writing of others. To create a shared language for discussing the elements associated with the writer's craft, teachers should provide explicit instruction of key writing vocabulary, such as *sensory details, erratic support, tense, writing purpose, transitional devices*, and so forth. As a collaborative activity, teachers should guide students in creating rubrics that will enhance their understanding of compositional elements and provide a common set of expectations for the writing process. Instruction should also provide students with opportunities to write in a variety of narrative structures (e.g., personal and fictional narratives and the elements appropriate to each). Teachers should consistently model the use of the entire writing process (e.g., planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing). Students need explicit instruction in narrowing the focus of a piece of writing (e.g., from year to month to day to moment) and in interpreting prompts (i.e., understanding how to apply personal interests to a broad spectrum of writing topics).

Analysis of Grade 8 FCAT Writing Prompt Results

Overall Grade-Level Performance for Grade 8

Graph W-8 shows the mean score for Grade 8 students from 2001–2008. It represents the combined mean scores for the expository and persuasive prompts for all eighth graders tested. By 2008, the combined mean scores of Grade 8 students increased by 0.5 of a rubric score point, from 3.7 in 2001 to 4.2 in 2008. This is a medium change in writing performance over time, with an effect size (d) of 0.5. In other words, relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008, the change in mean scores is considered statistically noteworthy. This trend of writing improvement for eighth grade students coincides with the improvement seen in Florida's 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, particularly in the proportion of students performing at or above *Proficient* (http://www.fldoe.org/asp/naep/pdf/gr8-writingBrief.pdf). From a practical standpoint, educators may view this trend in student performance as a considerable improvement resulting from increased instructional emphasis.

Prompt Grade 8

Graph W-8
Writing Grade 8
Both Prompts Combined
Mean Scores
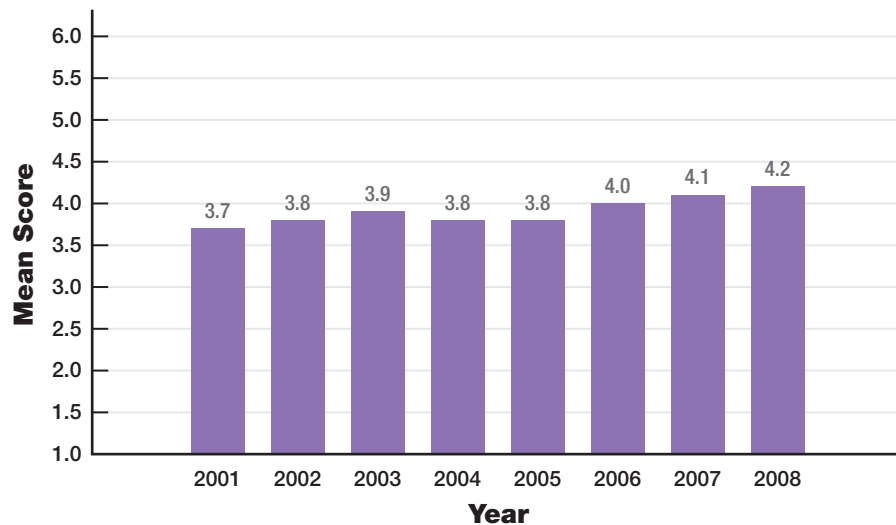
Grade 8 Expository Writing Assessment Data

Graph W-9 indicates an increase in the mean score of 3.8 achieved by Grade 8 students in 2001 to a mean score of 4.2 in 2008. This is a small change in expository writing performance over time, with an effect size *(d)* of 0.4. Unlike the combined Grade 8 mean writing prompt scores, the change in mean expository prompt scores is small relative to the spread of the scores from 2001 to 2008. From an instructional standpoint, however, educators may view the overall increase of a rubric score point of 0.4 for the expository prompt mean scores as a definitive improvement.

Graph W-9
Writing Grade 8
Expository Prompt
Mean Scores
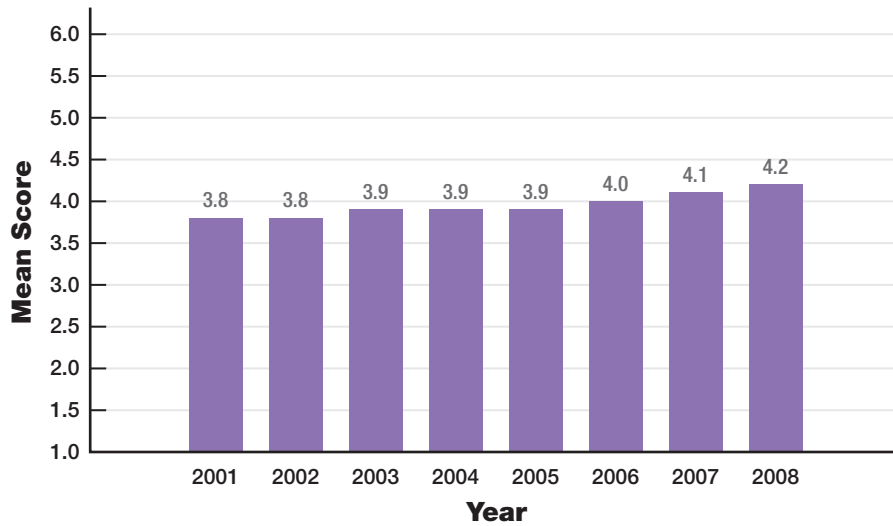
To illustrate the approximate level of expository writing characteristic of eighth grade performance from 2001–2008, the expository response below represents a rubric score of 4. The prompt directed students to explain the way they like to learn. This response is focused on the topic, and the organizational pattern is apparent. Transitional devices are sometimes used effectively. The development of support includes an uneven quality; specific, concrete details are not used consistently. More specific information is included in the third paragraph, however, which does enhance the reader's understanding. Although errors occur in basic sentence structure, variation is attempted. Word choice is generally adequate, and knowledge of conventions is demonstrated.

Many people, including me, like learning in the form of doing it. I have a few reasons for this, it helps me to memorize what you need to know, learn how it is done, and learn how I could do it in an everyday situation.

Doing helps me in memorization everyday. For example, if my teacher wanted me to memorize the Ten Amendments I would have a hard time memorizing by reading or listening to them. The best way would for me to write them down. This would make something physical for me and to where the thing I had to know was, in a way, forever burned in m head or memory.

My second reason is that doing helps me learn how what I am doing is done. If I was learning how to ride a bike the best way for me to learn would be to get on my bike and try untill I got it. Not to read how or listen to some one tell me how because mabey they don't have the same kind or size of bike or mabey I am taller or shorter than them, this would change how I would ride a bike a lot from the way they do. So by riding my bike I would learn how to do it in my situation.

Lastly by doing something I would learn how to use it in my everyday situation. Sopose I was learning how to make statues out of clay or paint. I would have to get a lot of practice in before I was good. So by doing it I would be getting the practice I need

Score Point 4

Graph W-10 indicates the percentage of Grade 8 students whose performance on expository prompts was a rubric score point 3 or above. Graph W-11 indicates the percentage of Grade 8 students whose performance on expository writing was a rubric score point 4 or above.

Graphs W-10 and W-11
Writing Grade 8
Expository Prompt
2001–2008

Graph W-10
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3

Graph W-11
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4

Graph W-10 shows relative stability in the percentage of students scoring at or above 3. Graph W-11, however, illustrates an overall increase of students scoring at the rubric score point of 4 or above, particularly beginning in 2006.

Prompt
Grade 8

Table 5 below shows the percentage of Grade 8 students at each score point for the expository prompt from 2001 through 2008.

Table 5: FCAT Writing Grade 8 Expository Prompt Percentage of Students at Each Score Point 2001–2008														
Year Tested	Number Tested	Mean	Percentage of Students at Each Score Point											
			0	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6
2001	87,207	3.8	0	2	1	4	3	20	11	29	10	16	2	2
2002	91,711	3.8	0	2	1	4	4	14	14	34	11	10	3	3
2003	95,110	3.9	0	1	1	3	4	12	17	27	17	11	5	3
2004	97,998	3.9	1	1	1	2	4	15	18	28	16	10	4	2
2005	100,304	3.9	0	1	1	2	3	16	18	29	16	9	4	2
2006	99,886	4.0	0	1	0	2	3	11	15	36	16	11	4	2
2007	98,834	4.1	1	1	0	2	2	11	13	33	17	13	6	3
2008	94,007	4.2	0	1	0	2	2	7	10	35	17	14	7	5

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

Noting the statistical effect (Graph W-9) related to changes in the mean scores from 2001 to 2008 on the Grade 8 expository prompt provides one comparison of results. Changes in the score point distribution, however, also provide valuable information concerning student performance on the prompt over time. The most notable change in student performance can be seen at the score point of 3, which dropped from 20% in 2001 to 7% in 2008. While 30% of students scored at the score point 3 or below in 2001, this percentage dropped to 12% in 2008. The middle to higher score point range showed a corresponding improvement in results with 70% of students scoring 3.5 or higher in 2001, compared to 88% in that range in 2008. Table 5 highlights the distributional shift from year to year away from the lower score points and toward the higher range of rubric scores on the Grade 8 expository prompts over time.

While Graph W-10 indicates a small change in mean scores of Grade 8 expository writing, Graph W-11 shows that the percentage of students earning a rubric score of 4 and above increased significantly from 2001–2008. To illustrate a higher level of eighth grade expository writing, the response below represents a rubric score point 5. The prompt directed students to explain a favorite form of transportation. The writing is focused on the topic and is organized around three reasons for selecting the bike as a favorite mode of transportation. Development of support is ample. The response conveys a sense of wholeness and exhibits a mature command of language. Variation in sentence structure is included, and conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling are generally followed.

I pedal my feet as fast as I can hoping to reach school on time. I pedal even harder as I go through an alley so I am not late. Just one block to go and I am safe. I pedal harder and harder and I finally reach the bike post. And there is the bell. My favorite form of transportation has to be the bike because if you are running late you can take short cuts, you are not prohibited to one direct path, and riding a bike gives you so much more than just transportation.

To start, my favorite form of transportation is the bike because if you are running late, you can take short cuts. Unlike skateboards and roller blades, you can go most everywhere on a bike. Just imagine you are late to your best friends party. She lives three streets down and your parents car is broken down. You jump on your bike and arrive within 10 minutes. You are fashionably late and just in time for cake and ice-cream!

Also, I prefer bikes because you are not prohibited to one direct path. Think back to the good old days. Riding down the street on your bike, you come across a path that leads directly to a pond and patches of wildflowers. You have time to spare so you go down the path. You have a wonderful time and it becomes one of your favorite spots. If you were on a bus, just think of what you would have missed.

Last but not least, riding bikes give you so much more than just transportation. Riding bikes give you so many different things to do. Imagine riding down the sidewalk with cars going past you poluting the air. Your bike doesn't do that. You realize by just riding a bike you can also lose weight. You get multiple outcomes from just one activity!

So as you can see, my favorite form of transportation is the bike because you can take short cuts, you are not prohibited to one direct path, and riding a bike gives you so much more than just transportation. Think about it.

Score Point 5

Grade 8 Persuasive Writing Assessment Data

Graph W-12 indicates an increase in the mean score of 3.5 achieved by Grade 8 students in 2001 to a mean score of 4.2 in 2008. This is a medium change in persuasive writing performance over time, with an effect size *(d)* of 0.7. As was found in the combined mean writing prompt scores for eighth grade students, the change in mean persuasive prompt scores is considered statistically noteworthy relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008. From a practical standpoint, educators may view this change as a considerable improvement in student performance resulting from increased instructional emphasis.

Graph W-12
Writing Grade 8
Persuasive Prompt
Mean Scores
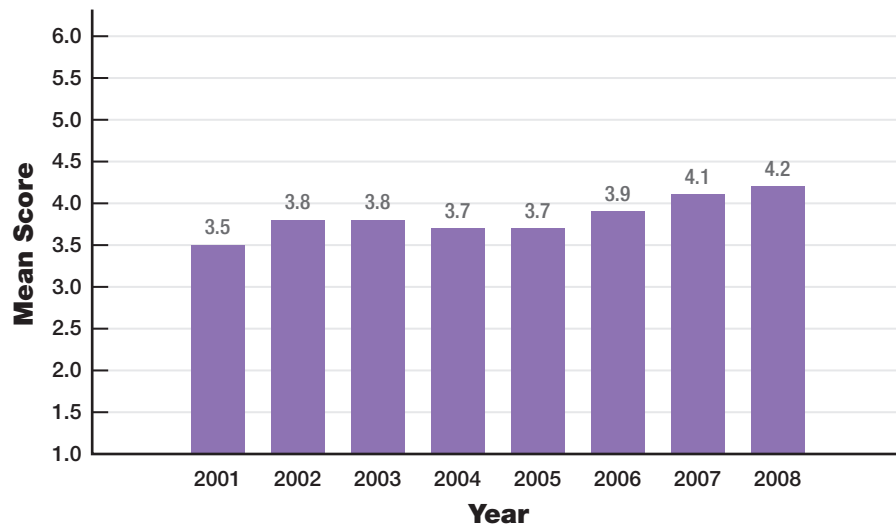
Prompt
Grade 8

To illustrate the approximate level of persuasive writing characteristic of eighth grade performance from 2006–2008, the persuasive response below represents a rubric score of 4. The prompt directed students to persuade the principal whether schools should have candy and soda machines. This response is focused on the topic, taking the position that schools should have candy and soda machines. A predictable organizational pattern is apparent, and effective transitional devices are used. Although supporting details are provided for each argument, the development of support is uneven in quality. Support for the "teachers and staff" argument is limited, but more specific support is provided for the other arguments. Word choice is sometimes precise, and some variation in sentence structure is presented. Basic conventions are generally followed.

Hello. My name is _____ and I am an eighth here at _____ Middle. My fellow students and I have been talking about perhaps getting a few soda and candy machines for the schools. I know this may not sound like a good idea, but it actually really is. With these candy and soda machines we could make a lot of money for the school, the students would enjoy them and the teachers and staff would enjoy them also.

Since everyone likes candy and soda many people would buy them. When people buy all that candy and soda a profit of that goes into money for our school. With all that money we could buy more plants or books or lab equipment for our school. I believed that these machines would be used very often if they were to be installed. The candy and soda machines would probably have to be restocked every five minutes too because they would be so popular.

The students would enjoy these machines a great deal if we got these machines. I also thought about the rule of no eating in class and I was thinking that we would still enforce that law. We could make a law that candy and soda are to be devoured prior to class or in the lunch period. That way the rule would still be used and so would the candy and soda machines.

The students would not be the only ones to use the machines the teachers and staff would too. For example if the teacher is on a free period or just had a hectic class she could go buy a candy bar or a soda. The soda machines can be used by teachers at any time also.

Whether it's the teachers and staff or the students using the soda and candy machines I be that it is a good investment for the school. Thank you and please take this into consideration.
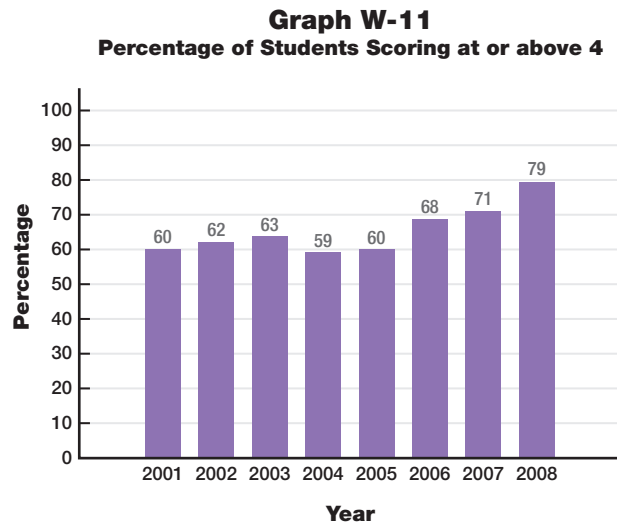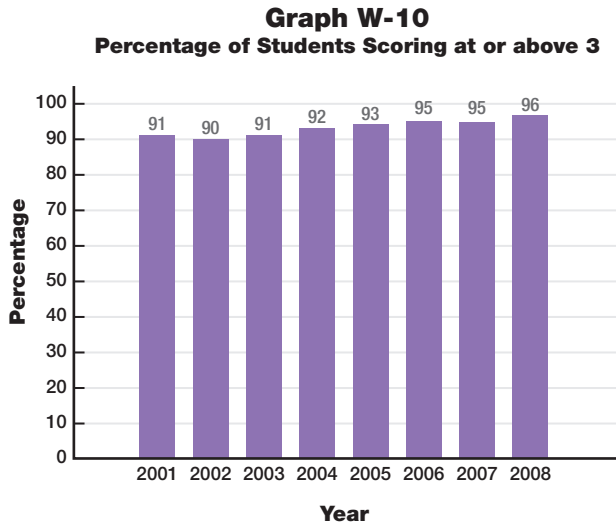
Score Point 4

Graph W-13 indicates the percentage of Grade 8 students whose performance on the persuasive prompt was rubric score point 3 or above from 2001–2008. Graph W-14 indicates the percentage of Grade 8 students whose performance on the persuasive prompt was rubric score point 4 or above from 2001–2008.

Graph W-13 and Graph W-14
Writing Grade 8
Persuasive Prompt
2001–2008

Graph W-13
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3

Graph W-14
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4
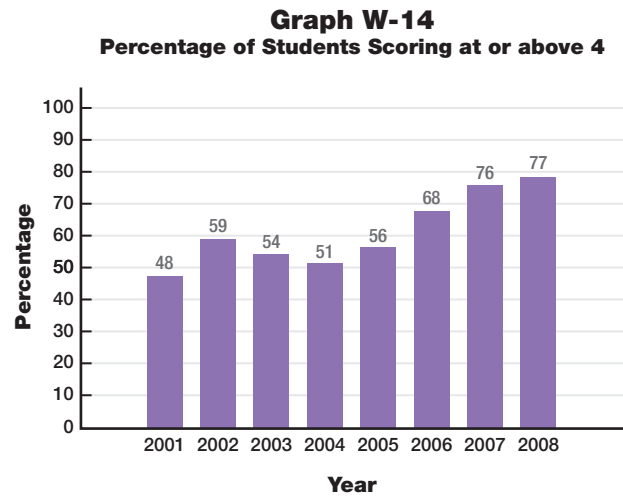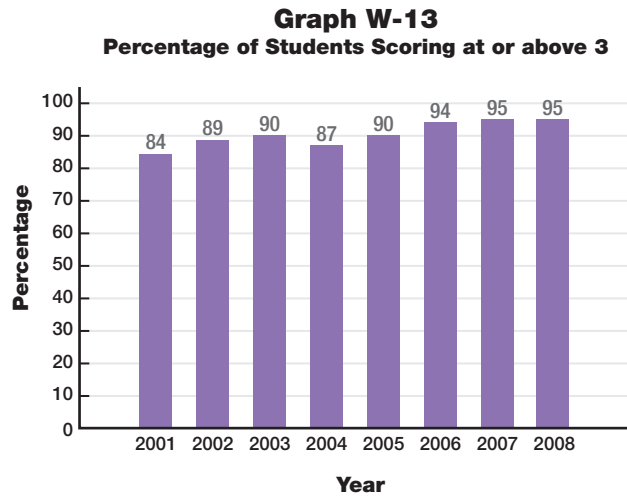
Prompt
Grade 8

Graph W-13 shows a subtle increase in the percentage of students scoring at or above 3, while Graph W-14 illustrates a more apparent increase in the percentage of students scoring at the rubric score point of 4 and above, particularly beginning in 2006. This trend is similar to what was found in eighth grade expository writing.

Table 6 below provides the percentage of students at each score point from 2001 through 2008 for the Grade 8 persuasive prompt, which can be used as another indicator of overall student performance on the prompt over time.

Table 6: FCAT Writing Grade 8 Persuasive Prompt Percentage of Students at Each Score Point 2001–2008														
Year Tested	Number Tested	Mean	Percentage of Students at Each Score Point											
			0	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6
2001	86,991	3.5	0	2	1	9	4	25	11	29	8	10	1	1
2002	91,742	3.8	1	2	1	5	3	18	11	29	12	15	2	1
2003	95,493	3.8	0	1	1	3	5	17	18	24	16	10	3	1
2004	98,196	3.7	0	2	1	4	6	18	18	22	14	10	3	1
2005	100,153	3.7	0	1	1	3	5	16	19	33	13	7	3	1
2006	99,527	3.9	0	1	1	2	3	11	15	36	16	10	3	1
2007	99,249	4.1	0	1	1	2	2	8	11	33	18	16	6	3
2008	91,297	4.2	0	1	1	2	2	8	10	28	18	18	8	5

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

The score point distribution for the Grade 8 persuasive prompt follows trends similar to those in both Grade 4 and Grade 8 expository prompts. While 41% of students scored at or below score point 3 in 2001, this percentage dropped to 14% in 2008. Likewise, an increase in scores at the 3.5 point and higher range had corresponding results with 60% scoring 3.5 or higher in 2001, compared to 87% in that range in 2008. Table 6 highlights the significant distributional shift away from the lower score points and toward the higher range of rubric scores on the Grade 8 persuasive prompts over time.

Observations about Grade 8 Writing

While the statistics show an overall increase in eighth grade writing skills, the task force observed both strengths and weaknesses in student writing based on the four elements of writing represented in the scoring rubric: Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions.

Their observations are as follows:

Focus (staying on topic and demonstrating a main idea or theme):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- control and maintain the focus;
- personalize the prompt and write to it effectively;

- demonstrate understanding of writing for a specific purpose, audience, or occasion (e.g., apply compositional elements to enhance the expository or persuasive writing purpose); and
- engage the reader throughout the piece by creating a central theme or idea.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- accessing the topic/prompt wording and writing from personal experience;
- staying focused on the writing task by including only relevant information; and
- expressing commitment to the topic, especially in persuasive writing.

Organization (implementing a plan for a logical progression of ideas with a beginning, middle, and end):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- produce a clear beginning, middle, and end while moving beyond predictable writing patterns;
- use a variety of transitional elements rather than basic transition words and phrases; and
- use transitions to connect ideas between and among sentences and paragraphs (i.e., employ internal transitioning).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- utilizing organizational structures other than formulaic or predetermined patterns;
- moving beyond the use of rudimentary transitional devices; and
- synthesizing ideas to provide an effective conclusion.

Support (using specific details and precise word choice to explain, clarify, or define meaning):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- use various methods of support appropriately (e.g., include analogies, scenarios, anecdotes, statistics);
- demonstrate involvement with the topic (e.g., engage the reader to show an awareness of audience);
- expand on ideas associated with the topic and use personal experiences for depth of support;
- manipulate the language to create an effect (e.g., use imagery, descriptive language, playful language, interesting dialogue);
- demonstrate precision in word choice (e.g., describe *a 1963 Chevy Impala* rather than *a car*); and
- use elements of persuasion (e.g., address cause/effect, pros/cons, problem solving, counter-argument).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- using complete and specific details;
- moving beyond lists;
- clarifying meaning by developing ideas that further the writer's intent;

- using specificity in word choice and moving beyond repetition (e.g., *The dog is my favorite pet. I like dogs.*); and
- employing techniques to develop support for important ideas, rather than for incidental details (i.e., some ideas do not need to be elaborated upon, while some ideas may need further explanation).

Conventions (demonstrating knowledge of basic skills of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- vary sentence structure effectively;
- use conventions to create meaning (e.g., purposely use phrases or fragments, such as *Picture this:*, *She paused…*); and
- consistently demonstrate knowledge of basic conventions.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- moving beyond simple sentence patterns;
- applying the appropriate punctuation; and
- using punctuation purposefully, rather than arbitrarily (e.g., randomly inserting semicolons, exclamation points, apostrophes, and commas).

Grade 8: Implications for Instruction for Writing

In order to reach the expectations described in the SSS, the task force recommends allowing students to be expressive and experimental with organization, style, and word choice. Teachers should model a variety of ways to support ideas (e.g., examples, analogies, anecdotes, scenarios), as well as how to transition between and among ideas. Instruction should also include practice in creating effective conclusions, perhaps by taking an existing essay and having students create an appropriate conclusion. Explicit instruction in the use of standard English conventions in the context of authentic writing should be provided, including opportunities for students to practice editing for conventions in all subject areas.

Instruction should also provide students with strategies to pace their writing, especially in a timed draft writing situation. Teachers should provide students with opportunities for real-world writing in order to see how their writing impacts the reader (e.g., writing a letter to the editor, parents, approved blogs). Students need to be able to evaluate their own writing through anchor papers, rubrics, and peer editing. Teachers should keep portfolios of students' work and have students revisit past writing assignments and revise them based on targeted criteria.

Analysis of Grade 10 FCAT Writing Prompt Results

Overall Grade-Level Performance for Grade 10

Graph W-15 presents the mean score for Grade 10 students for each year from 2001–2008. It includes the combined mean scores for tenth graders tested on either prompt (expository or persuasive). The change of 0.1 of a rubric score point between 2001 and 2008 indicates a small change, with an effect size (d) of 0.1. Relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008, the change in mean writing scores for tenth grade students is not considered noteworthy. It should be noted that in 2008, only the persuasive prompt was administered to Grade 10 students; therefore, the data for 2008 reflect the mean scores on the persuasive prompt only.

Graph W-15
Writing Grade 10
Both Prompts Combined
Mean Scores
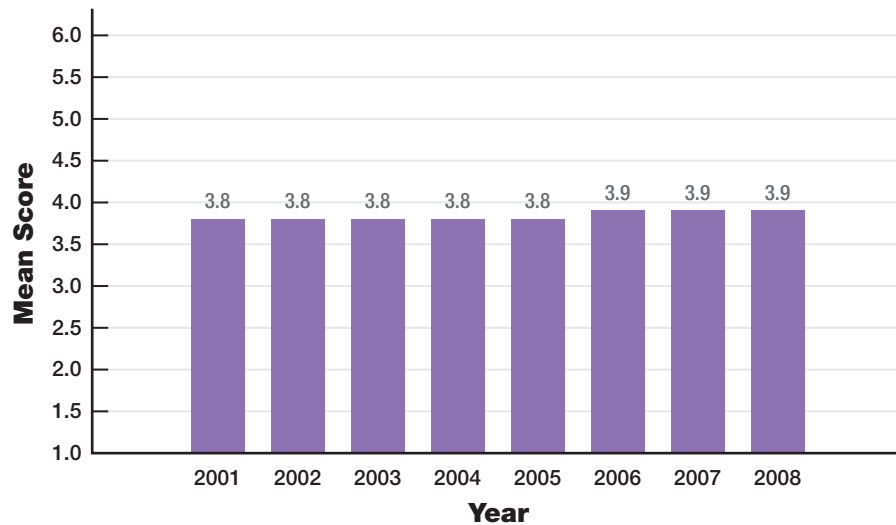
Prompt
Grade 10

Grade 10 Expository Writing Assessment Data

Graph W-16 indicates a decrease of 0.2 of a rubric score point in expository writing, from 4.0 in 2001–2002 to 3.8 in 2007. This change is small, with an effect size (d) of –0.2. Similar to the findings of the combined Grade 10 mean writing scores, the change in mean expository writing scores for tenth grade students is not considered noteworthy. As previously noted, an expository prompt was not administered to the Grade 10 students in 2008; therefore, data for 2008 are not provided in Graph W-16.

Graph W-16
Writing Grade 10
Expository Prompt
Mean Scores
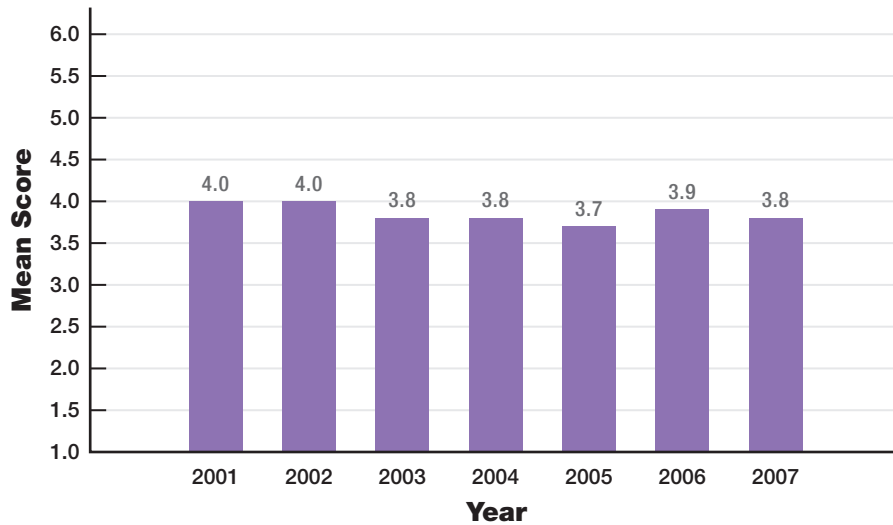
Year	Mean Score
2001	4.0
2002	4.0
2003	3.8
2004	3.8
2005	3.7
2006	3.9
2007	3.8

Prompt Grade 10

To illustrate the approximate level of expository writing characteristic of tenth grade performance from 2001–2007, the expository response below, a rubric score point 4, is presented. The prompt directed students to explain what they enjoy most about being a teenager. This response is focused on the topic, and the organizational pattern is apparent. The development of support is consistent, but some of the support is general and lacks specificity. The "privileges" reason, however, contains some specific details. Word choice is adequate and variation in sentence structure is demonstrated, but occasional errors in conventions occur.

There are many things to enjoy when you are a teenager; the thing that I enjoy the most about being a teenager is that I am no longer treated like or considered a little kid. My parents now treat me with respect, I am given more privileges and I am also given more responsibilities.

Now that I am a teenager my parents treat me with the respect that they would give another adult. My parents also keep me informed on certian subjects, instead of shutting me out like a little kid. Also when they talk to me, my parents talk to me not as a child, but as a person that has some understanding about what is going on around them. My parents also show respect by giving me more privileges.

Now that I am older my parents have loosened their grip allowing me to do more of what I want to do. My parents no longer give me a bedtime, check up on me all the time, and they give me the privlege of letting me make my own descions. It is now possible for me to go where I want, when I want, and with whomever I choose. My parents are also giving me the privlege to have my own car when I turn 16. However, with some privleges (like a car) comes resposibilities.

Another thing that comes with age and not being considered a little kid is responsibilites. For example, it is now my responsibility to take care of myself. Doing my own laundry, doing my homework, making sure I get my self up ontime, things like that. It is also my responsibility to make safe and resonable decisions. These are just a few responsibilites, but that is all part of growing up.

So, this is why my favorite part of being a teenager is that I am no longer treated like or considered a little kid. I am now shown respect, given more privileges, and have had to take on more responsibilites. That's all part of growing up, Right?

Score Point 4

Prompt
Grade 10

Changes in student achievement on expository writing can also be seen by examining the percentage of Grade 10 students whose performance was a rubric score point 3 or above, as shown in Graph W-17. Graph W-18 indicates the percentage of Grade 10 students whose performance on expository writing was a rubric score point 4 or above. Because an expository prompt was not administered to the Grade 10 students in 2008, data for 2008 are not provided in Graphs W-17 and W-18.

Graphs W-17 and W-18
Writing Grade 10
Expository Prompt
2001–2007

Graph W-17
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3
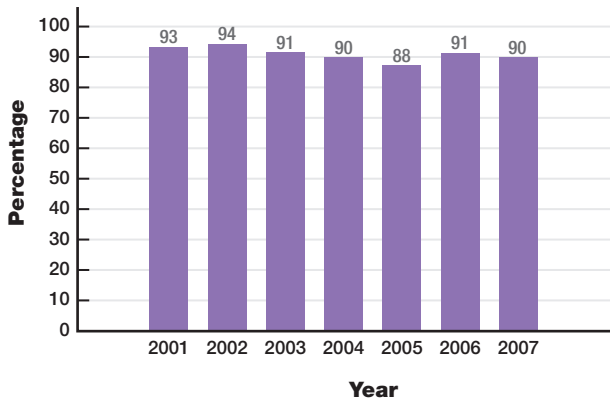
Graph W-18
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4
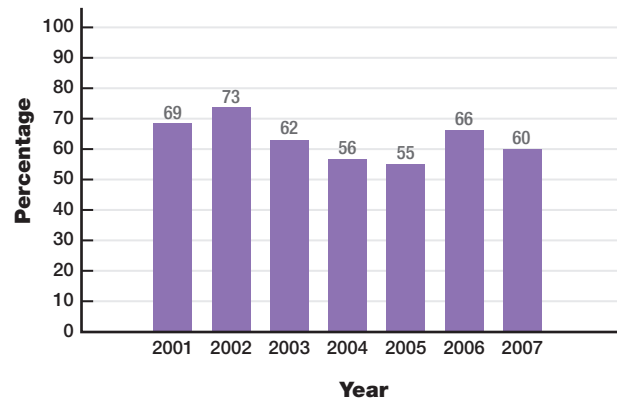
Although Graph W-17 shows that a consistently high percentage of tenth grade students achieved at or above a rubric score point of 3 on expository writing, any trend in expository writing is difficult to discern based on Graph W-18. Unlike some of the results found for students in Grades 4 and 8, a noticeable increase in the percentage of Grade 10 students scoring 4 or above over time is not found.

Prompt
Grade 10

Table 7 below provides the percentage of students at each score point on the Grade 10 expository prompt from 2001 through 2007. Please note that an expository prompt was not administered to Grade 10 students in 2008.

Table 7: FCAT Writing Grade 10 Expository Prompt Percentage of Students at Each Score Point 2001–2007														
Year Tested	Number Tested	Mean	Percentage of Students at Each Score Point											
			0	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6
2001	72,845	4.0	0	1	1	3	3	12	12	37	15	13	3	2
2002	75,829	4.0	0	1	0	3	2	11	10	42	14	12	3	2
2003	81,939	3.8	0	1	1	3	4	13	17	37	14	7	3	1
2004	85,785	3.8	0	1	1	3	5	15	20	33	13	6	3	1
2005	91,710	3.7	1	1	1	4	6	14	19	29	14	7	3	2
2006	94,993	3.9	1	2	1	2	4	10	15	32	16	10	5	2
2007	94,805	3.8	1	2	1	3	4	13	17	31	14	8	4	2

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

Student performance on the Grade 10 expository prompt is the only area in the task force's analyses of prompts that does not demonstrate improved mean scores or increased percentages of students scoring at each score point over the time span analyzed. Between 2001 and 2007, some of the score points have relatively stable percentages: 1.5–3, 5.5, and 6. A five percent increase from 2001 to 2007 at the 3.5 score point is offset by a 6 percent decrease at score point 4 and a 5 percent decrease at score point 5. Since 2005, a notable increase in the 0 and 1 point scores is shown. Due to year-to-year fluctuations, it is difficult to identify particular trends in Grade 10 expository prompt results. The increase at points 0 and 1 may indicate a motivation issue, but the data are too inconsistent to identify a definitive trend. Although overall improvement from 2001 is not demonstrated, more than 75% of students scored at a score point of 3.5 or higher in 2007.

Prompt
Grade 10

Grade 10 Persuasive Writing Assessment Data

Another set of data for Grade 10 students gives information about persuasive writing. According to the data in Graph W-19, the mean score increased 0.2 of a rubric score point between 2001 and 2008. This change, similar to the findings shown in Graphs W-15 and W-16, is small with an effect size *(d)* of 0.2. Relative to the spread of the writing scores from 2001 to 2008, the change in mean persuasive writing scores for tenth grade students is not considered statistically noteworthy. As previously noted, only the persuasive prompt was administered to Grade 10 students in 2008.

Graph W-19
Writing Grade 10
Persuasive Prompt
Mean Scores
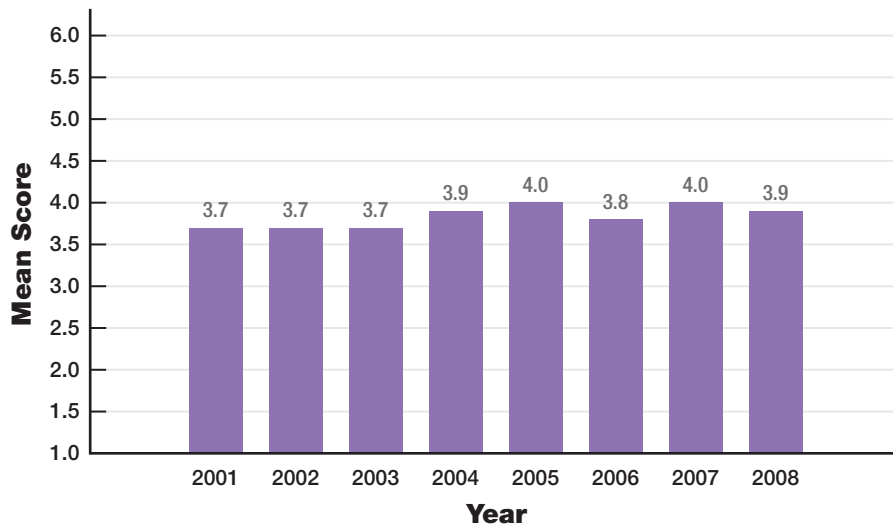
Prompt Grade 10

To illustrate the approximate level of persuasive writing characteristic of tenth grade performance from 2001–2008, the persuasive response below, a rubric score point 4, is presented. The prompt directed students to persuade community leaders whether to set a weekend curfew. The response is focused on the writer's position that a weekend curfew should be imposed. An organizational pattern is apparent, but effective transitional devices are sometimes lacking. Support for each reason is consistently developed and sometimes includes specific details and examples. Word choice is adequate, and sentence structure is varied. The conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling are generally followed.

Everyone now and days go out on the weekends to parties and out with their friends. They all come back home in the early hours of the mournings. If in our community we consider having an 11:00PM weekend curfew it would be so much better. I think this community should have an 11:00 PM weekend curfew because our parents would have more control over us, we won't be so tired the next day, and also because it could be safer for us.

First of all, this community should have an 11:00PM weekend curfew because our parents would have more control over us. My mom always waits until I get home every time I go out. I always come back very late and I feel really bad making my mom stay up for me. Our parents always worry about where we are. If we consider having the 11:00 PM weekend curfew, our parents would know we are going to come back home.

Second of all, this community should have an 11:00 PM weekend curfew because we are always tired the next day and the 11:00 PM weekend curfew could prevent that. When I go to parties, I come home late. When I wake up I never want to get out of bed. I end up staying in bed all day. That's how people start to become lazy. Becoming lazy could destroy your health. At such an early age it's horrible to be in such bad conditions.

Thirdly, this community should consider having an 11:00 PM weekend curfew because it could be much safer for us children under 17. Drunk drivers usually come on the street after 11:00PM. If you go to a party it usually does not start until after 10:00, for people to get drunk and come on the street they could kill children in car accidents. There has been so many accidents because of driving under the influense. If your home safe and sound after 11:00 PM nothing can happen to you. Let the drunk driver pay the consequences.

Many people and teenagers like to party until 3:00 AM. If you have the 11:00 PM weekend curfew your parents would have more control, you won't be so tired the next day, and it could be safer. I think we should all colaberate and make this a consideration. We could have a community meeting next week in the town hall at 3:00 PM, on Monday. I would greatly appriciate it if you would consider my words.

Score Point 4

Graph W-20 indicates the percentage of Grade 10 students whose performance was rubric score point 3 or above on the persuasive prompt for the years 2001–2008. Graph W-21 indicates the percentage of Grade 10 students whose performance on persuasive writing was a rubric score point 4 or above from 2001–2008.

Graphs W-20 and W-21
Writing Grade 10
Persuasive Prompt
2001–2008

Graph W-20
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 3

Graph W-21
Percentage of Students Scoring at or above 4
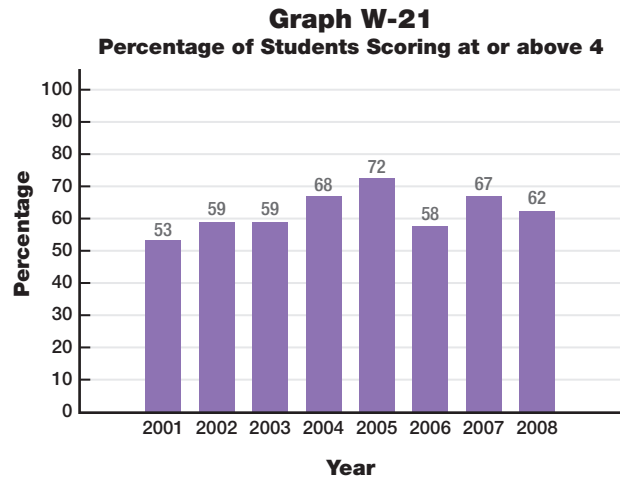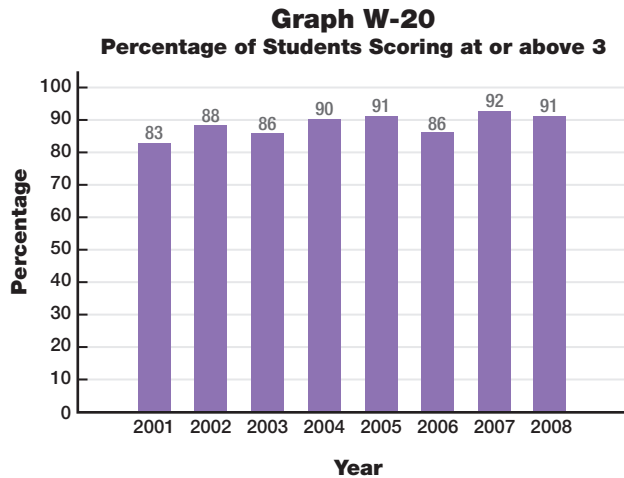
As can be seen in Graph W-21, tenth grade students showed some improvement in persuasive writing between 2001 and 2008, with an increasing percentage of students scoring at or above a rubric score point of 4 from 2001 to 2005. This finding can also be seen in the distribution of score points of 4 and 4.5 in Table 8 below. It is important to note that only a persuasive prompt was administered to Grade 10 students in 2008.

Year Tested	Number Tested	Mean	Percentage of Students at Each Score Point											
			0	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6
2001	72,731	3.7	0	2	1	8	6	19	11	27	10	12	3	3
2002	75,972	3.7	0	1	1	5	5	13	15	39	10	9	1	0
2003	82,206	3.7	0	1	1	5	7	10	16	37	13	7	2	1
2004	85,723	3.9	0	1	1	3	4	8	14	38	17	9	3	1
2005	91,753	4.0	0	1	1	2	4	7	13	39	18	11	3	1
2006	94,681	3.8	1	3	2	4	6	12	16	26	15	8	5	3
2007	94,823	4.0	1	1	1	3	3	10	14	28	18	12	6	4
2008	189,757	3.9	0	1	1	3	4	12	17	30	16	9	5	2

Table 8: FCAT Writing Grade 10 Persuasive Prompt
Percentage of Students at Each Score Point
2001–2008

Note: Percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Each number represented has a variance of + or – 0.5%.

Prompt
Grade 10

The trends for performance on the Grade 10 persuasive prompt, as seen in the table on the preceding page, are more consistent with findings in Grades 4 and 8 than those seen in the Grade 10 expository prompt. The percentage of students at or below the score point 3 decreased from 36% in 2001 to 21% in 2008. The percentage of students at score point 3.5 or above increased from 66% to 79% from 2001 to 2008. The shifts in Grade 10 persuasive prompt performance are less remarkable both in viewing aggregate data by year and at each score point. Generally, the data indicate improvement over time, but no indication of steady, consistent improvement from year to year is shown.

As shown in Graph W-21, despite some fluctuation, the percentage of students earning a rubric score of 4 and above has increased from 2001–2008. To illustrate a higher level of tenth grade persuasive writing, the response on the next page, a rubric score of 5, is presented. The prompt directed students to persuade community leaders whether high school students should volunteer to work three hours each week in the community. The writing is focused. The writer takes the position that "Volunteer work is something that should be included in the education of all high school students." The organization of the response is strengthened by effective transitional devices, which assist with the logical progression of ideas. To develop support for the arguments, personal anecdotes and specificity are used. A mature command of language is sometimes demonstrated, and there is variation in sentence structure. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

Prompt
Grade 10

Volunteer work is something that should be included in the education of all high school students. Statistics show that high school students who volunteer for community work develop many positive characteristics that strongly influence the person they grow up to be. By requiring students to volunteer for only 3 short hours in the community each week, the community benifits the most by producing mature and stable adolescents going into adulthood.

For example at the heart of all volunteer work lies Responsibility. For the past 2 years when I began my Freshmen year my parents made me begin Volunteering at the local retirement home. While there I was responsible for planning weekend activites for the sweet and loving elderly. Although I would have much rather been hanging out at the beach on my day off, I knew that the residents of the retirement center needed me to organize events so their weekends wouldn't be dull. As a result I became attached to my task and every free moment I had I was planning new things for my friends.

With increasing responsibility in teenagers they are also able to perform much better in School. A survey in Time magazine Showed that 57% of high school students that volunteer are able to pull from a D- average to a B+ average in 6 months time. My best friend who hated school and was barley a D student was always Spending his days just sitting watching T.V. After tremendous encouragement I was able to, although unhappily, get him to volunteer at the same retirement center after afew weeks their he became attached to volunteer work and became a totally different person. Knowing he was helping people and doing good made him feel speacial and now he has a 3.4 GPA.

So as you can see volunteer work is very benefical thing to high school students. It develops them a good sense of character allowing them to succed through school and eventually life.

Score Point 5

Observations about Grade 10 Writing

Although the level of achievement for tenth grade writing has remained stable across years, the task force observed both strengths and weaknesses in student writing based on the four elements of writing represented in the scoring rubric: Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions.

The observations are as follows:

Focus (staying on topic and demonstrating a main idea or theme):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- remain on topic;
- narrow the focus;
- use an anecdote as a "hook" to introduce a topic;
- construct an effective thesis statement; and
- choose and maintain a stance for a persuasive essay.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- maintaining a central idea (e.g., providing relevant rather than loosely related or extraneous information); and
- sustaining a stance or argument to develop a persuasive response.

Organization (implementing a plan for a logical progression of ideas with a beginning, middle, and end):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- use an effective organizational pattern;
- demonstrate logical progression of ideas;
- use transitions to link ideas;
- write an essay that has a clear beginning, middle, and end; and
- group similar ideas.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- using a variety of transitional words/phrases;
- synthesizing ideas to provide an effective conclusion; and
- choosing an effective organizational structure according to the purpose and audience, which includes removing the scaffold provided by the five-paragraph essay, when appropriate.

Support (using specific details and precise word choice to explain, clarify, or define meaning):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- include effective details to support ideas; and
- use persuasive elements, such as conceding or countering opposing opinions, to develop support for a particular point of view in persuasive essays.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- using specific word choice to describe;
- extending, layering, or elaborating on supporting ideas rather than using list-like support;
- using personal experiences to explain or persuade;
- varying the type of support provided (e.g., including facts, illustrations, comparisons and contrasts, cause and effect, examples, anecdotes); and
- knowing when and how to use figurative language to support ideas.

Conventions (demonstrating knowledge of basic skills of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure):

Students who are **successful** are able to
- structure sentences for clarity;
- use variety in sentence length; and
- spell grade-level words correctly.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- varying sentence structure;
- punctuating compound and complex sentences;
- applying appropriate pronoun usage;
- using commas, colons, semicolons, and apostrophes correctly;
- applying subject/verb agreement; and
- using complete sentences rather than fragments or run-on sentences.

Grade 10: Implications for Instruction for Writing

In order to reach the expectations described in the SSS, the task force suggests several targeted instructional strategies to improve writing performance. For students struggling with narrowing the focus of their writing, the task force recommends that teachers ask students to practice choosing broad, general topics and narrowing the focus to more specific ideas (e.g., given a list of different topics, ask students to identify narrow vs. broad topics). Teachers should also have students complete various prewriting activities and organizational patterns, keeping the purpose in mind. Instruction should include opportunities for students to practice recognizing different levels of support by familiarizing them with vocabulary related to support (e.g., *elaboration, extension, layering, listing*). After students master the meaning of these terms, teachers should provide students with practice varying and evaluating the quality of support used through a process of taking one sentence and supporting it by using a fact, next by using an illustration, then by using a comparison and contrast detail, then by using an example, and so on. Students should also be encouraged to support topics using personal stories/anecdotes, always with the goal of clarifying meaning by using varied, relevant, and thorough support.

The task force also recommends allowing students more practice with using engaging hooks as introductions along with emphasis on using fresh thoughts to conclude a piece of writing instead of repeating points previously made. To increase smoother connections between and among ideas, practice should target embedding transitions within paragraphs to link ideas (i.e., internal transitioning). During the revision process, teachers should use student conferencing to review focus, organization, support, and conventions. Along with this, teachers should provide students with samples of exemplary papers as well as weak papers for comparison. To provide specific information concerning strengths and weaknesses in writing, students should have opportunities to score responses with an analytic rubric containing criteria for focus, organization, support, and conventions. Overall, teachers should present writing as a recursive process and allow time for all aspects of the writing process, with the understanding that the FCAT Writing essay is not an example of a final product.

Lessons Learned
FCAT WRITING+ MULTIPLE-CHOICE ANALYSIS 2006–2008

FCAT Writing+ Statewide Grade-Level Achievement Results by Reporting Category with Instructional Implications

This section of *Lessons Learned* includes an analysis of student performance on MC items by grade (Grades 4, 8, and 10) and by reporting category. The examination of each reporting category across grade levels provides important instructional implications to educators. Teachers at the elementary and middle school levels can benefit from learning about the expectations for student performance through high school. A view of student performance through the lens of achievement in reporting categories provides valuable information about similarities and differences across grades.

From 2006–2008, FCAT Writing+ reports sent to students, parents, and teachers provided the number of questions correct by reporting category. Additional analyses by reporting category based on the mean percent correct statistic were conducted specifically for this report. The task force examined these analyses of student performance on the four reporting categories and on the benchmark clarifications that further define each reporting category to determine (1) the particular areas of student strength or weakness; (2) the types of errors that limited student performance; and (3) appropriate instructional strategies for classroom teachers. They supplemented these analyses with an examination of student performance on individual test questions at the reporting-category level. Sample test questions are interspersed throughout the publication. In the previous section, sample student responses were chosen to illustrate writing that is characteristic of the mean rubric score. In this section, sample questions were chosen to highlight some observations on student performance for each reporting category and/or to demonstrate the variety of content assessed. Student performance on a sample question might not be characteristic of the mean percent correct for the reporting category. The percent of students who selected each option on MC items is shown on each sample test question. In some cases, these percents will not add up to 100%, which is a result of rounding each percent to a whole number.

To gain a better understanding of student performance, the task force analyzed the correct answer for each question and the incorrect answers that proved most attractive to students who did not respond correctly.

For additional information about the characteristics of FCAT items, including difficulty level, see Section 4.4 of the *FCAT Handbook* at http://fcat.fldoe.org/handbk/fcathandbook.asp.

The MC portion of FCAT Writing+ measures the SSS benchmarks that address prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. MC items are categorized into the reporting categories of Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions. The terms *questions* and *items* are used interchangeably in this publication. Incorrect answer options (choices) are called *distractors*. Multiple-choice item types are as follows: plan based (four option), sample based (four option), cloze based (three option), and stand alone (three option). Table 9 below and the following item-type descriptions help explain the various MC item types.

Table 9: FCAT Writing+ Multiple-Choice Item Types		
Item Type	**Answer Option**	**Reporting Category**
Plan-based item	4 option	• Focus • Organization
Sample-based item	4 option	• Focus • Organization • Support
Cloze-based item	3 option	• Conventions
Stand-alone item	3 option	• Conventions

Writing Plan—A writing plan is a prewriting structure, such as a diagram, web, or story map. Students answer questions about the purpose and strengths and weaknesses of the writing plan.

Sample—A writing sample models student draft writing, such as a story, a report, a letter, or an article written in draft form. Items based on writing samples ask about the strengths and weaknesses of the sample.

Cloze—A cloze stimulus contains engaging material with numbered blanks inserted. After reading the cloze stimulus, the student chooses the answer that provides the correct spelling or usage needed to complete the sentence.

Stand-alone—Stand-alone items provide a succinct context for measuring the student's knowledge of conventions.

Sample test items are included throughout this document to help the user gain as much insight as possible about students' academic strengths and weaknesses. These questions are presented in boxes using distinguishable type. They were selected from several sources, including actual

questions from previous test administrations. For each example, the performance statistics from its most recent use are also presented to provide additional insights regarding students' academic strengths, weaknesses, and most common mistakes or misconceptions. The correct answer to the MC items is indicated by a pointing hand symbol (☞).

On the FCAT Writing+ test, the icons below help students identify sentence numbers and new paragraphs; in this publication, the same icons appear next to sentences and paragraphs in the writing samples.

$\boxed{1}$ A symbol like this appears in the FCAT Writing+ test to show a sentence number.

$\boxed{\rightarrow}$ For Grades 4 and 8, this symbol appears in the FCAT Writing+ test to show a new paragraph.

Each grade-level section is organized by

- a graph depicting student performance data for all reporting categories by year; and
- reporting category observations, sample items, and implications for instruction.

Evaluation of School and District Performance by Reporting Category

Tables 10–12 provide further possibilities for evaluation of school and district performance. To glean reliable information from the FCAT, it is important to identify at the reporting-category level the comparisons that yield valid interpretations of student performance. One valid comparison is performance on a given reporting category among schools, districts, and the state. For example, a particular school's results at the reporting-category level can be compared to other schools', districts', or the state's results at the reporting-category level. District results can be compared to other district results and state results. The reasoning for this is simple: Students in any group (school, district, or state) will take the same set of test items in a given year. This means that, regardless of varying item difficulty at the reporting-category level, students are assessed using the same items; consequently, their results are comparable. The state data in Tables 10–12 are real, but for illustration purposes, mock data are provided for the fictitious schools and district in the tables.

In Table 10 below, students in two schools (Sunshine and Evergreen) and students in the district (Coastal) can be compared to students in the state based on their performance in the reporting category of Focus.

Table 10: Mean Percent Correct for Grade 4 Writing+ MC Reporting Category: Focus 2008 School Year (mock data)			
Sunshine Elementary (mock data)	**Evergreen Elementary (mock data)**	**Coastal District (mock data)**	**State of Florida (real data)**
49%	66%	70%	68%

Another type of valid comparison is the trend of any of the aforementioned comparisons (e.g., school to school, school to district). Educators in a low-performing school may be interested in tracking the gaps between their students' performance on the reporting category of Focus to students' performance in their district or to students' performance in the state. Evaluating trend data for such comparisons is valid and potentially very enlightening.

Table 11: Mean Percent Correct for Grade 4 Writing+ MC Reporting Category: Focus 2006–2008 (mock data)			
Year	Sunshine Elementary (mock data)	State of Florida (real data)	Difference
2006	42%	66%	−24%
2007	40%	62%	−22%
2008	49%	68%	−19%

In Table 11, the trend results from 2006–2008 provide important evaluative information to the educators of Sunshine Elementary. While student performance at Sunshine Elementary was consistently lower on the reporting category of Focus than the performance of all Grade 4 students in Florida, substantial progress was made over the three-year period. This trend suggests that program initiatives could be linked to this improvement in performance (e.g., the school may have introduced an afterschool tutoring program).

Table 12: Mean Percent Correct for Grade 4 Writing+ MC, 2008 School Year Comparison of School to District and School to State (mock data)						
Reporting Category	Evergreen Elementary (mock data)	Coastal District (mock data)	Difference	Evergreen Elementary (mock data)	State of Florida (real data)	Difference
Focus	66%	70%	−4%	66%	68%	−2%
Organization	65%	56%	9%	65%	63%	2%
Support	73%	75%	−2%	73%	68%	5%
Conventions	55%	68%	−13%	55%	69%	−14%

In Table 12, 2008 mock results for Evergreen Elementary are compared to both the district (Coastal) and the state. This presentation of data provides yet another perspective of student performance and program effectiveness. For example, in the reporting category of Organization, Evergreen Elementary had a higher mean percent correct statistic than the Coastal District (65% versus 56%, respectively); however, Evergreen Elementary results were comparable to the state (65% versus 63%, respectively). If this variance were consistent over the three years, there would be good reason to identify and share best practices in Evergreen Elementary with the rest of the district.

Another meaningful finding from Table 12 is illustrated in the reporting category of Support. In this category, Evergreen Elementary had a slightly lower mean percent correct than Coastal District (73% versus 75%, respectively); however, Evergreen Elementary results were higher than those of the state (73% versus 68%, respectively). While the school results were lower than the district results in this reporting category, both mean percentages were substantially higher than the state results; thus, adding resources to improve results in this reporting category may not be a critical priority.

The DOE and the task force encourage educators to use FCAT results in any way that is statistically appropriate. The comparisons that have been described in this section provide possibilities for evaluation at the school and district levels.

Grade 4 Multiple-Choice Analysis

Reporting-Category Results for Grade 4

Student achievement for Grade 4 in each reporting category is provided in the following graph. Users should pay particular attention to the overall performance across reporting categories. While questions across administrations and within a reporting category are similar in the content to which they align, the results at the reporting-category level are not equated. Any changes in average question difficulty are not adjusted at the reporting-category level; therefore, it is important to realize that the changing results across administrations may reflect, in part, variance in question difficulty from year to year.

Graph W-22
Writing+ Grade 4
MC Only
Mean Percent Correct by Reporting Category
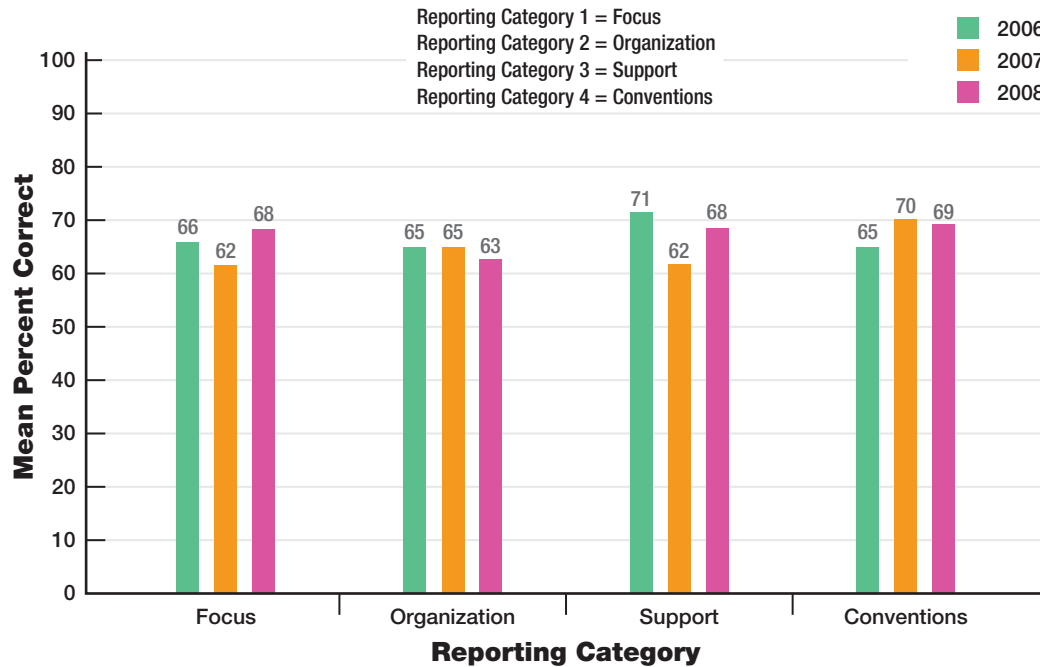
Reporting Category 1 = Focus
Reporting Category 2 = Organization
Reporting Category 3 = Support
Reporting Category 4 = Conventions

	2006	2007	2008
Focus	66	62	68
Organization	65	65	63
Support	71	62	68
Conventions	65	70	69

Mean Percent Correct (y-axis: 0–100)
Reporting Category (x-axis)

Note: Caution must be used in interpreting this graph because the changes in performance over time may be attributed to changes in item difficulty. See pages 54–56 for appropriate methods the DOE suggests schools and districts use to analyze performance at the reporting-category level.

Grade 4: Observations for Reporting Category—*Focus*

Focus items may assess the following: Planning for a Purpose, Topic Awareness, Central Idea, and Writer's Purpose. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- analyze various graphic organizers to determine the purpose for writing (See Sample Item 1);
- understand complex graphic organizers;
- differentiate between narrative (story) and expository (explanation) purposes for writing;
- recognize how a specific format can be used to help the writer achieve the purpose for writing (e.g., use an advertisement to persuade, an invitation to inform);
- select relevant information for a writing plan (e.g., add relevant details, remove extraneous details);
- find a sentence that is off-topic in a piece of writing; and
- determine which conclusion would be the most appropriate for a piece of writing.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- recognizing how the parts of a writing plan work together to contribute to the writing purpose;
- identifying details that should or should not be added to a writing plan according to the topic, subheading, or purpose for writing;
- recognizing key writing vocabulary that indicates the writing purpose or mode (e.g., *story* relates to narrative writing, *explain* relates to expository writing);
- classifying details in a writing sample according to a subtopic;
- finding sentences that repeat an idea in a piece of writing; and
- examining the strengths and weaknesses of complete compositions (writing samples full page or over).

Sample Item 1

For items in the Focus reporting category, the mean percent correct for fourth grade students was in the 62–68% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 4 MC Focus item below is based on the writing plan "Two African Animals" and measures the student's understanding of how a writing plan affects the mode or purpose for writing (Benchmark LA.B.1.2.1). On the item on page 60, 72% of fourth grade students successfully analyzed a graphic organizer to determine the purpose for writing based on a writing plan.

Stacy made the writing plan below to organize the ideas for a paper. Use her writing plan to answer questions 0–0.

Two African Animals		
	Crocodile	**Hippopotamus**
What kind of animal is it?	Reptile	Mammal
What does it look like?	Long, narrow body Huge mouth and teeth Eyes near top of head Short legs Tough hide	Big, round body Huge mouth and teeth Eyes near top of head Short legs Tough hide
Where does it live?	Swamps, Rivers, Lakes	Swamps, Rivers, Lakes
What does it like to eat?	Fish Land mammals Birds	Water plants Land plants

Multiple Choice
Grade 4

Sample Item 1

Based on the information in the writing plan, what kind of paper is Stacy planning to write?

☞ A.   a paper that compares two animals that live in Africa
   B.   a paper that tells a story about two animals from Africa
   C.   a paper that explains how two animals live together in Africa
   D.   a paper that describes the mouths and teeth of two animals from Africa

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

72% chose option A
16% chose option B
8% chose option C
4% chose option D

Grade 4: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Focus*

The task force recommends that instruction should include emphasis on how writing purposes (narrative, expository, and persuasive) can be achieved through a variety of formats (e.g., posters, letters, advertisements, poems). Also, teachers should provide students with opportunities to read and analyze a variety of different types of writing to illustrate the elements specific to each purpose. Students should receive explicit instruction in how strategic planning can help the writer achieve the intended purpose for writing.

Students should continue to practice varying their wording and avoiding repetition of ideas, especially when the repetition does not use exact wording (e.g., *I like basketball. Playing basketball is what I like to do.*). Teachers should provide examples of ineffective writing, (e.g., writing samples containing repetition of ideas, overused words, and loosely related and extraneous details) to provide guided practice on revising to eliminate weaknesses. Explicit instruction should also provide opportunities for students to learn how to focus on a central idea, theme, or unifying point in a piece of writing (e.g., effective writing answers the questions *So what? What is the point of a personal narrative, an expository report, or a persuasive letter?*) Practice may include writing alternate scenarios for a story or nonfiction article to modify the central idea and extend the writing experience. Students could also practice working backwards to create a writing plan from a previously written piece to determine how a writing plan may affect the drafting and revising stages of the writing process.

Grade 4: Observations for Reporting Category—Organization

Organization items may assess the following: Organizational Plan, Logical Order, and Transitional Devices. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- understand the use of transitional words and phrases according to the function of that particular word or phrase;
- understand where to place an event to create logical order (see Sample Item 2); and
- identify organizational strategies to improve the progression of ideas in writing.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- discerning the subtle differences in meaning of transitional words;
- identifying effective transitions used to enhance the intended purpose for writing (see Sample Item 3);
- identifying the placement of details to create logical order in longer writing samples; and
- understanding how effective organization can improve a writing plan or piece of writing.
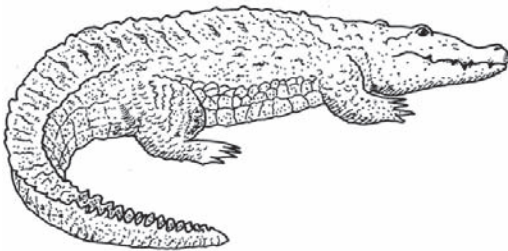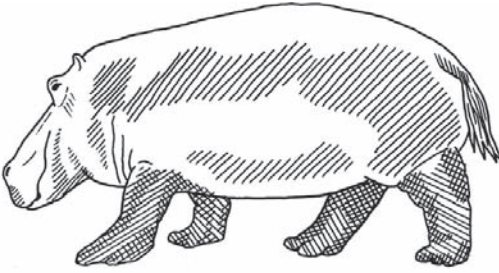
Sample Item 2

For items in the Organization reporting category, the mean percent correct for fourth grade students was in the 63–65% range during 2006–2008. The sample Grade 4 MC item on page 63 is based on "Love That Puppy" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.2.2, which shows the student's understanding of using an organizational pattern to establish a logical progression of ideas. On the following item, 62% of fourth grade students successfully identified the correct placement of a detail in a story to maintain organization.

The story below is a first draft that Michael wrote for his class. The story contains mistakes. Read the story to answer questions 0–0.

Love That Puppy

→ 1 My family wanted to get a new puppy. 2 My dad searched and searched until he found an advertisement in the newspaper about a puppy for sale. 3 The picture in the advertisement showed the cutest little puppy I had ever seen. 4 Once we had a cat. 5 He was a yellow and brown puppy. 6 He had yellow on one side of his face and brown on the other side of his face. 7 There was only one problem. 8 The puppy lived 150 miles away. 9 My family would have to travel for several hours to get it.

→ 10 My dad called the owner. 11 My dad likes to talk on the telephone. 12 My dad asked if the puppy was still for sale. 13 She said it was, but we would have to wait a few weeks because it wasn't old enough to go home with us. 14 Finally, the lady called us and said we could come get the puppy.

→ 15 The trip was long, but I knew it would be worth it. 16 The trips to my grandma's house are long, too. 17 We went inside to get our new puppy. 18 It was love at first sight. 19 I held the puppy almost all the way home.

Sample Item 2

Michael wants to add this detail to his story.

> **I didn't think that I could wait that long to get the puppy.**

Where should this detail be added to keep events in order in the story?

A.   after sentence   7
B.   after sentence   10
☞ C.   after sentence   13
D.   after sentence   17

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

19% chose option A
9% chose option B
62% chose option C
9% chose option D

Sample Item 3

The Grade 4 MC item below is based on the sample "Notice of Awards Assembly" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.2.2 in the reporting category Organization. On the item on page 65, only 50% of fourth grade students correctly identified an effective transitional device that enhances the purpose for writing. Fourth grade students need practice in the function of transitional devices to convey meaning.

The notice below is a first draft that Caroline wrote about an awards assembly. The notice contains mistakes. Read the notice to answer questions 0–0.

Notice of Awards Assembly

→ **1** As you know, the school year will be over soon. **2** Many students have worked hard all year. **3** These students deserve a reward. **4** This Friday will be a special day at our school. **5** The students in my class like Friday better than Monday. **6** Students will get awards from the principal.

→ **7** We are pleased to honor students in the following ways:

   8 • Ribbons go to students with good grades.

   9 • Certificates go to students who have not missed any school days.

   10 • The prizes will come from the school store.

   11 • T-shirts go to all who entered the math contest.

   12 • Notebooks will be given to reporters for the school paper.

   13 • Special gifts will go to the student lunchroom helpers.

   14 • Ink pens will go to students who took part in the science fair or the spelling bee.

   15 • Certificates will be given to students in the band, art club, and chess club.

   16 • Some other special awards will also be given.

→ **17** The event will be held in the lunchroom. **18** We will have a guest speaker. **19** Cake and punch will be served after the awards are presented.

→ **20** All are welcome, so bring your family and friends.

Sample Item 3

Which transition should be added to the beginning of sentence 18 to connect it to the ideas in sentence 17 ?

    A.   As an example
    B.   Besides all of that
☞ C.   Be ready to listen because
    D.   As a result of eating in the lunchroom

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

    12% chose option A
    21% chose option B
    50% chose option C
    16% chose option D

Grade 4: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Organization*

Students need practice in the use of a variety of organizational plans and patterns. The task force also recommends that teachers include instruction on the functions of transitional devices (e.g., *move a story through time, show compare-and-contrast details, connect ideas within paragraphs*). Instruction should be provided on the use of functional transitional devices (e.g., *until, as soon as, meanwhile, likewise, otherwise, even though, as well as, along with*) rather than formulaic transitioning (e.g., *my first reason, in addition, last*). Students may benefit from practice in inserting effective transitions into existing student work in order to create smooth connections. Writing samples with illogical transitions can be used as "non-examples" to help illustrate the meaning and function of transitional devices. Teachers should guide students to identify transitional phrases and words in high-quality trade books and independent reading. Along with this, students should create classroom anchor charts based on transitional devices found through independent reading, read-alouds, and shared reading.

Grade 4: Observations for Reporting Category—*Support*

Support items may assess the following: Word Choice and Development of Support. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- add a detail that supports either a specific sentence or an entire paragraph (see Sample Item 4); and
- differentiate between details that include specific information vs. general statements.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- identifying a detail to support the main idea in an entire paragraph when the topic is not explicitly stated;
- recognizing that the repetition of a word from a prior sentence does not necessarily provide support for an idea (e.g., *I love to play with dogs. Dogs are fun to play with*.); and
- recognizing which detail should be added to develop a specific type of support (e.g., to provide an example or to extend an idea in a sentence).

Sample Item 4

For items in the Support reporting category, the mean percent correct for fourth grade students was in the 62–71% range during 2006–2008. The sample Grade 4 MC item on page 68 is based on the sample "What I Did Over the Summer" and measures the student's recognition of supporting ideas that contribute to a sense of completeness or wholeness in writing Benchmark LA.B.1.2.2 in the reporting category Support. On that item, most fourth grade students (70%) successfully identified a detail that supports an entire paragraph.

Sample Item 4

The report below is a first draft that Maria wrote for school. The report contains mistakes. Read the report to answer questions 0–0.

What I Did Over the Summer

→ 1 During the summer, my family and I went on a canoe trip. 2 On the canoe trip, we explored a river and did many new things together.

→ 3 Seeing different kinds of birds was the best part. 4 Swallows flew right over our heads. 5 The bald eagles soared way up high. 6 We saw many long-legged herons along the river.

→ 7 I had lots of fun on the canoe trip. 8 I laughed every time a turtle plopped into the water. 9 We must have scared them as we passed. 10 I had fun plopping into the water too. 11 It felt good floating and swimming like a turtle.

→ 12 We camped on the sandy riverbank. 13 The weather was warm and comfortable. 14 Millions of stars filled the sky. 15 Fireflies blinked on and off in the trees. 16 The mosquitoes were the only bad part of the whole trip. 17 A few pesky mosquitoes couldn't ruin this fun trip though.

→ 18 I hope you like my report.

Sample Item 4

Which sentence below should be used at the beginning of the fourth paragraph to introduce the ideas in the paragraph?

- A.   We cooked eggs for breakfast.
- B.   We ate our lunch on a wooden picnic table.
- ☞ C.   We set up camp as the day came to an end.
- D.   We wore life jackets in the canoe.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

4% chose option A
8% chose option B
70% chose option C
16% chose option D

Grade 4: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Support*

The task force recommends that instruction provide opportunities for teacher-student conferencing to discuss developing support. Teachers should place emphasis on revision to create an understanding of effective ways to develop support. Students should be taught to recognize that repeating a word or phrase does not necessarily provide further support for an idea (e.g, *I like pepperoni pizza best. Pepperoni pizza is my favorite*). Modeling specific types of support, such as effective use of an example, supporting details, an anecdote, or a statistic, can guide the revision process. Instruction should also include practice with identifying a detail to support the main idea of a paragraph when the topic must be inferred.

Grade 4: Observations for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

Conventions items may assess the following: Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization, Usage, and Sentence Structure. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- recognize capitalization rules for common vs. proper nouns (see Sample Item 5);
- use the appropriate homophone;
- capitalize and punctuate dialogue;
- keep subjects and verbs in agreement;
- identify correctly spelled words; and
- combine and revise sentences.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty

- distinguishing between common and proper nouns, especially the use of a common noun as the replacement for a name (e.g., *my mom* vs. *Mom*);
- appropriately using commas (e.g., between city/state, in dates, with phrases in a series) (see Sample Item 6); and
- understanding how to capitalize direct quotations.

Sample Item 5

For items in the Conventions reporting category, the mean percent correct for fourth grade students was in the 65–70% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 4 MC item below measures the students' knowledge of correct capitalization, Benchmark LA.B.1.2.3 in the reporting category of Conventions. On the following stand-alone item, 69% of fourth grade students successfully identified correct capitalization of a proper versus a common noun.

Sample Item 5

In which sentence below is all **capitalization** correct?

    A.   Adam's mother is going to help Mr. Johnson at the bake sale next friday.

☞ B.   Adam's mother is going to help Mr. Johnson at the bake sale next Friday.

    C.   Adam's Mother is going to help Mr. Johnson at the bake sale next Friday.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

10% chose option A
69% chose option B
21% chose option C

Sample Item 6

The sample Grade 4 MC item below measures the student's knowledge of punctuation, Benchmark LA.B.1.2.3 in the reporting category of Conventions. On the following stand-alone item, only 40% of the students identified a correctly punctuated city and state when used in a sentence. Fourth grade students need more practice appropriately using commas between a city and state.

Sample Item 6

In which sentence below is all **punctuation** correct?

    A.   We are planning a trip to Atlanta Georgia, in the spring.
    B.   We are planning a trip, to Atlanta Georgia, in the spring.
☞ C.   We are planning a trip to Atlanta, Georgia, in the spring.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

41% chose option A
18% chose option B
40% chose option C

Grade 4: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

The task force recommends that teachers provide explicit instruction through targeted mini-lessons in the use of conventions followed by applied practice in student writing. Teachers and students should create classroom word walls by posting frequently misspelled words and homophones. Specific feedback concerning conventions in student writing should be discussed through teacher-student conferences. Instruction should emphasize the use of the entire writing process, including the editing and publishing stages.

Grade 8 Multiple-Choice Analysis

Reporting-Category Results for Grade 8

Student achievement for Grade 8 in each reporting category is provided in the following graph. Users should pay particular attention to the overall performance across reporting categories. While questions across administrations and within a reporting category are similar in the content to which they align, the results at the reporting-category level are not equated. Any changes in average question difficulty are not adjusted at the reporting-category level; therefore, it is important to realize that the changing results across administrations may reflect, in part, variance in question difficulty from year to year.

Graph W-23
Writing+ Grade 8
MC Only
Mean Percent Correct by Reporting Category
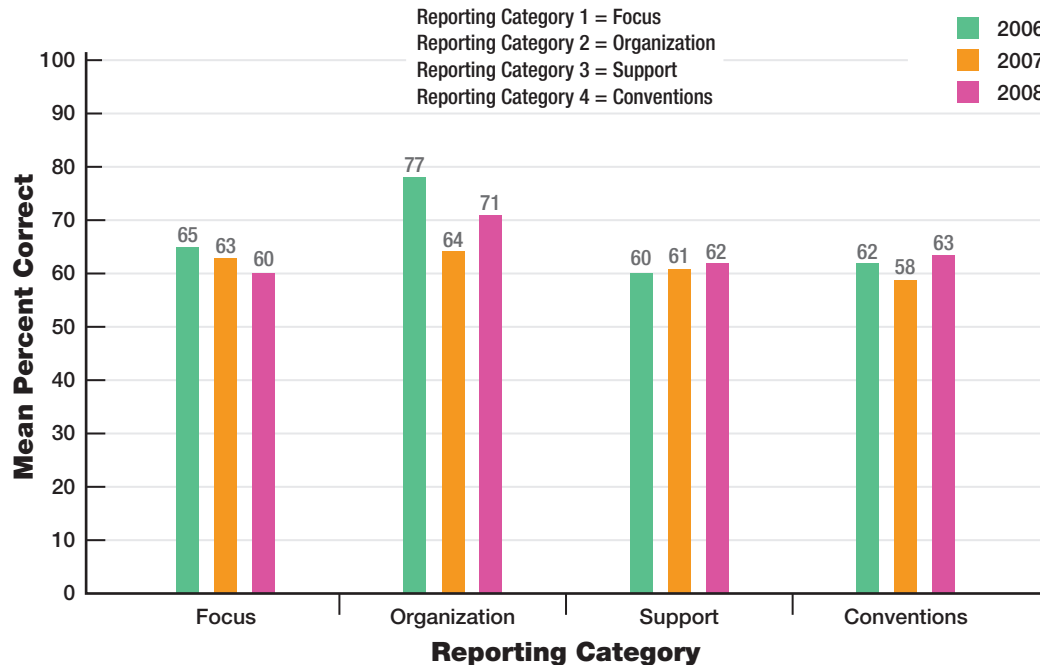
Reporting Category 1 = Focus
Reporting Category 2 = Organization
Reporting Category 3 = Support
Reporting Category 4 = Conventions

2006
2007
2008

Reporting Category	2006	2007	2008
Focus	65	63	60
Organization	77	64	71
Support	60	61	62
Conventions	62	58	63

Mean Percent Correct

Reporting Category

Note: Caution must be used in interpreting this graph because the changes in performance over time may be attributed to changes in item difficulty. See pages 54–56 for appropriate methods the DOE suggests schools and districts use to analyze performance at the reporting-category level.

Multiple Choice
Grade 8

Grade 8: Observations for Reporting Category—*Focus*

Focus items may assess the following: Planning for a Purpose, Topic Awareness, Central Idea, and Writer's Purpose. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- understand subtle differences between similar ideas to determine relevance (e.g., deleting off-topic or repetitive information);
- determine the intended purpose for writing by interpreting a graphic organizer;
- identify compositional devices used to achieve the purpose for writing (see Sample Item 7);
- differentiate between central idea and details;
- identify details related to a topic or subheading; and
- recognize elements of an effective conclusion.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- recognizing techniques that help the writer to achieve the intended purpose or mode of writing;
- interpreting graphic organizers as they relate to planning for a purpose; and
- understanding key writing vocabulary (e.g., *repetitive*, *off-topic*, *revise*).

Sample Item 7

For items in the Focus reporting category, the mean percent correct for eighth grade students was in the 60–65% range during 2006–2008. The sample Grade 8 MC item on page 74 is based on the sample "Fifty State Quarters" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.3.2, which shows the student's knowledge of the mode or purpose for writing. On that item, 63% of eighth grade students identified how the writer achieves the purpose of a writing piece.

The two parts of the report on the next page appeared on separate pages on the test but are displayed together in this publication to conserve space.

Sample Item 7

The report below is a first draft Imani wrote for social studies class. The report contains errors. Read the report to answer questions 0–0.

Fifty State Quarters

→ [1] Have you seen the new quarters the government is making? [2] Each new quarter represents one of the fifty states. [3] The history of the state quarters is interesting and gave me the idea of creating our own designs for quarters. [4] If you had been asked to design the quarter for Florida, what important thing about the state would you have wanted to appear on the back of the quarter?

→ [5] Here is some information about the state quarters. [6] All the new quarters are similar because they have the same picture of George Washington on the front. [7] The backs, however, have a picture and words that represent the history or traditions of the individual states. [8] The first five new quarters were issued in 1999. [9] State selection was based upon the order in which each state was originally admitted to the Union (the United States of America). [10] Florida was the twenty-seventh state to join the Union, and, therefore, its quarter was the twenty-seventh issued. [11] The pictures chosen for the back of the Florida quarter were a Spanish galleon and a space shuttle. [12] The first Europeans to come to Florida probably had gold coins.

→ [13] Now that you have read about the fifty state quarters, try the activity I have included.

Directions for Making a Model Quarter

Materials:
[14] You will need flour, salt, water, and a jar lid.

Step 1:
[15] Mix one-half cup of flour and one-quarter cup of salt.

Step 2:
[16] Stir in one-quarter cup of warm water. [17] The mixture will be thick and soft like clay.

Step 3:
[18] Press some of the mixture into a jar lid, and smooth the surface to make a mold.

Step 4:
[19] Smooth the surface.

Step 5:
[20] Use a pencil or pointed stick to carve pictures and words in the mold.

Step 6:
[21] Choose pictures and words that represent Florida.

Step 7:
[22] Let the clay dry overnight. [23] The next day, remove your clay-like coin from the mold, and paint the coin bright silver.

Sample Item 7

How does Imani achieve her purpose for writing?

☞ A.   She includes factual details and the steps in a process to inform the reader.
   B.   She uses creative writing strategies to create a fictional story that entertains the reader.
   C.   She shares her ideas and attitudes about state quarters to express her feelings about a process.
   D.   She presents a topic sentence and argues each point so the reader will be convinced to follow her procedure.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

63% chose option A
9% chose option B
19% chose option C
9% chose option D

Grade 8: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Focus*

The task force recommends that teachers expose students to a variety of writing formats and discuss the purpose of each (e.g., poetry, narratives, plays, technical manuals, editorials, recipes, instructions, historical documents, email, Web pages, PowerPoint® presentations, etc.). Instruction should provide students practice with using specific writing techniques to enhance the intended mode or purpose of writing (e.g., persuasion may include forming an opinion statement; exposition may include identifying a specific informational subject clearly expressed in a thesis statement; narration may include building the action by adding specific details, feelings, or suspense). In addition, teachers should guide students in recognizing, using, and evaluating the effectiveness of certain types of graphic organizers for the specific mode or purpose for writing (e.g., a Venn diagram for compare and contrast, a story map for narrative).

Students should be exposed to key writing vocabulary (e.g., *repetitive*, *sensory details*, *central idea*, *extraneous information*, *thesis*). Teachers should encourage students to create and use multiple formats for prewriting purposes (e.g., graphic organizers, notes, data presentations, charts, tables, graphs). Also, teachers should encourage students to analyze texts to articulate what good writers do to affect the reader (e.g., to create suspense—*I wanted to go to the next page*; to interject humor—*I laughed out loud;* to develop character, to describe with details). Furthermore, students may benefit from practice working backwards to create a writing plan from a previously written essay in order to understand how planning affects the focus of the composition throughout the drafting, revising, editing, and publishing stages in the writing process.

Grade 8: Observations for Reporting Category—*Organization*

Organization items may assess the following: Organizational Plan, Logical Order, and Transitional Devices. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- interpret a writing plan as a prewriting organizational tool;
- appropriately place details and sentences into a writing plan; and
- recognize how transitional devices convey meaning in writing (see Sample Item 8).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- understanding the meaning and function of transitional devices in the context of writing;
- recognizing sophisticated transitional devices (e.g., prepositional phrases, subordinating conjunctions, connecting sentences); and
- appropriately adding a detailed sentence to an existing piece of writing to maintain a logical progression of ideas.

**Multiple Choice
Grade 8**

Sample Item 8

For items in the Organization reporting category, the mean percent correct for eighth grade students was in the 64–77% range during 2006–2008. The sample Grade 8 MC item on page 77 is based on the sample "Summer Fireworks" and measures the student's knowledge of how to use transitional elements to develop relationships among ideas, Benchmark LA.B.1.3.2 in the reporting category of Organization. On that item, most eighth grade students (74%) identified the appropriate use of transitional devices.

The two parts of the essay on the next page appeared on separate pages on the test but are displayed together in this publication to conserve space.

Sample Item 8

The essay below is a first draft that Robert wrote about an experience he had last summer. The essay contains errors. Read the essay to answer questions 0–0.

Summer Fireworks

→ [1] Last summer I went to a fireworks show. [2] I'd never seen a show as cool as this. [3] It was much more exciting than those I had seen in the past.

→ [4] I've been to lots of fireworks shows. [5] They were fairly small and arranged by a local neighborhood or civic group. [6] They usually lasted ten to fifteen minutes and consisted of a few large skyrockets and several big starbursts. [7] There were often, however, gaps in the show as the workers lit the next set of fuses.

→ [8] It was completely different. [9] To be safe, you should stay at least a quarter mile away from the firing site. [10] All of the fireworks were coordinated with music. [11] When the music was soft and slow, the fireworks were also soft and slow with no loud explosions or large aerial starbursts. [12] When the music swelled louder and picked up in rhythm, the fireworks did, too, with huge starbursts, crisscrossing skyrockets, and loud explosions.

→ [13] The explosions in the air were also timed exactly with the music. [14] When an important change happened in the music, an explosion occurred in the air. [15] There was much more variety in the types of fireworks. [16] Different kinds of fireworks could be seen. [17] There were displays that whirled and sparkled in frames on the ground. [18] Cascades of sparkling lights looked like a waterfall.

→ [19] The planning for this show revealed talent and expert knowledge. [20] My sister is afraid of fireworks. [21] It reminded me of the great celebrations that are seen on TV in our biggest cities. [22] After seeing this fireworks display, other shows will seem ordinary.

Sample Item 8

Which transition below should be added to the beginning of sentence $\boxed{5}$ to connect it to sentence $\boxed{4}$?

   A.   By all means

   B.   Believe it or not

☞ C.   Most of the time

   D.   In the olden days

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

4% chose option A
18% chose option B
74% chose option C
4% chose option D

**Multiple Choice
Grade 8**

Grade 8: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Organization*

The task force recommends that teachers provide instruction in the use of transitions to convey meaning (e.g., move the action through time, signal a contrast, build suspense, conclude). Also, teachers should teach a variety of atypical transitional devices (e.g., repetition of key words for emphasis or effect, reference to a preceding idea).

Teachers should emphasize the various ways to arrange details to create a logical progression of ideas according to the writing purpose (e.g., chronological, spatial, order of importance, comparison/contrast).

Grade 8: Observations for Reporting Category—*Support*

Support items may assess the following: Word Choice and Development of Support. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- recognize and add appropriate details to develop support according to the writing purpose;
- demonstrate knowledge of revising a sentence for the most specific word choice (see Sample Item 9); and
- recognize elaborated support.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- recognizing how to add support in less common types of writing (e.g., journals, instructions, stage directions);
- identifying the specific type of support used (e.g., factual detail, descriptive detail, list, example, anecdote); and
- identifying the most specific choice of words or phrases in a sentence (see Sample Item 10).

Multiple Choice Grade 8

Sample Item 9

For items in the Support reporting category, the mean percent correct for eighth grade students was in the 60–62% range during 2006–2008. The first sample Grade 8 MC item on page 79 is based on the sample "*Summer on the Farm* Stage Directions" and measures the student's knowledge of how word choice affects communication, Benchmark LA.B.1.3.2 in the reporting category of Support. On that item, 61% of eighth grade students identified a revised sentence that provides the most specific word choice.

The stage directions below are a first draft Juan wrote for drama class. The draft contains errors. Read the draft to answer questions 0–0.

Summer on the Farm
Stage Directions

→ ⬚1 The curtain opens.

→ ⬚2 The time period is the early twentieth century.

→ ⬚3 We see a big house with a porch that goes all the way across it.

⬚4 Steps lead to the veranda, and columns support the roof above it.

⬚5 Four fern plants hang in baskets on the porch.

→ ⬚6 A porch swing hangs to the far right of the veranda. ⬚7 Two high-backed wicker chairs sit to the left of the porch swing. ⬚8 Tall drink glasses rest on a small table between the chairs. ⬚9 To the left of the wicker chairs is a rocking chair. ⬚10 It gently rocks back and forth in the breeze.

→ ⬚11 A screen door, immediately to the right of the rocking chair, is slightly ajar, as if it never seems to close completely. ⬚12 The screen door always seems to be slightly open. ⬚13 A single window opens onto the veranda, and delicate lace curtains flutter behind it in the wind.

→ ⬚14 The wooden house is white, and the floor of the veranda is gray. ⬚15 The columns supporting the roof are gray. ⬚16 The paint is slightly cracked and peeling in places, especially on the floor. ⬚17 Aluminum siding is easier to maintain than the wooden shingles on the house. ⬚18 The whole veranda looks as if it needs painting, except for one item—the porch swing. ⬚19 It looks as if the swing has a new coat of red paint.

→ ⬚20 Jenny, dressed in a lacy white dress and a wide-brimmed hat, enters through the screen door, followed by Jack, dressed in overalls, boots, an old shirt, and a straw hat.

Sample Item 9

Read the sentence below from Juan's stage directions:

> 3 **We see a big house with a porch that goes all the way across it.**

Which revision provides the most specific word choice?

- A. We see the front of an elegant, two-story house with a porch on it.
- B. We see a two-story house that is large and has a porch on the front.
- ☞ C. We see the front of a grand, two-story house with a thirty-foot porch extending across the first floor.
- D. We see the front of a house with a giant porch that goes all the way across the front of the house.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

4% chose option A
5% chose option B
61% chose option C
30% chose option D

Sample Item 10

The sample Grade 8 MC item below is based on the previously shown sample "Summer Fireworks," found on page 76, and measures the student's knowledge of how word choice affects communication. On the following item, only 43% of eighth grade students identified the most specific word choice in a phrase to add specificity to a sentence.

Sample Item 10

Read the sentence below from the essay:

> 8 **It was completely different.**

Which words should replace "It" to make the sentence specific?

- A. One show
- B. That show
- C. A previous show
- ☞ D. Last summer's show

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

6% chose option A
46% chose option B
4% chose option C
43% chose option D

Grade 8: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Support*

The task force recommends that teachers provide opportunities for students to practice developing support through elaboration in a variety of ways (e.g., statistics, dialogue, details, descriptions, anecdotes). Instruction should include teaching students to recognize techniques used by authors to develop support in their writing, as well as providing students with opportunities to model these techniques as they write for a variety of purposes. Teachers should emphasize revising for specificity of language, encouraging students to recognize how word choice (e.g., words, phrases, complete sentences) impacts context and tone.

Grade 8: Observations for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

Conventions items may assess the following: Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization, Usage, and Sentence Structure. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- combine ideas into a single sentence;
- recognize tense;
- capitalize titles (e.g., book titles, titles of organizations, personal titles) (see Sample Item 11);
- use colons to signal a list; and
- use subject-object pronouns (e.g., *he/him*) and subject/verb agreement (e.g., *is/are*).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- distinguishing between common and proper nouns (e.g., awards, nationalities);
- identifying multiple capitalization errors within a sentence;
- identifying errors in the context of a sentence rather than in isolation;
- using semicolons to connect related ideas (see Sample Item 12);
- punctuating quotations;
- placing commas after nonessential clauses;
- demonstrating knowledge of common spelling rules; and
- punctuating plural possessives.

Sample Item 11

For items in the Conventions reporting category, the mean percent correct for eighth grade students was in the 58–63% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 8 MC item below measures the student's knowledge of correct capitalization, Benchmark LA.B.1.3.3 in the reporting category of Conventions. On the following item, 68% of eighth grade students identified proper capitalization of organizations and courses.

Sample Item 11

In which sentence below is all **capitalization** correct?

   A.   She is a member of the chorus, and she belongs to the society for tree preservation.
☞ B.   She is a member of the chorus, and she belongs to the Society for Tree Preservation.
   C.   She is a member of the Chorus, and she belongs to the Society for Tree Preservation.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

5% chose option A
68% chose option B
27% chose option C

Sample Item 12

The Grade 8 MC item below measures the student's knowledge of punctuation conventions, Benchmark LA.B.1.3.3 in the reporting category of Conventions. On the following item, only 46% of eighth grade students identified proper punctuation using a semicolon to separate two independent clauses. Because 44% of the students incorrectly chose the distractor using the comma to separate these clauses, this item indicates that eighth grade students need more instruction in distinguishing correct use of commas and semicolons.

Sample Item 12

In which sentence below is all **punctuation** correct?

   A.   Jane earned a good grade on her test, she had studied hard.
☞ B.   Jane earned a good grade on her test; she had studied hard.
   C.   Jane, earned a good grade on her test, she had studied hard.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

44% chose option A
46% chose option B
11% chose option C

Grade 8: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

The task force recommends explicit instruction in the use of conventions in the context of all writing, including models of published writing, and the application of conventions rules across the curriculum. Along with this, teachers should teach terminology as it relates to conventions (e.g., *sentence structure, usage, tense, subject/verb agreement*). Instruction should also include evaluating conventions through the peer-editing process. Opportunities should be provided for students to engage in all stages of the writing process, especially the editing and publishing stages.

Grade 10 Multiple-Choice Analysis

Reporting-Category Results for Grade 10

Student achievement for Grade 10 in each reporting category is provided in the following graph. Users should pay particular attention to the overall performance across reporting categories. While questions across administrations and within a reporting category are similar in the content to which they align, the results at the reporting-category level are not equated. Any changes in average question difficulty are not adjusted at the reporting-category level; therefore, it is important to realize that the changing results across administrations may reflect, in part, variance in question difficulty from year to year.

Graph W-24
Writing+ Grade 10
MC Only
Mean Percent Correct by Reporting Category

Reporting Category 1 = Focus
Reporting Category 2 = Organization
Reporting Category 3 = Support
Reporting Category 4 = Conventions

2006
2007
2008

Reporting Category	2006	2007	2008
Focus	68	65	72
Organization	71	59	61
Support	64	53	63
Conventions	58	63	60

Note: Caution must be used in interpreting this graph because the changes in performance over time may be attributed to changes in item difficulty. See pages 54–56 for appropriate methods the DOE suggests schools and districts use to analyze performance at the reporting-category level.

Multiple Choice
Grade 10

Grade 10: Observations for Reporting Category—*Focus*

Focus items may assess the following: Planning for a Purpose, Topic Awareness, Central Idea, and Writer's Purpose. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- understand how to use various writing plans (graphic organizers) according to a particular purpose;
- group details by topic or heading;
- recognize details that are repetitive or unrelated to the topic;
- recognize elements of an introduction and a conclusion (see Sample Item 13);
- demonstrate an awareness of key terms related to the writing purpose or mode; and
- identify details that enhance the central idea.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- interpreting the entire writing plan;
- choosing details during prewriting that enhance the intended writing purpose;
- discriminating between degrees of importance for details necessary for maintaining the focus;
- recognizing specific writing techniques that enhance the writing purpose;
- identifying the mode or purpose for writing without cue words, such as *argue/persuade* and *explain/inform*; and
- understanding the relationship of details to the central idea.

Sample Item 13

For items in the Focus reporting category, the mean percent correct for tenth grade students was in the 65–72% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 10 MC item on page 86 is based on the sample "For Sale: A 1968 Truck" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.2 in the reporting category of Focus, which measures the student's knowledge of the relevance of written content to the central idea. On that item, 77% of tenth grade students successfully identified a concluding statement relevant to the central theme and intended writing purpose.

Sample Item 13

The advertisement below is a first draft that Mike wrote for his uncle. The advertisement contains errors. Read the advertisement to answer questions 0–0.

For Sale: A 1968 Truck

[1] This 1968 truck has been completely restored with new interior, new paint, and a new engine. [2] It operates and drives well, cruising smoothly at highway speeds. [3] It was previously owned by a retired couple. [4] They sold it when they moved to another state. [5] They never used the truck for heavy towing jobs and only occasionally hauled potted plants and gardening supplies in it.

[6] The present owner bought the truck over ten years ago and has been restoring it ever since. [7] From time to time, he drives the truck to car shows and sometimes takes it to parades. [8] It is in excellent driving condition with only 128,000 miles. [9] This is very low mileage for a truck its age. [10] His other truck is only ten years old and has a broken speedometer.

[11] The present owner has made many mechanical improvements. [12] The brakes, the transmission, and the steering all work perfectly. [13] The electrical system is brand new. [14] The air conditioner works very well and keeps the inside of the truck cool even on hot days.

[15] The owner has also updated the interior and exterior. [16] The truck is bright red with matching interior and has a newly installed AM/FM radio with a CD player. [17] The seats have new leather seat covers. [18] The back of the truck is also new with oak planks and stainless steel sideboards.

[19] The truck will be on display this weekend in the car show at the fairgrounds. [20] The owner will be glad to answer any questions from prospective buyers.

Sample Item 13

Which sentence promotes the purpose of the advertisement and should be added as a concluding sentence?

    A.   Automobiles may become works of art.
    B.   Cars may increase in value over the years.
    C.   Restoring vehicles takes a great deal of time and money.
☞ D.   Don't miss this opportunity to own an expertly restored vehicle.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

4% chose option A
10% chose option B
8% chose option C
77% chose option D

Grade 10: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Focus*

The task force recommends that students read and write for a variety of purposes and identify characteristics that are unique to various writing modes. Instruction should provide students with opportunities to use various writing plans applicable to specific purposes. Along with this, students should practice converting a brainstormed list into a purposeful writing plan (e.g., Venn diagram, event map, anticipation/reaction guide). Teachers should provide students with opportunities to practice narrowing a topic to find relevant details that suit the purpose for writing and finding unimportant or unrelated ideas within their writing plans and drafts. Students must continue to practice distinguishing between central ideas and details.

Instruction should allow students to practice constructing titles, thesis statements, topic sentences, and concluding sentences that maintain the central idea, theme, or unifying point of the composition. Students should also practice working backwards to create a writing plan from a previously written essay in order to understand how planning affects the focus of the composition. Teachers should provide students opportunities to employ all stages of the writing process, emphasizing the recursive nature of writing.

Grade 10: Observations for Reporting Category—*Organization*

Organization items may assess the following: Organizational Plan, Logical Order, and Transitional Devices. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- understand how graphic organizers reflect specific organizational patterns (e.g., Venn diagram for compare/contrast);
- organize details to create logical order (see Sample Item 14);
- identify logical progression of ideas; and
- identify transitional devices that show the progression of time.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- matching appropriate graphic organizers to a writing purpose;
- identifying and understanding key words for placement of ideas in order to further a writer's purpose; and
- recognizing unconventional transitional devices.

Sample Item 14

For items in the Organization reporting category, the mean percent correct for tenth grade students was in the 59–71% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 10 MC item on page 89 is based on the sample "A Movie to See" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.2 in the reporting category of Organization, which measures the student's knowledge of how the organization of writing affects the logical presentation of ideas. On that item, 74% of tenth grade students correctly placed a detail to create logical order and strengthen a writer's argument.

The two parts of the essay below appeared on separate pages on the test but are displayed together in this publication to conserve space.

Sample Item 14

The movie review below is a first draft that Jordan wrote for the school newspaper. The review contains errors. Read the review to answer questions 0–0.

A Movie to See

Movie: Minding Jason's Business
Reviewer: Jordan Fischer
Starring: Simon Page, Ashley Atkins, Marc Todd, Hilary Evans
Director: Angela Gibbons
Written by: Alex Orr
Running Time: 110 minutes
Rating: PG (for language)
Reviewer's Overall Rating: ★★★
Out of a Possible: ★★★★

[1] Jason (played by Simon Page), who is a star athlete at Lake Hills High, becomes friends with Lisa Kingsway, the principal's daughter. [2] Lisa (played by Ashley Atkins) is one of the shyest girls in school. [3] Jason usually dates more talkative girls. [4] When Jason starts spending his afternoons in the library with Lisa, his friend Billy is curious.

[5] Billy spies on Jason and Lisa to learn the reason for their mysterious attraction to one another. [6] Lisa's father is determined to end Lisa's relationship with Jason. [7] The librarian, Miss Harrington, has her own secret mission. [8] Even Lisa's mother, Mrs. Kingsway (played by Hilary Evans), gets caught up in the confusion.

[9] Jason and Lisa are individuals desirous of utilizing their time together in an agreeable manner. [10] Even so, their plans are continually being ruined. [11] The actions of others lead to a surprising discovery in this romantic comedy. [12] Romantic comedy is a very popular type of movie in America. [13] Moviegoers may recognize the rather overused plot, but somehow, *Minding Jason's Business* keeps it interesting.

[14] Overall, the acting is good. [15] The talented cast is what makes the movie worth seeing. [16] The one exception is Hilary Evans, who plays Mrs. Kingsway. [17] The other actors in the film, however, are perfect. [18] In fact, they're so believable that viewers will definitely be able to relate to the students in the movie. [19] They'll cheer for Jason and Lisa and wonder what will happen to them next.

[20] *Minding Jason's Business* is about youth. [21] It also pokes fun at the well-meaning actions of protective adults. [22] Movie fans will enjoy the hilarious, fast-paced plot.

Sample Item 14

The writer would like to add the sentence below to the movie review:

> **She is too young and inexperienced an actress to be convincing as a worried parent.**

Where should this detail be placed to strengthen the writer's argument?

A. after sentence 7

B. after sentence 8

☞ C. after sentence 16

D. after sentence 17

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

5% chose option A
16% chose option B
74% chose option C
6% chose option D

Grade 10: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Organization*

The task force recommends that teachers provide instruction and practice in creating original transitional expressions to link ideas (e.g., signal a contrast, build suspense, conclude) rather than overusing rudimentary or typical transitional devices. Students should be provided a variety of real-world texts to find examples of such transitional devices (e.g., manuals, magazines, newspapers).

Instruction should provide students opportunities to practice using various organizational patterns for specific purposes as well as using the appropriate terminology associated with these organizational patterns (e.g., chronological, spatial, cause and effect). Teachers should also provide students more practice with revising to identify unimportant ideas or sentences that interrupt the flow of logical order.

Multiple Choice Grade 10

Grade 10: Observations for Reporting Category—*Support*

Support items may assess the following: Word Choice and Development of Support. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to
- recognize what type of support is needed to clarify meaning (e.g., precise word choice, anecdotes, details, quotations); and
- identify a specific detail needed to provide development of support to a sentence (see Sample Item 15).

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty
- identifying the most specific and logical support relevant to a paragraph (see Sample Item 16);
- comprehending inconsistencies in style through word choice (e.g., formal or informal tone);
- revising for effective word choice; and
- recognizing parallel structure.

Sample Item 15

For items in the Support reporting category, the mean percent correct for tenth grade students was in the 53–64% range during 2006–2008. The Grade 10 MC item on page 92 is based on the sample "Student-Faculty Banquet" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.2 in the reporting category of Support, which targets the student's knowledge of how depth of support affects the sense of completeness or wholeness in writing. On that item, 66% of tenth grade students identified an appropriate detail used to add depth of support for an idea.

The speech below is a first draft that Marisa wrote. The speech contains errors. Read the speech to answer questions 0–0.

Student-Faculty Banquet

[1] Good evening, teachers and classmates. [2] I would like to thank each of you for coming tonight. [3] You are about to enjoy a wonderful meal, but even more importantly, we students will have the opportunity to see what interesting people our teachers are. [4] That is the point of this banquet—to promote greater understanding between students and faculty.

[5] Most of us students are so busy that we rarely have the time to think about anything except homework and activities. [6] I know many students who are always thinking about activities and homework. [7] We have probably never stopped to wonder about our teachers—about where they went to college, why they chose their profession, or what they like to do in their spare time. [8] Tonight, I encourage my classmates to get to know our teachers a little better.

[9] Most of us have probably never stopped to thank our teachers for all they do for us day after day. [10] This evening is also about that. [11] The student body has voted, and tonight we will hand out awards to honor teachers. [12] The awards are for everything from having the best bulletin boards to the teacher who gives the toughest tests.

[13] I hope our teachers will leave this dinner knowing that we students like what they do. [14] I hope we students will walk away knowing our teachers just a little bit better. [15] That way, we can forgive them the next time they pile on the homework!

[16] Thank you and enjoy your dinner.

Sample Item 15

Which sentence below supports the topic and should be added after sentence ⬚7 ?

    A.   This is a yearly tradition, and the student council is proud to participate in it.

    B.   So let us thank them for all they have done for us this past year.

    C.   Tonight's menu includes baked chicken and mixed vegetables.

☞ D.   We do not know about their families or their future goals.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

6% chose option A
27% chose option B
2% chose option C
66% chose option D

Sample Item 16

The Grade 10 MC item on page 94 is based on the sample "Wind Farms" and measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.2 in the reporting category of Support, which targets students' knowledge of how depth of support, including ideas that clarify, explain, or define, affects the sense of completeness or wholeness in writing. On that item, only 42% of tenth grade students identified an appropriate statement to support the ideas in a paragraph. Students need practice in adding a detail that not only clarifies a specific sentence but also supports other ideas in the paragraph.

The two parts of the essay on the next page appeared on separate pages on the test but are displayed together in this publication to conserve space.

Sample Item 16

The report below is a first draft Luis wrote for science class. The report contains errors. Read the report to answer questions 0–0.

Wind Farms

[1] According to the United States Department of Energy, two-thirds of electricity in the United States in 2004 was supplied by fossil fuels, an energy source created from the remains of ancient plants and animals. [2] Supplies of fossil fuels are limited, and burning them to generate electricity results in pollution and acid rain. [3] Additionally, neglecting to recycle contributes to pollution. [4] To address these concerns, researchers are experimenting with methods for using renewable sources of energy. [5] Some methods have encountered technical, political, environmental, and economic resistance. [6] One method that has been successfully implemented is producing electricity with wind farms.

[7] Wind farms are collections of structures with blades on top. [8] The blades catch the wind. [9] Some look like giant airplane or helicopter propellers. [10] These energy-generating sites are located in pastureland, on mountaintops, and even offshore.

[11] Wind comes from solar energy. [12] The earth's atmosphere absorbs heat from the sun, but the warming is uneven, causing the air to swirl. [13] Wind turbines convert energy into electricity by spinning a generator. [14] The generator turns the energy into electrical current. [15] Wires transmit the current to consumers.

[16] Wind farms are not without controversy. [17] The noise level, which caused disturbances for residents in the past, has been reduced significantly with improved engineering. [18] The cost of wind power is reasonabley close to the cost of most electric power, which makes it a feasible energy source to consider.

[19] Even in places where the wind blows more often, wind speed and direction are constantly changing. [20] Researchers have developed windmills that can adjust to varying wind conditions to ensure maximum electrical output. [21] Although wind farms do not yet produce electricity more cheaply or more inexpensively than other power stations, the helpful benefits of wind farms could be substantial and large.

Multiple Choice Grade 10

Sample Item 16

Which sentence below should be added after sentence 16 to support the ideas in the paragraph?

   A.   Regardless, many people think that wind farming is uncertain and unreliable.

   B.   Many controversial inventions have become famous only because of media coverage.

   C.   It should be remembered, however, that many new inventions are considered too controversial.

☞ D.   There are complaints that they interfere with bird migration, disrupt transportation pathways, and spoil scenic views.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

22% chose option A
9% chose option B
26% chose option C
42% chose option D

Grade 10: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Support*

The task force recommends instruction that includes practice in the critique of various types of writing to determine tone and style. Students should examine published writing to identify stylistic elements, tone, and various types of support. Teachers should provide students opportunities to revise their own writing to refine word choice and incorporate precise, relevant supporting details. Instruction should also include using model sentences to illustrate compositional elements (e.g., parallelism, style, tone).

Grade 10: Observations for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

Conventions items may assess the following: Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization, Usage, and Sentence Structure. (See the FCAT Writing References section for SSS benchmarks by grade-level reporting categories.)

Analysis of student performance data on items reveals the following:

Students who are **successful** are able to

- use homophones correctly;
- apply appropriate punctuation in dialogue and in direct address;
- use a comma to separate two adjectives modifying the same noun (see Sample Item 17);
- identify correct verb forms (e.g., tense, subject/verb agreement, parallelism);
- distinguish correct use of comparative and superlative forms; and
- recognize correctly combined sentences.

Students who are **unsuccessful** have the greatest difficulty

- using commas (e.g., series, clauses, parenthetical phrases, dates) and semicolons;
- punctuating sentences containing conjunctions;
- capitalizing divided quotations (see Sample Item 18);
- differentiating when to capitalize regions vs. directions (e.g., *Northeast* vs. *northeast*); and
- using apostrophes in possessive forms.

Sample Item 17

For items in the Conventions reporting category, the mean percent correct for tenth grade students was in the 58–63% range during 2006–2008. The sample Grade 10 MC item below measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.3 in the reporting category of Conventions, which targets the student's knowledge of punctuation conventions. On the following stand-alone item, 61% of tenth grade students understood the correct placement of a comma to separate two adjectives modifying the same noun.

Sample Item 17

In which sentence below is all **punctuation** correct?

☞ A. Our community bookstore is a friendly, welcoming place where anyone can buy or sell a book.

   B. Our community bookstore is a friendly welcoming place where anyone can buy, or sell a book.

   C. Our community bookstore is a friendly, welcoming, place where anyone can buy or sell a book.

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

61% chose option A
20% chose option B
19% chose option C

Sample Item 18

The Grade 10 MC item below measures Benchmark LA.B.1.4.3 in the reporting category of Conventions, which targets the student's knowledge of correct capitalization. On the following stand-alone item, only 39% of tenth grade students identified correct capitalization within a divided direct quotation. Students need practice in applying capitalization rules involving direct quotations.

Sample Item 18

In which sentence below is all **capitalization** correct?

   A.   "No," said mom, "you are too ill to go to play."
☞ B.   "No," said Mom, "you are too ill to go to play."
   C.   "No," said mom, "You are too ill to go to play."

☞ Correct Answer

Most recent student results

24% chose option A
39% chose option B
37% chose option C

Grade 10: Implications for Instruction for Reporting Category—*Conventions*

The task force recommends that teachers provide explicit instruction and guided practice with applying capitalization and punctuation rules. Instruction should provide students with opportunities to revise sentences containing multiple errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and/or sentence structure. Instruction should also target revision to vary sentence structure, to eliminate wordiness, and to clarify meaning (e.g., combining sentences and correcting misplaced modifiers, dangling participles, or dangling prepositions). Students also need more practice with pronoun usage, especially linking a pronoun to its antecedent. Teachers should display exemplary work to emphasize the importance of conventions in writing.

Lessons Learned
FCAT WRITING+ TOTAL SCORE ANALYSIS 2006–2008

Statistical Considerations for FCAT Writing+ Analysis

Data Analysis Process

The task force analyzed results from 2006–2008 to identify trends in student performance. In doing so, areas of growth, as well as areas needing improvement, were identified. Question-by-question analyses revealed the extent to which changes in student performance reflected gains in skills associated with writing. Readers are reminded that changes in performance at the reporting-category level may be attributed to variations in the difficulty level of questions from one year to another. Overall changes in difficulty are accounted for with a statistical technique known as *equating*;[5] however, at the reporting-category level, there may be some variation in difficulty.

This section of data analysis provides statewide achievement results for the writing prompt and the multiple-choice items combined and includes information concerning trends in the statewide achievement results. Readers are reminded that a rubric score on the prompt is **not** equivalent to the Writing+ Achievement Level, which involves the student's performance on the prompt and the multiple-choice sections combined. Achievement Levels are discussed in more detail on pages 100–109 of this document.

Student results for the years with MC items *and* writing prompts (2006–2008) are presented as follows:
- average scale scores
- percent of students who achieved at a proficient level or above (Achievement Levels 3, 4, or 5)
- percent of students scoring in each Achievement Level (Levels 1–5) within each year

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[5] Fern, E. F. & Monroe, K. B. (1996). Effect-size estimates: issues and problems in interpretation. *The Journal of Consumer Research, 23*, 89–105. See also: Prentice, D. A. & Miller, D. T. (1992). When small effects are impressive. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 160–164.

FCAT scale scores are derived from equated scores. Results based on these scale scores can be compared across years. These results are the average (mean) scale scores and the percents of students in Achievement Levels 3, 4, and 5. The task force took care not to misinterpret or overinterpret the trend data presented at these levels, given the limitations with comparability.

Scale Scores (SS)

A beginning point for analyzing writing performance trends is to review the statewide mean scale scores from 2006–2008. The following graph shows a summary of the mean scale scores. Standards for the Writing Achievement Levels were set in the fall of 2006. As such, the Spring 2007 FCAT Writing+ test administration marked the first time that the student writing performance was reported by Achievement Levels based on scale scores. For trend purposes, this report uses those standards to retrofit the student performance on the Spring 2006 FCAT Writing+ test on to the Achievement Level metric. It should be noted that this document provides the first reporting of the Spring 2006 FCAT Writing+ test results by Achievement Level.

Graph W-25
Writing+ Grades 4, 8, and 10
Mean Scale Scores
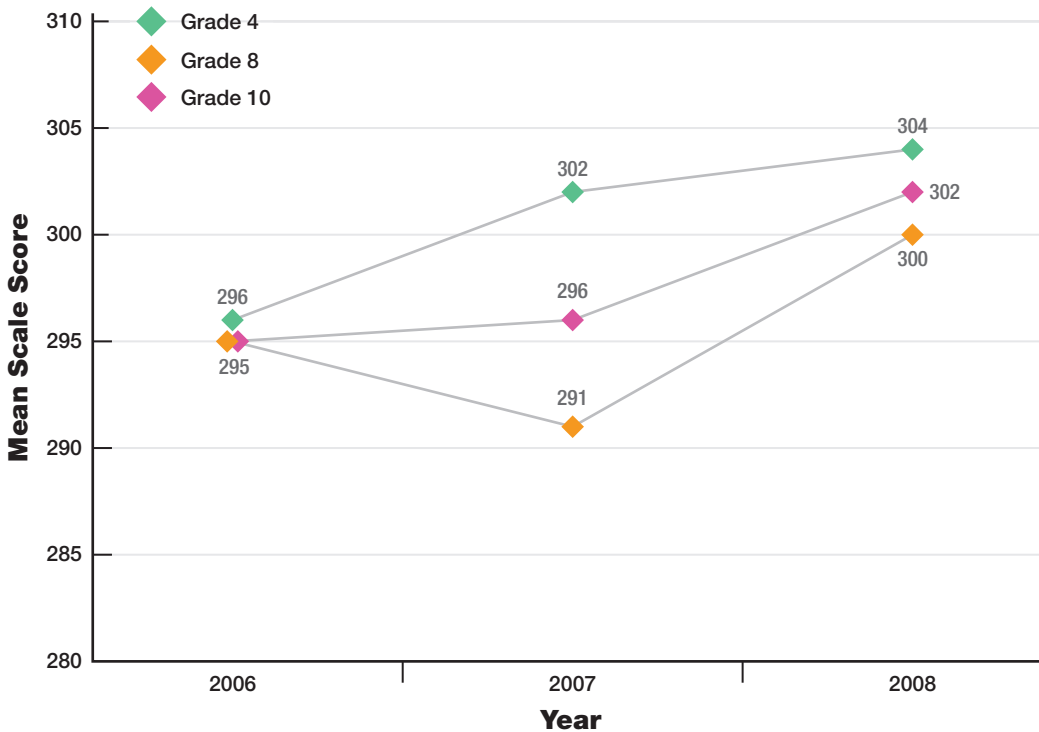
Although Table 13, on the next page, provides information about the mean scale scores as they relate to effect size, Graph W-25 depicts the mean scale score results from 2006–2008 for each grade. Although each grade shows an overall increase in the mean scale score from 2006 to 2008, and the 2008 average scale scores are very similar for all grades, each grade's progress to that improvement is very different. Grade 4 shows a marked improvement from 2006 to 2007, with a less dramatic increase from 2007 to 2008. Grade 10 shows a minimal increase in mean

scale scores from 2006 to 2007 but then displays marked improvement from 2007 to 2008. Grade 8 demonstrates a substantive dip in average scale scores in 2007 but then jumps almost 10 scale score points to 300 in 2008.

Although Graph W-25 provides valuable information with regard to overall student achievement, it does not provide educators with information that allows them to target *specific* areas of need. The previous sections provide data and analyses at the grade level and reporting-category level, along with instructional strategies suggested by the task force at each reporting-category level.

Effect Size and FCAT Writing+ Results

A discussion of effect size and how it is used in research to quantify statistical change relative to the spread of distribution is provided previously in this report in the section on analyzing FCAT prompt results. See pages 12–13 of this report for this discussion as well as more detailed information on how effect size is calculated and used in analyzing FCAT Writing results.

From a program evaluation standpoint, a small effect size implies a change that is insubstantial, whereas the implications of medium or large effect sizes warrant more serious consideration. As shown in the table below, change in mean scale scores from 2006–2008 was negligible for all grades (d = 0.1). A small difference or change in score is equivalent to a small effect size or no effect size.

Table 13: Statistics Used to Calculate Effect Sizes								
Grade	**2006**			**2008**			**Difference in Means**	**Effect Size**
	Sample Size	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Sample Size**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**		
4	189,589	296	71	190,008	304	70	8	0.1
8	198,247	295	63	184,559	300	70	5	0.1
10	187,939	295	64	188,733	302	67	7	0.1

The data in Table 13 indicate that there was, for the most part, negligible change in the statewide mean scale scores from 2006 to those from 2008. For all grades, change was not noteworthy, with effect sizes of 0.1.[6] These findings, along with other results presented in *Lessons Learned*, are intended to provide another measure of program and student performance for educators to consider when evaluating the efforts of Florida educators and students as a whole. The limitations of the Writing+ analysis are included on pages 7–8 of this document.

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[6] Fern, E. F. & Monroe, K. B. (1996). Effect-size estimates: issues and problems in interpretation. *The Journal of Consumer Research,23*, 89–105. See also: Prentice, D. A. & Miller, D. T. (1992). When small effects are impressive. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 160–164.

FCAT Writing+ Statewide Achievement Results
Total Score Analysis 2006–2008

Achievement Levels

The Achievement Levels for each grade were recommended by teachers and district administrators and adopted by the Florida Board of Education in 2006. Five levels of achievement are used for each grade. A brief description of the five categories follows.

- **Level 5**—This student has success with the most challenging content of the SSS. A student scoring in Level 5 answers most of the test questions correctly, including the most challenging questions.
- **Level 4**—This student has success with the challenging content of the SSS. A student scoring in Level 4 answers most of the test questions correctly, but the student may have only some success with questions that reflect the most challenging content.
- **Level 3**—This student has partial success with the challenging content of the SSS, but performance is inconsistent. A student scoring in Level 3 answers many of the test questions correctly, but the student is generally less successful with the most challenging questions.
- **Level 2**—This student has limited success with the challenging content of the SSS.
- **Level 1**—This student has little success with the challenging content of the SSS.

The following table provides the scale score ranges for each Achievement Level by grade.

	Table 14: Achievement Levels in FCAT Writing				
Grade	**Achievement Level**				
	Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Level 5**
4	100–239	240–289	290–364	365–426	427–500
8	100–249	250–298	299–355	356–415	416–500
10	100–249	250–299	300–341	342–402	403–500

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) requires states to identify one of their Achievement Levels as "proficient." The "partial success" FCAT Writing Achievement Level (Level 3) was identified by the State of Florida to be equivalent to what the federal legislation would deem "proficient." For this level, data are reported for students who scored in Achievement Levels 3, 4, and 5. For example, if 15% of students scored in Level 3, 10% in Level 4, and 5% in Level 5, the reported percent would be 30%. This implies that the percent of students who did not meet the minimal acceptable level of achievement (Level 3) was 70% (i.e., 100% minus 30%).

Achievement-Level Comparisons

The grade-specific sections that follow include graphic information organized by the following categories:

- Achievement Level 3 (proficient or partial success) or higher (e.g., Graph W-26)—Following NCLB guidelines, students who demonstrate partial success on the content assessed by the FCAT are classified as Level 3 achievement; therefore, these graphs will, for each year, display the percent of students having achieved at least Level 3.
- Three-year trend results for Achievement Level 1 versus Achievement Levels 3–5 (e.g., Graph W-27).
- Three-year trend results for all achievement levels (e.g., Graph W-28)—Evaluating results at this level allowed the task force to understand better the changes that took place related to score distribution across Achievement Levels over time.

Note: At the state level, the statistical process of equating allows for the across-year comparison of the mean percent of students who achieve in Level 3 or higher; however, it is not appropriate to draw trend-related inferences with mean percent correct statistics across years and within a given reporting category.

Analysis of Grade 4 FCAT Writing+ Total Score Results

The following graph shows the percentage of Grade 4 students who achieved in Level 3 or higher on FCAT Writing+ (total scores) from 2006–2008.

Graph W-26
Writing+ Grade 4
Total Scores
Percent of Students in Levels 3–5

The percent of Grade 4 students achieving in Level 3 or higher increased 6 percentage points from 2006–2008, moving from 55% to 61%.

Legend: Levels 3–5

Year	Percent of Students
2006	55
2007	60
2008	61
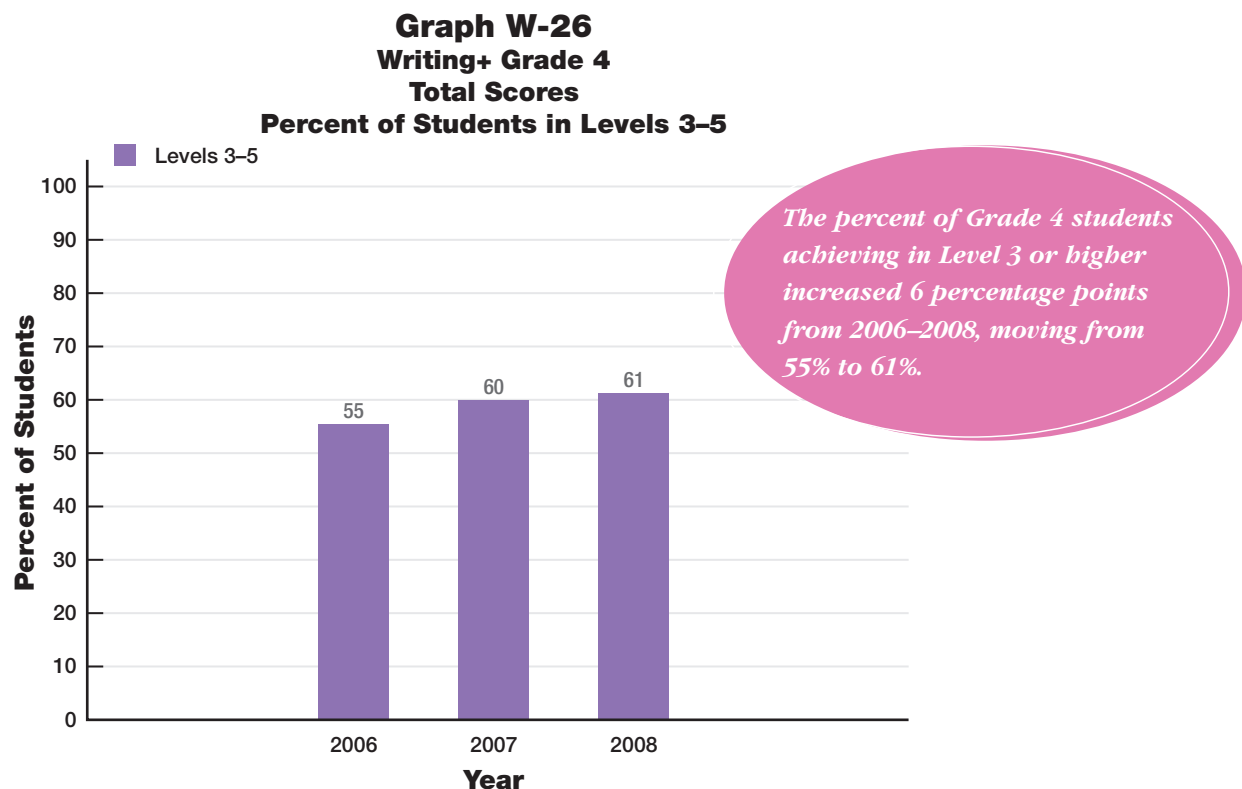
Based on the previous graph, an increasing number of fourth grade students were able to demonstrate evidence of achievement in writing assessments based on the challenging content of the SSS.

The NAEP results for the 2007 Grade 4 Reading assessment show similar success for Florida's fourth grade students (http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/stt2007/2007497FL4.pdf). Although reading and writing are two unique skill sets that students must acquire, the link is sufficiently strong to note the parallel improvement in both areas and may provide support for the observation that there was overall improvement in English Language Arts instruction in Florida.

It is also worthwhile to study trends for Achievement Level 1 in comparison to Achievement Levels 3–5 combined. In the following graph and similar graphs to follow, a positive trend is indicated by a steady decrease in the percent of students achieving Level 1 and by a commensurate percent increase in Levels 3–5.

Graph W-27
Writing+ Grade 4
Total Scores
Percent of Students by
Achievement Level

Graph W-27 shows an overall decrease of Level 1 scores from 2006–2008, moving from 20% to 17%.

This graph depicts a positive trend in writing achievement in that an increasing percentage of fourth grade students have at least partial success with the challenging content of the SSS while a decreasing percentage of students have little success with the challenging content of the SSS.

The information presented in Graph W-27 can also be illustrated with a bar graph. Although Graph W-27 illustrates Achievement Level results over time, Graph W-28 provides a perspective that captures the distribution within each year. Graph W-28 further illustrates the decrease of Level 1 and Level 2 scores from 2006–2008, as well as the stable percentages for Level 4 and Level 5 scores.

Graph W-28
Writing+ Grade 4
Total Scores
Percent of Students by Achievement Level
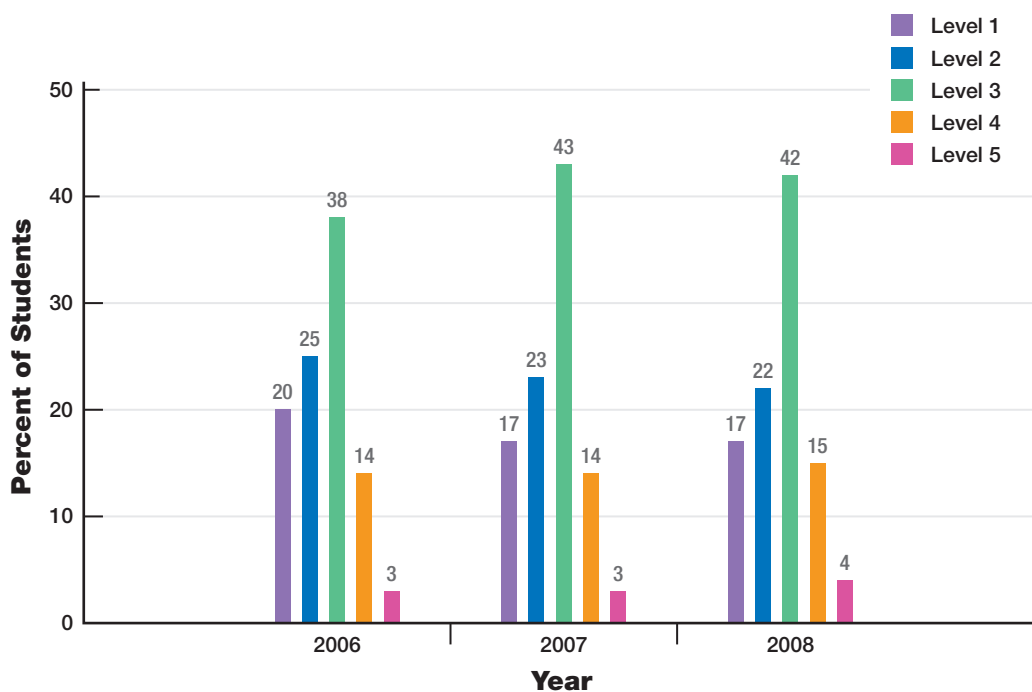
Analysis of Grade 8 FCAT Writing+ Total Score Results

The results in the following graph show the percent of Grade 8 students who achieved Level 3 or higher on FCAT Writing+ from 2006–2008.
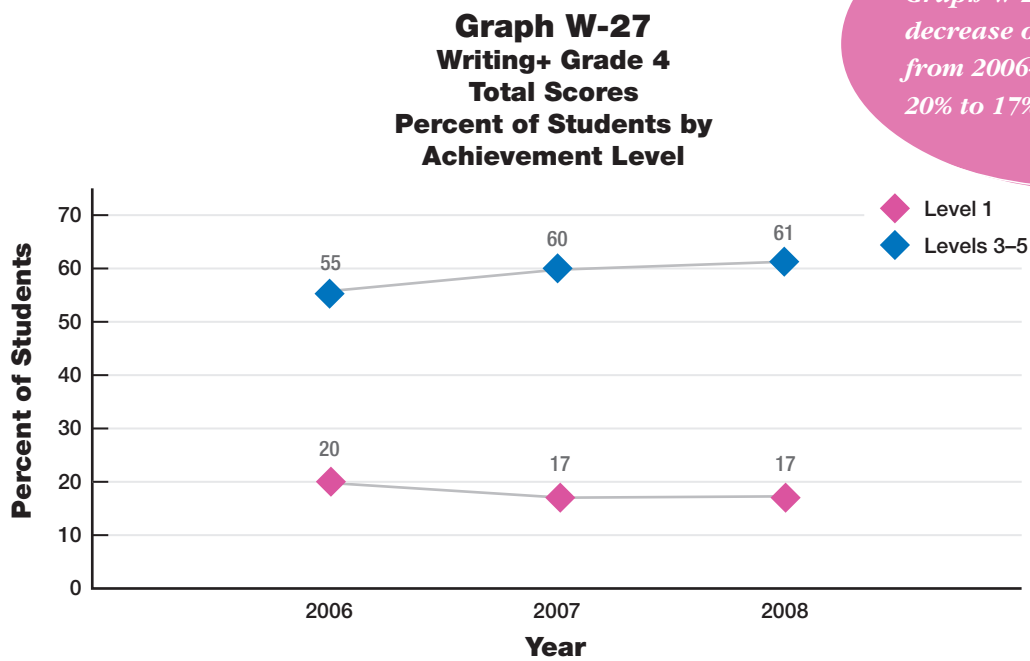
Graph W-29
Writing+ Grade 8
Total Scores
Percent of Students in Levels 3–5
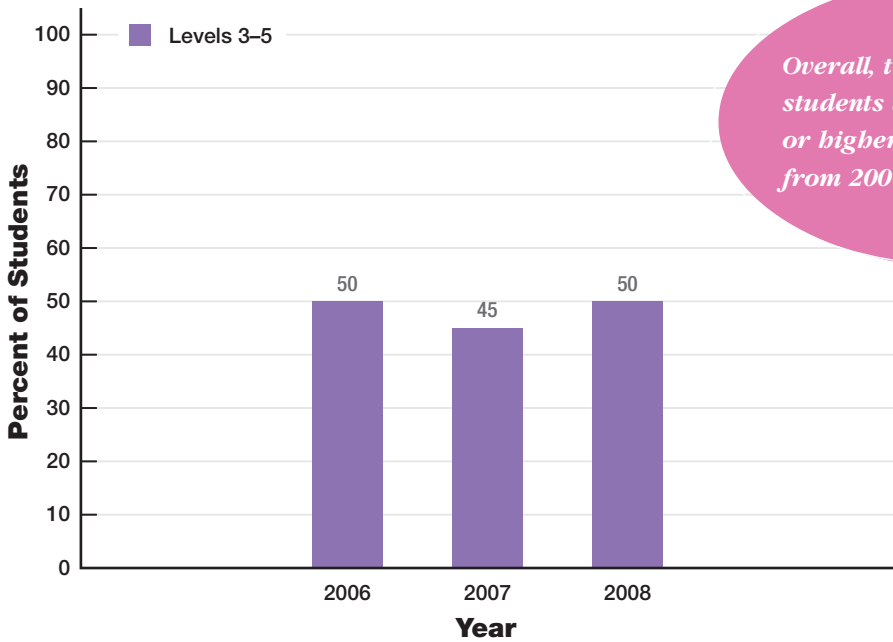
Overall, the percent of Grade 8 students achieving Level 3 or higher did not change from 2006–2008.

Graph W-29 shows no overall increase in the percentage of students achieving at least proficient or partial success with the challenging content of the SSS. It is worthwhile, however, to study the trends shown in Graph W-31, on page 106, which reflect the increase in percentage of students achieving in Levels 4 and 5.

The following graph provides another view of the percentage of students achieving in Levels 3–5 as well as those achieving in Level 1 from 2006 through 2008.

Graph W-30
Writing+ Grade 8
Total Scores
Percent of Students by Achievement Level
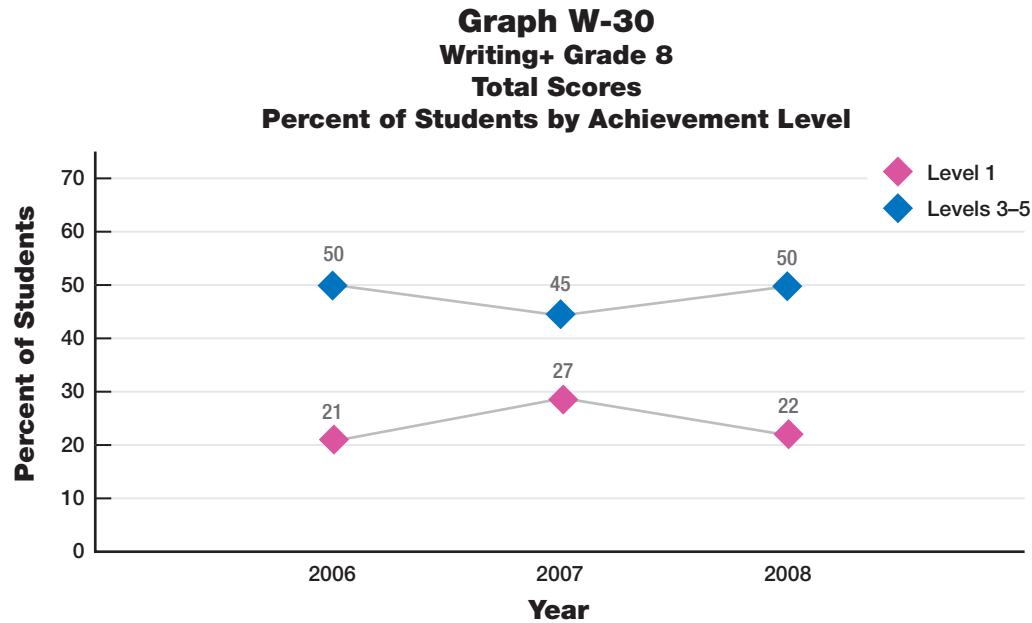
Although this graph plots the findings presented in Graph W-29, it also shows that there was no overall decline or downward trend in the percentage of eighth grade students having little success with the challenging content of the SSS between 2006 and 2008. For comparison, it should be noted that the percentage of Florida's eighth grade students classified as *Proficient* on the NAEP Writing assessment increased from 19% in 1998 to 36% in 2007, ending with a higher percentage than the nation in 2007.

The bar graph below, Graph W-31, displays some of the same data provided in Graph W-30. The graph illustrates the relative stability of the distribution of Level 2 scores, as well as the decrease of Level 3 scores from 2006–2008. It is, however, encouraging to note the increase in the distribution of Level 4 and Level 5 scores combined, a steady improvement from 16% to 19% to 21% from 2006–2008, respectively.

Graph W-31
**Writing+ Grade 8**
Total Scores
Percent of Students by Achievement Level

Analysis of Grade 10 FCAT Writing+ Total Score Results

The results for the percent of students who achieved Level 3 or higher in Grade 10 are provided in the following graph.

Graph W-32
Writing+ Grade 10
Total Scores
Percent of Students in Levels 3–5
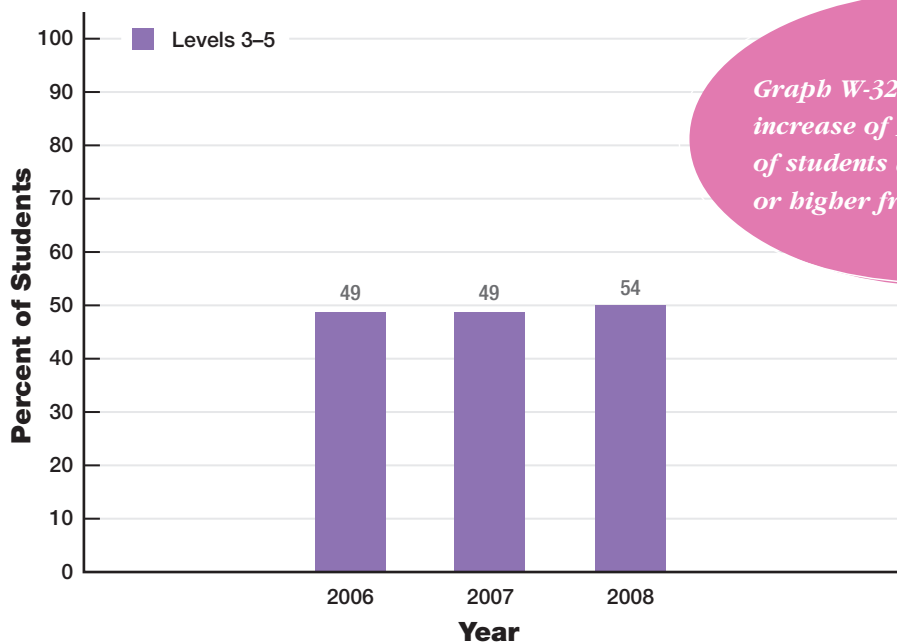
Graph W-32 shows an overall increase of 5 percentage points of students achieving in Level 3 or higher from 2006–2008.

An increase in the percentage of students achieving at least proficient or partial success with the challenging content of the SSS occurred between 2007 and 2008. While it is encouraging to see this overall increase, it is also worthwhile to study the trends for each specific Achievement Level shown in Graph W-34.

The following graph provides another view of the percentage of students achieving in Levels 3–5 as well as those achieving in Level 1 over the three-year period.
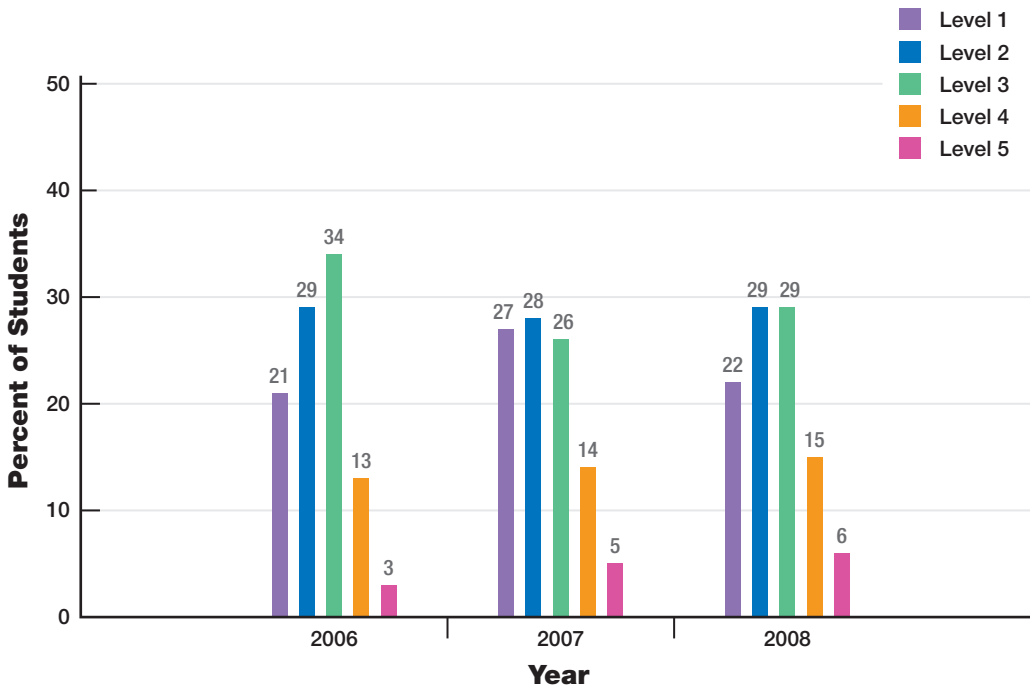
Graph W-33
Writing+ Grade 10
Total Scores
Percent of Students by Achievement Level

The percent of Level 1 scores remained relatively steady across the three-year period, decreasing from 21% in 2006 to 20% in 2008.
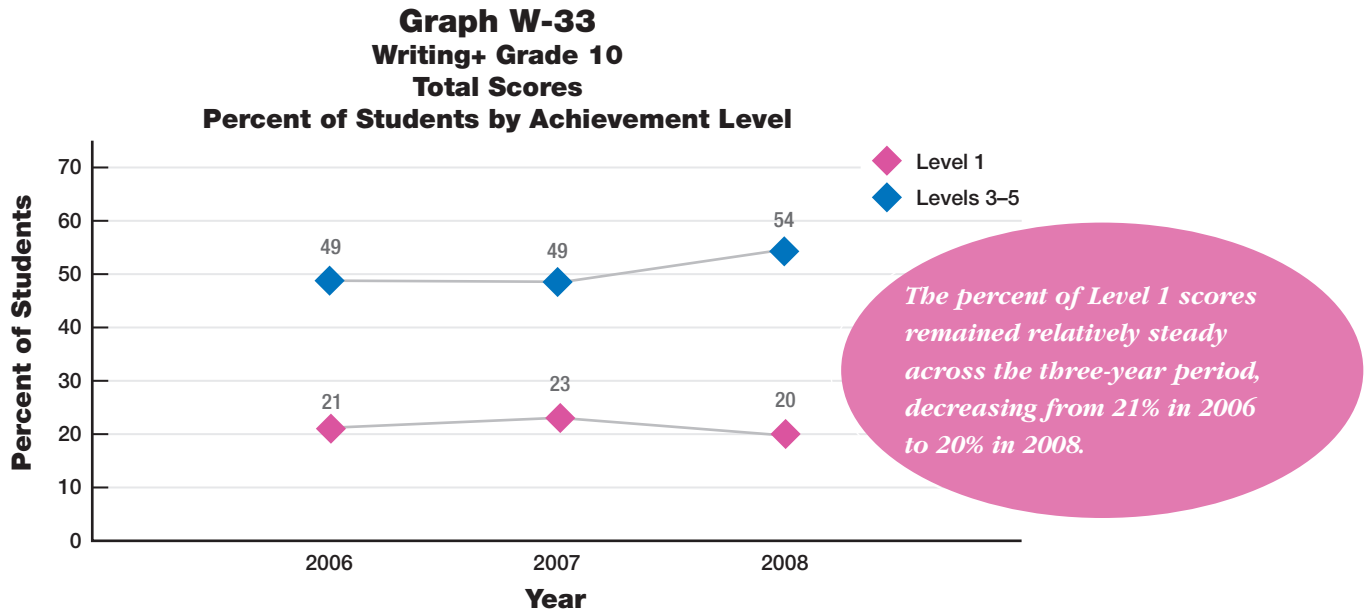
Although this graph plots the findings presented in Graph W-32, it also shows that there was no significant decline in the percentage of tenth grade students having little success with the challenging content of the SSS between 2006 and 2008.

The bar graph below, Graph W-34, provides some of the same data provided by Graph W-33. Graph W-34, however, illustrates the specific increase in Level 4 and Level 5 scores from 2006–2008. It is encouraging to note the increase in the distribution of Levels 4 and 5 combined, a steady improvement from 22% to 24% to 27% from 2006–2008, respectively.

Graph W-34
Writing+ Grade 10
**Total Scores**
Percent of Students by Achievement Level
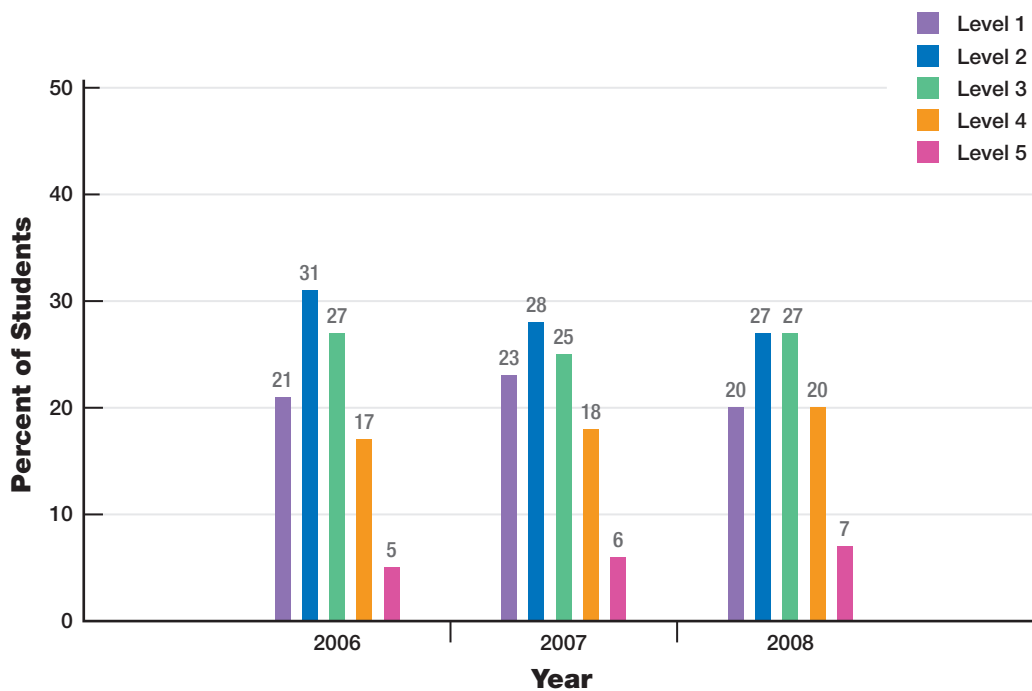
Lessons Learned
CONCLUSION

FCAT Writing *Lessons Learned* Task Force Conclusions

In reviewing this report, many educators may likely see the performance of their own students reflected in the results of the data analysis and in the findings of the task force. Subsequently, the *Lessons Learned* report can be used to confirm what educators may have already suspected was occurring in some areas. Educators may also use findings within this report to inform instruction. The task force recognized that some things educators believe to be occurring within their classrooms during instruction were not reflected in the data analyses presented in this report. It is important to keep in mind that the recommendations presented in this report are based upon the data, rather than on personal experiences of educators within Florida.

Across grades, the task force made the following observations and suggestions:

- Teachers should continue to expose students to various writing modes (purposes) and models of writing. Along with discussion and modeling, teachers should provide numerous opportunities for students to identify and work with the specific compositional elements in various genres and modes of writing, with focus on how the writer achieves the intended purpose (e.g., to explain, persuade, or entertain).
- Instruction should promote opportunities for students to be expressive and experimental with organization, style, word choice, sentence structure, and transitions, followed by reflective analysis and discussion of the effectiveness of various choices related to different purposes and goals of writing.
- Although the mean percent correct in the reporting category of Conventions increased slightly from 2006–2008, the task force recommends that teachers in all content areas emphasize the correct use of standard English conventions.

- Despite the growth in student achievement in writing performance, there is still an over-reliance on formulaic writing (e.g., traditional five-paragraph formula). Instructional methods that are used to teach organizational patterns should not impose a rehearsed, prescribed format for responding to every type of writing situation. Students should practice choosing an organizational structure tailored to the specific topic and purpose for writing, allowing for the student's personal writing style to emerge.

- Writing instruction should provide opportunities for students to engage in all stages of the writing process as they write for a variety of purposes, audiences, and occasions. Emphasis on the drafting stage alone limits the student's understanding of the importance of planning, revising, editing, and publishing. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to revise their own and other students' writing. Additionally, teachers should seek opportunities that allow students to publish their writing (e.g., writing contests, school/class newsletters, book and movie reviews, literary magazines, writing fairs) and to celebrate these successes in the larger community.

The achievements of Florida students in Grades 4, 8, and 10 who took the FCAT Writing assessment are generally in accordance with the findings of national research. Florida students in Grades 4 and 8 show an overall improvement on their prompt scores from 2001 through 2008. Some of the increases match the findings in the NAEP report "The Nation's Report Card Writing 2007." Results in this report show that eighth grade students in Florida performed above the national average, particularly in the "proficient" range, showing significant increases in writing scores (http://www.fldoe.org/asp/naep/pdf/gr8-writingBrief.pdf). Other literature seems to support the data found in Grade 10 FCAT Writing where growth has been relatively flat. Applebee and Langer discuss such trends in "The State of Writing Instruction in America's Schools: What Existing Data Tell Us" (http://www.albany.edu/aire/news/State%20of%20Writing%20Instruction.pdf.).

In order to continue and encourage improving trends, the task force provided recommendations for further classroom instruction. Many of these recommendations across grade levels are supported by the research-based recommendations for instruction found in Graham and Perin's article "Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools." (http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf). In addition, the task force emphasized the importance of teaching a wide variety of writing models.

This summary information, as well as the additional details provided throughout *Lessons Learned,* is intended to provide educators with information that can further support the continuation of existing initiatives and possibly re-target programmatic change focused on addressing new issues.

Lessons Learned
FCAT WRITING REFERENCES

Grade 4 Benchmarks

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.

Benchmark LA.B.1.2.1 The student prepares for writing by recording thoughts, focusing on a central idea, grouping related ideas, and identifying the purpose for writing.

<div align="right">

MC and WP
</div>

LA.B.1.2.1 Benchmark Clarifications

Focus

Clarification 1.2.1.1 The student recognizes how a writing plan affects the writing mode or purpose.

Clarification 1.2.1.2 The student uses the writing plan as a tool for maintaining the focus.

Organization

Clarification 1.2.1.3 The student understands how a writing plan is used as an organizational tool.

Benchmark LA.B.1.2.2 The student drafts and revises writing in cursive that: focuses on the topic; has a logical organizational pattern, including a beginning, middle, conclusion, and transitional devices; has ample development of supporting ideas; demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness; demonstrates a command of language including precision in word choice; generally has correct subject/verb agreement; generally has correct verb and noun forms; with few exceptions, has sentences that are complete, except when fragments are used purposefully; uses a variety of sentence structures; and generally follows the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Note: The conventions portion of this benchmark is assessed by LA.B.1.2.3. (Also assesses LA.B.2.2.3, LA.B.2.2.5, and LA.B.2.2.6)

<div align="right">

MC and WP
</div>

LA.B.1.2.2 Benchmark Clarifications

Focus

Clarification 1.2.2.1 The student demonstrates knowledge of how to maintain focus.

Clarification 1.2.2.2 The student demonstrates knowledge of the mode or purpose for writing.

Organization

Clarification 1.2.2.3 The student uses an organizational pattern to establish a logical progression of ideas.

Clarification 1.2.2.4 The student demonstrates knowledge of effective use of transitional devices.

Support

Clarification 1.2.2.5 The student recognizes supporting ideas that clarify, explain, or define, contributing to a sense of completeness or wholeness in draft writing.

Clarification 1.2.2.6 The student recognizes how word choice affects the quality of a response.

Benchmark LA.B.1.2.3 The student produces final documents that have been edited for: correct spelling; correct use of punctuation, including commas in series, dates, and addresses, and beginning and ending quotation marks; correct capitalization of proper nouns; correct paragraph indentation; correct usage of subject/verb agreement, verb and noun forms, and sentence structure; and correct formatting according to instructions.

Note: This benchmark assesses the conventions portion of LA.B.1.2.2. Correct formatting according to instructions is not assessed.

<div align="right">

MC and WP
</div>

MC: multiple choice   **WP: writing prompt**

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.
LA.B.1.2.3 Benchmark Clarifications
Conventions **Clarification 1.2.3.1** The student demonstrates knowledge of spelling conventions. **Clarification 1.2.3.2** The student demonstrates knowledge of punctuation conventions. **Clarification 1.2.3.3** The student demonstrates knowledge of correct capitalization. **Clarification 1.2.3.4** The student demonstrates knowledge of standard English usage. **Clarification 1.2.3.5** The student demonstrates knowledge of sentence structure.
Strand B: Writing
Standard 2: The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively.
LA.B.2.2.1 The student writes notes, comments, and observations that reflect comprehension of content and experiences from a variety of media. **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**
LA.B.2.2.2 The student organizes information using alphabetical and numerical systems. **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**
LA.B.2.2.3 The student writes for a variety of occasions, audiences, and purposes. **(Assessed with LA.B.1.2.2)**
LA.B.2.2.4 The student uses electronic technology, including word processing software and electronic encyclopedias, to create, revise, retrieve, and verify information. **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**
LA.B.2.2.5 The student creates narratives in which ideas, details, and events are in a logical order and are relevant to the story line. **(Assessed with LA.B.1.2.2)**
LA.B.2.2.6 The student creates expository responses in which ideas and details follow an organizational pattern and are relevant to the purpose. **(Assessed with LA.B.1.2.2)**

MC: multiple choice   **WP: writing prompt**

Grade 8 Benchmarks

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.

Benchmark LA.B.1.3.1 The student organizes information before writing according to the type and purpose of writing. **MC and WP**
LA.B.1.3.1 Benchmark Clarifications
Focus **Clarification 1.3.1.1** The student demonstrates knowledge of the function of planning in accomplishing the specific writing mode or purpose. **Clarification 1.3.1.2** The student recognizes how modifications to a writing plan affect the maintenance of the writing focus.
Organization **Clarification 1.3.1.3** The student demonstrates knowledge of the function of prewriting in establishing an effective organizational plan.
Benchmark LA.B.1.3.2 The student drafts and revises writing that: is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation; conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness with adherence to the main idea; has an organizational pattern that provides for a logical progression of ideas; has support that is substantial, specific, relevant, concrete, and/or illustrative; demonstrates a commitment to and an involvement with the subject; has clarity in presentation of ideas; uses creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper; demonstrates a command of language (word choice) with freshness of expression; has varied sentence structure and sentences that are complete except when fragments are used purposefully; and has few, if any, convention errors in mechanics, usage, and punctuation. Note: The conventions portion of this benchmark is assessed by LA.B.1.3.3. (Also assesses LA.B.2.3.3) **MC and WP**
LA.B.1.3.2 Benchmark Clarifications
Focus **Clarification 1.3.2.1** The student demonstrates knowledge of effective ways to focus on a central idea or topic. **Clarification 1.3.2.2** The student demonstrates knowledge of the mode or purpose for writing.
Organization **Clarification 1.3.2.3** The student demonstrates knowledge of how a logical progression of ideas contributes to effective organization and communication. **Clarification 1.3.2.4** The student demonstrates knowledge of how to use transitional elements to develop relationships among ideas.
Support **Clarification 1.3.2.5** The student demonstrates knowledge of how to incorporate supporting ideas that clarify, explain, or define, contributing to a sense of completeness or wholeness in writing. **Clarification 1.3.2.6** The student demonstrates knowledge of how communication is affected by word choice.
Benchmark LA.B.1.3.3 The student produces final documents that have been edited for: correct spelling; correct punctuation, including commas, colons, and semicolons; correct capitalization; effective sentence structure; correct common usage, including subject/verb agreement, common noun/pronoun agreement, common possessive forms, and with a variety of sentence structure, including parallel structure; and correct formatting. Note: This benchmark assesses the conventions portion of LA.B.1.3.2. Correct formatting is not assessed. **MC and WP**

MC: multiple choice   **WP: writing prompt**

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.
LA.B.1.3.3 Benchmark Clarifications
Conventions **Clarification 1.3.3.1** The student demonstrates knowledge of spelling conventions. **Clarification 1.3.3.2** The student demonstrates knowledge of punctuation conventions. **Clarification 1.3.3.3** The student demonstrates knowledge of correct capitalization. **Clarification 1.3.3.4** The student demonstrates knowledge of standard English usage. **Clarification 1.3.3.5** The student demonstrates knowledge of sentence structure.
Strand B: Writing
Standard 2: The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively.
Benchmark LA.B.2.3.1 The student writes text, notes, outlines, comments, and observations that demonstrate comprehension of content and experiences from a variety of media.   **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**
Benchmark LA.B.2.3.2 The student organizes information using alphabetical, chronological, and numerical systems.   **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**
Benchmark LA.B.2.3.3 The student selects and uses appropriate formats for writing, including narrative, persuasive, and expository formats, according to the intended audience, purpose, and occasion.   **(Assessed with LA.B.1.3.2)**
Benchmark LA.B.2.3.4 The student uses electronic technology including databases and software to gather information and communicate new knowledge.   **(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)**

MC: multiple choice   **WP: writing prompt**

Grade 10 Benchmarks

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.

Benchmark LA.B.1.4.1 The student selects and uses appropriate prewriting strategies, such as brainstorming, graphic organizers, and outlines.

MC and WP

LA.B.1.4.1 Benchmark Clarifications

Focus

Clarification 1.4.1.1 The student demonstrates knowledge of prewriting strategies suitable for the specific writing mode or purpose.

Clarification 1.4.1.2 The student demonstrates knowledge of how the selection and modification of information during prewriting affect the presentation and maintenance of the topic.

Organization

Clarification 1.4.1.3 The student uses prewriting to establish an effective organizational structure based on the central idea and purpose for writing.

Benchmark LA.B.1.4.2 The student drafts and revises writing that: is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation; has an organizational pattern that provides for a logical progression of ideas; has effective use of transitional devices that contribute to a sense of completeness; has support that is substantial, specific, relevant, and concrete; demonstrates a commitment to and involvement with the subject; uses creative writing strategies as appropriate to the purposes of the paper; demonstrates a mature command of language with freshness of expression; has varied sentence structure; has few, if any, convention errors in mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

Note: The conventions portion of this benchmark is assessed by LA.B.1.4.3. (Also assesses LA.B.2.4.3)

MC and WP

LA.B.1.4.2 Benchmark Clarifications

Focus

Clarification 1.4.2.1 The student demonstrates knowledge of the relevance of written content to the central idea or topic.

Clarification 1.4.2.2 The student demonstrates knowledge of compositional elements that depict the mode or achieve the purpose for writing.

Organization

Clarification 1.4.2.3 The student demonstrates knowledge of how the organization of writing affects the logical presentation of ideas and the unity of the piece.

Clarification 1.4.2.4 The student identifies appropriate compositional techniques for establishing relationships between and among ideas.

Support

Clarification 1.4.2.5 The student demonstrates knowledge of how the depth of support, including ideas that clarify, explain, or define, affects the sense of completeness or wholeness in writing.

Clarification 1.4.2.6 The student demonstrates knowledge of how a command of the language affects the quality of writing.

MC: multiple choice   **WP: writing prompt**

Strand B: Writing
Standard 1: The student uses writing processes effectively.

Benchmark LA.B.1.4.3 The student produces final documents that have been edited for: correct spelling; correct punctuation, including commas, colons, and common use of semicolons; correct capitalization; correct sentence formation; correct instances of possessives, subject/verb agreement, instances of noun/pronoun agreement, and the intentional use of fragments for effect; and correct formatting that appeals to readers, including appropriate use of a variety of graphics, tables, charts, and illustrations in both standard and innovative forms.

Note: This benchmark assesses the conventions portion of LA.B.1.4.2. Correct formatting and use of graphics are not assessed.

MC and WP

LA.B.1.4.3 Benchmark Clarifications

Conventions

Clarification 1.4.3.1 The student demonstrates knowledge of spelling conventions.

Clarification 1.4.3.2 The student demonstrates knowledge of punctuation conventions.

Clarification 1.4.3.3 The student demonstrates knowledge of correct capitalization.

Clarification 1.4.3.4 The student demonstrates knowledge of standard English usage.

Clarification 1.4.3.5 The student demonstrates knowledge of sentence structure.

Strand B: Writing
Standard 2: The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively.

Benchmark LA.B.2.4.1 The student writes text, notes, outlines, comments, and observations that demonstrate comprehension and synthesis of content, processes, and experiences from a variety of media.

(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)

Benchmark LA.B.2.4.2 The student organizes information using appropriate systems.

(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)

Benchmark LA.B.2.4.3 The student writes fluently for a variety of occasions, audiences, and purposes, making appropriate choices regarding style, tone, level of detail, and organization.

(Assessed with LA.B.1.4.2)

Benchmark LA.B.2.4.4 The student selects and uses a variety of electronic media, such as the Internet, information services, and desktop publishing software programs, to create, revise, retrieve, and verify information.

(Not assessed by FCAT Writing+)

MC: multiple choice   WP: writing prompt

Holistic Scoring Method Used in FCAT Writing

The holistic scoring method used to score FCAT Writing requires trained readers to evaluate the overall quality of each student's draft. Rather than focusing on any one aspect of writing, readers consider the integration of four writing elements: Focus, Organization, Support, and Conventions.

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

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.

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

Conventions refers to the punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure. These conventions are basic writing skills included in Florida's SSS.

The FCAT Writing holistic rubrics for Grades 4, 8, and 10 provide a description of the characteristics of writing at each score point. A clear relationship exists between the four writing elements listed above and the rubric score-point descriptions. Each score-point description includes language addressing each of the writing elements. The score points on the rubric range from 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest.

FCAT Writing Grade 4 Holistic Rubric

6 Points   The writing is focused on the topic, has a logical organizational pattern (including a beginning, middle, conclusion, and transitional devices), and has ample development of the supporting ideas. The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language including precision in word choice. Subject/verb agreement and verb and noun forms are generally correct. With few exceptions, the sentences are complete, except when fragments are used purposefully. Various sentence structures are used.

5 Points   The writing is focused on the topic with adequate development of the supporting ideas. There is an organizational pattern, although a few lapses may occur. The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness. Word choice is adequate but may lack precision. Most sentences are complete, although a few fragments may occur. There may be occasional errors in subject/verb agreement and in standard forms of verbs and nouns, but not enough to impede communication. The conventions of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are generally followed. Various sentence structures are used.

4 Points   The writing is generally focused on the topic, although it may contain some extraneous or loosely related information. An organizational pattern is evident, although lapses may occur. The paper demonstrates a sense of completeness or wholeness. In some areas of the response, the supporting ideas may contain specifics and details, while in other areas, the supporting ideas may not be developed. Word choice is generally adequate. Knowledge of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization is demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly. There has been an attempt to use a variety of sentence structures, although most are simple constructions.

3 Points   The writing is generally focused on the topic, although it may contain some extraneous or loosely related information. Although an organizational pattern has been attempted and some transitional devices have been used, lapses may occur. The paper may lack a sense of completeness or wholeness. Some of the supporting ideas may not be developed with specifics and details. Word choice is adequate but limited, predictable, and occasionally vague. Knowledge of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization is demonstrated, and commonly used words are usually spelled correctly. There has been an attempt to use a variety of sentence structures, although most are simple constructions.

2 Points   The writing may be slightly related to the topic or may offer little relevant information and few supporting ideas or examples. The writing that is relevant to the topic exhibits little evidence of an organizational pattern or use of transitional devices. Development of the supporting ideas may be inadequate or illogical. Word choice may be limited or immature. Frequent errors may occur in basic punctuation and capitalization, and commonly used words may frequently be misspelled. The sentence structure may be limited to simple constructions.

1 Point The writing may only minimally address the topic because there is little, if any, development of supporting ideas, and unrelated information may be included. The writing that is relevant to the topic does not exhibit an organizational pattern; few, if any, transitional devices are used to signal movement in the text. Supporting ideas may be sparse, and they are usually provided through lists, clichés, and limited or immature word choice. Frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure may impede communication. The sentence structure may be limited to simple constructions.

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.

FCAT Writing Grade 8 Holistic Rubric

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.

FCAT Writing Grade 10 Holistic Rubric

6 Points   The writing is focused and purposeful, and it reflects insight into the writing situation. The organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. Effective use of transitional devices contributes to a sense of completeness. The development of the support is substantial, specific, relevant, and concrete. The writer shows commitment to and involvement with the subject and may use creative writing strategies. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

5 Points   The writing is focused on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. Effective use of transitional devices contributes to a sense of completeness. The support is developed through ample use of specific details and examples. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, and there is variation in sentence structure. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

4 Points   The writing is focused on the topic and includes few, if any, loosely related ideas. An organizational pattern is apparent, and it is strengthened by the use of transitional devices. The support is consistently developed, but it may lack specificity. Word choice is adequate, and variation in sentence structure is demonstrated. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

3 Points   The writing is focused but may contain ideas that are loosely connected to the topic. An organizational pattern is demonstrated, but the response may lack a logical progression of ideas. Development of support may be uneven. Word choice is adequate, and some variation in sentence structure is demonstrated. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

2 Points   The writing addresses the topic but may lose focus by including extraneous or loosely related ideas. The organizational pattern usually includes a beginning, middle, and ending, but these elements may be brief. The development of the support may be erratic and nonspecific, and ideas may be repeated. Word choice may be limited, predictable, or vague. Errors may occur in the basic conventions of sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and punctuation, but commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

1 Point   The writing addresses the topic but may lose focus by including extraneous or loosely related ideas. The response may have an organizational pattern, but it may lack a sense of completeness or closure. There is little, if any, development of the supporting ideas, and the support may consist of generalizations or fragmentary lists. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and punctuation, 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 illegible;
- the response is written in a foreign language;
- the response is incomprehensible (words are arranged in such a way that no meaning is conveyed);
- the response contains an insufficient amount of writing addressing the prompt;
- 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.

Lessons Learned
FCAT RESOURCES

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. Note the dates on these publications when considering specific information provided about the FCAT program. While most of this information is still accurate, only the Sample Test Materials are updated annually. Some changes, such as the removal of the NRT and of multiple-choice questions in FCAT Writing, may not be reflected in earlier publications. Additional information about the FCAT program is available on the FCAT homepage of the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org.

General Information

- *About the FCAT Web Brochures* These Web-based brochures are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. http://fcat.fldoe.org/aboutfcat/english/index.html
- *Assessment & Accountability Briefing Book* This book provides an overview of Florida's assessment, school accountability, and teacher certification programs. http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatpub1.asp
- *FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators* This publication provides the first comprehensive look at the FCAT, including history, educator involvement, test content, test format, test development and construction, test administration, and test scoring and reporting. http://fcat.fldoe.org/handbk/fcathandbook.asp
- *FCAT Myths vs. Facts* This brochure addresses common concerns about the FCAT. It is also available in Spanish. http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatpub3.asp
- *Frequently Asked Questions about FCAT* This database provides answers to frequently asked questions about the FCAT program. http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatpub3.asp
- *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. http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatpub2.asp

FCAT Released Tests
Reading and Mathematics (Grades 3–10) and Science, Grade 8

Since 2005, the DOE has released previously used full tests of FCAT Reading, FCAT Mathematics, and FCAT Science. This Web-based release has included not only the tests but also several other important documents, including interactive test books, 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*. All materials are available on the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatrelease.asp.

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 10/11

Defining both the content and the format of the FCAT test questions, the *Specifications* primarily serve as guidelines for item writers and reviewers, but they also contain information for educators and the general public. These materials can be downloaded from the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp. The DOE will revise the *Specifications* following final revision of the Florida standards.

Florida Reads! Report on the 2007 FCAT Reading Released Items (Grades 4, 8 & 10)
Florida Solves! Report on the 2007 FCAT Mathematics Released Items (Grades 5, 8 & 10)
Florida Inquires! Report on the 2007 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 2007 student reports. Reports from 2006 and 2007 are posted to the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatflwrites.asp.

Florida Reads! Writes! Solves! Inquires! CD (FRWSI CD)

The *FRWSI* CD provides educators with the annotated papers used to train handscorers for the short-response items released on the FCAT Reading, Mathematics, and Science individual student reports and for the released FCAT Writing prompts. For each featured item, the CD provides the item as it appeared on the test, a top-score response for that item, images of student responses, and annotated training papers from the anchor set and one of the qualifying examinations required for potential scorers. This CD was delivered to districts in July 2008. The DOE does not plan to produce this CD for 2009.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2007 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4, Grade 8, and Grade 10

Each grade-level publication describes the content and application of the prompt portion of the 2007 FCAT Writing+ tests and offers suggestions for activities that may be helpful in preparing students for the draft writing assessment. Reports from 2006 and 2007 are posted to the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatflwrites.asp. The DOE does not plan to produce these print publications in 2008 and beyond, but much of the information related to scoring appears on the *2008 Florida Reads! Writes! Solves! Inquires! CD* distributed to districts in July 2008.

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

These booklets 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 website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatkeys.asp. The DOE does not plan to produce this publication after 2009.

Lessons Learned—FCAT SSS and Instructional Implications

The original *Lessons Learned* provides analyses of FCAT Reading, Writing, and Mathematics results based on state-level data through 2000. The next two volumes in the *Lessons Learned* series, *FCAT Reading Lessons Learned: 2001–2005 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications* and *FCAT Mathematics Lessons Learned: 2001–2005 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications*, were delivered to districts in November 2007; the *FCAT Science Lessons Learned: 2003–2006 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications* was delivered in September 2008. This publication, *FCAT Writing Lessons Learned: 2001–2008 Data Analyses and Instructional Implications*, is the fifth book in the *Lessons Learned* series. All *Lessons Learned* publications are available on the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/lessonslearned.asp.

Sample Test Materials for the FCAT
Reading and Mathematics, Grades 3–10
Science, Grades 5, 8, and 11

These materials are produced and distributed prior to test administration for teachers to use with students. The student sample questions booklet contains practice questions. The teacher sample answers booklet provides the correct answer, an explanation for the correct answer, and also indicates the assessed SSS benchmark. Beginning in 2010, the student booklet will be distributed to students and available online, but the teacher booklet will only be available online. These booklets are available in PDF format on the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatsmpl.asp.

Understanding FCAT Reports

This booklet provides information about the FCAT student, school, and district reports. The DOE does not plan to produce this publication after 2009. Previous versions of this booklet can be downloaded from the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatUnderstandReports.asp.

Online FCAT Data Resources

FCAT Scores and Reports for schools, districts, and the state for all test administrations are accessible from the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatscor.asp.

FCAT Technical Reports are available on the DOE website at http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcatpub5.asp.

The FCAT Demographic Results website, located at https://app1.fldoe.org/FCATDemographics, provides searches on school-, district-, and state-level data. The site currently hosts data for FCAT Reading and Mathematics (2000–2009), FCAT Science (2003–2009), and FCAT Writing (2001–2009).

School Grades and Accountability Reports are available on the DOE website at http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/.

Summer Fireworks

Which transition below should be added to the beginning of sentence 5 to connect it to sentence 4 ?

A. By all means
B. Believe it or not
C. Most of the time
D. In the olden days

starbursts. 7 There were often, however, gaps in the show as the workers lit the next set of fuses.

8 It was completely different ... safe, you should stay at least a quarter mile away from the firing s... of the fireworks were coordinated with music. 11 When the m... was soft and slow, the fireworks were also soft and slow with no loud explosions ... or large aerial starbursts. 12 When the music swelled loud ... and picked ... up in rhythm, the fireworks did, too, with huge starbursts, crisscrossing skyrockets, and loud explosions.

~continued~

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Florida
Recycles

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