



The Florida
Parental
Information
and
Resource
Center
of FND
www.floridapirc.org

The Florida Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) of FND

What does FCAT really mean?

Families

Communities

And

Teachers

It takes
← *THIS*
FCAT
for kids to
succeed on
THIS
FCAT! →

Florida

Comprehensive

Assessment

Test

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Florida PIRC of FND Staff:

We believe PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT is the key to a child's successful future!

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Why Do Florida's Kids Take FCAT? How Much Do You Know About FCAT? Let's See!

True or False...

- One reason Florida students take FCAT is because of requirements in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).
- State and federal laws require that all public schools assess students to see how they are learning compared to state educational standards, as well as other students nationwide.
- Florida's educational standards are named *the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*.
- Florida uses FCAT results to measure how well students are learning.
- Florida uses FCAT results to grade its schools, A–F.
- Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) is a tool in NCLB that schools are required to use to show learning gains for kids.
- FCAT results are put into four AYP categories, or subgroups: Students with Disabilities, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and Race/Ethnicity.
- FCAT results for each subgroup are used to determine the AYP level for schools, districts, and states.
- FCAT assesses kids on their academic skills, or how well they can do or figure out something.
- FCAT is not a test on memorization of content and information.
- FCAT expects our kids to be able to figure out the main idea, infer, reason out, and apply information about what they have read.
- FCAT expects our kids to solve problems and write about how they solved the problems.
- FCAT expects our kids to write essays from prompts.
- FCAT expects our kids to take skills and concepts and use them in real-life situations.
- FCAT assesses kids' skills in Reading, Writing, Math, and Science.
- Schools teach kids skills like critical thinking and reasoning, and teaches kids how to use these skills in everyday life.
- Schools cannot "teach to the test", but they can teach kids practice activities to help kids become familiar with the *format* of FCAT.
- In 2011, FCAT will begin to transition into FCAT 2.0.
- FCAT skills should be practiced all year long.
- FCAT preparation is not a one or two month process. FCAT preparation and skill practice should always be happening at home and at school.

So how did you do?

If you answered **TRUE** for every statement, you get an **A+!**

Note to Self...

*FCAT Skills are used everyday, and should be practiced everyday!

The Good 'Ole Days

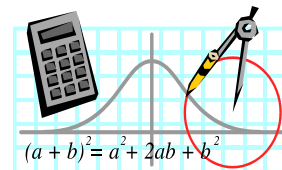
"Back in the day", when some of us "older" folks were in school, we didn't have to take FCAT. But we *did* take standardized tests and we had to use a #2 pencil to color in that little circle! The teacher would tell us to do our best and put our heads down when we were done. And after taking that test, most of us never knew how we did, why we took it, or for what our scores were used. No one looked at the results to see if the kids at our schools were making learning gains. Probably because the test was not made to measure how well we were learning! And the test wasn't based on our state's academic standards. (Did we even have standards?!) As much as some of us long for the good 'ole days, we now know how important it is to measure each child's learning gains, if we want to help prepare our kids to be successful in life.

FCAT is not like the standardized tests we took when we were in school! Today, kids do not just "color in a circle" with a #2 pencil and hope for the best. Teachers just don't wish us luck and then forget about the test until next year. Kids can't just go back to what they read and find the answer; kids have to use skills like critical thinking, reasoning, drawing conclusions, inferring, and deduction. Using these skills helps kids to figure out and explain their answers, so they can use these skills in other real-life situations. They can't just memorize information to be prepared for FCAT; kids have to know how to use skills in order to figure out the answers.

FCAT assesses kids' skills in Reading, Writing, Math, and Science. There are four different question types used on FCAT:



- **Multiple Choice:** requires critical thinking skills - the answer is not always literal or obvious. Kids need to reason and draw conclusions from information and facts to determine the correct answer.
- **Short Response:** kids need to use skills to describe how they will solve the problems.
- **Extended Response:** kids need to use skills to provide more description and details for problem solving.
- **Gridded Response:** requires kids to plot and draw their answers.



We know that FCAT is a very different type of test than what we took when we were in school! We also know that FCAT assesses kids' skills compared to Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, in order to determine areas where our kids may need additional help and support to be better prepared for successful futures.



Types of Questions on FCAT by Grade Level

Item Format	Sunshine State Standards			
	Reading	Math	Writing	Science
Essay	NA	NA	4, 8, 10	NA
Multiple-Choice	3-10, R	3-10, R	NA	5, 8, 11
Gridded-Response	NA	5-10, R	NA	8, 11
Short-Response	4, 8, 10	5, 8, 10	NA	NA
Extended-Response	4, 8, 10	5, 8, 10	NA	NA

Note to Self...
*Ask my kids
High Order
Questions
every day!



FCAT 2.0 – What's That?!

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® 2.0 (FCAT 2.0) is a criterion-referenced test (test that measures skills) that measures student achievement of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. The transition from FCAT to FCAT 2.0 will be phased in, with 2011 FCAT 2.0 Reading (grades 3-10) and Math (grades 3-8) being the first assessments to begin this transition. FCAT 2.0 Science (grades 5 and 8) will be administered to students for the first time in the spring of 2012.

How are the FCAT and FCAT 2.0 different?

The FCAT measures student achievement of the *Sunshine State Standards*, while the FCAT 2.0 measures student achievement of the *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*, which are more rigorous, thorough, and precise grade-level expectations.

The major differences between the FCAT 2.0 and FCAT are:

- Some test items on the Grades 3 and 4 FCAT 2.0 Math require the use of the provided ruler to answer questions, and may include measurements in either metric or customary units.
- The Grade 4 FCAT 2.0 Math will include multiple-choice test items and gridded-response test items.
- The gridded-response test items in FCAT 2.0 Math for grades 5 through 8 have different grids than those on the FCAT. The option for negative answers is now also included for grades 7 and 8.
- The FCAT 2.0 Reading in grades 3 through 10 will include more reading passages from the public domain, such as historical documents and works by classical authors.
- The FCAT 2.0 Reading in grades 3 through 10 will include more test items that require reasonable inferences and reasonable prior knowledge.
- FCAT 2.0 tests will not have any performance task items.

(Information courtesy of the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Assessment and School Performance.) For more information on FCAT and FCAT 2.0, please go to: www.fldoe.org/faq/default.asp ALL=Y&Dept=179&ID=1261

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How Can **PARENTS** Help Their Kids Practice FCAT Skills?

Some parents think they can't help their kids with skill building. Some parents think it takes a lot of time to practice skills—time they just don't have. Some parents think they have to be really smart and have diplomas, degrees, or licenses to help their kids. Some parents think they have to be able to speak and read English. If you believe any of these statements, then you are wrong! All parents can help their kids with skill building! No matter what language parents speak, how much money parents have, what degrees parents do or do not have, or how well parents can read, all parents can help their kids! Here's how!

Ask your kids questions!

Low Order Questions are questions that have factual, literal, often memorized answers. Low order questions usually do not require kids to do much critical thinking. For example: *What are the three colors in the American Flag?* (answer: red, white, and blue). Most kids already know this answer and would just have to recall a fact - they would not have to think very much. There is only ONE correct answer, which could be figured out just by looking at the American Flag.

High Order Questions are questions that require kids to use skills like critical thinking, reasoning, deliberating, comparing and contrasting, and justifying. Kids can't memorize answers to most high order questions. For example: *Why are the colors in the American Flag red, white, and blue?* Most kids would need to go back and read and research somewhat to figure out the answer, and then think about how to organize the information in a meaningful way to correctly explain the answer. Parents can help their kids build and practice skills by asking their kids High Order Questions as often as possible!

Here are some High Order Question starters:

- Why did...? (Example: Why did you decide you want to get your hair cut?)
- What if...? (Example: What if you get your hair cut and you don't like it?)
- How would you...? (Example: How would you get your hair cut if you had hair like Pittsburgh Steeler Strong Safety Troy Polamalu?)
- How is this the same as...? different from...? (Example: How is this haircut the same as and different from the haircut you want?)
- Which is better? Why? (Example: Which haircut is better? Why?)

Here are more ideas parents can try to help their kids practice FCAT skills:

- Ask your kids to explain what they are doing and learning in school.
- Know what your kids are doing for classwork and homework, so you can ask high order questions that will support their learning.
- Communicate with the school and teachers frequently.
- Read with your kids as often as possible—read to each other.
- Share ideas and get ideas from other parents!

OK. You say you already do these things.
Then how about these things... 



More Ideas on How Parents Can Help Their Kids Practice FCAT Skills!

Did you know that while you and your kids are doing everyday chores and tasks, you can reinforce FCAT skills?!
Ask High Order Questions and try some of these activities:

Note to Self...
*Practice FCAT Skills with my kids while doing chores and running errands!

Yard Work

Why do grass and plants grow faster in the summer?

In winter, how does covering plants help them not to freeze?

Why do plants and trees have to be pruned?
When is the best time of day to water the yard and plants? Why?



Cooking

How does a microwave work? Why can't metal be put in a microwave?

Which is better to use for cooking: electric or gas? Why? Why do we use different temperatures when cooking and baking food?

Have kids help with cooking and following recipes. If the recipe calls for a cup of something, give a half-cup measuring cup and have kids try to figure out how to convert it. Halve and double recipes. Use a variety of measuring cups and spoons.



Washing Dishes

Why is hot water used to wash and rinse dishes?

Why do we use this brand of dish soap?
Which is better: air drying or drying with a towel? Why?



Trash

Why is the trash picked up only on certain days?
How can we keep animals from getting into the trash?

What happens to our trash after it gets picked up?

How can we reduce our amount of trash?

Doing Laundry

Why are there many different knobs and settings on the washer and dryer?

How much detergent should be used for this size of a load of clothes?

How long will it take/should it take the clothes to wash? To dry?

What water temperature should be used? Why?



EVEN MORE ACTIVITIES!

Shopping

Categorize items when putting them in the cart and conveyer belt (frozen items, soaps, cans, etc.).

In the checkout line, read the magazine headlines and determine if they are fact, fiction, or opinion. Why are certain items sold at the checkout line, and others at the back of the store?

Subtract coupon amounts from product prices and compare to the prices of other brands of the same product. Use a calculator to total up prices as you shop. Before going shopping, make a shopping list with your kids. Read product labels and discuss nutritional information. Have kids push the cart and read the list while you get the items, and then switch places. Have kids put the shopping list in order of where the items are located in the aisles at the store. Why are the store items organized this way?



Playing Video Games

Ask high order questions about the games your kids are playing: What is the game about? What do you have to do to win? Why do you like playing this game? Why did this game get this rating? What does each rating mean? Play two or more player games with your kids (this also gives parents the opportunity to be sure the game content is appropriate for your kids!).



Watching TV and Movies

During commercials breaks, ask: What just happened in the show? What do you think will happen next? Then watch, check your predictions, and make new ones. Make a weekly schedule of the TV shows your family will watch, observing the "rules of the house" for the amount of time allowed for TV viewing. Ask: what's your favorite TV show Why? Watch commercials and discuss what is being sold and why it is advertised that way. Observe what types of commercials are shown during favorite shows, and compare and contrast why they are shown when they are (toy commercials during cartoons in the morning; sports drink commercials during sporting events, etc.).



Waiting Room

It seems we always have to wait when we go to the doctor's office! Why? What time do we have to leave in order to be at the appointment on time? How long did we wait before we were seen? Why do we make appointments when we usually aren't seen at those times? What questions should we ask the doctor?





Six Sundays for **FCAT** Success

Part of **The FL PIRC of FND's Faith Based Initiative**

WEEK ONE

Early Spring and second semester means it is "FCAT Season" for Florida students. Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. This test is an important part of your child's education, so encourage your child and reassure him/her of your support and prayers for this important test.

WEEK FOUR

Reading comprehension is key to success on FCAT. Take turns reading and discussing what was read with your child. Ask questions about what is being read *as you read*. Let reading become a part of family time when all family members are engaged in reading.

WEEK TWO

FCAT Writing is the first test given. Have your child practice writing in complete sentences on homework, etc. Parent and child can take turns dictating and writing sentences or a story. Personal experiences expand a child's knowledge and enhance a child's vocabulary and writing. Share your life stories with your child.

WEEK FIVE

Math is a vital part of FCAT and as parents we can demonstrate how math is a part of our everyday lives. Have your child help with the cooking, using various sizes and types of measuring tools. Go grocery shopping and have your child sort and categorize items, estimate costs, determine coupon savings, and compare prices for different brands of the same item.

WEEK THREE

FCAT requires your child to have a broad range of knowledge and a good understanding of vocabulary. Start asking your child high order questions: questions where he/she has to explain an answer, not just give a one word answer. Use the word *WHY*. Example: What is your favorite color? Why? Why is the American flag red, white, and blue?

WEEK SIX

FCAT is not a test for which your child can "cram", but parents can help their child prepare:

- ◇ Praise and award your child's efforts
- ◇ Stay in touch with teachers
- ◇ Ensure adequate rest and nutritious meals
- ◇ Ask high order questions
- ◇ Educate yourself about FCAT!

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT MATTERS!

WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO...

- PARENTS are the most significant and influential people in their kids' lives - PARENTS are their kids' first teachers.
- What PARENTS model for their kids speaks volumes! PARENTS must *model* what they want their kids to do.
- PARENTS must talk with and ask kids High Order Questions at every opportunity!



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