



## **A Letter to Parents and/or Guardians of Students in Grades 4 and 7**

In 2018, the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) will be administered in schools between October 1 and November 9, 2018.

The FSA is a set of annual tests assigned by the Ministry of Education. The results of these tests provide a snapshot of how students in Grades 4 and 7 are performing in relation to provincial standards in selected areas of reading comprehension, first draft writing, and mathematics (numeracy).

The reading comprehension and numeracy portions of the FSA consist of both multiple choice and written response questions. The writing portion of the FSA consists of two impromptu writing tasks, one longer piece and one shorter piece. The assessed skills are part of the foundation that students need for further development of their reading, writing, and numeracy skills and for future learning success.

The FSA provides a snapshot of specific skills only. It is not a thorough examination over time of all desired learning outcomes for students. The FSA is one of many measures used to determine how students are progressing and should be considered along with the ongoing assessments and professional judgments carried out by teachers. FSA scores are not part of the evaluations included in students' report cards.

Since 2001, the FSA has been scored with reference to the British Columbia Performance Standards for reading, writing and numeracy. These performance standards are internationally acknowledged as being comprehensive and age-appropriate. The FSA results are communicated at the provincial level, the school district level, and (confidentially) at the individual student level.

The main purpose of the FSA is to help the province, school districts, and schools evaluate a variety of approaches to providing effective educational programs for a diverse range of students. Close analysis and careful comparisons of FSA scores by professional educators, together with analysis of data from other sources, has enabled school districts to plan for improvements to educational programs. Small differences in results between grades, between parts of the assessment, or from school to school should not be regarded as significant. When comparing results between schools, a variety of demographic, social, and cultural factors need to be taken into account. The use of FSA results in ranking schools has no validity.

### **Administering the FSA**

The multiple-choice portions of the FSA will be done online, using computers at each school site. Students will be assisted in understanding the online multiple-choice application, and technical assistance will be provided at each school. The written response portions will be

marked within school districts. The marked written responses will be sent to the parents along with the individual student's results. The earlier administration of the FSA, the on-line marking of the multiple-choice portions, and the in-district marking of the written responses will provide the results in a more timely fashion than in past years.

### **Who Will Write the FSA?**

The Ministry of Education has made it clear to all Superintendents and all Boards of Education that writing of the FSA is expected for all students (including French Immersion) in Grades 4 and 7, with very few exceptions. School Principals will excuse from writing any students with special needs who have Individual Education Plans (IEP) documenting a disability that significantly impacts their performance and English as a Second Language (ESL) students with insufficient levels of English language proficiency to understand the test questions. In addition, Principals may excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, a lengthy illness, or other extenuating circumstances of similar seriousness. A parent's submission of a form letter to the Principal will not, of itself, constitute proof of extenuating circumstances.

I hope this information will clarify any questions you might have had about the Foundation Skills Assessment. If you require any further information concerning your children's writing of the FSA, please communicate directly with your School Principal. Additional information is available on the BC Ministry of Education's website at:

Parent Brochure: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/pdfs/assessment/fsabrochure.pdf>

Foundation Skills Assessment: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/>

Thank you for your ongoing support of the School District's efforts to provide the best possible educational programs for students in SD70 (Alberni).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Smyth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" and last name "Smyth" clearly distinguishable.

Greg Smyth  
Superintendent of Schools