

Parents Should Know: FSA Tests Are Not Useful



Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)

Teachers believe

The purpose of assessment is to support and promote learning.

- It is important to use a variety of methods to effectively assess student progress and meet student needs.
- Ongoing classroom assessment helps inform teaching and learning and allows students to demonstrate what they are learning in various ways.
- There are better ways to assess how the whole system is addressing the learning needs of individuals and groups. BC currently uses a variety of national and international assessments and there have been productive conversations provincially about alternatives to the FSAs.
- The FSA is not a reliable method of measuring individual progress.

Research says

Effective classroom assessment provides the best support for student learning. Large-scale assessment is only useful for broadly evaluating the educational system and its programs.

Large-scale testing may negatively affect student motivation and learning, with the worst effects being on low-achieving students who need the most support. Effects of testing may include:

- students focusing on short-term performance goals: “What’s on the test?”
- less successful students concluding they are unable to succeed and therefore reducing their effort.
- narrowing of instructional methods to anticipate what might be on the test.
- students, parents, and others equating test results to overall intelligence or capability.

When true learning has occurred, it will manifest itself in performance. The converse does not hold: mere performance on a test does not necessarily mean that learning has occurred. Learners can be taught how to score well on tests without much underlying learning. —Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning; Dunedin, New Zealand; March 2009

Let's stop
wasting
class time on
Foundation
Skills
Assessment
tests that
aren't
necessary



Teachers' concerns

- FSA tests have a negative impact on student motivation and learning.
- Teachers do not assess student learning only for use on report cards. The main purpose of classroom assessment is to support student learning, not simply to measure it.
- The blatant misuse of FSA testing results by the Fraser Institute, with its unscientific and misleading school rankings, leads to incorrect assumptions about how well schools are doing. These rankings have no credibility in the educational community.

One of the significant failings of the current Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) program is that the results are used to make judgments that go beyond its mandate.

—Final Report of the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment, May 2014



Teachers' actions

- Teachers are asking parents to withdraw their children from the participation in the Grade 4 and Grade 7 FSA assessments, according to Ministry of Education guidelines concerning exemptions.
- BC teachers have been actively working with the Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders on new ways to assess our public education system.
- Teachers will continue to use a range of assessment tools in their classrooms to support student learning. Assessing the learning of students in their classes allows teachers to monitor progress and adjust their teaching accordingly.
- Teachers will continue to actively speak out and work with parents and others in the education community to effect positive change.

Teachers don't want to spend valuable time endlessly preparing for "the test." They want to guide their students to ask insightful questions, offer well-reasoned opinions, and work diligently until they master content. Those are the types of classroom experiences that unleash students' ingenuity and reveal their understanding of the material. And that's the kind of learning that is being stamped out by the current pervasive fixation on testing. —Randi Weingarten, JD, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); "Fixing the Fixation on Testing" in Huffington Post; Feb. 21, 2012

You can help

- Parents can ask school principals to withdraw their children from the FSA tests, according to Ministry of Education guidelines concerning exemptions. There is a withdrawal letter and information at bctf.ca/fsa.aspx.
- Talk to teachers about the range of assessments they use to support learning.
- Join other parents in a conversation on the impacts of the FSA testing.

For further information: bctf.ca/fsa.aspx