

## FOUNDATION SKILLS ASSESSMENT (FSA) TESTING WHY TEACHERS ARE CONCERNED

The Ministry of Education has been administering Foundation Skills Assessment tests to students in Grades 4 and 7 since 2000. Teachers are so concerned about the negative effects of these tests on student learning that they are recommending parents withdraw their children from the tests.

### What is the FSA?

The Foundations Skills Assessment (FSA) is a set of annual provincial tests in reading comprehension, first draft writing, and some aspects of numeracy. These tests do not count toward students' marks in any way.

### When are the FSA tests?

This year FSA tests will be administered between February 4 and 15, 2008.

### Why are teachers concerned?

The FSA tests do not help teachers teach your child. Teachers work with students in classrooms every day, constantly assessing and supporting their learning. Teachers strive to meet the needs of every student and foster students' love of learning. These tests do not help students learn. In fact, they can have a negative effect on students' motivation and learning. These tests take valuable time away from teaching and learning. Hours and hours of practicing for the tests take time away from richer, more meaningful learning experiences. These tests are expensive. They take money away from priorities such as textbooks, support for students with special needs, science equipment, and library books.

### What can you do as a parent?

- Withdraw your child from the FSA tests by writing a letter to the school principal. Simply tear off and sign the sample letter on the back of this brochure.
- Raise concerns with the teachers and principal at your child's school.
- Talk with other parents about the negative effects of FSA tests.
- Bring the issue to your Parent Advisory Council.
- Raise concerns with your local school trustees.
- Go to the BCTF web site [bctf.ca/fsa.aspx](http://bctf.ca/fsa.aspx) for more information on teachers' concerns and the FSA tests.

### What is the alternative?

The Provincial Learning Assessment Program was previously used to assess curriculum coverage by testing a random but broad selection of students across the province. Students, schools, and districts were not identified, thereby preventing the indiscriminate and unfair practice of misleading and meaningless comparisons such as those that occur today. Teachers generally supported this model of curriculum assessment. And please note that teachers continually use classroom assessments to monitor their students' progress and to check their own professional practice.

Dear Principal,

Please excuse my child, \_\_\_\_\_, from all three Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) tests to be administered in February, 2008. I am concerned that this test will have negative effects on my child's learning, motivation, and self-esteem.

I am requesting that my child be exempt from the FSA tests. I prefer that my child be engaged in meaningful learning activities during the testing times.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Parent/guardian signature