



January 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians of Students in Grades 4 and 7

Our BC students are among the strongest in the world! Many international tests in science, math and reading have shown this to be true (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/nat_int_pubs.htm). To ensure that we continue to support successful learning, we routinely check our students' growth. An important part of this is the BC Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) that is given to students in grades 4 and 7 every year. It assesses basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing and numeracy. The FSA is not optional; all students are expected to participate unless they are among the few who are excused by principals because they lack sufficient English, have special learning needs, are ill, or are experiencing other special circumstances.

We need information in order to teach your children well. Our district, therefore, is committed to developing and using many effective instruments and practices that create a profile of each student's performance. The FSA provides a small but important snapshot of how well our students are doing in relation to Ministry standards. When studied together with classroom-based assessments, the FSA helps us make decisions about district and school programs, staffing, resources and professional learning.

Facts about FSA

1. FSA is a set of 3 assessments. It covers reading, writing and numeracy skills from the provincial curriculum. Part of it is electronic; part is hand-written.
2. The FSA is written in sections that are spread over 6 weeks. Most students require a total of 4 ½ hours of writing time. Students who need more time are allowed more time.
3. FSA scores are not letter grades or percentages; they do not count toward students' report card marks or promotion. This is not "high-stakes" testing.
4. The handwritten sections of your child's FSA are scored in Chilliwack, perhaps by your child's teacher.

Preparing your child to do his or her best on the FSA

1. Talk to your child about the FSA. Explain why we complete it and cheer him or her on. This is a chance for Chilliwack's students to show what they know!
2. Make sure your child gets lots of rest and good food.
3. Read through the information and help your child try the sample questions at <http://bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/info/welcome.htm>

The FSA provides us with important evidence of student learning. Encourage your child to participate with pride!

Sincerely

Corinne McCabe
Superintendent of Schools