



New Reading and Mathematics FCAT Test Item Specifications – Spring 2009 Release

What are Test Item Specifications?

The *FCAT Reading and Mathematics Test Item Specifications (Reading and Mathematics Specifications, or Specifications)* are documents produced by the Florida Department of Education in conjunction with our test development contractor that detail the item and design features of the reading and mathematics portions of the test, respectively. The *Specifications* are resource documents that all item writers and reviewers should use to define the content and format of test items and should serve as a source of information about FCAT design for educators and the general public.

How are the new Reading and Mathematics Specifications different from earlier versions?

Earlier versions of the *Reading and Mathematics Specifications* detailed item and design features of test items written to match the Sunshine State Standards in reading and mathematics that were adopted in 1996. The new *Reading and Mathematics Specifications* detail item and design features of test items that will be written to match the new Sunshine State Standards in reading and mathematics, which were adopted in 2007.

Why are the new FCAT Reading and Mathematics Specifications marked “DRAFT”?

The Department developed the *Specifications* and provided them to test item writers so test questions could be written for the 2010 field test and 2011 test administrations. Program components are still being considered at the policy level and are subject to change. Because these publications also provide valuable information to educators, the Department has made the draft versions available on the Web site.

Will test items written to the new Reading and Mathematics Specifications appear on the 2009 FCAT Reading and Mathematics assessments?

No. The 2009 FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests at all grades are composed only of items written to the earlier versions of the *Specifications* (released in January 2001 for FCAT Reading and in 2005 for FCAT Mathematics).

When will test items written to the new Reading and Mathematics Specifications appear on the FCAT?

The 2010 FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests will have field-test items written to the new *Specifications*, but the items that are used to calculate student scores will still be based on the earlier versions of the *Specifications* (released in January 2001 for FCAT Reading and in 2005 for FCAT Mathematics). In 2011, all items appearing on FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests will be written to the new *Specifications* (released in 2009).

If items written to the new Reading and Mathematics Specifications won't appear until field testing in 2010, why is the Department releasing these Specifications now?

The Department understands that districts need ample time to plan professional development as the new Sunshine State Standards are implemented in Florida's public schools. Making the newest versions of the *Reading and Mathematics Specifications*—even though they are still in draft format—available prior to the beginning of the school year in which these items will be field tested offers greater opportunity for students and teachers to become familiar with test material aligned to the new Sunshine State Standards.

Why do the new FCAT Reading and Mathematics Specifications include performance tasks when it was recently announced that performance tasks will not be included on FCAT Reading and Mathematics assessments in 2011 and beyond?

At the time that the draft versions of the *Specifications* were delivered to the Department by its interpretive products vendor, the decision to remove performance tasks had not yet been made. The decision to remove performance tasks will be reflected in future versions of revised *Specifications*. These revised *FCAT Reading and Mathematics Specifications* will be released at a date to be determined later.

When will new FCAT Science and Writing Test Item Specifications be released?

Currently, work is underway to develop *FCAT Science Test Item Specifications* aligned to the new Sunshine State Standards that were adopted in 2008. The Department anticipates releasing these *Specifications* in 2010. Field testing of new FCAT Science items will take place in 2011. In keeping with the timeline for the new FCAT Writing test mandated by Senate Bill 1908, passed during the 2008 legislative session, release of the new *FCAT Writing Test Item Specifications* is currently planned for 2011. Field testing of new FCAT Writing items will take place in 2012.