



School District #8 (Kootenay Lake) FSA Fact Sheet

This fact sheet has been prepared by Andy Leathwood, Director of Student Learning, to provide parents and other members of the school community with facts about the Foundation Skills Assessment. (FSA). The FSA is a required provincial assessment for all students in grades 4 and 7 who are attending a public school in B.C., except in rare circumstances as determined by the principal. For further information contact:

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What is FSA?

- Foundations Skills Assessment is a **standards-based** (not standardized) assessment of reading, writing and numeracy done in Grades 4 and 7.
- Test items are aligned with one or more learning outcomes from BC curriculum
- It measures performance over a period of years, not just grades 4 and 7.
- It is meant to be a “snapshot” measure of learning in the years leading up to the assessment.

How is the FSA developed?

- All the questions, tasks, scoring rubrics are written by practicing BC classroom teachers. There are 6 teams with 24 teachers from different regions of the province. Each item is written according to the test specifications and linked to learning outcomes.
- All items are field tested for validity and there is an extensive process to review the quality of the FSA, including a team of external assessment experts

What Happens in Other Provinces?

- All provinces in Canada and many other jurisdictions in the world have some level of provincial or large scale assessments
- Eg: Alberta: Provincial Achievement Tests in English, Math, Science and Social Studies in Grades 3, 6 and 9
- No province does it on a random sample basis – all students take the assessment
- There is little or no protests over assessments in other provinces.

What is the purpose of the FSA?

- FSA provides a system check regarding our progress in meeting the outcomes of provincial curriculum
- FSA provides parents with information about how their student does in relation to a provincial standard
- FSA provides schools and districts with information for large scale planning
- **EDUDATA** provides schools with an item-level analysis (how many students answered a question incorrectly) to use in school planning
- FSA is recognized as an example of Assessment OF Learning

Is the FSA optional?

- No, all students are expected to write FSA unless they meet clear criteria for being excused

Who might be excused?

- Students who have previously written the FSA
- Students with a disability that would significantly impact their performance even with adaptations
- ESL students who do not have sufficient English skills to understand the assessment tasks
- Students with IEP's who need extensive adaptations or such extended time periods that it would create a hardship for the student

Who decides who might be excused?

- The principal is responsible for identifying students who might be excused
- The principal must notify the parent/guardian if they intend to excuse a student
- The principal may also excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, a lengthy illness, or other extenuating circumstances

What is happening in other Districts?

- Participation rates are higher and parents are not asking principals to excuse students
- Students performance results have not declined provincially much as they have in SD#8
- Practice activities are completed
- Many teachers voluntarily score the FSA.

What are some concerns expressed about the FSA?

- The results of the FSA are used to rank elementary schools by the Fraser Institute– this is a totally invalid measure to rank schools, as it is only one of many pieces of information about the quality of a school (***This is the major concern and the Board of Education wrote of letter of protest last year***)
- There have been concerns expressed about the impact on instructional time (4.5 hours in each grade, or 9 hours in the first 10 years of school). There are about 800 hours of instruction in a school year. Time for assessment – tests, quizzes, exams and the FSA is actually counted as “instructional time”.
- It is suggested the test items are invalid, despite the fact they are written by BC teachers and linked to the learning outcomes
- There were initial technical difficulties related to doing the FSA electronically. The Ministry has added extra technical support this year
- Statements have been made that FSA “harms children”, but in 2009, the SD 8 DPAC wrote a letter refuting that claim. Principals report no substantiated claims of harm to a child.