

Ministry of Education
Open Letter to Parents
Jan. 14, 2010

Open Letter to Parents of Grade 4 and 7 Students:

If you have a child in the public school system, then you have probably heard about the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) for Grades 4 and 7. I want to take this opportunity to explain to parents why the provincial government believes this assessment is important for your children's future. The FSA is a set of reading, writing and numeracy tests, developed by B.C. teachers, administered each winter to B.C. students. The purpose of the FSA is to provide parents and teachers a "snapshot" of how students are performing across the province. The FSA provides important data so we can find out if student achievement is improving over time. It also allows us to track individual students to measure how they are doing in reading, writing and math problem solving. We know that there is a very strong correlation between a child's FSA scores and their future success in completing school. In other words, the earlier that we discover a student may be struggling, the faster teachers and principals can intervene to help them. For example, students who had met or exceeded expectations in Grade 7 reading achievement went on to obtain completion rates ranging from 90 to 100 per cent. Of those students who did not meet expectations for Grade 7 reading, only two-thirds went on to complete high school within the six-year time frame. As a parent, you have the right to know how your child is performing and the FSA is an essential tool to help students achieve positive educational outcomes. Every province in Canada uses assessment tools similar to the FSA, which has been endorsed by leading education experts. In short, FSA is part of the provincial government's accountability and responsibility to parents. It is an important building block for your child's future success as a student. Contrary to misinformation, the FSA is not optional - if you have any questions, please contact your child's principal. Also, a pamphlet on FSA and sample tests are available at www.gov.bc.ca/bced. Please ensure your child writes this year's FSA. It might be one of the most important steps you take in preparing them for their future.

Original Signed by/ Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Education
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