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INTERPRETING AND COMMUNICATING BRITISH COLUMBIA FOUNDATION SKILLS ASSESSMENT RESULTS





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1. Overview

1.1 About the Foundation Skills Assessment

Each spring, Grades 4, 7 and 10 students across British Columbia take part in the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), an assessment of reading comprehension, writing and numeracy.

FSA measures foundation skills that are embedded in the provincial curricula. Although the skills assessed by FSA are not confined to any single course or grade, they are most closely linked to prescribed learning outcomes in language arts and mathematics.

The main purpose of this assessment is to help the province, school districts, schools and school planning councils evaluate how well foundation skills are being addressed and make plans to improve student achievement. A secondary purpose is to provide teachers, students and parents or guardians with external information about student performance. The information provided by FSA can facilitate discussion at the provincial, district and school levels.

FSA is not designed to be comprehensive or diagnostic, but rather to provide a snapshot of how well students are attaining foundation skills in relation to provincial standards.

The information FSA offers is intended to complement, not replace, information gathered in the school or classroom about schools and individual students. Further information about FSA is available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa.

1.2 FSA Facts

- FSA is administered in all public schools and provincially funded independent schools each spring. Over 140,000 students in Grades 4, 7 and 10 take part.
- FSA takes students approximately four and a half hours to complete. Most schools administer the assessment in three separate sessions.
- The reading comprehension and numeracy components consist of multiple-choice and written-response questions. The writing component consists of two writing tasks – one extended (longer) piece and one focused (shorter) piece.

The tables of specification are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/development.htm.

Scoring guides for the writing and numeracy components are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/samples.htm.

- The assessment is developed in accordance with the tables of specification for each component of FSA and the prescribed learning outcomes in provincial curricula.
- English and French versions are available. Programme francophone students receive French versions of test materials and respond in French. All other students receive English versions of the test materials and respond in English. With the exception of the *Conseil scolaire francophone* (SD 93) and its schools, school and district

results are based on students who write the English version of the assessment.

- Each year, hundreds of teachers from across the province are involved in developing, field-testing, reviewing, marking and setting the standards for student performance. Advisory groups of subject-area and measurement specialists and provincial representatives of education organizations oversee the development of FSA and offer guidance in reporting and communicating its results.
- After each FSA administration, the Ministry of Education seeks feedback from teachers to improve the test instruments and administrative procedures. More than 1,800 teachers provide suggestions to the ministry.
- A provincial assessment advisory committee comprising education organizations provides advice to the Ministry of Education on the reporting and interpretation of FSA results, including communication with districts, schools, teachers, parents and students.

1.3 A Basis for Dialogue

The Foundation Skills Assessment gives schools, school planning councils, districts and parents or guardians a valuable and ongoing measure of how well students are performing in reading comprehension, writing and numeracy in relation to provincial standards.

Each year, FSA offers information that generates informal and formal dialogue about improving student achievement at the individual, school, district and provincial levels. This guide is provided to facilitate the dialogue and help people interpret FSA results in a meaningful and appropriate manner.



2. Provincial Standards: The Basis for Reporting FSA Results

2.1 Three Standards of Performance

The “**exceeds expectations**” standard is defined as:

The level of a student’s performance that is beyond that at which a teacher would say the student has fully met the expectations of the grade on this test. Student performance would be considered excellent for the grade on this test.

The “**meets expectations**” standard is defined as:

The level of performance at which a student meets the widely held expectations for the grade on this test.

The “**not yet within expectations**” standard is defined as:

On this assessment, the student did not demonstrate sufficient skill to meet expectations. A teacher would want to know more about the reasons for a student’s low performance.

Some students’ reports may indicate there was insufficient information to generate a student result on one or more components of the assessment (see *Missing or Insufficient Information* in Section 4.2.1).

2.2 Determining Standards for FSA

The following activities and processes contribute to setting appropriate standards for FSA.

- Each FSA test is developed by BC teachers from prescribed learning outcomes listed in the provincial curricula. These learning outcomes are the content standards for Kindergarten to Grade 12. They describe what BC students are expected to know and be able to do in all subject areas and grades.
- FSA content standards are set when the specifications for the assessment are developed. This is done by identifying the general categories of learning outcomes to be addressed in the assessment. The content standards for the assessment are communicated to schools prior to FSA administration.
- The curricular and FSA content standards and the ability range of BC students are used to develop individual test items and each test as a whole.

2. Provincial Standards: The Basis for Reporting FSA Results

- Standards for expected student performance are set when scoring guides are developed and examples of student work at each level of performance (exemplars) are selected.
- Standards are communicated to the more than 500 BC teachers who are trained to mark student responses. Reliable standards are maintained by checking the consistency with which marks are assigned during marking sessions.
- Statistical measurement techniques are employed to enable the performance on different years' tests to be compared against a common standard and improvement over time to be measured.
- Baselines were established at FSA 2000 for the reading comprehension and numeracy components, and at FSA 2001 for the writing component. Experienced teachers from across BC provided advice on the scores students need to receive to meet or exceed provincial expectations for each specific component.



3. Overview of FSA Results Reports

3.1 Provincial, District and School Results Reports

Provincial, district and school results on FSA are available to schools and districts early in the school year following the FSA writing session. This information is in the public domain and available on the FSA web site: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results/.

Provincial, District and School Results Reports contain the following information for Grades 4, 7 and 10:

- a year-to-year summary of results in reading comprehension, numeracy and writing (see Section 4.1.1)
- overall results in relation to provincial standards of performance (see Section 4.1.2)
- distribution of students' overall results over years (see Section 4.1.3)
- overall results of particular student populations according to provincial standards of performance (see Section 4.1.4)
- distribution of results for particular student populations (see Section 4.1.4)
- overall results for all schools/districts in the district/province (see Section 4.1.5)

3.2 Individual Student Results Reports

Individual student results are provided to schools in two formats:

- the *Individual Student Results* report
- the *School List of Individual Student Results*

The *Individual Student Results* report is produced for each student; it provides the student's individual results. Each fall, schools receive *Individual Student Results* reports and distribute them to individual students and their parents or guardians.

The *School List of Individual Student Results* is for the school's internal use.

This report contains confidential information protected under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. School staff may only share an individual student's results with the student and his or her parents or guardians.



4. Reviewing FSA Results Reports

4.1 School, District and Provincial Results Reports

4.1.1 Year-to-Year Summary

The first page of the School Results Report is divided into three parts: Performance, Participation and Equity.

Performance

School Name School Code - SD Number	Grade (4, 7 or 10)		Foundation Skills Assessment (year) Year-to-Year Summary			
Performance						
Proportion of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations						
Reading Comprehension	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	82 ± 4% *	68 ± 6%	75 ± 6%	86 ± 5%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	▼	—	—		
Compared to Province	—	▼	—	▲		
Writing	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	n/a	82 ± 8%	72 ± 6%	92 ± 6%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	n/a	—	▲		
Compared to Province	n/a	▼	▼	—		
Numeracy	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	77 ± 5%	68 ± 7%	73 ± 7%	83 ± 5%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	—	—	—		
Compared to Province	—	▼	▼	—		
<p>*The confidence interval (±) represents the range in which the results are likely to fall 90% of the time. Differences in proportions are not statistically significant when the ± confidence interval for each proportion overlaps.</p> <p>It should be possible for schools to explain when there have been large changes from one year to the next.</p>						
Participation**						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Enrolment**	54	45	47	54		
Participation (%)	49 (91%)	40 (89%)	44 (94%)	50 (93%)		
Excused (%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)		
Not-represented (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 (2%)		
Participation level	●	○	●	●		
Equity**= Performance + Participation						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Equity Index	n/a	n/a	n/a	■		
The equity index includes only particular groups of students: Male, Female, Aboriginal, English as a Second Language and French Immersion.						
Performance Comparisons		Participation levels		Equity index		
▲	Higher	●	High (higher than 95%)	■	High (higher than 7)	
—	Similar	●	Medium (90 - 95%)	■	Medium (5 - 7)	
▼	Lower	○	Low (lower than 90%)	□	Low (lower than 5)	
n/a	Not applicable					
**See page 7 for definitions and details.						
				SAMPLE		

Performance

The first part of page 1 contains the school’s proportions of students meeting and exceeding expectations for 2000 and on, for reading comprehension, writing and numeracy. FSA 2000 writing results are not included in this report because of major changes made to the assessment of writing in 2001.

Performance comparisons

- ▲ Higher
- Similar
- ▼ Lower
- n/a Not Applicable

Performance						
Proportion of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations						
Reading Comprehension	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	82 ± 4% *	68 ± 6%	75 ± 6%	86 ± 5%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	▼	—	—		
Compared to Province	—	▼	—	▲		
Writing	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	n/a	82 ± 8%	72 ± 6%	92 ± 6%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	n/a	—	▲		
Compared to Province	n/a	▼	▼	—		
Numeracy	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
School	77 ± 5%	68 ± 7%	73 ± 7%	83 ± 5%		
Compared to school's previous year	n/a	—	—	—		
Compared to Province	—	▼	▼	—		

*The confidence interval (±) represents the range in which the results are likely to fall 90% of the time. Differences in proportions are not statistically significant when the ± confidence interval for each proportion overlaps.

It should be possible for schools to explain when there have been large changes from one year to the next.

SAMPLE

Statistical significance is determined by mathematical formulae and considers such issues as reliability and sampling.

A 90% confidence interval is commonly used when discussing statistical significance and would indicate that on repeated administrations of the test, similar results would be obtained 9 times out of 10.

It is a matter of interpretation as to whether a difference in results has educational significance. A process such as the one suggested in Section 5.2.1, *In Comparison to Local Expectations*, may be useful in determining the educational significance of FSA results.

Confidence intervals are used to determine whether a single school’s FSA results for a particular year are statistically significantly higher or lower than its FSA results for another year. For reading comprehension and numeracy, FSA 2000 results may serve as a baseline against which to measure change over time. For writing, the baseline is the FSA 2001 results.

Schools and districts will undoubtedly face situations where a statistically significant difference is perceived to have little educational significance (i.e., the difference is very small), as well as situations where a difference that is perceived to have educational significance does not in fact have statistical significance. Professional judgment and consideration of other available data (e.g., trend data gathered over several years, comparable data gathered at the school or district levels) will play an important part in dealing with these situations.

Participation

The second part of page 1 provides information related to the school participation for previous and current years.

Participation**						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Enrolment**	54	45	47	54		
Participation (%)	49 (91%)	40 (89%)	44 (94%)	50 (93%)		
Excused (%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)		
Not-represented (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 (2%)		
Participation level	●	○	●	●		

SAMPLE

Participation levels

- High (higher than 95%)
- Medium (90 - 95%)
- Low (lower than 90%)

Enrolment is the number of students enrolled in February of the current school year.

Participated (%) is the number of students (and per cent of enrolment) who responded to at least one test question. Since the assessment is conducted in the spring, the participation rate is affected by increases or decreases in student enrolment since February. In some cases, it may be greater than 100%. In other cases, students may have responded, but not given enough information to be assessed against provincial standards.

Excused (%) indicates the number of students (and per cent of enrolment) excused from FSA by the school because they would be unable to respond meaningfully to the assessment instrument. Excused students are not counted in the participation number.

Not Represented (%) indicates the number of students who did not take the test and were not excused by the school.

Participation level is based on participation rates.

Equity

The third part of page 1 indicates the school's equity index for the current year.

Equity**= Performance + Participation						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Equity Index	n/a	n/a	n/a	■		

The equity index includes only particular groups of students: Male, Female, Aboriginal, English as a Second Language, and French Immersion.

SAMPLE

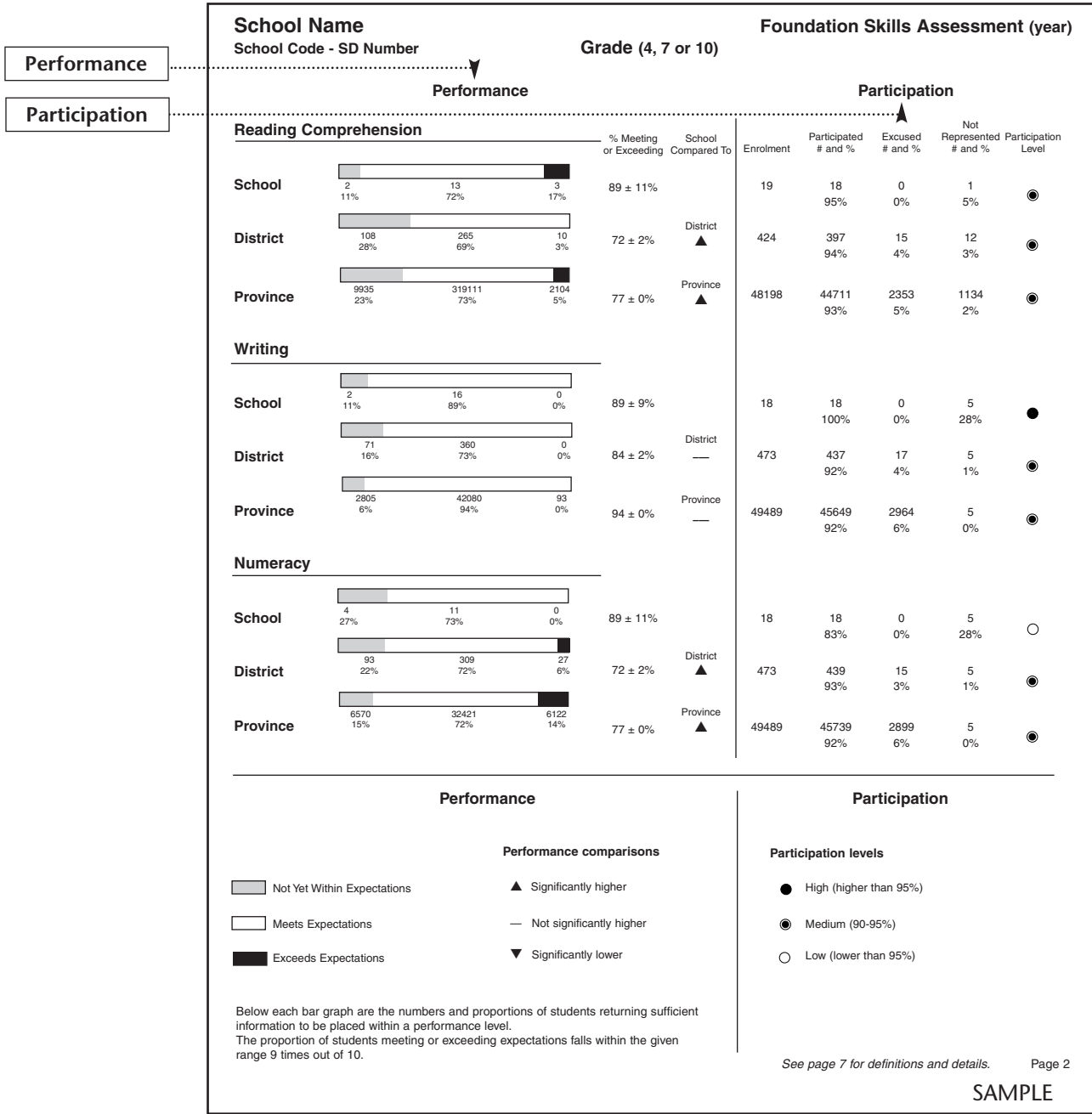
Equity index

- High (higher than 7)
- Medium (5 - 7)
- Low (lower than 5)

The equity index is a composite of performance and participation for particular groups of students. It compares the school's performance and participation of particular groups of students to the province's performance and participation for the same groups of students. The data from pages 4, 5 and 6 of the School Results Report is used to calculate the equity index. (More information on the index and on particular groups of students is provided in Section 4.1.4.)

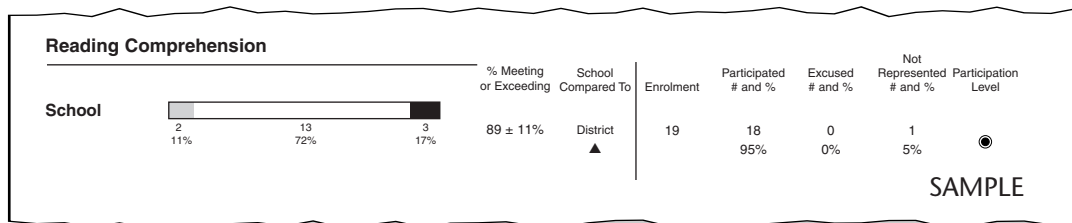
4.1.2 Number and Proportion of Students at Each Performance Level

Page 2 of the School Results Report is divided into two sections: Performance and Participation. It presents the overall reading comprehension, writing and numeracy results for the school, district and province in relation to provincial standards of performance.



Performance

The performance part of page 2 presents for each school, each district, and the province, the number and proportion of students who achieved the three levels of performance using the type of graph shown in the following example:



% Meeting or Exceeding is the number of students who either met or exceeded expectations divided by the total number of students assessed. In the example, this is $(13+3) \div (2+13+3) = 89\%$.

Any comparisons should take into consideration the confidence intervals reported with the proportion of students at a particular level.

For example:

A school report shows a proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations of $78\% \pm 2$ in numeracy for the current year.

The previous year's results show a proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations of $75\% \pm 4$ for the same component.

The proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations for the current year lies between 76% and 80%, whereas the proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations for the previous year lies between 71% and 79%.

Since the proportion for the current year overlaps the proportion of the previous year, this school is not doing statistically significantly better in comparison to the previous year.

The confidence interval for 89% of students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations is between 78% and 100% ($89\% \pm 11\%$).

Comparisons of the school's proportion of students meeting or exceeding expectations with the district's and the province's are significantly lower or higher when confidence intervals do not overlap.

Participation

This section provides information related to student participation for the current year. Definitions for terms used for participation are provided in Section 4.1.1.

4.1.4 Results and Distribution of Scores for Particular Groups

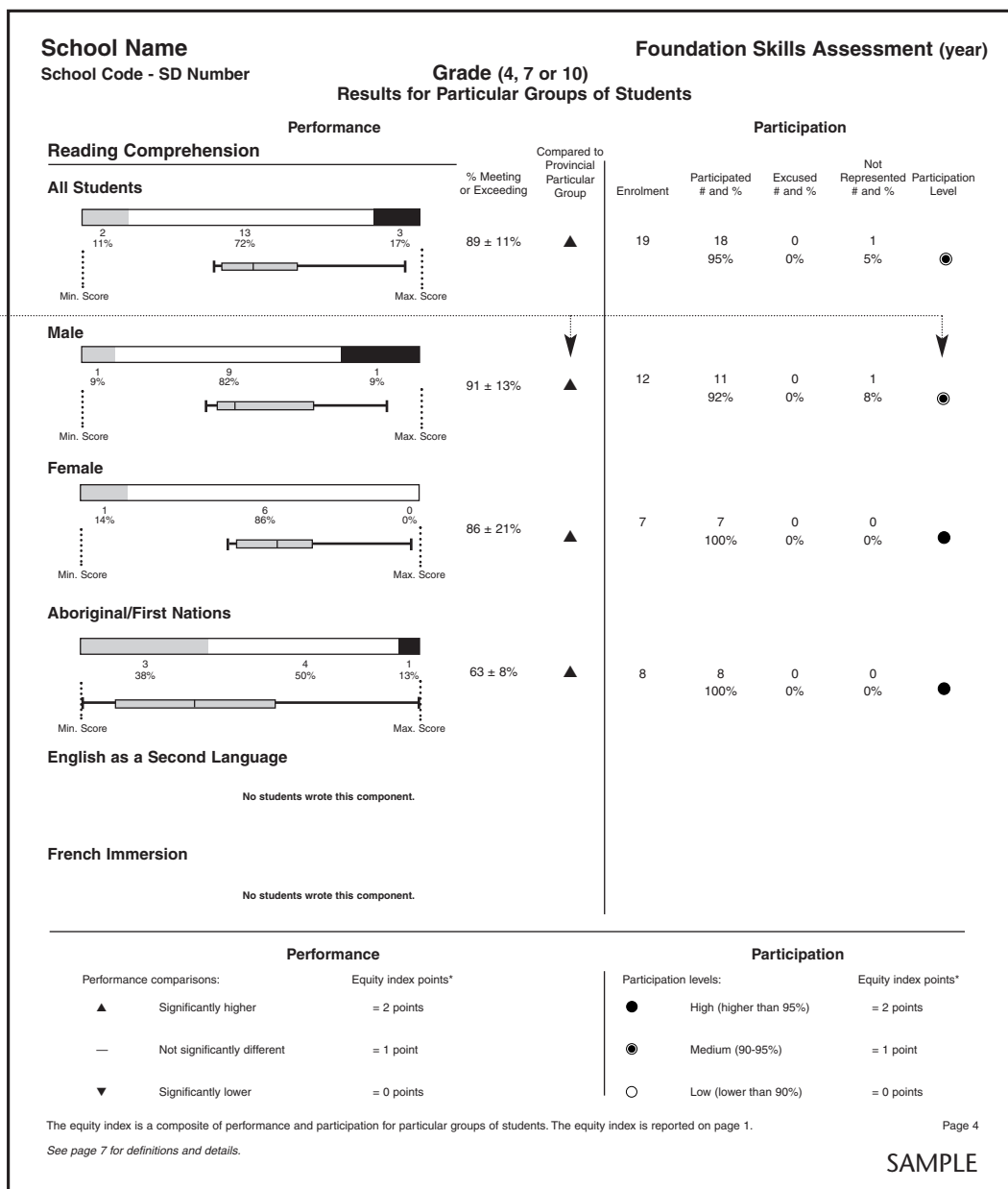
Pages 4 to 6 of the School Results Report display the overall reading comprehension, writing and numeracy results for particular groups of students in the school, district or province and the distribution of scores for these students.

Data used to calculate equity index

Male
 ▲ + ● = 3 pts
 2 + 1 = 3 pts

Female
 ▲ + ● = 4 pts
 2 + 2 = 4 pts

Aboriginal/First Nations
 ▲ + ● = 4 pts
 2 + 2 = 4 pts



SAMPLE

Data are provided for the following groups of students:

- All students
- Male
- Female
- Aboriginal/First Nations
- Students currently enrolled in an English as a Second Language program
- French Immersion

All data identifying particular groups of students are based on *Student-Level Data Collection Form 1701* submitted by schools for each student. Since the number of students in some groups may be quite small, caution must be taken when interpreting the results for particular groups of students. To ensure protection of privacy, results are not provided where there are fewer than five students in a group.

The Equity Index

The equity index balances the performance and participation of particular groups of students. A score above 7 is generally considered high. A score between 5 and 7 is generally considered medium. A score below 5 is generally considered low. Please see page 9 for more information.

Points are calculated for the performance and participation of each participating group of students (male, female, aboriginal/First Nations, English as a Second Language, French Immersion) for the reading, writing and numeracy components based on the comparison of their performance and participation to the respective provincial group.

Performance comparisons:

- ▲ = 2 points
- = 1 point
- ▼ = 0 points

Participation levels:

- = 2 points
- ◐ = 1 point
- = 0 points

To illustrate, here are points for a fictional school with male, female and aboriginal students (no English as a Second Language or French Immersion students):

	Performance				Participation			
	Male	Female	Aboriginal		Male	Female	Aboriginal	
Reading	▲	▲	▲	= 6 points	◐	●	●	= 5 points
Writing	▲	▼	—	= 3 points	◐	○	◐	= 2 points
Numeracy	▼	▼	▼	= 0 points	○	○	◐	= 2 points
				9 points				8 points

The school's total points are $9 + 8 = 17$ points.

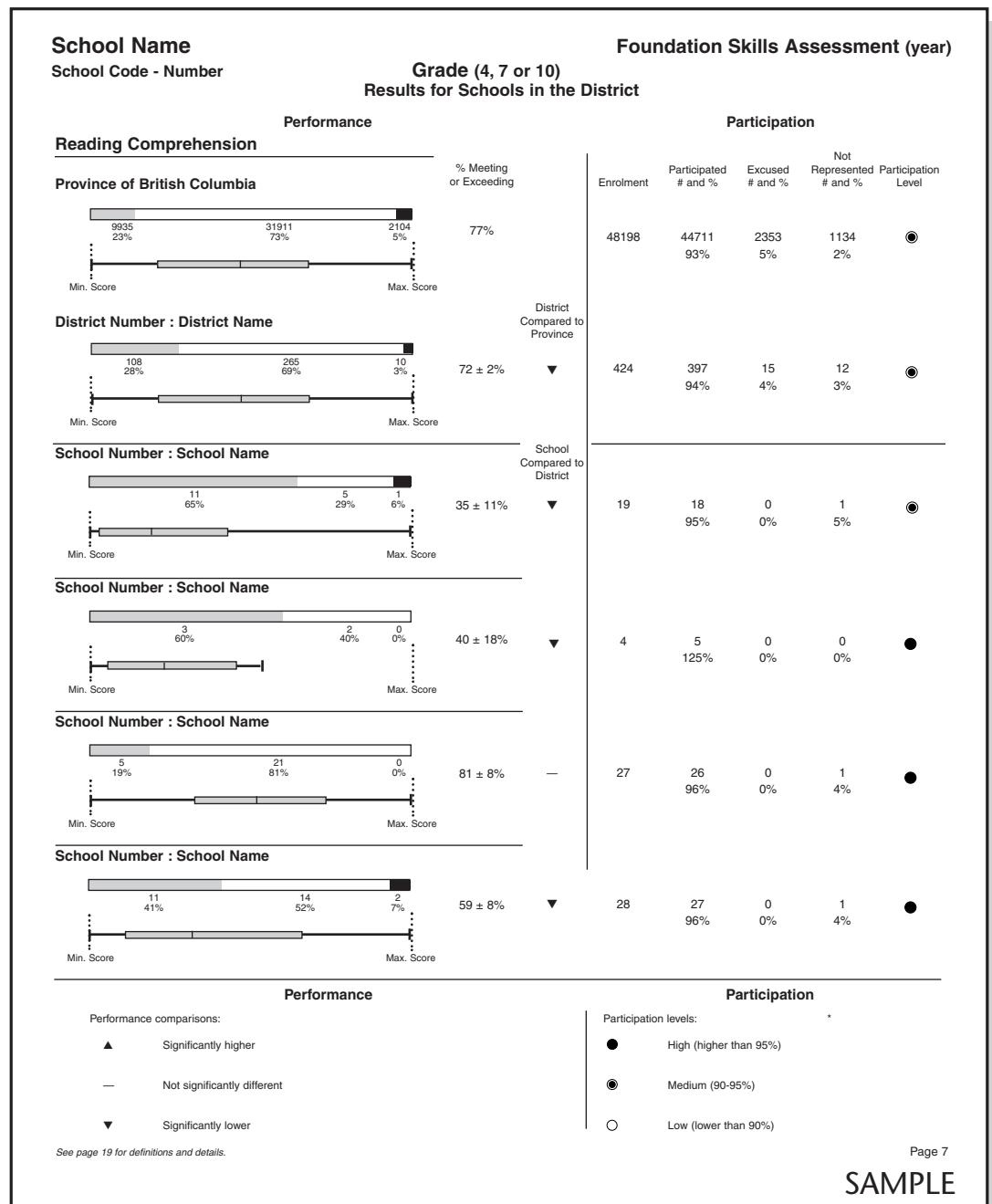
The total number of points is divided by the maximum possible number of points. In this example, the maximum possible number of points is 36 (18 points for performance + 18 points for participation). If the school had only two groups represented (e.g., male/female), the maximum number of points would be 12 points for performance and 12 points for participation.

The equity index is the total number of points divided by the maximum possible number of points, multiplied by 10.

Therefore, the equity index for this school is: $17 \div 36 \times 10 = 4.7$

4.1.5 Results for All Schools in the District/ All Districts in the Province

Page 7 of both the District Results Report and the Provincial Results Report present the overall reading comprehension, writing and numeracy results for all schools in a district (for the District Results Report) and all districts in the province (for the Provincial Results Report).



SAMPLE

4.2 Individual Student Results Reports

4.2.1 Individual Student Results Reports

The Individual Student Report indicates the performance of individual students on each component of FSA in terms of the standards set for the assessment (i.e., not yet within expectations, meets expectations and exceeds expectations). Supporting text is available in 14 different languages at the FSA web site at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/.

Grade (4, 7 or 10)		Foundation Skills Assessment (year) INDIVIDUAL STUDENT REPORT		
Personal Education Number:		2002/2003 School:		School Name
Student Name:		2003/2004 School:		School Name
Reading Comprehension	This student's performance on the reading comprehension component fell within the "Not Yet Within Expectations" category.			
	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	
Writing	This student's performance on the writing component fell between the "Not Yet Within Expectations" and "Meets Expectations" category.			
	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	
Numeracy	This student's performance on the numeracy component fell within the "Exceeds Expectations" category.			
	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	

SAMPLE

Early in the school year, *Individual Student Results* reports are available to schools via the ministry secure web site. This information is confidential and may be shared only with a given student and his or her parents or guardians.

Errors of Measurement in Calculating Individual Student Results

In order to provide a fair representation of how each student performed in relation to FSA standards, a confidence interval is calculated for each individual student score (representing one standard error of measurement).

The confidence interval is compared to the scores associated with each standard to determine the category in which the student falls. In instances where the confidence interval for an individual student overlaps two standard categories, student performance is reported, as shown for writing in the example above, as falling somewhere between the two categories (i.e., the student is on the "borderline").

Missing or Insufficient Information

In cases where there is missing or insufficient information, three different statements could be reported:

- *“This student did not write the reading comprehension/writing/numeracy component.”*
This statement is used for a student who did not take part in a portion of FSA.
- *“Insufficient information was obtained to accurately report on this student’s performance.”*
In some instances, students may not have responded to a sufficient number of items on the assessment to enable accurate results to be calculated.

This statement may also appear on a very limited number of student reports if the response required intervention during the marking process. For example, responses using profanity or depicting gratuitous violence are not marked. In every assessment there are also a handful of responses that, by law, must be referred to agencies responsible for child protection or law enforcement. Such responses are not marked.
- *“This student’s performance on the reading comprehension/numeracy component fell within (one of the three performance categories). Results are based on multiple-choice items only.”*
In a handful of cases, school and individual student results will be based on multiple-choice responses only. This would be a result of not being able to accurately match written-response and multiple-choice answer forms.

As stated in the interpretive text accompanying each individual report, it is important to consider that FSA is only one measure of how well a student is developing basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. Student results should be discussed in context with other information about the student gathered in the classroom.

Descriptions and examples of the reading comprehension, writing and numeracy skills expected to be demonstrated by students at various grade levels are provided in the BC Performance Standards. Further information on these resources is available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/.

4.2.2 School List of Individual Student Results

Early in the school year, the *School List of Individual Student Results* is available to schools via the ministry secure web site. Two lists are provided: one contains the results of every student at the school who wrote FSA the previous year; the other contains the results of students who wrote in other schools, but who are currently enrolled at the school.

PEN	Student Name	Reading			Writing			Numeracy		
		NYW	M	E	NYW	M	E	NYW	M	E
Grade (4, 7 or 10)										
PEN	Student Name									
PEN	Student Name									
PEN	Student Name									
PEN	Student Name				IND					
PEN	Student Name									
PEN	Student Name							DNW		
PEN	Student Name									
PEN	Student Name			MCO						
PEN	Student Name									

LEGEND

NYM Not Yet Within Expectations
M Meets Expectations
E Exceeds Expectations
MCO Multiple Choice Only (results are based on multiple-choice items only)
IND Insufficient Data
EXC Excused
DNW Did Not Write

A confidence interval is calculated for each individual student score. In cases where the confidence interval overlaps two categories, results are reported as falling somewhere between the two categories:

- Not Yet within Expectations / Meets Expectations
- Meets Expectations / Exceeds Expectations

SAMPLE

Considering the confidence intervals surrounding each student’s score and the likelihood that some students may fall somewhere between two categories of performance, it is important to note that individual results provided on the school lists cannot be aggregated to provide overall results for a given school. Persons wanting overall school results (e.g., the number of students not yet within expectations, meeting expectations and exceeding expectations) should refer to the *School Results Report*.

Schools may obtain results for newly enrolled students via the ministry secure web site.



5. Interpreting FSA Results

5.1 Key Contextual Considerations

As with all assessment data, it is important to place FSA results in context, carefully considering the characteristics of the assessment instrument and various factors that might influence the results.

When reviewing and interpreting FSA results, schools, school planning councils and districts should consider local factors that might influence their results. Schools, school planning councils and districts can expect to have significant control over some of these factors (e.g., participation rate on FSA, local policy, instructional strategies used) but not others (e.g., diversity of student population, socioeconomic variables, population mobility).

Consideration of relevant factors will help place FSA results in an appropriate context from which plans can be made for improvement. District and school profiles providing additional information about districts and schools are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results. Other helpful information may include the school district accountability contract, at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc_contracts, and the school district and school satisfaction survey, at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/.

Characteristics of FSA Results

When reviewing FSA results, the following points should be kept in mind:

- The assessment is designed to measure cumulative learning for grade groupings. For example, students use skills they have gained from Kindergarten through the spring of Grade 4 when they complete the Grade 4 assessment.
- FSA is not designed to be comprehensive or diagnostic, but rather to provide a snapshot of how well students are attaining important foundation skills in relation to provincial standards.
- FSA results are meant to complement other information gathered in the district, school or classroom.
- Reading comprehension and numeracy results are based on the total marks awarded to each student on both multiple-choice and written-response questions.
- Writing results are based on two samples of student work: one extended writing task and one shorter, focused task. Student results should not be interpreted as representing final, polished work.

5.2 Approaches for Interpreting FSA Results

Schools, school planning councils and districts interpret FSA results in three general ways:

- in comparison to local expectations
- in relation to past performance
- against external references

Each comparison provides unique information that will facilitate discussion on how well reading comprehension, writing and numeracy skills are being addressed in the school or district.

5.2.1 In Comparison to Local Expectations

It is important to discuss and interpret FSA results in their proper context.

When a group of people look at a school's or district's assessment results, it is reasonable to expect that individuals may interpret the same results differently. A goal of any interpretation process involving more than one person is to reach a common understanding of the issues (e.g., identifying areas of strength, areas in need of improvement and steps that should be taken to maintain or improve student performance). This understanding may be achieved in many ways. Approaches that work in one community may not necessarily be appropriate in another setting.

Questions to Consider

The interpretation of a school's or district's FSA results may take a variety of forms, depending on the needs and circumstances of the school or district. Before engaging in the interpretation process, consider the following questions:

- Who should be involved in the interpretation process (e.g., school planning councils, parents, students, school administrators, teachers, teaching-assistants, resource teachers, district personnel, trustees, members of the local community)?
- How does this interpretation fit into existing school or district evaluation activities (e.g., school improvement plans, district assessments, departmental reviews)?
- What kinds of information would help provide a meaningful context to the school's or district's assessment results (e.g., recent enrolment statistics, student attendance records, school report card results, grade-to-grade transitions, graduation rates, other assessment or examination results for the school or district)?

5.2.2 In Relation to Past Performance

One aim of FSA is to measure change over time. This information will help schools and districts identify whether changes in their practices are having any effect.

To help gauge changes in student performance, schools and districts are encouraged to make plans to monitor their FSA results over time, keeping in mind that several years of data are needed to determine whether their performance on FSA is improving, declining or staying the same.

Changes over time may be due to a combination of factors, some of which include:

- “cohort effect” (characteristics of the students being assessed in a given year)
- staff turnover
- local/world events

To assist in monitoring FSA results over time, each year’s assessments are placed on comparable scales, using FSA 2000 as a baseline for reading comprehension and numeracy, and FSA 2001 as a baseline for writing.

5.2.3 Against External Comparisons

To provide an external reference against which performance may be compared, schools and districts are encouraged to compare their performance to the performance of other districts in the province and, in the case of schools, to other schools. Section 4.1 of this guide outlines how this comparative information is presented in FSA results reports.

As a further means of external comparison, it is desirable to consider districts and schools judged to be similar to the district or school of interest. The purpose of this type of comparison is to identify high-performing schools or districts with similar characteristics that may wish to share strategies to help improve student learning. To assist in this regard, the *Provincial Results Report* lists the results of all districts in the province; likewise, each *District Results Report* lists the results of all schools in the given district. All school and district results are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results/.

One way of interpreting school results is to rank order them from highest to lowest and to claim that the schools ranked higher are somehow ‘better’ than the schools ranked lower. However, this may lead to misinterpretation.

All schools should aim to improve student achievement over time. Year-to-year information is found on the first page of the *School Results Report* for the school.

5.3 Communicating Individual Students' FSA Results

Individual student results must be shared with parents or guardians prior to September 30. It is also appropriate to review results with students.

Schools may determine the method and timing of distribution as long as parents receive the results report prior to September 30. Parents should not be required to ask specifically for the results nor to visit the school in order to obtain them.

Results should be provided in context. Other information about FSA, classroom assessment of the student's performance and the school's plans for improving student achievement can help provide this context.