

September 24, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians of students in grades 4 and 7,

Re: Foundation Skills Assessment – October 2021

The [Foundation Skills Assessment](#) (FSA) is an annual province-wide assessment of students' academic skills, and provides a snapshot of students' foundational skills in literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy. All students in grades 4 and 7, including French Immersion students, are required by the Ministry of Education to write the FSA.

The results of the FSA are communicated at the provincial and school district levels, as well as confidentially at the individual student level to parents/guardians. The results are a tool that can be used along with the many other assessment approaches teachers use in the classroom to support student learning; however, they are not part of formal student evaluations and are not included in student report cards.

The FSA will be administered at schools between **October 4 and October 29, 2021**. As explained in the parent/guardian brochure, available in [English](#) and [French](#), the assessment includes online and written questions, a group activity and a reflection exercise. The written responses will be marked within the school district by our teachers and administrators.

Since 2013, a protocol agreement between the BC Teachers' Federation and the BC Public School Employers' Association enables local teachers' unions to distribute information about the FSA to parents/guardians. The protocol outlines parameters to this distribution of information, including materials distributed to parents/guardians by teachers via students shall be in sealed envelopes and clearly identify that they are union produced and distributed. The union materials parents/guardians receive often indicate that if a parent/guardian returns to the school either a signed letter or the tear-off section of the union material stating they have a preference for their child to not write the test, that the child will be excused from the assessment. However, letters and/or forms from parents/guardians indicating they have a preference for their child to not write the FSA are not sufficient to excuse a student.

There are few Ministry exemptions to writing this assessment. School principals will excuse students whose personalized learning standards significantly differ from provincial curricular standards, and whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) documents a learning need that precludes the student from writing the FSA. English Language Learning (ELL) students who have not reached a level of proficiency sufficient to provide meaningful responses to the literacy or numeracy sections of the FSA are also excused. In addition, principals may excuse a student in the event of a family emergency, lengthy illness, or other extenuating circumstances of similar seriousness. A parent's/guardian's submission of a letter to the principal will not, of itself, constitute proof of extenuating circumstances.

I hope this information will clarify any questions you may have about the Foundation Skills Assessment. If you require additional information, please communicate directly with your school principal.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our efforts to provide students with the best possible educational programming.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Board of Education
Executive Committee
Principals and Vice Principals