

Ferguson Senior High School

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 2009

JANE GARRAUX
PRINCIPAL

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

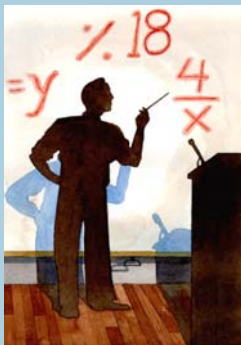
All public school students in grades 3-10 are required to take the FCAT.

FCAT test dates:

SSS - Reading: March 10

SSS - Math: March 11

SSS - Science: March 12



Ferguson Senior High School Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test FCAT

Here is an information guide that provides you with helpful suggestions in preparing your child for the FCAT.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is part of Florida's overall plan to increase student achievement by implementing higher standards for public school students. It measures selected benchmarks in reading, writing, mathematics, and science from the Sunshine State Standards (SSS); and is called a criterion-referenced test (CRT).

The FCAT is a test given to students in Florida to measure what they know and are able to accomplish in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The test is part of Florida's plan to improve student achievement. It measures challenging content standards, which are entitled the Sunshine State Standards. The Sunshine State Standards are broad statements that describe what a child should know and be able to do at every grade level. These standards cover seven content areas: social studies, science, language arts, health/physical education, the arts, foreign language and mathematics. The standards are divided into smaller units called "benchmarks," which outline the specific content, knowledge, and skills that students are expected to learn in school. Each student's performance on the FCAT Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Science tests indicates his or her progress in reaching these benchmarks.

The primary purposes of the statewide assessment program are to provide information needed to improve the public schools and to inform parents of the educational progress of their children. The program is designed to:

- Assess the annual learning gains of each student toward achieving the Sunshine State Standards appropriate for the student's grade level.
- Provide data for making decisions regarding school accountability and recognition.
- Assess how well educational goals and performance standards are met at the school, district, and state levels.
- Identify the educational strengths and needs of the students and the readiness of students to be promoted to the next grade level or to graduate from high school with a standard high school diploma.
- Provide information to aid in the evaluation and development of educational programs and policies.
- Provide information on the performance of Florida students compared with others across the United States.



*"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task."
Vince Lombardi*

Here are everyday activities that can help increase reading comprehension and language arts skills. These activities can be part of the daily routine and do not require any special equipment or materials, and they can easily become part of your family's daily routine at home.

Reading is a skill that only improves with practice. There is **NO** substitute. The FCAT for reading does not test intelligence or prior knowledge; rather, it assesses careful reading and critical thinking skills. The answers are found in the passages the student reads during the test. The most effective means of increasing a student's reading comprehension skills is to encourage free or recreational reading. Help your child develop a positive attitude toward reading in the following ways:

- Maintain a relaxed attitude toward your child's reading.
- Provide high interest, low difficulty reading material that match your child's interest.
- Model reading by making sure your child sees you reading on a regular basis.

For immediate reading improvement, encourage your child to do the following for oral reading:

- Practice reading aloud easy books or articles. Listen for a smooth, conversational pace. Fluent reading follows these guidelines:
 - stop at pauses, pause at commas, and don't stop

or pause until you come to a punctuation mark.

- As your child reads aloud, he/she should not point at each word; rather, he/she should keep pace by moving a finger steadily beneath each line while reading at a relaxed, conversational speed.
- Have your child re-read the same section aloud until fluency is achieved.

For immediate reading improvement, encourage your child to do the following for silent reading:

- Students should not move their lips when reading silently; this slows the reading pace and limits comprehension.
- Only the student's eyes should move across each line of text. The head should not move from side to side with the eyes; moving the head slows the reading pace and limits comprehension.
- On tests such as the FCAT, a student should read first through the entire passage quickly for the overall comprehension. Once the student understands what the passage is all about, then he/she can return to the passage to skim for answers as often as needed.

Checklist for Parents: How can parents help their child be successful?

- Make sure your child attends school regularly. The more effort your child puts into learning, the more likely he or she will perform well on tests.
- Meets with your child's teacher to discuss his or her progress. Ask teachers to suggest ways to help the child prepare for tests.
- Encourage your child, especially when he/she does well. A positive outlook helps children do their best.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for

studying at home.

- Make sure that your child is well rested on school days, especially on test days.
- Give your child a well-rounded diet. This will help ensure a healthy body and a healthy, active mind.
- Provide books and magazines for your child. By reading new materials, your child will learn new words that might appear on the tests.
- Don't be too anxious about your child's test scores. The best advice you can give your child is to "just relax and do your best".





"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task."

Vince Lombardi



TEST ANXIETY

THE FIVE CAUSES OF TEST ANXIETY:

Test anxiety is a learned behavior.

The association of grades and personal worth causes test anxiety.

Test anxiety can come from a feeling of a lack of control.

Test anxiety can be caused by a teacher embarrassing a student.

Being placed into course above your ability can cause text anxiety.

Test anxiety develops from fear of alienation from parents, family and friends due to poor grades.

Test anxiety can be caused by timed tests and the fear of not finishing the test, even if one can do all the problems.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEST ANXIETY:

1. One type of test anxiety is somatic, which is what you are feeling.
2. The second type of test anxiety is cognitive, which is what you are thinking.

HOW TO REDUCE TEST ANXIETY

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

There are both short-term and long-term relaxation response techniques that help control emotional (somatic) and worry (cognitive) test anxiety. Once these procedures are learned, the relaxation response will take the place of an anxiety response.

THE TENSING AND DIFFERENTIAL RELAXATION METHOD

1. Put your feet flat on the floor.
2. With your hands, grab underneath the chair.
3. Push down with your feet and pull up on your chair at the same time for about five seconds.
4. Relax for five to ten seconds.
5. Repeat the procedure two or three times.
6. Relax all your muscles except the ones that are actually used to take the test.



"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task."

Vince Lombardi



THE PALMING METHOD

1. Close and cover your eyes using the center of the palms of your hands.
2. Prevent your hands from touching your eyes by resting the lower parts of your palms on your cheekbones and placing your fingers on your forehead. Your eyeballs must not be touched, rubbed or handled in any way.
3. Think of some real or imaginary relaxing scene. Mentally visualize this scene. Picture the scene as if you were actually there, looking through your own eyes.
4. Visualize this relaxing scene for one to two minutes.

DEEP BREATHING

1. Sit straight up in your chair in a good posture position.
2. Slowly inhale through your nose.
3. As your inhale, first fill the lower section of your lungs and work your way up to the upper part of your lungs.
4. Hold your breath for a few seconds.
5. Exhale slowly through your mouth.
6. Wait a few seconds and repeat the cycle.

LONG-TERM RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

The cue-controlled relaxation response technique is the best long-term relaxation technique. Cue-controlled relaxation means you can induce your own relaxation based on repeating certain cue words to yourself. In essence, you are taught to relax and then silently repeat cue words, such as "I am relaxed." After enough practice you can relax during tests.

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

Negative self-talk (cognitive anxiety) is defined as the negative statements you tell yourself before and during tests. Negative self-talk causes students to lose confidence and to give up on tests. Students need to change their negative self-talk to positive self-talk without making unrealistic statements. During tests, positive self-talk can build confidence and decrease your test anxiety. Using positive self-talk before a test can help reduce your test anxiety and improve your grades.

EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE SELF-TALK:

"No matter what I do, I will not pass the course."

"I am no good at math, so why should I try?"

"I cannot remember the answers or I have forgotten how to do the problems. I am going to fail this test."

"I failed this course last semester, and I am going to flunk out again this semester."



"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task."
Vince Lombardi

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK

"I failed the course last semester, but I can now use my study/math skills to pass this course."

"I went blank on the last test, but I now know how to reduce test anxiety."

"I know that with hard work, I will pass math."

"I prepared for this test and will do the best I can."

"I feel good about my self and my abilities. I am not going to worry about that difficult problem. I'm going to use all my test time and check for careless errors. Even if I don't get the grade I want on this test, it is not the end of the world."

THOUGHT-STOPPING TECHNIQUES

Some students have difficulty stopping their negative self-talk. These students cannot just tell themselves to eliminate those thoughts. These students need to use a thought-stopping technique to overcome their worry and become relaxed.

To stop your thoughts in the classroom or during a test, silently shout to yourself "Stop" or "Stop thinking about that." After our *silent shout*, either relax yourself or repeat one of your positive self-talk statements. You may have to *shout* to yourself several times during a test or while doing homework to control negative self-talk. After every shout, use a different relaxation technique/scene or positive self-talk statement.

Thought stopping works because it interrupts the worry response before it can cause high anxiety or negative emotions. During the interruption, you can replace negative self-talk with positive self-talk statements or relaxation. Students with high worry anxiety should practice this technique three days to one week before taking a test. Contact the campus counselor if you have additional questions about how to reduce test anxiety/negative self-talk statements.

REFERENCE:

<http://www.wvup.edu/Academics/moretestanxietytips.htm>

