

FCPS: BASIC SKILLS ARE ESSENTIAL

Students must learn many things if they are to succeed in our modern world, but none of these things matter if students do not master basic skills. Fairfax County teachers know this. FCPS provides a well-defined curriculum for every grade level—a curriculum that meets or exceeds state standards.

Here are examples of basic skills that students learn:

- All students become skilled readers and writers using both phonics and comprehension strategies. Third graders write and revise stories, letters, and reports, then edit for grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
- Fifth graders use glossaries, dictionaries, and thesauri to find the meanings of unfamiliar words in their reading. They learn to use library and technology resources in the media center.
- Eighth graders read short stories, essays, speeches, poems, plays, and novels. They learn word origins, derivations, and idioms and use analogies, metaphors, and similes to extend their vocabulary.
- In math, third graders add, subtract, multiply, tell time, and measure length, volume, capacity, and temperature.
- Fifth graders classify geometric shapes and understand numbers up to billions; organize, reorder, and interpret results of simple probability experiments; and solve equations.
- Eighth graders become proficient in algebra, geometry, data analysis, and statistics.

How well have Fairfax County students mastered basic skills?

- More than 87 percent of all FCPS third, fifth, and eighth graders passed the math Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in 2005.
- The passing rate for the SOL English exam for third graders has risen from 68 percent (1998) to 79 percent (2005). Fifth graders have increased their pass rate for the writing exam from 80 percent (1998) to 94 percent (2005).
- On the 2005 Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), FCPS students scored their highest ever (1114), 86 points above the national average.
- 23,573 students took the Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 2005, up from 21,213 in 2004. The number of scores of three or above rose to 15,809, up from 14,190 in 2004.

Complete information about the FCPS Program of Studies is available at:
www.fcps.edu/DIS/pos/index.htm.