

For the FCAT, FCAT 2.0 and the District's Diagnostic Tests, it is possible for students to have the same number of questions answered correctly, but receive different final test scores and Levels!

How, you may ask, is this possible?

Most of us are familiar with tests that use number-correct scoring. This scoring method considers only how many questions students answer correctly when determining their final test score. Such a final test score is often reported in percent of questions answered correctly.

However, FCAT, FCAT 2.0 and the District's Diagnostic Tests determine student final test scores using Item Response Theory (IRT). IRT considers the fact that test questions vary in the following characteristics:

- difficulty (the percentage of students answering the question correctly)
- difference between the percent of high and low scoring students answering a question correctly
- probability that low-scoring students answer a multiple-choice question correctly (There is always some chance of guessing the answer to a multiple-choice question.)

In IRT, student final test scores are based not only on the number of questions answered correctly, but also on the pattern of questions answered correctly - with some items counting more than others as a result of the above question characteristics.¹ For example, students who answered correctly the same number of questions,

- and who answered correctly exactly the same questions receive the same final test score;
- but students who answered correctly different questions receive a different final test score.

As a result, an IRT final test score is not reported as a percent correct score. It is reported as a scale score.

¹ The final test score does not consider the incorrect answer choice or the cognitive complexity of the question.