

PREPARING FOR THE FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXAM (FELE) 3.0: HELPFUL TIPS

SUBTEST 3: SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

WRITTEN PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (WPA)



This resource booklet for
FELE 3.0 Subtest 3: Systems Leadership
Written Performance Assessment (WPA)
Effective Communication Practices

Is one of several FELE 3.0 helpful tip guides prepared for
the Florida Association of Professors of Educational
Leadership (FAPEL)

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January 2019

The Significance of Leader Certification

Effective organizational leaders possess credentials to signal that they have the skills, knowledge, and experience required to be a successful leader in their profession. School leaders are no different. Thus, in order to become a principal, candidates first must become certified. Certification systems vary by state. In most states, to be considered for licensure, candidates must (a) possess a minimum number of years of teaching experience, and/or (b) hold a master's degree in educational leadership or a closely related field, and/or (c) complete an accredited/approved preparation program. Quality school leaders are second only to teachers in ensuring student success in the classroom.

Additionally, research has shown that knowledge and experience *alongside* pedagogy are needed in order to be an effective principal. Therefore, principal certification systems that carefully certify those candidates who have demonstrated mastery of the skills necessary to be an effective principal are a critical component to improving teaching and student learning.

Source: UCEA, 2018, ESSA Brief series Issue #4 Certification of Educational Leaders

FELE 3.0 Subtest 3: Systems Leadership

Written Performance Assessment (WPA)

“It is the principal, more than anyone else, who is in a position to ensure that excellent teaching and learning are part of every classroom. Leadership is second only to teaching among school related factors as an influence on learning.”

The Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 3.

“High quality preparation results in better trained principals who can lead more successful schools.”

Anderson & Reynolds, 2015, p. 3.

Florida requires principal candidates to pass a standardized licensure exam (known as the Florida Educational Leadership Exam [FELE]) before they are licensed to work as a public school principal or assistant principal. The FELE is a computer-based standardized exam whose content is aligned with the Florida Principal Leadership Standards.

An analysis of Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) FELE data, January 2015-September 2018 (FLDOE, October 2018) reveals that the competency performance of students graduating from state approved MEd Educational Leadership programs on average exceeds that of other students in the state in all FELE subtests. The 2015-2017 overall FELE pass rate mean score for the WPA was 7.2 (<http://flapel.org/past-events-2/>). Pass rates are based on first-time testing attempt, and in 2015-2016, the best attempt mean score for the WPA was 8 (FLDOE, 2016).

Despite the WPA success of students graduating from state approved programs, some students express a feeling of intimidation when preparing for FELE Subtest 3, Systems Leadership, written performance assessment (WPA): Effective Communication Practices.

The WPA is "intended to measure prospective educational leaders' and administrators' ability to analyze and interpret educational data, as well as the efficacy of their written communication," ([FLDOE, 2018, Purpose of the WPA](#)). Data analysis, interpretation, and effective communication are fundamental to all MED Educational Leadership programs as well as being a daily requirement for K-12 practitioners.

It can be argued that whilst highly effective teachers have practiced and developed effectual oral communication, less time may have been spent on written communication, and specifically on extended writing. Remember that the FELE is a high stakes test, and rightly so as successful program graduates will be leading our Florida schools and supporting instruction for years to come. As with all high stakes tests, there is a need to prepare by reviewing all course work and reflecting on both scholarly learning and practitioner experience with a group of critical friends. Typically, the WPA requires the application of several skills such as data analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving. Additionally, you are required to recall content knowledge, reflect on experience, and write precisely and accurately. Demanding yes, but no different from the challenges experienced by an AP or principal in the working average day.

TWELVE TIPS

REMEMBER THAT...

TIP #1

The WPA has two purposes:

- 1. To measure your ability to analyze and interpret educational data; and*
- 2. To assess the efficacy of your written communication.*

An examinee's response is judged for its total effect:

Raters make an overall evaluation taking multiple performance factors into consideration (FLDOE, 2016).

FELE WPA Scoring Constructs:

The FELE WPA is scored on two constructs.

I. Data Analysis

- a. Interpretation
- b. Evaluation
- c. Explanation
- d. Application
- e. Implication
- f. Trend Analysis

2. Communication Skills

- a. Ideas
- b. Focus
- c. Organization
- d. Mechanics

Source: FLDOE, 2016

TIP #2

The WPA assesses Competency 5:

Knowledge of effective communication practices that accomplish school and system-wide goals by building and maintaining collaborative relationships with stakeholders.

- 1. Analyze data and communicate, in writing**, appropriate information to stakeholders.
- 2. Analyze data and communicate, in writing**, strategies for creating opportunities within a school that engage stakeholders.
- 3. Analyze data and communicate, in writing**, strategies that increase motivation and improve morale while promoting collegial efforts.

It goes without saying that effective written communication has no grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors. It is essential that you continually proofread your work to ensure accuracy.

TIP #3

WPA prompts require you to analyze descriptive rather than inferential data in order to ensure that you are ready to meet the data-driven challenges of school improvement and student achievement.

K-12 school leaders must be able to identify and use available data from their campuses to make effective, informed decisions, and to also be able to effectively and accurately communicate this information to their stakeholders. I have no doubt that you are familiar with your school and district data, but it is essential that you use the terminology of the WPA data table that you are analyzing.

Ensure that when crafting your WPA response you follow a process e.g. plan, organize, reflect, write, review, revise (see Figure 1). This process (or a similar process with which you are familiar) is essential and can make all the difference between achieving a pass (7 points) or a fail (6 points).



Figure 1: Process of Plan, Organize, Reflect, Write, Review, Revise

TIP #4

FELE Rubric-The 6-point [FELE Rubric](#) (PDF) applies to all FELE WPA responses. It identifies required performance criteria, and describes how performance varies across the scoring scale. Six is the highest possible score, and one the lowest.

FELE RUBRIC

SCORE	CRITERIA
6	The writing sample has a clearly established topic that the writer fully develops with specific details and examples, including accurate and thorough data interpretation, explanation, and application. The writer clearly describes the purpose of the communication and reflects an understanding of the target audience with plans for change appropriately aligned with data findings, all relevant implications, and analysis of trends. Point of view is consistently maintained. Organization is notably logical and coherent. The writer demonstrates superior facility in the use of proper grammar and syntax.
5	The writing sample has a clearly established topic that is adequately developed and recognizable through specific details and/or examples, including mostly accurate and thorough data interpretation, explanation, and application with minor errors in details not affecting conclusions. The writer adequately describes the purpose of the communication and reflects an understanding of the target audience with plans for change appropriately aligned with data findings, relevant implications, and analysis of trends. Point of view is mostly maintained. Organization follows a logical and coherent pattern. The writer demonstrates infrequent errors in the use of proper grammar and syntax.
4	The writing sample has an adequately stated topic that is developed with some specific details and/or examples, including some components of data interpretation, explanation, and application. The writer describes the purpose of the communication and reflects a basic understanding of the target audience with some unexplained terms or references. Plans for change may omit a few necessary details or relevant implications in aligning data findings and analysis of trends. Point of view is somewhat maintained. Organization is mostly logical and coherent. The writer demonstrates satisfactory use of proper grammar and syntax.
3	The writing sample states a topic that is developed with generalizations, with some accurate components of data interpretation, explanation, and application. The writer somewhat describes the purpose of the communication and reflects a marginal understanding of the target audience with several unexplained terms or references. Plans for change omit some necessary details or relevant implications in aligning data findings and analysis of trends. Explanations of some data elements may be faulty, and placement of data-related details may not be effective. Point of view is ambiguous. Organization is occasionally illogical or incoherent. The writer demonstrates some errors in the use of proper grammar and syntax that do not detract from the overall effect.
2	The writing sample presents an incomplete or ambiguous topic, with most components of data interpretation, explanation, and application omitted or inaccurate. The writer poorly describes the purpose of the communication and reflects little understanding of the target audience with numerous unexplained terms or references. Support is developed with generalizations with little description of plans for change or relevant implications in aligning data findings and analysis of trends. Explanations of data elements are faulty, and placement of data-related details is ineffective. Point of view is confusing and distracting. Organization is frequently illogical and incoherent. The writer demonstrates serious and frequent errors in proper grammar and syntax.
1	The writing sample has no evident topic. Numerous components of data interpretation, explanation, and application are missing or inaccurate. The writer fails to describe the purpose of the communication and does not address the target audience. Plans for change and/or relevant implications in aligning data findings and analysis of trends are minimally addressed. Development is inadequate and/or irrelevant. Point of view has not been established. Organization is illogical and/or incoherent. The writer demonstrates severe and pervasive flaws in the use of proper grammar and syntax.

FELE Supplemental Rating Criteria-The Supplemental Rating Criteria (SRC) rubric

<http://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/5575/urlt/0067603->

[hssuppratingcritwebsample.pdf](#) is specific to the WPA prompt. The example below

taken from the FLDOE website is helpful as it gives clarity to the points that should

be highlighted in your prompt response.

Sample SRC for FELE WPA Prompt #1 (High School ABC):

Score Point	Supplemental Rating Criteria
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data findings must identify all of the following data trends: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning gains for 9th-grade as whole are relatively unchanged. 2. Learning gains for students in the lowest performing quartile in reading and mathematics are increasing. 3. Learning gains for the students not in the lowest performing quartile are unknown. • Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional data are needed for all students. ○ Focuses on the data provided and the additional data desired. ○ Makes a well-supported case for why additional data are needed, what data are required, how the data will be gathered, and how the data will be used. ○ Plan for gathering additional data includes disaggregating data at least by student and teacher. ○ Develops hypotheses for further investigation.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data findings must identify all of the following data trends: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning gains for the 9th-grade as whole are stagnant. 2. Learning gains for lowest 25% in reading and math are improving. 3. Learning gains for other than lowest 25% are declining. • Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional data are needed for students not in the lowest performing quartile. Focuses on the data provided and the additional data desired. ○ Makes a strong case for why additional data are needed, what data are required, how the data will be gathered, and how the data will be used. ○ Plan for gathering additional data includes disaggregating data at least by student and teacher.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two of three data findings with specific details. • Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focuses on the data provided and the additional data desired. ○ Makes a adequate case for why additional data are needed, what data are required, how the data will be gathered, and how the data will be used.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of three data findings with specific details. • Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on data provided and data desired. ○ Mentions what additional data are needed and how they will be collected. ○ Insufficiently clear for the reader to determine with precision how data are being used and what additional data are important.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of three of the data findings with generic statements. • Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Misstatements of data findings. ○ Plan for additional data nonexistent or misaligned.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data interpretation nonexistent or wrong, many errors. • Communication nonexistent or misaligned with data findings and needed resources.

TIP #5

WPA & Holistic Scoring-FELE raters evaluate your interpretation of data and writing ability as it relates to the data analysis and target audience. Specifically, they evaluate your WPA response for content accuracy, data trend analysis, organization, sentence structure, appropriate audience level, and grammar (FLDOE, n.d.).

Two separate FELE raters independently score your WPA response. If the FELE raters' scores differ by more than one point, a FELE chief rater resolves the discrepancy. The passing score is 7/12.

In my experience any grading appeal is unlikely to be successful due to the rigorous assessment process.

TIP #6

In order to help future WPA examinees the FLDOE has been transparent in communicating feedback from FELE raters regarding WPA submission trends: 1) that are limiting ratings to a score point of 1, 2, or 3; 2) earning a score point of 4, 5, or 6; and 3) common factors that distinguish a score point of 4 from a score point of 3.

1. Trends in examinee submissions that are limiting ratings to a score point of 1, 2, or 3.

- Not using data to inform response
- Not citing specific data
- Lack of data
- Using generalizations instead of examples/evidence
- Failing to address all areas of the prompt

2. Trends in examinee submissions earning a score point of 4, 5, or 6.

- Thorough data analysis and well-developed plans
- Citing specific data, not generalizations of the data
- Explanation of data points used to inform response
- Providing examples/evidence from the data
- Addressing all areas of the prompt

3. Common factors that distinguish a score point of 4 from a score point of 3.

- Depth of the data analysis and quality of the plan
- Specific data (numbers/percentages) instead of generalizations
- Examples/Evidence from the data to inform the response

Tip #7

FELE Raters and Chief Reviewers have identified a number of common areas for improvement which include:

- Citing Specific Data (numbers/percentages)
- Thorough Data Analysis (explanations/trends)
- Addressing All Prompt Requirements (bullet points)

I have no doubt that you are confident that you will successfully address all aspects of the WPA prompt. But the only way to know for sure is to practice responding to a WPA prompt.

The best strategy is to work with a critical friend who is also preparing to take the FELE. Complete a written response to one of the FLDOE WPA [Sample Prompts](#) as the two assessment rubrics are provided. Once you have written your response within the time frame of one hour, you should ask your critical friend to grade your response utilizing both the general FELE rubric and the SRC rubric.

Once each WPA response has been graded, review and respond to the following:

1. Do you and your critical friend agree on the score?
2. Did you achieve the level you expected?
3. Did you score 7 or over?
4. What did you miss?
5. Identify any weakness (es) you may have.
6. Repeat the exercise with another FLDOE WPA prompt.
7. Undoubtedly, this practice exercise can be time consuming but you will find it to be very worthwhile.

TIP #8

Whilst it is essential that test takers show evidence of a thorough understanding of the WPA prompt data, it is also important that the written response includes all aspects of the prompt and *stays on topic*. Without exception WPA prompts require you to *formulate a plan* based on the presented *scenario data*. You must then justify all aspects of your plan. Review FLDOE samples

<http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/postsecondary-assessment/fele/written-performance-assessment.stml>

Once you become thoroughly acquainted with both the general assessment rubric and the design and requirements of the prompt specific assessment rubric, you may choose to use specific bullet headings in your WPA response. Using bullets in your response can also help you balance the content and ensure that all required aspects of the WPA prompt are addressed because as the feedback from the reviewers suggest a weakness of many WPA responses is that they are not specific enough, and sometimes actually neglect to reference the actual data, and specific/overall trends. At all times you must be clear as to what group you are referencing i.e. students, teacher(s), year, grade level, and subject.

Tip #9

Remember that the FELE addresses the role of the Assistant Principal i.e. BESAC.

A beginning effective school administrator candidate (BESAC) understands a core of research on instructional strategies and behaviors, leadership, decision-making models, and state approved academic and accountability standards so that the administrator will have a high probability of positively impacting student achievement, faculty development, school management, and the development of professional and ethical behaviors (FLDOE presentation to FAPEL, 2014).

The assessment rubrics of the WPA (Subtest 3) highlight what the field felt was appropriate for a beginning school administrator. So we're not looking for the fifty-year principal, we're looking for the first year principal, or assistant principal, what type of writing do they need to have for that first day of work. And so that was the threshold that that committee looked at the entire time. So when you're looking at the sample responses that we had, they felt that a 7 gave them that comfort level that an individual who scores a 7 or higher is ready to be an assistant principal (Canto, 2017).

Tip #10

An example of program best practice is the creation of a WPA test bank initiated either by a program coordinator or student group. Students are required to craft a writing prompt, response, and supplementary grading rubric (I often find that this can be a pair activity).

Both the process for developing a WPA test bank, and the WPA test bank contents is beneficial to anyone preparing to take the FELE. First, each peer developed WPA response you assess by applying the FELE WPA rubric and by crafting a SRC rubric will give you a greater understanding of the complexities of a WPA prompt. Second, your assessment of acceptable/unacceptable WPA responses will lead to quality improvement over time.

Finding the time in a program to develop a WPA test bank can be challenging. One option would be to schedule a critical friend FELE group or a FELE boot camp. In both of these examples the group could meet virtually.

Tip #11

Ensure that you are familiar with the following terms as this vocabulary is relevant to a variety of WPA responses.

A

Accountability

Action plan

Activation of prior knowledge

Added value

Appraisal

Assessment/formative/summative

Asynchronous communication

B

Benchmarking

Blended learning

Bloom's taxonomy

C

Characteristics of students making progress

Collaborative learning

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuous assessment/improvement

Correlation

Criterion referencing

Curriculum mapping

Cycle of inquiry

D

Data use -professional development needs/intervention requirements/ resource allocation/focuses discussions about teaching and learning/guides teacher instruction, and monitors progress.

Data driven decisions

Data literacy

Data culture

Data based recommendation

Decrease

Disaggregate data (by gender or race/ethnicity)

Dissemination plan

Diversity

Dual mode delivery

F

Feedback/immediate/positive

Flexible learning

Formative assessment

G

Gains

Group assessment/formation/work/outcome

Guided Reading

I

Increase

Independent learning

Inquiry-based learning

Instructional support

Interactive methods

Intervention

L

Learning contract/environment/group/objectives/outcomes/styles

Longitudinal progress

M

Mapping competence

Mentor

Meta-analysis

Meta-cognition

Meta-competence

Meta-skill

Monitoring achievement

N

Needs assessment

Norm referencing

O

Objectives

Ongoing

Open-ended questions

Oral skills

P

Pedagogy

Peer assessment

Percentage

Performance criteria/indicators

Personal development plan

Population
Problem-based learning
Professional development
Progress monitoring
Proportion

R

Range
Reflection
Reliability
Resource
Review
Rubric(s)/grading

S

Scaffolded instruction
Self-assessment
Standards
State assessment/data
Strategy/Strategic learning
Structure
Subgroups
Synchronous communication

T

Transfer of learning/skills
Trends

V

Validity
Virtual learning

TIP #12.

Remember the FLDOE online [FELE Written Performance resource page](#) also includes several resources intended to further aid examinees in their individual test preparation efforts. These additional resources include an overview of the FELE WPA, rubric and scoring information, sample prompts, and examples of supplemental rating criteria.

[Sample Prompts.](#)

<http://www.fldoe.org/asp/fele/wpa.asp#ratingcriteria>

In conclusion

**KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY ON**

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FACULTY RESOURCES

http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_FacultyResources.asp

Includes:

1. Faculty-relevant information regarding understanding FELE test content & assistance to candidates in preparing for the exam
2. Curriculum Mapping Tool, including tutorial and blank map documents.

Potential uses:

- I. Faculty self-evaluation of curriculum
- II. Program-level evaluation of curriculum
- III. University-level interdisciplinary cooperation

USEFUL LINKS

The FELE interactive *Test Information Guide* (TIG)

http://www.fl.nesinc.com/studyguide/FL_SG_about_081.asp

<http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/postsecondary-assessment/fele/ftce-fele-cognitive-complexity.shtml>

Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/postsecondary-assessment/faq.shtml#4906>