

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2009**

**GRADE
6**

Social Studies (Pilot)



**Government
of Alberta ■**

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document is an assessment highlights report on the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test.

The assessment highlights report provides information about the test overall, test blueprints, and student performance on the achievement test that was administered in 2009. Also provided is commentary on areas of strength and weakness in student performance at the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on selected items (from the 2009 achievement test). This information is intended for teachers and is best used in conjunction with the multi-year and detailed school reports that are available to schools via the extranet. Beginning in 2007, **assessment highlights reports** will be **mailed** to school administrators **every year** in the fall.

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The 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of those students who wrote the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 29 920 students wrote the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Achievement Test consisted of 45 multiple-choice questions and 3 written-response questions based on two social studies topics: Citizens Participating in Decision Making and Historical Models of Democracy – Ancient Athens, Iroquois Confederacy.

How Well Did Students Do?

Out of a total score of 75 on the test, the provincial average was 48.4/75 (64.5%). The results presented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students who wrote the test except those in French Immersion and Francophone programs; results for these students are reported separately. Detailed provincial assessment results are provided in school and jurisdiction reports.

Blueprint for Written-Response Component

The blueprint for the written-response component identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which summary data are reported to schools and school authorities; it also provides a description of the writing assignment and the achievement standards.

Scoring/Reporting Categories	Description of Writing Assignment	Achievement Standards
<p>Content* (recognizing the relevance of citizenship in a democracy and active citizenship)</p> <p>Students respond in writing to questions in relation to an issue. Students establish their understanding and point of view of an issue, provide support for their reasons, and demonstrate an understanding of social studies.</p> <p>Communication of Ideas (expressing ideas clearly and coherently using the conventions of written language)</p> <p>Students focus, develop, and communicate their ideas using words and expressions correctly and effectively.</p> <p>*Content is weighted to be worth 75% of the combined score, while Communication of Ideas is worth 25%.</p>	<p>Students will respond to three extended-response questions. The questions will be related to an issue presented in a source set.</p> <p>Students will be required to consider various perspectives, points of view, facts, information, and current events artifacts. Students will have to identify their own point of view, and support it with evidence. Students will also be required to apply a broader understanding of the social studies curriculum in relation to the issue presented.</p> <p>While student achievement of Values and Attitudes outcomes may be observable in some students' responses, these outcomes are best measured in the context of the classroom.</p>	<p>Student achievement in each scoring/reporting category will be described according to the following achievement descriptors:</p> <p>Excellent</p> <p>Proficient</p> <p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Limited</p> <p>Poor</p> <p>Insufficient</p>

Written Response Writing—2009 Student Achievement

Student Achievement by Question and Reporting Category

The chart below illustrates the percentage of students achieving writing standards for each writing assignment and reporting category.

		Question 1		Question 2		Question 3	
		Reporting Category					
		Content	Communication of Ideas	Content	Communication of Ideas	Content	Communication of ideas
Writing Standard	Score	% of students	% of students	% of students	% of students	% of students	% of students
Excellent	5.0	3.1%	5.0%	3.2%	4.5%	2.9%	3.9%
Proficient	4.0	18.5%	26.8%	14.6%	19.8%	9.0%	15.7%
Satisfactory	3.0	56.7%	56.5%	46.5%	52.3%	23.1%	48.2%
Limited	2.0	18.3%	9.8%	30.2%	20.1%	36.1%	24.6%
Poor	1.0	2.7%	1.0%	4.0%	1.9%	25.9%	4.6%
Insufficient/ No Response	0	0.8%	0.8%	1.4%	1.4%	3.0%	3.1%

Written Response – Commentary on 2009 Student Achievement

During the 2009 scoring session 100 teachers from throughout the province centrally scored 29 920 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most of the student responses, particularly given that this was the pilot assessment year for the new Social Studies 6 program of studies.

In the written response of the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 16.6 out of a total of 30 (55.3%). The provincial average on Question 1 was 6.1/10 (61%), while the provincial average on Question 2 was 5.7/10 (51%). The provincial average on Question 3 was 4.7/10 (47%).

Training for the marking session emphasized the need for markers to look at the content of the students' writing from a social studies perspective. More importantly, it was impressed upon the markers that, when assessing the Communication of Ideas, that communication in social studies is measured much more generally than it is in Language Arts, which demands greater precision in composition that is not required by Social Studies outcomes in the program of studies. Because of the weighting of Content (75%) over Communication of Ideas (25%), students' ideas have more emphasis than writing skills. Thus, students' work with worthy ideas were rewarded in Content, and weak skills in written communication provided for a low, yet minimally impactful, score in Communication of Ideas. Occasionally, a student's ideas did not meet with success in the scoring criteria for Content, yet the student's ability to communicate clearly was recognized in his/her Communication of Ideas score.

Question 1

For Question 1, students were required to use a 2 page source set to identify two points of view and perspectives on an identified issue. Additionally, students were directed to provide facts and reasons to support each identified point of view. In order to be awarded at least *Satisfactory* as a score students needed to, first of all, complete all sections of this question; some students simply repeated the same information in both sections – to the detriment of their score. Many students, though, were able to easily identify differing points of view and then provide examples of collective perspectives. Students demonstrated that they were aware of the importance of providing facts to support perspectives.

The following excerpts from student responses illustrate a few of the responses to Question 1 which were scored as *Satisfactory*:

- “That schools should sell Junk food”
- “Junk food sould not be sold at schools”
- “The Junk food could give you diabeties or make you fat.”
- “If you dount have a lunch you could go to the vending machan”
- “Children can’t concentrate as well if theyre stomach is full of Junk. Obeseity is a growing problem and Junk food does not help.”

These examples illustrate the type of Content and Communication of Ideas that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to Question 1. They illustrate that assignment requirements have been adequately addressed, support is generally appropriate and the students have demonstrated acceptable understanding of Social Studies outcomes. The words that these students have chosen are generally accurate.

The following excerpt from a student response illustrates a few of the responses given that were awarded a score of *Excellent*:

- “To not ban junk food in schools in Alberta. Instead, just keep them there.”
- “This is probably the perspective of busy parents, some school boards and districts, and many of the students.”
- “Schools gain money for new school supplies selling food. Some schools are limiting the amount of junk food they sell, but not get rid of it altogether. These schools want to educate students on how to make a decision between healthy and junk food. Sold food is also convenient to busy parents who don’t have time to fix a snack and lunch for their kids, so they just send their kids with money to buy their own lunch”

More detailed rationales for scoring of student work will be available in the near future, at education.alberta.ca, under ‘Examples of Standards for Students’ Writing’.

Question 2

For Question 2, students were required to express their own points of view regarding the issue stated in the source pages. Students were explicitly directed to use facts and reasons to support their points of view – which may have come from the source pages as well as their own ideas. In order to be awarded at least Satisfactory as a score for Question 2, each student needed to make his or her point of view clear, either by explicitly stating it, or making the point of view clearly implicit in the support that he or she provided. Students generally did this very well. The larger factor was the quality and quantity of the facts or reasons that students provided.

The following excerpt from a student response illustrates an example of student work that was scored as *Satisfactory*:

- “No I do not agree that Junk food should be banned in schools. Students may have forgot their lunch, missed breakfast; if theirs a vending machine at least they have something to eat.”

This excerpt illustrates a portion of the type of Content and Communication of Ideas that a Grade 6 student used in the student’s response to Question 2. It partially illustrates that assignment requirements have been adequately addressed (note: this was only a portion of the student’s response). Support is generally appropriate, and the student has demonstrated acceptable understanding of Social Studies outcomes (e.g. Skill outcome: expressing a personal opinion and providing ideas and reasons to support that opinion).

The following excerpt from a student response illustrates the type of response given that was scored as *Excellent*:

- “I would remove the junk food because it contributes to diseases; negative affects may effect the people later on in life. Children who are fed healthy food have better memory and they can concentrate and learn better. Although it is a big change, students can eventually become accustomed to the new healthy food. Helps students feel good about themselves for making the right decisions. ... Reduces the amount and chance of obesity and being overweight.”

This excerpt illustrates a portion of the type of Content and Communication of Ideas that a Grade 6 student used in the student’s response to Question 2. It partially illustrates that assignment requirements have been thoroughly addressed and that support is complete and well developed (other, additional

The previous example illustrates how assignment requirements can be thoroughly addressed, with complete and well developed support. Additionally, the student demonstrates a perceptive understanding of Social Studies outcomes (Knowledge outcomes: identifies ways that individuals within a community can participate in the decision-making process; demonstrates an understanding of the structure and function of local government, school boards specifically, in Alberta – and the role played by school boards. Skill outcomes: provides reasons for ideas and positions).

Summary

Overall, student performance on the written response portion of the Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test was acceptable, if not somewhat uneven. While the majority of students demonstrated success overall, it was clear that many students need to ensure that they are addressing all aspects of a question, and that they respond with a specificity that demonstrates attention to the presented issue. The questions were deliberately scaffolded in a manner such that each question was more challenging than those prior to it.

Students generally showed strength in retrieving information, finding appropriate support, and categorizing reasons and details. Areas of challenge for students included generating personal responses and attending fully to the requirements of the question.

It should be anticipated that student performance on the written response portion of the Grade 6 Social Studies PAT will rise in the coming year(s) as the field internalizes the new, skills-focused, Social Studies curriculum.

2009 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement in Multiple Choice

Student achievement on the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test averaged 48.4 out of a total score of 75 (64.5%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and test sections (curricular content areas) by which 2009 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities, and the provincial average of student achievement by both raw score and percentage.

Multiple Choice: 45 Questions

		Knowledge and Understanding	Skills and Processes	Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage
Citizens Participating in Decision Making	Democratic Principles and Ideals			6.7/9 (74.4%)
	Structure and Function of Local and Provincial Government			6.7/10 (67.0%)
	Individual, Group, and Community Involvement			5.1/8 (63.8%)
Historical Models of Democracy	Ancient Athens			5.7/9 (63.3%)
	Iroquois Confederacy			6.9/9 (76.6%)
Number (Percentage) of Questions		11.7/17 (68.8%)	19.1/28 (67.9%)	30.8/45 (68.4%)

Multiple Choice – Commentary on 2009 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2009 Grade 6 Social Studies Pilot Achievement Test. For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. These questions are no longer secured and will not be reused on future achievement tests.

Multiple-choice question 10 was a skills and processes question and is found in the **Structure and Function of Local and Provincial Government** reporting category.

Use the following information to answer question 10.

Events in the Electoral Process

- 1 People who are eligible to vote cast their votes at polling stations.
- 2 Candidates campaign in an attempt to win people's votes.
- 3 The premier visits the lieutenant governor and asks for the session of the legislature to be dissolved.
- 4 The premier calls an election.
- 5 Elected officials are sworn in as members of the government.

10. Which of the following sequences identifies the correct order of events in a provincial electoral process?

- A. 5, 1, 2, 3, 4
- B. 2, 3, 4, 1, 5
- C. 4, 2, 3, 5, 1
- D. 3, 4, 2, 1, 5

Keyed answer is: D

This question was difficult, with 44.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to put the events in the electoral process in the correct order. Option A was chosen by 4.4% of students. Option B was chosen by 15.9% of students. Option C was chosen by 35.0% of students. Approximately 40.3% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the middle range of student scores, were able to answer this question correctly. Approximately 71.5% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the high range of student scores were able to answer this question correctly.

Multiple-choice question 31 was a skills and processes question and is found in the **Historical Models of Democracy: Ancient Athens** reporting category.

31. The citizens of Ancient Athens took action against individuals who did not vote **most likely** because they believed that
- A. obedience was more important than freedom
 - B. public life was more important than family life
 - C. citizens had the right to participate in government
 - D. citizens had the responsibility to participate in government

Keyed answer is: D

This question was less challenging than the prior one, with 63.9% of students answering correctly. Student needed to evaluate information to determine the democratic ideal demonstrated by citizens in ancient Athens. Option A was chosen by 14.5% of students. Option B was chosen by 6.7% of students. Option C was chosen by 14.8% of students. Approximately 66% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the middle range of student scores, were able to answer this question correctly. Approximately 87.5% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the high range of student scores, were able to answer this question correctly.

Multiple-choice question 43 was a knowledge and understanding question and is found in the **Historical Models of Democracy: Iroquois Confederacy** reporting category.

43. Some agreements and treaties were recorded by oral tradition and by
- A. sketching pictures on paper
 - B. weaving a wampum belt
 - C. writing on birch bark
 - D. creating a myth

Keyed answer is: B

This question was fairly easy, with 84.8% of students answering correctly. Students needed to recall the purpose of wampum belts. Option A was chosen by 4.3% of students. Option C was chosen by 6.5% of students. Option D was chosen by 4.3% of students. Approximately 88.6% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the middle range of student scores were able to answer this question correctly. Approximately 96.2% of students for whom the total multiple choice score fell in the high range chose the correct response.

Achievement Testing Program Support Documents

The Alberta Education website contains several documents that provide valuable information about various aspects of the achievement testing program. To access these documents, go to the Alberta Education website at www.education.alberta.ca. On the home page, click on the tab *Teachers*, then click on the link *Provincial Testing*. Next click on the link *Achievement Tests*, and then click on one of the specific links under the *Achievement Tests* heading to access the following documents.

Achievement Testing Program General Information Bulletin

The *General Information Bulletin* is a compilation of several documents produced by Alberta Education and is intended to provide superintendents, principals, and teachers with easy access to information about all aspects of the achievement testing program. Sections in the bulletin contain information pertaining to schedules and significant dates; security and test rules; test administration and directives; test accommodations; field testing; resources and web documents; calculator and computer policies; test marking and results; samples, forms, and letters; and Learner Assessment contacts.

Subject Bulletins

At the beginning of each school year, subject bulletins are posted on the Alberta Education website for all achievement test subjects for grades 3, 6, and 9. Each bulletin provides descriptions of assessment standards, test design and blueprinting, and scoring guides (for grades 3, 6, and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts) as well as suggestions for preparing students to write the tests and information about how teachers can participate in test development activities.

Writing Samples

For achievement tests in grades 3, 6, and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts, writing samples have been designed to be used by teachers and students to enhance students' writing and to assess this writing relative to the standards inherent in the scoring guides for the *Part A: Writing* achievement tests. The writing samples documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales, student self-assessment checklists, and scoring categories and criteria for the writing assignments.

Previous Achievement Tests and Answer Keys

All January achievement tests (parts A and B) for Grade 9 semestered students are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education. All May/June achievement tests are secured except *Part A* of grades 3, 6, and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts. Unused or extra copies of only these *Part A* tests may be kept at the school after administration. Teachers may also use the print versions of released items that have been mailed to schools and/or the tests that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

Parent Guides

Each school year, print versions of the *Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing* for grades 3, 6, and 9 are mailed to schools and posted on the Alberta Education website. Each guide presents answers to frequently asked questions about the achievement testing program; descriptions of and sample questions for each achievement test subject; and excerpts from the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* identifying what students should know and be able to do in each subject by the end of grades 3, 6, and 9.

Involvement of Teachers

Teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9 are encouraged to take part in a variety of activities related to the achievement testing program. These activities include item development, test validation, field testing, and marking. In addition, regional consortia can make arrangements for teacher in-service workshops on topics such as Interpreting Achievement Test Results to Improve Student Learning.