

Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing

Assessment
Highlights
2009-2010

GRADE
3

English Language Arts



Government
of Alberta ■

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document contains assessment highlights from the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. The examination statistics that are included in this document represent all writers: both French and English. If you would like to obtain English-only or French-only statistics that apply to your school, please refer to your detailed reports, which are available on the Extranet.

Assessment highlights provide information about the overall test, test blueprints, and student performance on the achievement test that was administered in 2010. Also provided is commentary on student performance at the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* both in *Part A: Writing* and on selected items from the *2010 Part B: Reading* tests. This information is intended for teachers and is best used in conjunction with multi-year and detailed school reports that are available in schools via the Extranet. **Assessment highlights reports** for all achievement test subjects and grades will be posted on the **Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

All released achievement tests including test blueprints, answer keys with the item difficulty, reporting category, test section, and item description for each test item are located at: education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/achievement/answerkeys.aspx

These materials, along with the Program of Studies and subject bulletins, provide information that can be used to inform instructional practice.

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The Alberta Education Internet address is www.education.alberta.ca.

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The 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of those students who wrote the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 38 327 students wrote both parts of the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test. This number reflects an increase of 540 students over last year’s administration.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative writing assignment (worth 35 marks). The narrative writing assignment provided students with a picture prompt to which they were to respond in narrative format.

Part B: Reading consisted of 40 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections that were either informational or narrative/poetic in nature.

How Well Did Students Do?

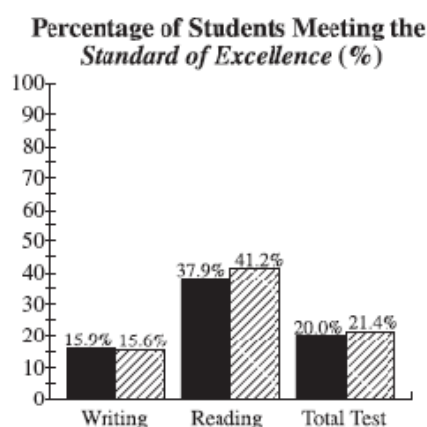
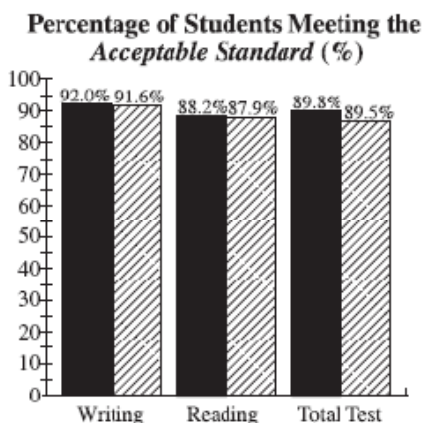
Out of a total score of 75 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 69.1%. The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2010 compared with 2009 are shown in the graphs below. The results presented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students who wrote the test, including those in French Immersion and Francophone programs. Detailed provincial assessment results are provided in school and jurisdiction reports.

Acceptable Standard

Grade 3—Acceptable %			
	Writing	Reading	Total
2009	92.0	88.2	89.8
2010	91.6	87.9	89.5

Standard of Excellence

Grade 3—Excellence %			
	Writing	Reading	Total
2009	15.9	37.9	20.0
2010	15.6	41.2	21.4



- 2009 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2009 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).
- ▨ 2010 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

Part A: Writing—2010 Test Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2010 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities; a description of the writing assignment; and the achievement standards.

Writing Assignment and Reporting Categories	Description of Writing Assignments	Achievement Standards
Reporting Category	A picture prompt is presented to students. The picture is designed to help stimulate the students' imagination and direct their writing. Before students discuss the picture prompt and organize their ideas on the planning pages provided, the test description, instructions, and information about the picture prompt are read out loud by the teacher.	Students' achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following descriptors: Excellent Proficient Satisfactory Limited Poor Insufficient
Content* (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students select appropriate details to describe events and characters. Events and/or actions should be plausible within the context established by the writer.		
Organization* (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize ideas, events, and details in a coherent sequence.		
Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) Students use a variety of sentence types and structures appropriately.		
Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) Students use words and expressions appropriately and effectively.		
Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.		

* *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories*

Part A: Writing—2010 Student Achievement

In 2010, 91.6% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 15.6% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are 0.4% lower at the *acceptable standard* and 0.3% lower at the *standard of excellence* than previous administrations of *Part A: Writing* of the achievement test.

Student Achievement by Assignment and Reporting Category

The quality of the writing on the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test is consistent with that of previous years. The chart below illustrates the percentage of students achieving writing standards for each writing assignment and reporting category.

		Narrative Writing Assignment				
		Reporting Category				
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions
Writing Standard	Score*	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students
Excellent	5.0	3.6	3.0	4.2	3.9	6.5
	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.3	5.3
Proficient	4.0	15.1	14.2	17.1	16.2	17.6
	3.5	15.5	15.0	13.9	14.4	12.0
Satisfactory	3.0	45.6	46.3	41.8	51.0	33.0
	2.5	7.9	8.9	9.6	5.7	10.5
Limited	2.0	7.1	7.5	8.1	3.9	13.4
	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.9
Poor	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.5
Insufficient / No Response	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

*Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2010, approximately 68% of papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third adjudicating reading. The third reading rescore rate was 7%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2010 Student Achievement

During the 2010 scoring session, 140 teachers from throughout the province scored 39 600 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were generally pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 22.8 out of a total raw score of 35 (65.1%).

Narrative Writing Assignment

In the 2010 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture shows a boy and a girl in a room that has a window. The walls and the floor of the room are made of wide, wooden boards and the window is broken in one corner. There are cracks between some of the wall boards. There are some outline drawings of different kinds of animals on the walls—a deer, birds, and squirrels. A table, which is also in the room, has crumbs and a beetle on its top. A spider web is below the table top and some webs are in the corners of the room. The boy has lifted up one of the floor boards and the two children are crouching, looking down into the large hole that is beneath the board.

Training for the marking session always emphasizes the need to focus on the strengths of the writer and to only mark what is written. Markers conscientiously use their exemplar documents to support the scoring criteria in helping them distinguish between the scoring categories. Each response is reviewed according to each category in the scoring criteria. Every effort is made to score each response in a valid and reliable manner.

Students responded in a variety of ways to the picture prompt, bringing their prior knowledge and experience into their writing. Students who were adept writers made personal connections with some or all of the details in the picture. Colour, the characters, and the mysterious hole in the floor engaged the students and resulted in responses that contained a variety of interesting events. Teachers who took part in the marking session noted that students were able to effectively develop the events, and due to the open-ended setting of the prompt, students wrote enthusiastically. Students achieving the *standard of excellence* had well-developed and detailed events, effective connections, and descriptive vocabulary allowing the markers to more clearly discern the writer's voice.

The following excerpts from student responses illustrate a few of the appropriate responses that related to the picture prompt at the *acceptable standard*:

- “That’s when the door shut behind them. There was no way out except through the gutter.”
- “When they got there, they left their bags on the floor and ran around like maniacs. Their mom and dad laughed so hard they fell on the ground.”
- “Later, David and Anne found a pot of GOLD. They took as much as they could and headed home. They hoped they could come back there another day.”

These are examples of Grade 3 students’ writing. Some spelling and punctuation have been corrected for readability purposes.

Each of these examples illustrates appropriate ideas presented in a straightforward manner. The ideas were supported by general details. The writing was organized in a logical manner that was generally sustained throughout the response. A predictable but suitable ending was provided.

The following excerpts from student responses illustrate a few of the responses that related to the picture prompt at the *standard of excellence*:

- “They were in a lair full of jewels: rubies, emeralds, etc. They soon found out that it was a troll’s lair. The boys recalled the spell that was for destroying a troll. It was: Troll begone, troll be quick, you will be turned into ashes quick.”
- “Once the kids got there, they quietly gazed at some beautiful swans gracefully swimming across the calm, peaceful water. Suddenly, the wind blew some leaves in the air and made the leaves circle the two kids. David and Alex watched with amazement at seeing the leaves dance around them.”
- “‘I think I know why we went there,’ Annie told Joe. ‘Why?’ asked Joe. ‘We believed. The only reason we saw those animals is because we believed,’ replied Annie. Believing is something great. Have you ever believed? Well, let me tell you, it’s sometimes magical.”

These are examples of Grade 3 students’ writing. Spelling and some punctuation have been corrected for readability purposes.

These examples illustrate how some students were stimulated by the picture prompt. In their writing, these students used specific, detailed events that were relevant and original in thought. The writing was purposeful and the connections were developed and maintained throughout the response.

Approximately 68% of the papers written were scored locally and submitted to Alberta Education. A high level of reliability was achieved between the local score and the central score. The third reading rescore rate was 7%.

Part B: Reading—2010 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2010, 87.9% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 41.2% of students who wrote the test achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are slightly lower (0.3%) for the students achieving the *acceptable standard* and over 3% higher for the students achieving the *standard of excellence* than previous administration (2009) of *Part B: Reading* of the achievement test.

Student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 29.2 out of a total score of 40 (73.0%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which the 2010 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities. The provincial average of student achievement by both raw score and percentage is also provided.

Reporting Category	Language Function		Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage
	Informational	Narrative / Poetic	
<p>Understanding Main Ideas/Details</p> <p>The student should be able to identify key details and main ideas, differentiate between main and supporting characters, recognize character motivation and explicit relationships between events and characters, and categorize ideas.</p>			<p>12.4/17</p> <p>(73%)</p>
<p>Organization of Ideas and Relationships Between Form and Content</p> <p>The student should be able to identify genre (stories, poetry, plays, reports, and articles), organize features of story structure, use text and typographical features, recognize authors' techniques, and determine an author's purpose.</p>			<p>5.5/8</p> <p>(69%)</p>
<p>Associating Meaning</p> <p>The student should be able to associate meanings of words, expressions, and literary devices from prior knowledge and contextual clues.</p>			<p>5.3/7</p> <p>(76%)</p>
<p>Synthesizing Ideas</p> <p>The student should be able to draw conclusions by relating what is known to new information, and assess the plausibility of ideas and situations in literature.</p>			<p>6.0/8</p> <p>(75%)</p>
<p>Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage</p>	<p>9.3/13</p> <p>(72%)</p>	<p>19.9/27</p> <p>(74.0%)</p>	<p>Part B: Reading</p> <p>Total Test</p> <p>Raw Score</p> <p>29.2/40 (73.0%)</p>

Part B: Reading—*Commentary on 2010 Student Achievement*

The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

In *Part B: Reading*, students constructed meaning from text using personal experiences, knowledge, and feelings. Students were able to demonstrate effective reading skills by focusing on the central theme and the critical features of a passage to successfully retrieve main ideas from the narratives and informational texts presented. When reading informational texts, students were able to decode and interpret information from texts and visuals to answer the questions. Students were able to use prior knowledge and contextual clues to comprehend the meaning of unknown words. Many students were able to go beyond the literal interpretation of the text, synthesize information, and make predictions about possible future events. When synthesizing, students drew conclusions and were able to assess the plausibility of ideas. Students who performed well took time to read the passages carefully and referred back to the passage before choosing the best alternative.

Types of Reading Passages

There are two types of reading passages on the provincial achievement test: informational texts and narrative/poetic texts. Stories and poems comprise almost 68% of the test. In 2010, students were able to correctly answer an average of 19.9/27 (74%) the questions based on the stories and poems that they read. This reflects an increase of 4.4% from the 2009 test. About 32% of the test is based on information passages. Students accurately answered an average of 9.3/13 (72%) of questions based on these texts. This reflects a decrease (4.0%) from the previous year.

Sample Questions from the 2010 Achievement Test

The following sample questions from the 2010 test show how students responded to questions from the four reporting categories (Understanding Main Ideas/Details, Organization of Ideas and Relationships Between Form and Content, Associating Meaning, and Synthesizing Ideas). For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. There is a brief analysis of the question and statistics describing how students answered it. These questions are no longer secured and will not be used on future achievement tests.

The questions are from the reading selection, *A banana treat...*, which was used on the 2009 and 2010 Grade 3 English Language Arts Achievement Tests. The reading selection is from the book, *Bananas!* by Jacqueline Farmer.

Questions from the reporting category, **Understanding Main Ideas/Details**, require students to identify key details and main ideas, differentiate between main and supporting characters, recognize character motivation, identify explicit relationships between events and/or characters, and categorize ideas.

Multiple choice Question 3 from *A banana treat...* requires students to locate some key details in the information passage and to recognize the purpose of these details.

3. In the list of items that are used to make banana chutney, the numbers

- explain the directions
- organize the information
- show the amounts needed
- show the number of servings

This item was a challenging question for students (65.6% answered it correctly). Students needed to locate the numbers in the recipe that was in the selection and then determine why these numbers were included beside each ingredient. Option A was chosen by 11.8% of the students, option B was chosen by 10.9% of the students, and option D was chosen by 11.3% of the students. About 66% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly and approximately 88% of the students who achieved the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice Question 5 requires students to recognize a significant idea based on details that were explicitly stated in the passage. It is also categorized as an **Understanding Main Ideas/Details** type of question.

5. The information states that banana chutney could be eaten for

- lunch and a snack
- dinner and a snack
- lunch and breakfast
- dinner and breakfast

This question was somewhat easier than Question 3 (71.6% of students answered Question 5 correctly). Students could refer back to the last sentence of the selection, which contained the details they needed for a correct response. Option A was chosen by 8.1% of the students and option B was selected by 15.4% of the students. Option C was the response of 4.4% of the children. About 74% of the students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer the question correctly and 89% of those who achieved the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the reporting category, **Organization of Ideas and Relationships Between Form and Content**, students are expected to identify various genres (ex. stories, poems, reports, articles, recipes, etc.), understand story and poetic structures, recognize organizational features of non-fiction passages, use text and typographical features to support their comprehension, identify an author's techniques, and determine an author's purpose for writing a selection.

Multiple choice Question 2 requires students to identify text written in the form of a recipe. This recipe is imbedded in the information passage.

2. In this information, the author includes a

- poem about bananas
- story about bananas
- recipe for tostones
- recipe for chutney

This question was relatively easy for most students (79.5% answered it correctly). To determine the answer, students had to recognize that the author included a recipe for Banana Chutney even though it was not explicitly stated in the passage that the list of ingredients followed by instructions was a recipe. Only 4.7% of students chose option A. Option B attracted 8.5% of the students and 7.1% of the students chose option C. Approximately 96% of the students who achieved a standard of excellence answered the question correctly and 84% of the students who met the acceptable standard chose the right answer.

When answering questions from the **Associating Meaning** category, students should be able to determine the meanings of words, expressions, phrases, and literary devices by using their background or prior knowledge and by using contextual clues.

When answering multiple choice Question 1, students had to determine the meaning of a word by using contextual clues from the information passage.

1. Chutney is a

- fried snack
- spicy relish
- ripe banana
- seasoned plantain

Students responded to this item very successfully and 81% of them answered it correctly. Students had to refer back to the selection to locate the description of chutney. Option A was selected by 7.2 % of students, option C was chosen by 8.7 % of students, and option D was the choice of 2.8% of the children. Over 85% of students meeting the acceptable standard responded correctly and 96% of students who met the standard of excellence chose accurately.

When answering questions from the **Synthesizing Ideas** category, students should be able to make inferences and draw conclusions by relating what they know to new information as well as assessing the plausibility of ideas and situations presented in the reading selection.

Multiple choice Question 4 is an item that requires students to draw a conclusion about a specific event that is described in an information passage.

4. Banana chutney is PROBABLY stored in the refrigerator because the banana chutney

- is in a glass jar
- will stay fresher
- will be easy to find
- is made with cloves

This question, like many questions which require synthesis of information, was somewhat challenging for students (68.3% answered it correctly). Students had to refer to information in the selection as well as draw upon their own experiences and knowledge of food and food storage in order to draw the best conclusion. Option A was chosen by 18.4% of students. Option C attracted 1.7% of children and option D was selected by 11.4% of the group. Approximately 69% of students who met the acceptable standard on the test chose the correct answer. About 90% of students who met the standard of excellence drew the correct conclusion.

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 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.

Examples of Standards for Students' Writing

For achievement tests in grades 3, 6, and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts, writing samples have been posted and can 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 actual students' written responses to previous picture prompts along with their scoring rationales.

Scoring Guides

The English Language Arts (Narrative) Scoring Guide can be used by classroom teachers to support their instructional and assessment practices.

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 released items that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

Parent Guides

Each school year, the *Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing* for grades 3, 6, and 9 are 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.