

Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing

Assessment
Highlights
2009-2010

GRADE
6

English Language Arts

Government
of Alberta ■

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document contains an assessment highlights report on the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

The assessment highlights report provides information about the test overall, test blueprints, and student performance on the English form of the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. 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 (common to both the 2009 and 2010 achievement tests) from *Part B: Reading*. 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. **Assessment highlights reports** for all achievement test subjects and grades will be **posted on the Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

Released test items, which contained approximately 25% of the total number of test items from previously secured achievement tests, were mailed to school administrators each fall from 2004 to 2006 and have been made available to teachers only in print form because of copyright limitations. **Every second year**, as of the fall of 2007, **a complete test** for all achievement test subjects and grades (except grades 6 and 9 Social Studies; grades 3, 6, and 9 Français/French Language Arts; and Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability courses). A test blueprint and an answer key that includes the difficulty, reporting category, test section and item description for each test item will also be included. These materials, along with the Program of Studies and subject bulletin, provide information that can be used to inform instructional practice.

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The 2010 Grade 6 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 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 39 531 students in Alberta wrote the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

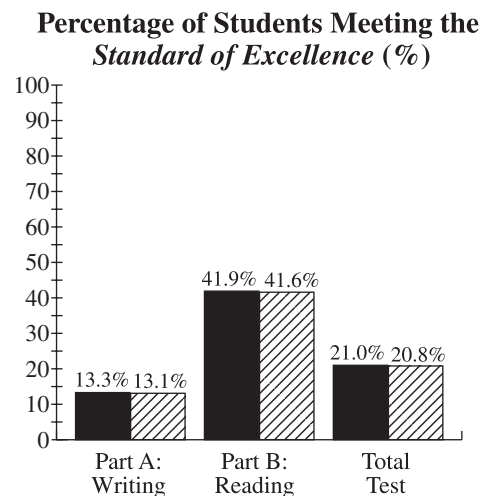
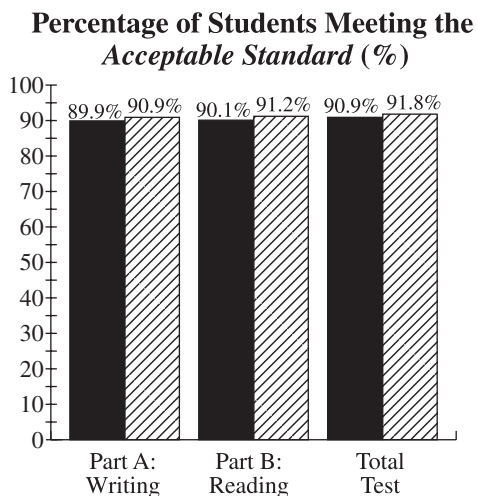
The 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional writing assignment required students to use specific information to create a newspaper article.

Part B: Reading consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections that were either informational or narrative/poetic in nature.

How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2010 compared with 2009 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 110 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 73.3/110 (66.6%). 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.



■ 2009 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2009 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

▨ 2010 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

Part A: Writing—2010 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify 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 assignments; and the achievement standards.

Writing Assignment and Reporting Categories	Description of Writing Assignments	Achievement Standards
Assignment I—Narrative / Essay Writing		
<p>Content* (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>Students respond to a picture prompt by writing a narrative. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve the purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.</p>	<p>The Narrative Writing Assignment is a picture prompt meant to stimulate the imagination of the student completing the narrative writing assignment. Students may organize their story ideas on a provided planning page.</p>	<p>Student achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p> <p>Meets the <i>standard of excellence</i></p> <p>Approaches the <i>standard of excellence</i></p> <p>Clearly meets the <i>acceptable standard</i></p> <p>Does not clearly meet the <i>acceptable standard</i></p>
<p>Organization* (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent narrative that links events, details, sentences, and paragraphs.</p>		
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>Students control sentence structure and use a variety of sentence types, sentence beginnings, and sentence lengths to enhance communication.</p>		
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students choose specific words and expressions that are accurate and effective, and enhance the student’s voice.</p>		
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>		
Assignment II—Functional Writing		
<p>Content* (thought and detail)</p> <p>Students organize and develop ideas for a specified purpose and audience.</p>	<p>The Functional Writing Assignment requires students to write to a specified audience in the context of a news article.</p>	<p>Clearly below the <i>acceptable standard</i></p> <p>Insufficient</p>
<p>Content Management* (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students communicate accurately and effectively by selecting words and phrases appropriate to their purpose. Students demonstrate control of sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and format.</p>		

*These scoring categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Part A: Writing—2010 Student Achievement

In 2010, 90.9% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 13.1% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are consistent with 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 6 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 / Essay Writing Assignment					Functional Writing Assignment	
		Reporting Category					Reporting Category	
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions	Content	Content Management
Writing Standard	Score*	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	
Meets the Standard of Excellence	5.0	3.7	3.1	4.2	4.6	4.2	2.3	2.4
	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.6	5.0	4.6	3.7	3.8
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	4.0	16.3	15.5	17.7	17.7	17.5	13.9	15.2
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	3.5	15.5	15.0	14.0	14.8	12.8	14.4	13.5
	3.0	45.4	45.1	44.0	49.1	39.0	45.1	42.9
	2.5	7.4	8.7	7.6	5.2	9.4	8.6	8.9
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	2.0	6.6	7.5	7.2	3.2	11.2	10.1	11.7
	1.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.8	0.6
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	1.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.4
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2010, approximately 67.5% 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 6.8%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2010 Student Achievement

During the 2010 scoring session, 180 teachers from throughout the province scored 40 870 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35.5 out of a total of 55 (64.5%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 22.9 out of 35 (65.4%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.5 out of 20 (62.5%).

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2010 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a boy sitting on a beach. He is wet, with seaweed wrapped around his feet. He is looking at a small boxlike object that appears to have washed up in front of him.

Training for the marking session always emphasizes the need to look at the strengths of the writer and to 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 to be 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 wide variety of ways to the picture prompt, bringing their prior knowledge, experience, and imagination into their writing. Students achieving the *standard of excellence* included substantial details, effective connections, and precise vocabulary that created vivid images and enhanced the students' voice.

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

- A boy named Adam was strideing along a beach one Thursday after noon. The beach name was Callaway beach ... Adam loved walking down this beach. Adam always watched the sunset. But tonight was different tonight he over herd some guys talking. The men were talking about a shipment of riches.
- Billy was looking around tring to find his grandma and sister, but he didn't see either one of them. Billy looked around again he saw a shark cycling around him Billy didn't know what to do. Billy tried to swim in to shore when something got caught on his foot. It was weighing him down. He started sinking. Billy was terrified.
- When they got back to the hotel room Garrett showed his mom the pictures and told her the story. "That's amazing! I'm glad you found this Garrett, now we definetly have a story to tell when we go home". His mom laughed. Garrett and his dad joind in. "Let's go to the beach and see if we can find some more stuff" Garrett's dad suggested. "Ok" Garrett yelled and ran to the car.

These examples illustrate the type of content and organization that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to the picture prompt. Some corrections have been made to aid readability.

Each of these examples illustrates ideas that are appropriate and straightforward. The ideas are organized and have both an adequate beginning and end. The vocabulary clarifies meaning and generally enhances the students' voices.

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

- When Brad gained consciousness he was still in the middle of the ocean. The boat was gone but he imagined that he could still hear his mother's faint screams. His throat was parched from having nothing to drink and his stomach was rumbling from having no dinner. He was trying very hard to keep his head above water but he was losing strength rapidly. His legs felt numb and his arms were screaming out in pain. Slowly he closed his eyes, stopped struggling and he felt the gentle waves cover his body.
- He started to feel weak without water and started seeing mirages. First he was a giant hamburger. That was just a pile of lawn chairs. Then he thought he saw a giant glass of water. That was just the beach sign. What he didn't imagine was a delicately designed box with writing. The writing said, "What you seek, you shall find, in this box, that is yours and mine."

These examples illustrate the type of content, organization, sentence structure, and vocabulary that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to for the picture prompt.

Each of these examples illustrates how some students selected clear and precise details, and organized them in a purposeful and effective order. Words and expressions helped to create vivid images and enhanced the students' voices. Few errors in conventions were noted in the student responses from which these examples were taken.

Functional Writing Assignment

The 2010 Functional Writing Assignment presented students with the situation of writing a news article for their school newspaper. The students were provided with information about a pumpkin boat regatta from which they were to construct an organized and effective news article. Students were successful in fulfilling the requirements of the Functional Writing Assignment by including the "what," "when," "where," and "who" in conjunction with some supporting facts. Students were given a list of "Interesting Facts" that required some initiative on the part of students to organize the facts in a coherent and effective manner. Some students chose to select only those facts which best served their response, which was acceptable. Many students were successful in selecting vocabulary necessary for conveying a tone appropriate for a news article.

The following excerpts from student responses illustrate a variety of responses at the *acceptable standard*:

- On the second Sunday of October a pumpkin regatta took place in Windsor Nova Scotia, Lake pesaquid. The purpose of the pumpkin regatta is to increase tourism in the area, raise Windsor's profile as the "worlds pumpkin capital" and expand the community's pumpkin festival.
- People from all over the world mainly local people come and enjoy the race. Prizes are givin for how good the decoration of the pumpkin is, accesories such as motors. People race in carved out pumpkins
- For this regatta the distance the pumpkins needed to go was 500 metres. The winner of the race completed it in 12 minutes. There was also a prize for the best decorated pumkin boat. Some pumpkins were so big that they needed 2 people to carry them. There were also many spectators who watched the regatta.

Each of the previous examples illustrates how students wrote news articles that directly addressed the writing prompt that was provided. These students included the purpose of the presentation on which they were reporting, essential details, and some interesting facts that were provided. Some, but not all, students chose to include direct quotes from fictitious participants or spectators at the regatta.

The following excerpts from student responses to the Functional Writing Assignment illustrate a variety of responses that meet the *standard of excellence*:

- An enormous amount of colourful pumpkins sailed past the shore. A practical joke? Not here, Lake Pesaquid, near Windsor, Nova Scotia....In all, there were 52 racers at this year's Pumpkin Regatta. It was amazing, not like anything I saw before. After all, who gets to watch seemingly humongous pumpkins actually float, and other than that, race other heavy-set orange (or not so orange) plants across a lake?

This excerpt from student responses to the Functional Writing Assignment illustrate the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, organization, and extensive details to create responses that, in their complete form, met the *standard of excellence*. The majority of the students at this standard included most, if not all, of the facts and details that were provided, and many incorporated them with quotations from participants or other attendees. Many of the students at this standard embellished their responses with relevant descriptive details that further enhanced their responses. An appropriate tone for a news article was maintained at all times, with adept use of vocabulary and few errors in conventions.

Overall, student performance on *Part A: Writing* of the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test was consistent with that of previous years. The majority of students continue to demonstrate success in achieving provincial assessment standards.

Part B: Reading—2010 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2010, 91.2% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 41.6% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are consistent with previous administrations of *Part B: Reading* of the achievement test.

Student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 34.4 out of a total score of 50 (68.8%).

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

Reporting Category	Language Function		Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage
	Informational	Narrative / Poetic	
Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details Students recognize explicit or implicit ideas and details and make inferences about the relationships between ideas and details.			12.3/18 (68.3%)
Interpreting Text Organization Students identify and analyze the author’s use of genre. Students identify and analyze the author’s choice of form, organizational structure, style, literary techniques, text features, and conventions.			5.6/8 (70.0%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			7.0/10 (70.0%)
Synthesizing Ideas Students make generalizations by integrating information from an entire selection in order to identify the purpose, theme, main idea, or mood of the selection.			9.5/14 (67.9%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	13.8/20 (69.0%)	20.6/30 (68.7%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2010 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2010 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test are provided to highlight these areas for students meeting the *acceptable standard* and for those meeting the *standard of excellence* on *Part B: Reading*. 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 29 required students to identify the meaning of a phrase in a poem and is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

29. The phrase “destined for the record books” (line 2) suggests that the narrator thinks that Jason will

- * A. become famous
- B. become a writer
- C. own a record book
- D. set a reading record

This question was somewhat challenging, with 69.3% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify the connotative meaning of a phrase in a poem. Option **B** was chosen by 5.8% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 9.4% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 15.5% of students. Approximately 73.0% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 91.9% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 30 required students to infer the relationship between the actions of a character and the character’s feelings in a poem, and is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details** reporting category.

30. In the quotation “‘It’s the one you gave me last week,’ he stammered” (line 17), the word *stammered* suggests that Jason is **most likely** feeling

- A. excited
- * B. curious
- C. impatient
- D. embarrassed

This question was easier for students than the prior one, with 94.6% of students answering correctly. Students needed to interpret the reason that a character might stammer a response, in the context of the entire poem. Option **A** was chosen by 5.7% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 7.1% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 12.0% of students. Approximately 81.2% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 96.4% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple Choice question 31 required students to integrate information to make an inference in a poem and is found in the *Synthesizing Ideas* reporting category.

31. It can be inferred that the narrator **most likely** values

- A. competing in athletic events
- * B. reading for pleasure
- C. observing miracles
- D. setting records

This question was the most difficult of all of the examples given, with 77.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to synthesize all of the information and devices in the poem in order to infer the values of the narrator of the poem. Option **A** was chosen by 10.8% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 21.9% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 10.0% of students. Approximately 58.5% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 77.5% of students who met the *standard of excellence* 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 were mailed to schools and/or the tests that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

Parent Guides

Each school year, versions of 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.