

Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing

Assessment
Highlights
2009-2010

GRADE
9

Knowledge and Employability
English Language Arts

Government
of Alberta ■

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document contains assessment highlights from the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability 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 statistics 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, the test blueprints, and student performance on the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test. Also provided is commentary on student performance at the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on selected items from the 2010 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. **Assessment Highlights reports** for all achievement test subjects and grades will be **posted on the Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

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

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The 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability 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 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 1 305 students wrote both parts of the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts:

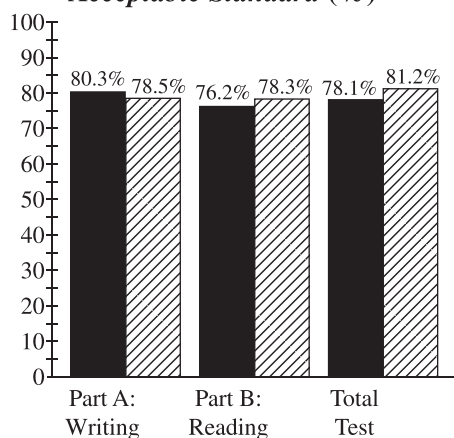
Part A: Writing consisted of a Persuasive Essay-Writing Assignment worth 35 marks (35%) of the total mark. The Persuasive Essay-Writing Assignment provided students with a context (situation) and a collection of materials that students could use if they wanted to.

Part B: Reading consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions worth 65 marks (65%) of the total mark. The reading selections were from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media.

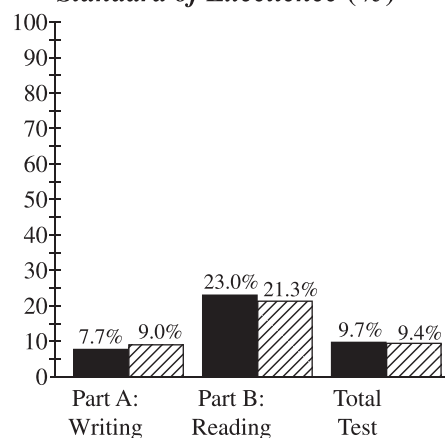
How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2010 are consistent with 2009, as shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 100 (parts A and B), the provincial average was 63.6%. The results represented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students who wrote the test, including those in French Immersion and Francophone programs.

**Percentage of Students Meeting the
Acceptable Standard (%)**



**Percentage of Students Meeting the
Standard of Excellence (%)**



2009 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2009 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability 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 9 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; it also provides a description of the writing assignments and the achievement standards.

Description of Writing Assignment	The writing assignment requires students to respond to a prompt that provides a given context (situation) and a collection of materials that students may use, if they wish. These materials may include graphics, quotations, and short literary excerpts. Students may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. Students are to respond by writing a persuasive essay.
Reporting Category	<p>Content* (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students respond to a given topic by writing an essay. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve the purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.</p>
	<p>Organization* (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent essay that links details, sentences, and paragraphs, and that supports the purpose.</p>
	<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) 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) Students choose specific words and expressions that are appropriate for their audience and effective in establishing a voice/ tone that will help to achieve their purpose.</p>
	<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>
Standards	<p>Student achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent Proficient Satisfactory Limited Poor INS (insufficient)

**Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Part A: Writing—2010 Student Achievement

In 2010, 78.5% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 9.0% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are consistent with the previous administration of *Part A: Writing* of the achievement test.

Student Achievement by Assignment and Reporting Category

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

		Essay-Writing Assignment				
		Reporting Category				
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions
Writing Standard	Score*	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students
Excellent	5.0	2.9%	2.7%	1.5%	2.2%	1.8%
	4.5	3.5%	2.4%	1.4%	1.8%	1.7%
Proficient	4.0	13.6%	12.8%	6.6%	11.0%	8.6%
Satisfactory	3.5	14.7%	12.1%	9.7%	11.3%	10.3%
	3.0	35.8%	34.6%	41.8%	52.1%	37.7%
	2.5	12.4%	13.9%	15.6%	12.6%	16.9%
Limited	2.0	12.1%	15.4%	17.3%	6.2%	16.3%
	1.5	2.3%	3.1%	3.1%	0.9%	3.0%
Poor	1.0	1.8%	2.1%	2.1%	1.0%	2.7%
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged.

Part A: Writing—*Commentary on 2010 Student Achievement*

During the 2010 scoring session, teachers from throughout the province scored 1 305 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were generally pleased with the quality of most papers. Students who wrote *Part A: Writing* of the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved an average of 20.8 out of a raw score of 35. The provincial average on the Essay-Writing Assignment was approximately 60%.

Essay-Writing Assignment

In the 2010 Essay-Writing Assignment, students were required to respond to a prompt that provided a context and a collection of materials that students may use, if they wish. Students were to respond in the form of a persuasive essay. The wording of the assignment in posing the question, “Should cellphones be banned from schools?” and inviting students to “Write a persuasive essay to present to the Centreville School Board that clearly states your point of view on the cellphone issue” encouraged students to bring their knowledge and experiences into their writing.

Training for the marking session always emphasizes the need to look at the strengths of the writer and to only mark what is written. When marking, markers conscientiously examined the “Focus” section of the scoring categories to orient themselves to distinctions within the scoring criteria as well as the various scoring descriptors in each scoring scale in order to arrive at judgments regarding the qualities of a response. Markers conscientiously used their exemplar documents to support the scoring criteria in helping distinguish between 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 to the prompt bringing their prior knowledge and experience into their writing. Teachers who took part in the marking session noted that many students were adept at listing the pros and cons related to the issue and responded in a realistic manner.

The following excerpts contain examples from responses that achieved “Satisfactory” scores:

- “I think the uses of the cell phone are great any where including school. They are great in school because, let’s say your class doesn’t have a clock. Then you can look on your phone see the time.”
- “Technology is exstremely popular. Especially cellphones. Cell phones should be band in schools because people could cheat, if texting not listening, and cellphones are disturbing.”
- “I think that cell phones should not be allowed during school hours. During school cell phones could be very distracting for students and teachers. Text messaging would be distracting in school and getting called would be distracting for everyone.”
- “Kids all over Alberta, Canada, North America, use their cellphones for emergency’s and to contact parents, siblings, friends.”

In responses such as those from which these excerpts were taken, students explored the topic in a clear, plausible, and straightforward manner, and provided relevant details that were general in nature. The writer's point of view was evident. The student's introduction was functional; they established a focus that was generally maintained, their ideas were developed in a discernible order, and their conclusion was related to the focus. Transitions tended to be mechanical and generally connected ideas/details within sentences and paragraphs. Also evident in such student responses was sentence structure that was generally controlled. Sentence type and sentence length was sometimes effective and/or varied, and some variety of sentence beginnings was evident. Words and expressions were generally used accurately, and a generally correct use of conventions was evident.

The following excerpts contain examples from responses that achieved "Proficient" or "Excellent" scores.

- "I'm Chris snow, and think cell phones should be banned from schools. I am a grade nine student and I see a lot of cell phones during class time when everyone is supposed to be working. Kids could put their cell phones in their lockers and use them after school or they could just use a school phone."
- "My name is Chris Snow. I am a Grade 9 student at Centreville High school. I am writing to you, the Centreville School Board, about cell phones not being banned from the schools within your district. I think cell phones at school are a good thing for parents, students, and teachers."
- "A lot of the time the cellphones can get stolen causing people to lose hundreds of dollars they spent on it. Cellphones get stolen everyday making a problem for the school and having to catch the thief(s)."

In responses such as those from which these excerpts were taken, students demonstrated work in which the exploration of the topic was adept and/or logical or insightful and/or discerning. The ideas and details were coherently developed, transitions clearly/fluent connected ideas, and conclusions were appropriate and effective. Students demonstrated consistently controlled and varied sentence structure and sentence beginnings that were varied. Words and expressions were used accurately and effectively, and there were few errors in conventions.

Overall, student performance on the *Part A: Writing* of the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English language Arts Achievement Test was consistent with that of the previous year.

Part B: Reading—2010 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2010, 78.3% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 21.3% of students achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are consistent with the previous administration of *Part B: Reading* of the achievement test.

Student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 32.9 out of 50 (approximately 66.0%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2010 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities, and it shows 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 construct meaning by recognizing explicit or implicit ideas and details and make inferences about the relationships between ideas, details, and events.			10.8/16 (67.5%)
Interpreting Text Organization Students identify and analyze the author’s use of genre. Students identify and analyze the author’s choice of form, text features, organizational structure, style, literary techniques, and conventions.			5.4/8 (67.5%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the denotative and connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, idioms, irony, symbolism).			5.5/8 (72.5%)
Synthesizing Ideas Students draw conclusions and make generalizations by integrating information in order to identify the tone, purpose, theme, main idea, point of view, or mood of a passage.			11.2/18 (62.2%)
Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)	16.7/25 (66.8%)	16.1/25 (64.4%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 32.9/50 (65.8%)

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

The following is a discussion of student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions are provided to highlight levels of achievement of students who met the *acceptable standard*, students who met the *standard of excellence*, and students who did not meet the *acceptable standard*. For each question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk.

Students were presented with a variety of Informational and Narrative/Poetic texts which included; an excerpt from an illustrated story, poems, an excerpt from a novel, a web page, cartoons, brochures, posters, and e-mails.

In the content area of **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details**, students were expected to construct meaning by recognizing explicit or implicit ideas and details and making inferences about the relationships between these ideas and details.

Multiple-choice question 33 required students to use implicit details from a novel excerpt to make an inference related to a character's actions.

33. The phrase “Matthew jumped” (line 9) is used to show that Matthew
- A. thought that he was late
 - B. was worried about security
 - *C. was startled out of a daydream
 - D. thought that he saw a polar bear

The question was of moderate difficulty, with 61.1% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen by 17.0% of students. Option B was chosen by 7.5% of students. Option D was chosen by 14.4% of students. Approximately 64% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 84% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Interpreting Text Organization**, students were expected to identify and analyze the author's use of genre. Students identified and analyzed the author's choice of form, organizational structure, style, literary techniques, text features, and conventions.

Multiple-choice question 28 required students to recognize the purpose and use of bold text from a cartoon.

28. The word “**ME**” (frame 2) is written in bold to suggest that Hagar is feeling
- A. embarrassed
 - *B. determined
 - C. respectful
 - D. bored

The question proved fairly easy, with 81.6% of students answering correctly. Option **A** was chosen by 9.1% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 6.2% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 3.0% of students. Close to 85% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 93% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Associating Meaning**, students were expected to use contextual clues to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.

Multiple-choice question 34 required students to recognize the meaning of a word from context.

- 34.** The word “tallied” (line 15) means
- A. estimated
 - B. reviewed
 - C. reported
 - *D. added

The question was a bit difficult, with 57.7% of students answering correctly. Option **A** was chosen by 19.8% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 13.1% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 9.4% of students. Approximately, 62% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas close to 82% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Synthesizing Meaning**, students were expected to make generalizations by integrating information from a selection in order to identify the purpose, theme, main message, point of view, or mood of the selection.

Multiple-choice question 31 required students to synthesize information from a cartoon to make a judgment related to a character.

- 31.** In this cartoon, Hagar can **best** be described as
- A. timid
 - B. worried
 - C. realistic
 - *D. dramatic

The question proved relatively easy with 78.1% of students answering correctly. Option **A** was chosen by 11.1% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 3.3% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 7.3% of students. Approximately, 82% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 93% 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 education.alberta.ca. From the home page, follow this path: *Teachers > Provincial Testing > 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 testing 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 released items 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, sample questions for each achievement testing 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.