

Local and Central Marking of Achievement Tests

Local Marking of Part(ie) A Language Arts Tests

All language arts written response papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. Classroom teachers may mark students' writing, using the scoring guides provided, before returning the tests to Alberta Education. A locally awarded mark submitted to Alberta Education will be used as the first reading of a student's test response. Local markers are to use the **For Teacher Use Only** section on the back of the Part A writing test booklet to record their marks by filling in the appropriate circles. **No marks may be placed inside student booklets when doing local marking.**

If a teacher wants to know how his or her locally awarded marks compare to the marks the tests received when marked centrally, then he or she must create an identification number and enter it in the appropriate location on the back of each student booklet. It is important that no two teachers from the same school create and use the same identification number.

Teachers have approximately one week to mark written response tests prior to their return to Alberta Education. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In the case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that the paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. After central marking has been completed and school reports have been sent to the schools, teachers who submitted their marks with an ID number will receive a confidential report on their marking. This report is called the Local Marker Report and includes the locally awarded mark, the centrally awarded mark, a third-read mark if applicable, and the final mark.

To support local marking, samples of student writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided with the test materials. These exemplars are not to be shared with students and must be returned to Alberta Education with the tests. An example of the procedure to use to calculate a total score for a Grade 9 student's writing is provided below.

Narrative/Essay Writing:

1. Assign a score of 1 to 5 for each of *content, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and conventions*.
2. Multiply the scores for *content* and *organization* by 2 as these categories are worth twice as much as the other categories.

Maximum score possible for Narrative/Essay Writing = 35.

Functional Writing:

1. Assign a score of 1 to 5 for each of *content* and *content management*.
2. Multiply these scores by 2.

Maximum score possible for Functional Writing = 20.

Total Score:

Add the narrative/essay and functional scores.

Total score for <i>Part A: Writing</i>	
Narrative/Essay Writing	___/35 (63.6%)
+ Functional Writing	___/20 (36.4%)
= Total Score	___/55 (100%)

The mark for Part A: Writing is worth 50% of the total mark for Language Arts.

Confirming of Standards and Provincial Marking

Teachers are nominated by their superintendent to assist with provincial marking, to confirm standards, and to participate in formal standard setting procedures when a new curriculum is introduced. To be eligible to mark, confirm standards and/or set standards, a teacher shall have taught the course within the last three years, be employed by a school authority at the time of marking, be able to mark on all scheduled days, and have a valid Alberta permanent professional teaching certificate. To be selected as a marker or to confirm or set standards, a teacher shall be recommended by the superintendent.

Reporting Achievement Test Results

Public Access to Results

Detailed school and school authority results are made available electronically via the extranet to schools and school authorities in late August, and multiyear summary reports are provided in mid September. Provincial results are released by the Minister of Education to the media later in September. We recommend that schools and authorities plan for the timely release of their own results within a context appropriate to the local situation.

Multiyear results for authorities and schools are posted on our web site at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing.aspx>.

An individual may make a formal request for results information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. In accordance with this legislation, Alberta Education will respond to formal FOIP requests without conditions and without notification to any school or

school authority.

In making results public, consideration should be given to Alberta Education's policy on the use and reporting of results. Alberta Education does not endorse the publication of rank-ordered lists of schools, based on their results.

Cut Scores and Standards

The achievement tests are criterion referenced and based on learning outcomes expected at given grade levels. Student performance is reported in relation to two standards: the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence*. For each of these standards, the score on a given test that determines whether a student has achieved the standard is the "cut score," which is set after the marking of the tests. Because it is almost impossible to construct tests that are precisely equal in difficulty, the cut scores may change slightly from year to year. Cut scores are set by test equating, a process of determining the score-equivalent on a new test relative to a previous test. This ensures that the actual performance expected of students at the *acceptable standard* and at the *standard of excellence* remains constant. In other words, the cut score representing the standard may vary; the standard of performance does not.

When a new curriculum is introduced, it is necessary to reconfirm standards. A formal standard-setting procedure, involving classroom teachers from across the province, is conducted to confirm that the standards for the test appropriately reflect the intent of the new curriculum. The information obtained through this standard-setting procedure is used, in conjunction with the information from the equating process, to confirm appropriate standards.

Planning and Results Reporting

Planning and reporting by school authorities and schools throughout Alberta is carried out within the government's Accountability Framework, which depicts an ongoing cycle intended to enable continuous improvement and critical reflection. In this way, school authorities and schools

- measure progress, set priorities, and use results to improve education for students on an ongoing basis
- incorporate provincial directions and community input into their plans
- communicate school authority and school directions and results to stakeholders (provincial government, staff, parents, and the public)

School authorities plan and implement three-year education plans aligned with ministry directions, allocate resources to schools and programs, monitor progress, report annually to stakeholders, and use results to plan improvements. Schools develop and implement three-year education plans aligned with school authority directions, monitor progress, report annually to stakeholders, and use results to plan improvements that will affect student learning.

School authorities and schools report results on all performance measures that are in their education plans, including the following required provincial measures:

- the percentages of enrolled students in grades 3, 6, and 9 who achieved the *acceptable standard* and the percentages who achieved the *standard of excellence* in relation to school targets, provincial results, and provincial standards for the past five years.

Learner Assessment provides multiyear reports on student achievement and participation on achievement tests, by school and school authority, on Alberta Education's web site. Learner Assessment also provides detailed reports for the achievement tests. These detailed reports, useful for identification of areas of strength and weakness in instructional programs are available only on the extranet site.

For more information on planning and reporting, including target setting, see the *Guide for School Board Planning and Results Reporting* on the Alberta Education web site at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/resources/guidetoed.aspx>. School and school authority administrators can access the *Guidelines for Interpreting Achievement Test Results* on the Alberta Education extranet site. School and school authority administrators can get access to the extranet web site by contacting the client services help desk (see *Contacts* section).

Accounting for the Performance of All Students

Over the past number of years, with the cooperation of its stakeholders, Alberta Education has been seeking ways to report on the performance of all students in grades 3, 6, and 9. As in the past, school authorities must report, to their stakeholders and Alberta Education, the performance of

- all students in grades 3, 6, and 9
- students in home education programs whose performance is measured using alternative assessments

For more information contact the Director, Achievement Testing (see *Contacts* section).

School and School Authority Reports

Alberta Education makes available to each superintendent a report for the authority as well as for each school in the authority. The detailed and multiyear school and authority reports are made available through the extranet. Guidelines for interpreting results are provided with these reports. Separate reports are issued for students who wrote the French forms of the mathematics, science, and social studies achievement tests. The school and authority reports contain local and provincial results. Both school and school authority reports contain results for students who wrote the tests and results based on the full enrollment (cohort) in the grade.

Preliminary Reporting of Results MARKING & RESULTS

Teachers of grades 6 and 9 are expected to mark all machine-scorable achievement tests, using the answer keys provided, and to report these

preliminary results to parents. An electronic reporting form is available for this purpose on Alberta Education's secured extranet site, however, schools may decide to use their own method to report preliminary results to parents in June.

**Guidelines
Regarding the
Re-Issue of Reports**

Except under unusual circumstances or by order of the Minister, the information reported in Achievement Testing Program school and school authority reports will remain unchanged prior to and following their public release.

Guidelines for the Re-Issue of Reports

1. In the first ten days following the publication and extranet posting of detailed Achievement Testing Program reports, the data of an *individual* school or school authority may be changed and a report re-issued under the following circumstances.
 - a. An error in a report, caused by Alberta Education, has a significant impact on the meaning or value of data that will be publicly reported, or is likely to raise doubts about the integrity of the entire report.
 - b. Requests for change to individual student records, made by the school or school authority subsequent to the initial publication of their report, have a significant impact on the meaning or value of the data that will be reported, and the request for report re-issue has been approved by the Superintendent.
2. In the first ten days following the publication and extranet posting of detailed Achievement Testing Program reports, the data of *all* school or school authorities may be changed and reports re-issued under the following circumstances.
 - a. An error in a report, caused by Alberta Education, has a significant impact on the meaning or value of data that will be publicly reported, or is likely to raise doubts about the integrity of the entire report.
 - b. Requests for change to individual student records, made by one or more schools or school authorities subsequent to the initial publication of reports, has a significant impact on the meaning or value of *provincial* data that will be publicly reported or results in the likelihood that doubts will be raised about the integrity of an entire report.
3. Beyond ten days after the publication and extranet posting of detailed Achievement Testing Program reports, no changes will be made to any school or school authority report except under unusual circumstances or by order of the Minister.

Individual Student Profiles (ISP)

Alberta Education makes available, in September, via the extranet, two copies of the Individual Student Profile (ISP) for each student, to the school where the student wrote the achievement tests. Students who are excused or absent from the assessment, and students whose results have been withheld, will have “not available” recorded on their profiles. The school must keep a copy of the ISP with the student’s record, and **must** provide the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s) with a copy of the ISP. Teachers are expected to discuss the ISP with parent(s) or guardian(s) during a regularly scheduled parent/teacher conference.

Home Education Reports

Results for students in home education programs are not included in the school authority report. Results are reported separately to each authority for their students in home education programs who wrote achievement tests.

Superintendents and supervising private school principals will ensure that home education supervisors and parents have access to the aggregated home education results for their authority. If the aggregated report includes results of fewer than six students, it shall not be reported publicly, in order to protect the confidentiality of individual student results. In this case, the report will be provided to the superintendents only.

Individual student profiles are available to the parents and supervisors of home educated students to use in planning their instructional programs.

Using the Reports

Students’ performance on the tests reflects their cumulative growth and achievement as a result of their entire school program, not just from instruction in grades 3, 6, or 9. Principals should therefore ensure that the entire staff review achievement test results. If changes to school programs are needed, all staff will need to be involved.

A workshop entitled “Interpreting Results to Improve Student Learning” presented by Alberta Education staff, is available through the regional professional development consortia in the fall and again in the spring each year.

Plans should also be made to involve the school council and community in discussing achievement test results and in developing plans to improve student learning. Many school administrators and classroom teachers have developed successful strategies for involving parents and the community in helping students to meet standards and in supporting the school to maintain its programs.