

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2012–2013**

**GRADE
6**

English Language Arts

Alberta  Government

This document contains an assessment highlights report on the 2013 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 2013 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 2012 and 2013 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) will be posted on the Alberta Education website. A test blueprint and an answer key that includes the difficulty, reporting category, language function, 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.

For further information, contact

Robyn Pederson
Grade 6 Humanities Assessment Standards Team Leader
Robyn.Pederson@gov.ab.ca;

Joanne Kallal
Grade 6 Humanities Examiner
Joanne.Kallal@gov.ab.ca;

Ken Marcellus, Director
Achievement Testing
Ken.Marcellus@gov.ab.ca

in the Assessment Sector, or call (780) 427-0010.
To call toll-free within Alberta, dial (780) 310-0000.

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

Copyright 2013, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Assessment Sector, 44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 108 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 5E6, and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Special permission is granted to **Alberta educators only** to reproduce, for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis, parts of this document that do **not** contain excerpted material.

Excerpted material in this document **shall not** be reproduced without the written permission of the original publisher (see credits, where applicable).

Contents

The 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test	1
Part A: Writing—2013 Test Blueprint.....	2
Part A: Writing—2013 Student Achievement	3
Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2013 Student Achievement.....	4
Part B: Reading—2013 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement	7
Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2013 Student Achievement	8
Achievement Testing Program Support Documents	10

The 2013 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 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 40 095 students in Alberta wrote the 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

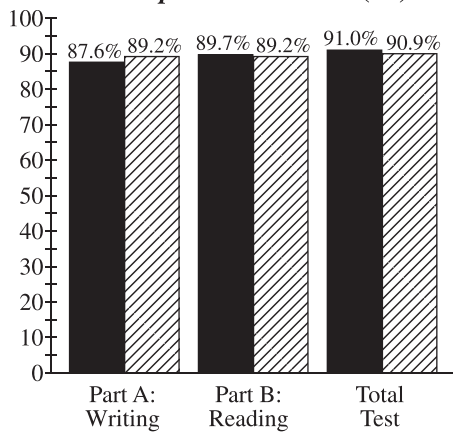
Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional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

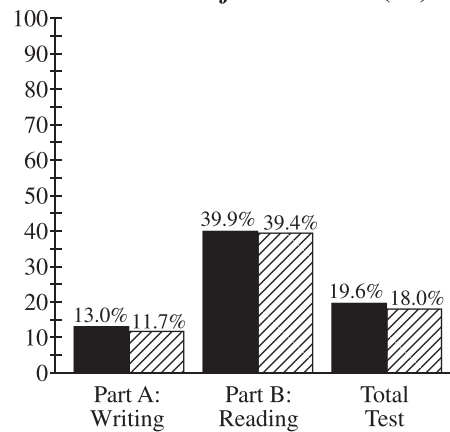
How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2013 compared with 2012 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 105 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 70/105 (66.7%). 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.

Percentage of Students Meeting the
Acceptable Standard (%)



Percentage of Students Meeting the
Standard of Excellence (%)



■ 2012 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

▨ 2013 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

Part A: Writing—2013 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2013 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) 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) 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) 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 accurate and effective, and enhance the student’s voice.</p>		
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>		
Assignment II—Functional Writing		
<p>Content* (thought and detail) 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) 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—2013 Student Achievement

In 2013, 89.2% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 11.7% 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 2013 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	% of Students
Meets the Standard of excellence	5.0	2.8	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	2.5	2.8
	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.0	4.0
Approaches the Standard of excellence	4.0	13.6	13.1	15.7	15.1	16.5	15.4	15.6
Clearly Meets the Acceptable standard	3.5	16.8	16.4	15.6	16.1	14.2	14.1	14.3
	3.0	45.6	45.0	44.7	51.5	39.1	37.8	39.7
	2.5	8.9	10.0	8.4	5.7	10.4	11.0	9.9
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable standard	2.0	7.1	8.1	7.2	3.3	10.6	12.2	11.2
Clearly Below the Acceptable standard	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.9	1.1	1.0
	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.5	1.2	0.8
	Insufficient / No Response	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.7

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2013, approximately 71% 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 7.4%.

Part A: Writing—*Commentary on 2013 Student Achievement*

During the 2013 scoring session, 180 teachers from throughout the province scored 41 198 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35 out of a total of 55 (63.6%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 22.6 out of 35 (64.5%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.5 out of 20 (62.5%).

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2013 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a boy holding on to a kite and floating above a playground and a barking dog.

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*:

- One fine morning when the sun was shining, Jim decided to go to the park and fly his brand new red kite. So he got out of bed and went downstairs for breakfast. When he was done he was about to walk out the door as his mom called “Jim are you crazy go up stairs and put on some cloths.”
- The wind started to pick up and Jack threw the kite into the air and off it went. The wind kept getting stronger and more powerful ever minute. Jack had to put a big rock in his backpack and his backpack on shoulders to stay on the ground. Jack started to put the kite in..... Fido was jumping and barking, he has no clue whats going on.
- As Alex and I dragged our selves out of the pond we noticed that we could see everything around us! We spent half an hour looking for a mine and their wasn't one, those no good grade 5 boys tricked us! We had no other choice but to set up camp. Alex started a fire and cooked us some hot dogs and after we ate we fell asleep.

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*:

- I look up at the towering maple trees in my yard. Some leaves are falling off, spinning like mini tornadoes then landing softly on the ground. Alyssa squeals and jumps into the leaf pile I had been raking for almost an hour.
“Rico come!” I call. Rico, my pet saint Bernard, comes flying through the trees, stirring up the crimson and gold leaves causing them to shoot up behind him like flames. Laughing as his slimy wet tongue rolls out of his mouth to lick my hand, I steady myself and untie my bright red kite. I look closer at the string and notice that Alyssa had tied a blue, red, grey, and yellow bow onto it. I just shake my head and untie the string from the rough bark of an ancient oak.
- Cameron kept running as the wind sliced by him. His backpack bounced painfully across his back. Everything became a blur. It was just he and Rover. Soon, Rover began to whine, for his little legs couldn’t produce that much energy to keep up with his speedy owner. Cameron too began to deteriorate, and both of them had to stop and catch their breath. Cameron looked around at the unfamiliar area. This wasn’t the way home.
What now? Thought Cameron as despair took over his body. *How could this happen on my birthday?*

These examples illustrate the type of content, organization, sentence structure, and vocabulary that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to 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 2013 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 student’s photograph that became a postage stamp, 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 excerpt from a student response illustrates a response at the *acceptable standard*:

- At Kindler Elementary School Canadian Geographic photography contest award winner. Wing Yan Tam gave a presentation on the contest. Her presentation was also about how she won. Wing Yan Tam gave facts like the picture she took was one of a humming bird in midflight, she took over 100 photos before getting the perfect one, and that she actually use her father’s camera for the picture... Wing Yan Tam won the contest two years in a row in the exact same category. I wonder if she will win again?

The previous example 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 the the student, Wing Yan Tang, or fictitious attendees.

The following excerpt from student responses to the Functional Writing Assignment illustrates a response that meet the *standard of excellence*:

- Have you ever taken an award-winning photo? Last week, Tuesday, April 27, 2012, Wing Yan Tam, a school student who won the *Canadian Geographic* picture contest, gave a presentation in our school gymnasium. The picture taken was of a hummingbird, and it is now a stamp issued for use in May, 2010. The contest was Canada wide, with photographers from all over Canada sending their pictures in to the *Canadian Geographic* magazine....
Winning stamps showcased the beauty and diversity of wildlife in Canada, and one million copies of winning photographs were made into stamps. Wing Yan Tam says that her photograph was chosen out of 6 400 entries, and that she is proud that her photo won...
The accomplishments of Wing Yan Tam are remarkable. We hope that our students at Kindler Elementary can do things just as well!

This excerpt from a student response to the Functional Writing Assignment illustrates 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 Wing Yan Tam 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 2013 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—2013 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2013, 89.2% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 39.4% 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 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 34.9 out of a total score of 50 (69.8%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2013 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.			11.7/16 (73.1%)
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.			6.3/10 (63.0%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			6.1/9 (67.8%)
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.			10.8/15 (72.0%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	13.4/20 (67.0%)	21.5/30 (71.7%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2013 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2013 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2013 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 1 required students to use context to identify the meaning of a word, and is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

1. In context, the word “speculate” (line 6) means the same as

- * A. think
- B. regret
- C. research
- D. understand

This question was moderately challenging, with 61.2% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify the meaning of an unfamiliar word, using context clues. Option **B** was chosen by 1.3% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 22.9% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 14.5% of students. Approximately 60.8% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 78.2% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 2 required students to identify the purpose of information in parentheses and is found in the **Interpreting Text Organization** reporting category.

2. The quotations in parentheses () in lines 15 and 16 are used to

- A. amuse the reader
- * B. provide examples
- C. show third-person narration
- D. provide examples of flashback

This question was quite easy, with 85.7% of students answering correctly. Students needed to demonstrate understanding of the author’s purpose in providing additional information in parentheses. Option **A** was chosen by 2.0% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 8.7% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 3.6% of students. Approximately 88.3% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 95.5% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 3 required students to summarize the main idea of a paragraph and is found in the **Synthesizing Ideas** reporting category.

3. Which of the following statements summarizes the **main** idea of the paragraph called “**Smilology**” (lines 11 to 19)?
- A. There is one basic purpose for smiling.
 - B. Smiling is well understood by scientists.
 - C. Smiling communicates the same message to everyone.
 - * D. There are many things that are unknown about smiling.

This question was more difficult than the previous one, with 66.1% of students answering correctly. Students needed to synthesize information in order to be able to identify the main idea of a specific paragraph. Option **A** was chosen by 5.1% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 16.0% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 12.8% of students. Approximately 67.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 84.1% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 4 required students to identify the idea that is being conveyed through facts in an article and is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details** reporting category.

4. The information in lines 16 to 18 supports the idea that smiling can be used to
- A. show discomfort
 - B. express uncertainty
 - * C. influence the behaviour of others
 - D. communicate confidence to others

This question was similar in difficulty to the one which it followed on the test, with 62.2% of students answering correctly. Students needed to look at direct details in the article and determine which idea they supported. Option **A** was chosen by 3.5% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 9.5% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 24.8% of students. Approximately 61.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 88.1% 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. 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 Assessment Sector 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.