

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2011–2012**

**GRADE
6**

English Language Arts

Alberta  Government

This document contains an assessment highlights report on the 2012 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 2012 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 2011 and 2012 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.

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Contents

The 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test	1
Part A: Writing—2012 Test Blueprint.....	2
Part A: Writing—2012 Student Achievement	3
Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2012 Student Achievement	4
Part B: Reading—2012 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement	7
Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2012 Student Achievement	8
Achievement Testing Program Support Documents	10

The 2012 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 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 39 249 students in Alberta wrote the 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

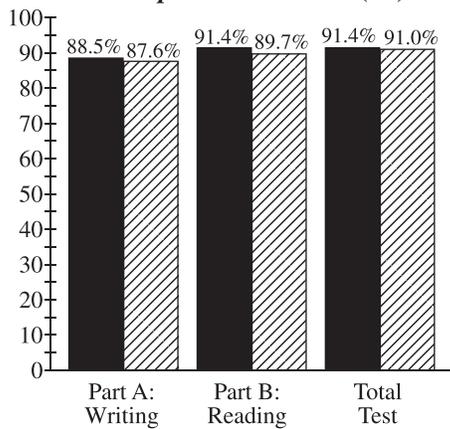
Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional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

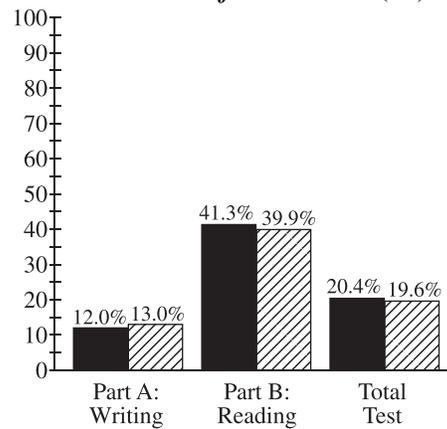
How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2012 compared with 2011 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 110 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 69.4/110 (66.3%). 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* (%)



■ 2011 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2011 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

▨ 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).

Part A: Writing—2012 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2012 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—2012 Student Achievement

In 2012, 87.6% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 13.0% 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 2012 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	3.4	2.9	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.5
	4.5	4.8	4.3	4.9	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.6
Approaches the Standard of excellence	4.0	13.7	13.0	15.1	14.7	16.1	14.4	14.6
Clearly Meets the Acceptable standard	3.5	16.5	16.0	15.2	16.0	13.6	14.4	14.1
	3.0	42.9	42.4	42.6	49.2	49.2	35.8	37.8
	2.5	9.4	10.9	9.2	6.3	10.7	11.0	10.4
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable standard	2.0	8.1	9.2	8.1	4.3	12.0	12.8	12.1
Clearly Below the Acceptable standard	1.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.3	1.2	1.5	1.2
	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.4	1.1
	Insufficient / No Response	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2012, 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 9.4%.

Part A: Writing—*Commentary on 2012 Student Achievement*

During the 2012 scoring session, 180 teachers from throughout the province scored 40 533 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2012 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 22.5 out of 35 (64.3%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.5 out of 20 (62.5%).

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2012 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a boy on a bus holding a small box that has a tail sticking out of it.

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*:

- Jeffrey is 12 years old. His best friend is his cornsnake, Chester Who is a very nice snake to him. When Jeffrey got home from school, he went to feed Chester. But he noticed the snake wasnt moving around today. Jeffrey woke chester up then fell asleep again. Jeffrey said that maybe he is feeling a little sick today.
- Last summer in Chinatown, Macy an Cho were trying to get home, because they were lost. Subway was they're only chance to get back to 2869 Blubid ave.
"Macy! What road do we go on to get to Blubid ave?" Cho questioned. "Um, Angel road, then take a sharp right. Why?" responded Macy. "Cause, I think I found our way home!" Yelled Cho in excitement "Come this way!"
- The owner came over and put the animal I thought was a frog in a box and I was on my way out. When I got back on the Bus I went to go take my set and all of a sudden a tentical started to reach out of the Box! As it came out of one of the holes every one gasped! All these people started asking me all these questions but I didnt have time to answer them.

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*:

- The gleaming sun shone through the bus window, bringing my mood down even more. I have never liked Mondays, especially this one. This morning, I woke up to find my very well loved pet, Lizzy the lizard, laying as still as a stone in her cage. My heart started to beat faster and faster as I approached her, but, when I got there, it stopped. A tear slipped out of the corner of my eye as I stared at my only pet, who was now dead.
- I'd been cooped up in my egg for so long it wasn't even funny. I finally decided I'd had enough. I felt my strength building then I jabbed up with my nose and cracked my egg. I pushed and pushed till I could push no more. I was rewarded with the ability to stretch my wings. It wasn't much better in the real world. It was still dark but what confused me was the holes in the air that let in light. I didn't really like the idea of walking into a hole, because I had no clue where any of them led. So I walked off in the direction where the least amount of holes were. I walked for about a second before hitting a wall. I muttered to my self, "This is annoying, who would paly such a cruel trick?"

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 2012 Functional Writing Assignment presented students with the situation of writing a news article for their school newspaper. The students were provided with information about the Alexandre Bilodeau 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 May 8 2012 Alexandre Bilodeau went to the Kindler Elementary School to have a class meeting the children. The purpose of the trip was to teach the children about himself and working hard into achieving their goals.
Alexandre Bilodeau was born and raised in sepember 8, 1989 in Quebec. Aleandre's brother inspires him every morning to train even when he doesn't want to.
Alexandre speaks french and english along with his sister.
- On May 5, 2011 Alexandre Bilodeau came to visit Kindler Elementary School
Mr. Bilodeau came to talk to Grade 6 students about himself. The purpose of the visit was to inspire Canadian children to work hard on there goals. ...
Bob Kinney of class 81 comented, "I really enjoyed the visit.It inspired me to believe that anything is possible."
Many others agreed with Bob Kinney, and would want to one day be like Alexandre Bilodeau.

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 the astronaut or fictitious attendees.

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

- Last week on Tuesday May 3rd Alexandre Bilodeau visited our school (Kindler Elementary School) for an interview with the whole 6th grade class. We had the chance to learn more about him, meet a Canadian Olympic athlete and to be inspired to work hard on achieving our goals. Alexandre Bilodeau was born September 8th, 1987, which means he's almost 24 years old. Alexandre skis freestyle moguls and grew up in Rosemere, Quebec. He is also know by friends as Big Al, and would be a fighter pilot if not an athlete.
- Olympic gold medalist, Alexandre (Big Al) Bilodeau, just last week came to our school to teach us about perserverance and understanding. Alexandre Bildeau. Olympic skier, brother, son. This French-Canadian athlete came to our school last week to tell us more about him, his life, and his motive to ski. "My older brother, Frederic," explains Bilodeau, "Is my inspiration. His level of determination is what gets me up in the morning when I am to tired to want to train. He, my father, and my sister are the most supportive people I know."

These excerpts 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 the astronaut 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 2012 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—2012 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2012, 89.7% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 39.9% 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 2012 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 2012 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.			10.5/15 (70.5%)
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.			7.7/12 (64.1%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			5.7/8 (71.3%)
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.			10.5/15 (70.0%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	15.5/22 (70.5%)	18.9/28 (67.5%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2012 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2012 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2012 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 27 required students to identify a specific detail in an informational article and is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details** reporting category.

27. According to the article, 14th century knights were identified in battle by the
- A. horse they rode
 - B. amount of mail they wore
 - *C. headgear and crest they displayed
 - D. type of body armour and basinet they owned

This question was a little challenging, with 69.1% of student answering correctly. Students needed to find information explicitly stated in the informational article. Option **A** was chosen by 3.7% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 11.8% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 15.3% of students. Approximately 72.6% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly whereas approximately 93.1% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 28 required students to recognize and know the use of sub-headings in an informational article and is found in the **Interpreting Text Organization** reporting category.

28. The purpose of the text in lines 1, 12, 16, 21, and 27 is to
- A. label the diagrams
 - *B. introduce the topic
 - C. allow for proper spacing
 - D. emphasize unusual words

This question was easier than the previous one, with 76.1% of students answering correctly. Students needed to determine the purpose of sub-headings in an informational article. Option **A** was chosen by 12.4% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 4.4% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 6.9% of students. Approximately 79.5% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly whereas approximately 90.4% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 29 required students to make an inference about the main topic in an informational article and is found in the **Synthesizing Ideas** reporting category.

29. According to the information in the article, an inference could be made that constructing garments of mail **most likely** was
- *A. a complex process
 - B. the work of knights
 - C. a task using needles
 - D. inexpensive for knights

This question was similar in difficulty to the previous question , with 73.7% of students answering correctly. Students needed to make an inference about the main topic in an informational article. Option **B** was chosen by 12.3% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 6.5% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 7.4% of students. Approximately 80.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly whereas approximately 95.8% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple choice question 33 required students to identify a quotation that expresses a specific idea in a poem and is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

33. Which of the following quotations suggests that the speaker is comfortable in everyday life because of the effort of others?
- A. “and I— / watch my TV” (lines 9–10)
 - *B. “I’m nestled in this world / that bold inventors built” (lines 11–12)
 - C. “Will my leave behinds / be just my junk food trash” (lines 13–14)
 - D. “What made my couch potato state?” (line 17)

This question was more challenging than the previous examples, with 66.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to select a quotation from a poem that represents a specific idea. Option **A** was chosen by 18.3% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 8.8% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 6.2% of students. Approximately 67.5% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly whereas approximately 88.9% 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.