

**Alberta Provincial  
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment  
Highlights  
2015–2016**

**GRADE  
6**

# English Language Arts

*Alberta*  Government

This document is an assessment highlights report on the 2016 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 2016 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 2015 and 2016 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.

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The [Alberta Education](http://www.education.alberta.ca) website address is [education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca).

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

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# *Contents*

The 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test .....	1
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2016 Test Blueprint.....	2
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2016 Student Achievement .....	3
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —Commentary on 2016 Student Achievement.....	4
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —2016 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement.....	7
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —Commentary on 2016 Student Achievement.....	8
Achievement Testing Program Support Documents .....	10



# The 2016 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 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

## How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 43 122 students in Alberta wrote the 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

## What Was the Test Like?

The 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

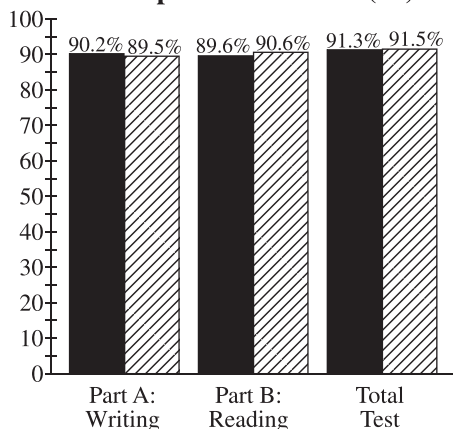
*Part A: Writing* consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional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

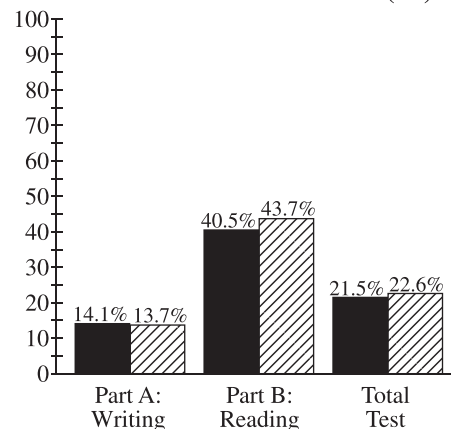
## How Well Did Students Do?



The percentages of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2016 and 2015 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 100 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 66.9/100 (66.9%). 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 (%)**



-  2015 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).
-  2016 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

## Part A: Writing—2016 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2016 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	
<b>Assignment I—Narrative /Essay Writing</b>			
<p><b>Content*</b> (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><b>Organization*</b> (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>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p><b>Sentence Structure</b> (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>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary</b> (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>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p><b>Conventions</b> (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>			<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
<b>Assignment II—Functional Writing</b>			
<p><b>Content*</b> (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 acceptable standard</p>	
<p><b>Content Management*</b> (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>		<p>Insufficient</p>	

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

## Part A: Writing—2016 Student Achievement

In 2016, 89.5% of students who wrote the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part A: Writing* and 13.7% of students who wrote the test 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 2016 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	3.9	3.3	4.6	4.6	5.0	2.2	2.7
	4.5	5.5	5.2	5.7	5.8	5.3	3.5	3.9
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	4.0	15.9	14.9	17.3	17.5	18.8	12.2	13.8
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	3.5	17.5	16.8	16.1	16.7	14.4	14.1	14.7
	3.0	43.4	43.2	40.6	46.2	35.3	38.1	38.7
	2.5	7.5	9.3	8.6	5.7	10.2	13.0	11.2
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	2.0	5.5	6.4	6.1	2.9	9.3	13.4	12.3
	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	1.1	1.6	1.3
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	1.2	0.8
	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

\* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2016, approximately 74.3% of papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third adjudicating reading. The third reading rescore rate was 6.1%.

## ***Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2016 Student Achievement***

During the 2016 scoring session, 169 teachers from throughout the province scored 44 223 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35.4 out of a total of 55 (64.4%). The provincial average on the Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment was 23.1 out of 35 (66.0%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.2 out of 20 (61.0%).

### **Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment**

In the 2016 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows two children diving down underwater towards a wooden chest.

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 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 illustrate a few student responses to the picture prompt at the acceptable standard:

- One day at the Beach, two little girls named Emily and Lili went for a little stroll by the shore and found a shiny Bronze Key and a really old map. So Emily and Lili followed the map, and the map said to go under water, but when they went in water they could breathe under water. So they went to find the chest full of hopfully gold, first they had to go through the seaweed and found a slimy snail named Zack, Zack helped Lili & Emily through the seaweed.
- When Toby got to Jeffery they both stared at the map it said "You have two days to find the chest, if you don't find it by Monday afternoon then the Key will disappear."  
Jeffery looked at Toby and said "We better find that key I wanna see if I could get a Xbox one."  
When they got home Toby was thinking about the key and the map, he couldn't fall asleep so at 6:30 am he went to go wake up Jeffery but he told him to go back to bed Toby went to his room and lay'd there still thinking about the key.
- Then right before their eyes was a gold and brown chest but they realized they had to have a key. So they took the chest with them back to shore.  
They thought maybe the key is in our tree house. So they ran to the tree house with the chest and looked around. "look, do you think this is it." Shouted Louise. "lets' give it a try." Said Isabella. So they took the key put it in the hole and turned it to the left and the chest opened. They looked inside and saw a hole bunch of gold and jewelry. Louise was so proud and so happy she couldn't stop smiling. Isabella was tired but proud.

These examples illustrate the type of content and organization that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to the picture prompt. Some corrections may 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 excerpt illustrates a student response to the picture prompt at the standard of excellence:

- “Dad!” Lily and Fiona shouted simultaneously as a rogue wave swept them into the ocean, away from their father. Slowly but surely, we were drifting away, wave after wave, our father becoming a speck on the horizon until he dissolved altogether. “What are we going to do?” Lily’s younger sister, Fiona asked. Lily couldn’t speak, she was in shock at how quickly everything fell apart on their perfect day. She felt like she was drowning. “I don’t know,” she said softly, almost to herself, “We can’t go back, dad had the paddles.” The dreaded realization hit them both as they realized the gravity of the situation. They were lost at sea.  
..... As they laid down on the warm sand, drying up and allowing the heat to seep into their skin, Lily still shivered as she remembered the face of the Great White as it prepared to end her life. She knew this adventure gave her new knowledge but as she lay there with her dad and sister, she honestly hoped she never had to go on an adventure like this ever again.

This example illustrates the type of content, organization, sentence structure, and vocabulary that some Grade 6 students used in their responses to the picture prompt.

This example 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 response from which this example was taken.

### **Functional Writing Assignment**

The 2016 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 invention of the first hockey mask, 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” and 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 that 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 illustrate responses at the acceptable standard:

- **The First Helmet**  
By: Taylor Greene  
Last week on November, 19, 2015 Stewart Bell gave us a presentation about his grandmother Elizabeth Graham.  
Over 85 years ago at Ontario, Canada, Queens University Elizabeth invented the first metal hockey helmet. She used her fencing mask as a hockey mask to protect her face and mouth. It was her father that convinced her that safety was important.  
Elizabeth played women’s hockey at Queens University. She first wore the mask in February 1927. Elizabeth’s team won the Intercollegiate Championships and the hall of fame now has 12 “Notable Women Hockey players.”  
Elizabeth was raised and grew up in the Ottawa valley.

- Revolutionary invention: hockey Goalie's Mask  
 Elizabeth Graham invented the first goalie mask, at Queen's University over 85 years ago. Elizabeth played goalie for Queen's University Female hockey team. She was the very first goalie to wear a mask. The fans were shocked because she was wearing that mask.  
 Elizabeth Graham grew up in the Ottawa Valley, she won Intercollegiate Championships with her team. The Hockey Hall of Fame names her a 'Notable Woman Hockey Player. Elizabeth wore her mask for the first time at Harty Arena, Kingston, Ontario, February 1927. This article is for you to learn about the contribution of Canadian Elizabeth Graham to hockey.  
 Reporter: Taylor Greene

The previous examples illustrate how students wrote news articles that directly addressed the writing prompt. These students included the purpose of the event on which they were reporting, essential details, and some interesting facts that were provided.

The following excerpt illustrates a student response that meets the standard of excellence:

- The Story of Elizabeth Graham  
 By Taylor Greene  
 Over 85 years ago a woman named Elizabeth Graham invented the first hockey goalie mask. Elizabeth was the goalie for the girl's hockey team in Queen's University, Ontario, Canada. She was the first hockey goalie ever, male or female, to start wearing a mask.  
 It was initially Elizabeth's father who came up with the idea of a goalie wearing a mask. He compelled Elizabeth into wearing a mask to protect her teeth, not so much her face.  
 Elizabeth obliged, and the fencing mask was chosen to substitute for a hockey mask, which had not been made yet.  
 Elizabeth Graham first skated out with a goalie mask in February 1927 at the Harty Arena, Kingston, Ontario. It shocked the fans to see a goalie wearing a mask, but since Elizabeth's team won the Intercollegiate Championships, it obviously did something.  
 Hall of Fame has twelve 'Notable Woman Hockey Players' and Elizabeth Graham is one of them 'It was always safety first with her: an unknown source tells us.  
 Since Elizabeth Graham took a stand and invented something to keep people safe, maybe you can too. Who knows, maybe one day you'll invent something the world needs to keep safe!

This excerpt illustrates the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, organization, and extensive details to create a response that 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. 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 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test was consistent with that of previous years. The majority of students continue to demonstrate success in achieving the acceptable provincial assessment standards.

## ***Part B: Reading—2016 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement***

In 2016, 90.0% of students who wrote the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part B: Reading*, and 43.7% 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 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 34.7 out of a total score of 50 (69.4%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2016 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	
<b>Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details</b> Students recognize explicit or implicit ideas and details and make inferences about the relationships between ideas and details.			<b>10.8/15</b> <b>(72%)</b>
<b>Interpreting Text Organization</b> 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.			<b>6.0/10</b> <b>(60%)</b>
<b>Associating Meaning</b> Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			<b>8/10</b> <b>(80%)</b>
<b>Synthesizing Ideas</b> Students make generalizations by integrating information from an entire selection in order to identify the purpose, theme, main idea, or mood of the selection.			<b>10.4/15</b> <b>(69.3%)</b>
<b>Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage</b>	<b>15.2/20</b> <b>(76%)</b>	<b>20/30</b> <b>(66.75%)</b>	<b><i>Part B: Reading</i></b> <b>Total Test Raw Score = 50</b>

## ***Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2016 Student Achievement***

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2016 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 36 required students to identify a literary device in an excerpted phrase from a novel. This question belongs to the **Interpreting Text Organization** reporting category.

36. The phrase “the lonely, stream-fed pool” (line 3) is an example of
- A. metaphor
  - B. alliteration
  - C. onomatopoeia
  - D.\* personification

This question was challenging, with 55.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify the literary device being used in a phrase. Option **A** was chosen by 27.1% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 12.4% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 5.3% of students. Approximately 54.1% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 82.9% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 37 required students to draw a conclusion about a character based on details in an excerpt from a novel. This question is found in the **Synthesizing Ideas** reporting category.

37. Based on the information in lines 6 to 8, what future career would **most likely** suit David?
- A.\* Graphic artist
  - B. Forest warden
  - C. Computer repairman
  - D. Wildlife photographer

This question was much easier than the prior one, with 75.9% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify a likely future outcome for a character. Option **B** was chosen 6.2% of the time. Option **C** was chosen 3.8% of the time. Option **D** was chosen 13.8% of the time. Approximately 80.6% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 92.5% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 38 required students to identify the correct pronoun antecedent in a phrase in an excerpt from a novel. This question is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details** reporting category.

38. In the phrase “he covered his head as it washed over him” (line 15), the word “it” refers to the
- A.\* rush of air
  - B. ball of fire
  - C. jet airplane
  - D. shock wave

This question more challenging, with 63.3% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify the correct pronoun antecedent in a phrase. Option **B** was chosen 17.6% of the time. Option **C** was chosen 4.4% of the time. Option **D** was chosen 14.4% of the time. Approximately 62.6% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 81.4% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 39 required students to identify the correct usage of a word with multiple meanings. This question is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

39. Which of the following statements uses the word *lay* in the same way as it is used in the sentence “David stopped at the edge of the meadow where the pond lay” (lines 21 to 22)?
- A. While walking in the woods, David saw a bird lay three eggs.
  - B.\* David’s house lay just around the corner and over the next hill.
  - C. David always remembers to lay four plates on the table for lunch.
  - D. The carpet installers will be coming next week to lay the new carpet.

This question was the easiest of the group, with 77.1% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify the correct usage of a word with multiple meanings. Option **A** was chosen 11.5% of the time. Option **C** was chosen 8% of the time. Option **D** was chosen 11% of the time. Approximately 83.7% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 97.2% 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](#). Click on one of the specific links 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 directives, guidelines, and procedures; calculator and computer policies; test accommodations; test marking and results; field testing; resources and web documents; forms and samples; and Provincial 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 6 and 9. Each bulletin provides descriptions of assessment standards, test design and blueprinting, and scoring guides (where applicable) as well as suggestions for preparing students to write the tests and information about how teachers can participate in test development activities.

## **Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing**

For achievement tests in grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts, writing samples are designed for teachers and students to enhance students' writing and to assess this writing relative to the standards inherent in the scoring guides for the achievement tests. The exemplars documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales that relate student work to the scoring categories and scoring criteria.

## **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 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 tests that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

## **Parent Guides**

Each school year, versions of the [Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing Parent Guide](#) for grades 6 and 9 are posted on the Alberta Education website. Each guide answers frequently asked questions about the achievement testing program and provides descriptions of and sample questions for each achievement test subject.

## **Involvement of Teachers**

Teachers of grades 6 and 9 are encouraged to take part in activities related to the achievement testing program. These activities include item development, test validation, field testing, and marking. In addition, arrangements can be made through the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia for teacher in-service workshops on topics such as interpreting achievement test results to improve student learning.