

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2014–2015**

**GRADE
6**

English Language Arts

Alberta  Government

This document contains an assessment highlights report on the 2015 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 2015 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 2014 and 2015 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 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test	1
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2015 Test Blueprint	2
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2015 Student Achievement	3
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —Commentary on 2015 Student Achievement.....	4
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —2015 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement.....	7
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —Commentary on 2015 Student Achievement	8
Achievement Testing Program Support Documents	10

The 2015 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 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 43 098 students in Alberta wrote the 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

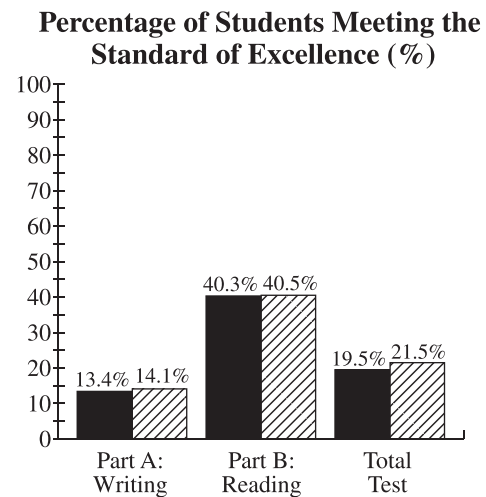
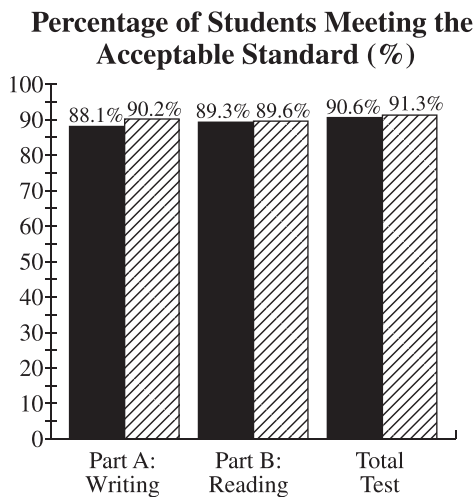
The 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

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 2015 compared with 2014 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 100 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 66.3/100 (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.



■ 2014 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

▨ 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).

Part A: Writing—2015 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2015 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—2015 Student Achievement

In 2015, 90.2% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 14.1% 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 2015 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	
Meets the Standard of excellence	5.0	3.8	3.4	4.4	4.4	4.7	2.8	3.4
	4.5	5.2	4.9	5.2	5.3	5.2	4.3	4.7
Approaches the Standard of excellence	4.0	15.1	14.4	16.2	15.8	17.6	14.3	15.1
Clearly Meets the Acceptable standard	3.5	17.4	16.8	16.1	16.3	14.3	15.2	14.6
	3.0	44.6	44.0	43.1	49.8	37.1	39.4	39.6
	2.5	7.3	8.7	8.0	5.1	9.4	9.8	9.6
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable standard	2.0	5.7	6.6	5.8	2.7	9.7	10.1	9.7
Clearly Below the Acceptable standard	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.3	1.1	1.6	1.3
	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.6	1.7	1.2
	Insufficient / No Response	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.8

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2015, approximately 72.2% 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 7.6%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2015 Student Achievement

During the 2015 scoring session, 165 teachers from throughout the province scored 44 134 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35.5 out of a total of 55 (64.5%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 23.0 out of 35 (65.7%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.6 out of 20 (63.0%).

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2015 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a boy pulling a whale up a hill with his skateboard and his bike.

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 day billy was going to go biking. Billy starts to down his block he turned the corner and sees a big giant whale. Billy stops and thins what is he going to do he disided to try to try to save the whale. Billy goes home and gets his skateboard and a string, put the skateboard under the whale and uses the string and atach it to his bike. Billy starts to pull the whale. Billy dicides to bring him to the beach but on the way to the beach Billy pulled down a lot of stuff like lamp post fire hidrent and tres and the whale pushed away cars.
- Alex was at Winston beach playing in the water but just then Alex seen something that looked like a baby wale. Alex instantly fell in love they became best friends. Alex named the wale Winston because he found the wale at Winston beach . Alex keep Winston in his backyard pool.
- Conner had a brilliant idea. Conner ran back to his house and grabbed a skateboard and a skipping rope. Connor sprinted back to the whale and slid his skateboard under the whale and tied the rpe to the skateboard and onto his bike. He pedaled his bike as fast as he could and it worked. By 10 minutes they were half way to the big blue Aquarium. "So what makes you want to live in the big blue Aquarium?" Questioned Connor. The whale responded, "well Im only 5 years old and my parents kicked me out of the house."

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 excerpts from student responses illustrate a few of the responses given that related to the picture prompt at the *standard of excellence*:

- When I was a little boy, my favourite stuffed animal was a whale. On my fifth birthday, I wished for a pet whale. What I Adam Bop wanted, I always go. I was a mischievous boy and always somehow ended up attracting trouble to me like a magnet. That’s how I ended up carting around a baby whale the size of 17 mansions through my town, Merpolios, on my skateboard...
Stripping off my shirt, I ran into the lukewarm ocean and started splashing around. After a few moment, a saw a ring of bubbles around me and felt a giant jet of water rushing straight at me like an arrow. Suddenly, I was flying. I saw a blue blurry shape as I began my death-defying plummet back to the water. I shut my eyes, clenched my hands and held my breath preparing for what would surely be a painful bellyflop....
- ...The whale, realizing that it was free, inched forward and crushed the first scientist under its belly. It then used its flippers to push itself forward again and flattened the other scientists. The whale, having resolved that all humans were junk, proceeded to destroy the lab. Then it faced the center of the city and inched on.
Meanwhile, two boys were playing in the streets of the city of Marra. Kyran was one, and he was riding a bike. He had ties a string to his bike and other end was tied to a skateboard. Kurt was on the skateboard. It was just their luck that they were directly in the whales path.
“Tell me, Kyran.” Said Kurt, “Do you hear yelling and screaming behind you?”
“Huh?” Kyran listened for a bit, and realized he did hear screams. They looked behind.
“Oh my gosh! I must be hallucinating! Is that a whale?” yelled Kurt....

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 2015 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 human-powered helicopter competition, 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 illustrates a response at the *acceptable standard*:

- 1st for human powered helicopter
vanghan Ontario
on June 13th 2013 a human powered helicopter made big success on flying in the air for 60sec or more. Aero velo was the team to win. one of the team members Said that “it isn’t really about the prize. It’s about the satisfaction of finishing something”. This team was the first team in history to succesfully fly a human powered helicopter. the team has come from far and coming up with a name is hard they got areo from “aircraft” and velo meaning “bicycle” if you would like more information go to there website at www.areovelo.com

- Human-Powered Helicopter
Taylor Green
Kindler Elementary

The Canadian Human powered helicopter team is the first team to win the \$250 000 Sikorsky prize. “Since 1980, More than 20 teams have tried to win the contest, and all failed. So you can imagine It’s a huge honour to be the first team to win,” stated the pilot of Atlas. The event happened June 13, 2013, and teams from all over the world flew to Vaughan, Ontario to compete in the contest name after Igor Sikorsky. One Team member of the Atlas crew said this after winning the prize, “It isn’t really about winning the prize, It’s about the satisfaction of finishing something.”

The previous examples illustrate how students wrote news articles that directly addressed the writing prompt that was provided. These students included the purpose of the event 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 fictitious attendees and participants.

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

- Human-Powered Helicopter
By Taylor Greene
On June 20th, 2013

Have you ever made your own helicopter? Last week in Vaughan, Ontario, Canadian team Aero Velo became the first team in history to successfully fly a human-powered helicopter.

Only one team has won the contest. In order to win, the helicopter must fly for at least 60 seconds and fly at least 3 meters off the ground. Team member Jack Bryan said “it isn’t really about the prize, It’s about the satisfaction of finishing something.”

The helicopter was very difficult to build. The helicopter was named Atlas and was made of lightweight carbon fibre. The pilot weighed more than the helicopter and the power came from the pilot pedaling. The team name come from aero, meaning aircraft, and velo, meaning bicycle. “It was a very interesting machine,” said Jim Johnson, a competitor in the contest.

The contest has an interesting history. The contest was named after Igor Sikorsky, pioneer of designing and building helicopters and airplanes. The contest was established in 1980 and since 1980 more than 20 teams have attempted to win and failed. “I hope I can enter the contest someday,” said grade 5 student John Pocket.

For more information about the Sikorsky contest, please visit their website at www.sikorskycontest.com

This excerpt 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 some incorporated them with quotations from 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 2015 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—2015 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2015, 89.6% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 40.5% 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 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 34 out of a total score of 50 (68%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2015 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.			11.7/17 (68.8%)
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.			7.4/11 (67.3%)
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.			9.2/14 (65.7%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	14.2/21 (67.6%)	19.8/29 (68.3%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2015 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2015 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2015 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 identify the implicit meaning of a phrase in an excerpt from a novel, and is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

1. In the context of the excerpt, the phrase “Making words into story music” (line 3) indicates that
 - A. a story is being recorded and listened to at a later time
 - B. * a story is being read in a way that is lively and interesting
 - C. an individual is writing music to go with the words of a story
 - D. an individual is singing the words to a story instead of reading it

This question was slightly challenging, with 74.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to infer the figurative meaning of a phrase. Option **A** was chosen by 2.9% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 9.0% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 13.6% of students. Approximately 78.9% of student who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 93.3% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 2 required students to identify a common contraction found in an excerpt from a novel, and is found in the **Text Organization** reporting category.

2. In the phrase “the last thing I’d want to do in my entire life” (lines 5 to 6), “I’d” is a contraction for
 - A. I did
 - B. I had
 - C. * I would
 - D. I should

This question was similar in difficulty to the prior question, with 72.5% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify a common contraction. Option **A** was chosen by 19.6% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 4.8% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 3.1% of students. Approximately 75.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 90.3% students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 5 required students to identify the problem a character is facing in an excerpt from a novel, and is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Details** reporting category.

5. Which of the following quotations **best** describes the problem that Ida B. faces in the excerpt?
- A. * “I almost couldn’t tell that all the other kids were staring at me with their mouths wide open, too.” (lines 2–3)
 - B. “But telling a story out loud in front of my class at Ernest B. Lawson Elementary School was nearly the last thing I’d want to do in my entire life.” (lines 4–6)
 - C. “And in my head I was already trotting off, looking for that stick, even though I could smell the stink and the thorns were pricking me. ...” (lines 16–17)
 - D. “I got tingly in my fingers thinking about opening up the book and reading those words out loud” (lines 21–22)

This question was slightly more difficult, with 67.0% of students answering correctly. Students needed to identify which quote best describes the problem the main character faces in an excerpt from a novel. Option **A** was chosen by 9.1% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 5.1% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 18.8% of students. Approximately 68.85% of students who met the **acceptable standard** were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 87.5% of students who met the **standard of excellence** chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 6 required students to integrate ideas and details to draw a conclusion about a character in an excerpt from a novel, and is found in the **Synthesizing Ideas** reporting category.

6. What will Ida **most likely** do if she experiences a similar situation in the future?
- A. Suggest a classmate have a turn
 - B. Refuse to do as the teacher requests
 - C. * Accept the offer to read more readily
 - D. Ask for practice time before reading aloud

This question was difficult, with 54.9% of students answering correctly. Students needed to predict the most likely future behavior of the main character, based on events in an excerpt from a novel. Option **A** was chosen by 14.6% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 17.3% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 13.1% of students. Approximately 55.4% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 81.5% 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. 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 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 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 presents answers to frequently asked questions about the achievement testing program as well as 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.