

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2013–2014**

**GRADE
6**

English Language Arts

Alberta  Government

This document contains an assessment highlights report on the 2014 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 2014 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 2013 and 2014 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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The 2014 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 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 41 379 students in Alberta wrote the 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

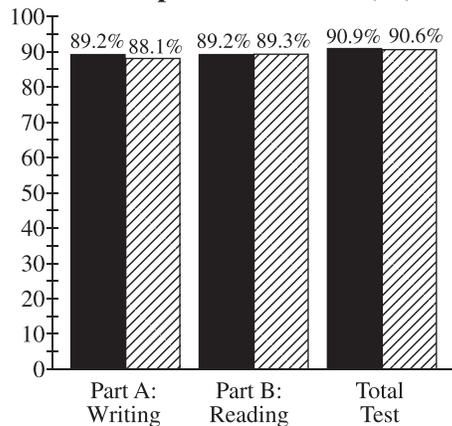
Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional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

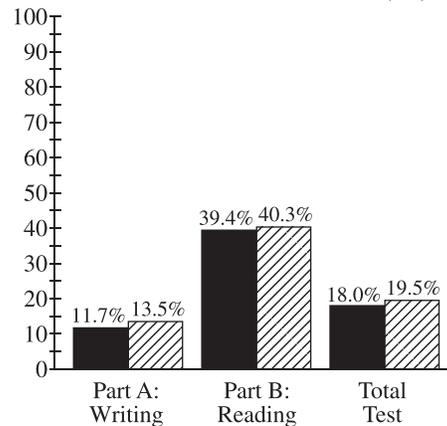
How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2014 compared with 2013 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 105 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 70.2/105 (67%). 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 (%)



 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).

 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).

Part A: Writing—2014 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2014 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—2014 Student Achievement

In 2014, 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 2014 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	3.6	3.2	4.2	4.1	4.5	2.7	3.3
	4.5	4.8	4.7	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.1	4.4
Approaches the Standard of excellence	4.0	15.2	14.5	16.5	15.4	17.5	15.1	15.5
Clearly Meets the Acceptable standard	3.5	16.1	15.7	15.3	15.4	13.4	14.3	14.3
	3.0	41.8	42.0	42.6	49.5	37.8	39.0	39.6
	2.5	8.8	9.6	8.0	5.8	9.5	9.3	9.2
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable standard	2.0	8.2	8.7	7.0	4.0	10.3	11.1	10.6
Clearly Below the Acceptable standard	1.5	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.3	1.0	1.4	0.9
	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.7	1.7	1.0
	Insufficient / No Response	0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.3

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2014, approximately 69.3% 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 8.24%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2014 Student Achievement

During the 2014 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 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35.2 out of a total of 55 (64%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 22.7 out of 35 (64.9%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.5 out of 20 (62.5%).

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2014 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a girl standing in a door, with photographers and journalists looking at her.

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 sunny day there was this girl named Julie she had short brown hair, skinny and she lived with the president of the United States of America and she has a little brother. Julie and her brother were sitting in the kitchen playing with their toys all of a sudden there was this really loud knock on the door Julie went to the door and opened it there were all these people with cameras taking pictures.
- When she finished breakfast she opened the door to be surprised by paparazzi. She was blinded by all the camera flashes. The first thing that popped in her head was how did they find out. Sure enough someone was holding up a newspaper, blinded by all the flashing she could barely read. But she could see with a glance it said secret unveiled and it was a picture of her taking her wig off, she was getting changed to go home after the movie scene.
- So the producer whispered into the news guy's ear and the news guy announced "This just in Jane Anlo the inventor of the workbot 2000 has something to say" really excited Jane announced "The robots are evil they destroyed my house you better get rid of them before they destroy your house just whack them with mallets multiple times then throw them in the trash that is all" So everyone who had a robot did just that and just like that Jane's fame was over.
Ahhh it is good to be back to normal" Jane sighed liking to relax with no paparazzi and no choopers
"Yep everything is back to normal" Jane said

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*:

- “Lauren! Jonathan! It’s time to go to school!” yelled Mrs. Glend from the kitchen. It was a typical day at number 5 Mayward Street. The Gaslat family lived there, consisting of Lauren, a twelve year old girl who was starting grade 7, Jonathan, Lauren’s eight year old brother, who was almost in grade 3, and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Glend, who were in their mid-thirties.
“Mom, do we have to go? I think I feel a fever coming on! Oh, woe is me! Mother! I’m wasting away! Please let my last days be spent here, in my home! Have you no heart? At school, there is no place for a dying person like me!” Lauren cried enthusiastically. She was always an actor, and a pretty good one, too. Since grade 2, she has been the lead in all the school plays. If you look at her report cards, you will see a big fat A+ beside drama.
- I sped through the first parts of the course but it started to get increasingly harder. I was climbing up a ladder and I lost all hope of winning. On top of the ladder was a platform with a tightrope. Nervously I stepped onto the tightrope, It wobbled a little but then steadied itself. I took another step and lost my balance, the tightrope shook violently and I couldn’t balance on it. Just as I was flung off the side I grabbed The tightrope and held myself up. Using all my upper body strength I wrenched myself back up. After that I just inched along on all fours until finally I was across... I remembered this from previous episodes I was supposed to jump out of the plane. I frantically started looking for skydiving equipment. There it was under the chair, I strapped myself in with crazy speed and looked out the door. Below me I could see a big bullseye painted in a field and without a second thought I jumped. The wind was crashing into my face as I plummeted down from over five thousand feet up. At around one thousand feet from the ground I pulled my parachute and slowly floated down landing right in the bullseye.

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 2014 Functional Writing Assignment presented students with the situation of writing a news article for their school newspaper. The students were provided with information about collecting change for charities, 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*:

- **Change for Change**
Today we are at the Change for Change event and we talked with Emily Fisher and she said “Change for Change is an event to raise money for local Charities. In about one month we raise 15 000 dollars. and last year a 7-year-old student collected 1000 pennies.” This event encourages people collect coins to support local charities.
- The students said that after a while, they understood the value of volunteerism. They also shared that they will start doing it in their community. As they helped others, they developed generosity and citizenship.
- All of this money will be given to charities like the animal shelter, food banks, community gardens and much more. Students will be sorting and counting coins in the Art room. To sign up go to the office. If you have pennies and are at the mall the stores there are collecting them.

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 fictitious attendees.

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

- **Got Change?**
Ever wonder what you can do with your spare change? Well now you can stop wondering, because there is now a place in town to go to. This program is called Change for Change? (Located southside of Kindler) Change for Change program is about donating the extra change that you have in your pocket, wallet, or just lying around your house. The change you donate goes to local charities, food banks, animal shelters, senior centres, and neighborhood service projects. “Change for change is all about reaching out for someone who needs spare change” says event specialist Cheryl Adler.
“Change for Change? Sure has helped us out by giving spare change away.” recalls Karen Dublet. Did you know that Change for change raised over \$15 000 in one month? Or that school and businesses were challenged to raise 25 sacks of pennies which is 750 lbs. Wow. I know I couldn’t do that.....

This excerpt from student responses 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 2014 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—2014 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2014, 89.3% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 40.3% 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 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 35 out of a total score of 50 (70%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2014 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.			10.2/14 (72.9%)
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.			7.3/11 (66.4%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			7.0/10 (70%)
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%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	14/20 (70%)	21/30 (70%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2014 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2014 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2014 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 26 required students to use context to understand the meaning of a phrase, and is found in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

26. The quotation “raid the cupboards” (lines 2 to 3) suggests that the narrator and his friends would
- A. store few items in the cupboards
 - B. keep many items in the cupboards
 - C. search the cupboards for items needed
 - D. take items from the cupboards of other people

This question was slightly challenging, with 74% of students answering correctly. Students needed to speculate on the meaning of an unfamiliar phrase using context clues. Option **A** was chosen by 5.9% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 8.2% of students. Option **D** was chosen by 11.8% of students. Approximately 78.4% 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 27 required students to recall information found directly in the reading, and is found in the **Identifying and Interpreting Details** reporting category.

27. According to information in the article, the narrator gets the idea for Peanut Butter & Co. from
- A. taking a course on how to run a business
 - B. working in a restaurant that catered to college students
 - C. reading a newspaper article about a peanut butter restaurant
 - D. competing to see who could create the best peanut butter sandwich

This question was slightly easier than the one it followed on the test, with 79.7% of students answering correctly. Students needed to recall a detail that was directly stated in the reading. Option **A** was chosen by 5.2% of students. Option **B** was chosen by 8.9% of students. Option **C** was chosen by 6.1% of students. Approximately 86.3% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 98.2% 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 at education.alberta.ca. From the home page, follow the path *Teachers > Provincial Testing > Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT)*, and then 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 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.