

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2010-2011**

**GRADE
9**

**Knowledge and Employability
English Language Arts**

**Government
of Alberta ■**

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ of KE English Language Arts
Administrators	
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

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The 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability 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 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 1 315 students wrote both parts of the 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

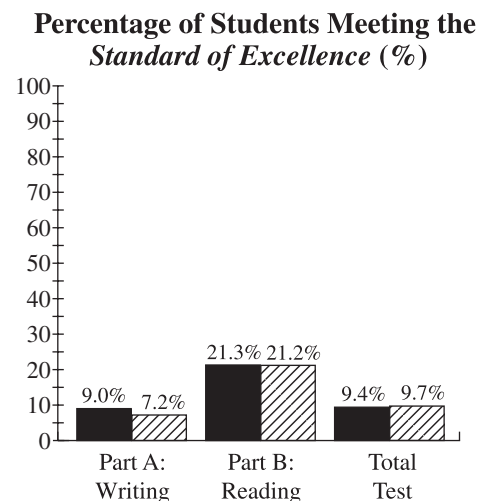
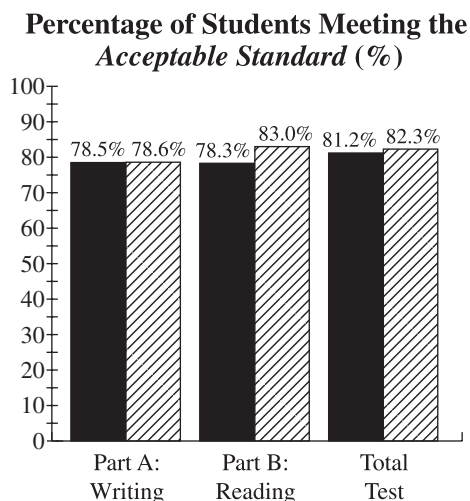
The 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts:

Part A: Writing consisted of a Persuasive Essay-Writing Assignment worth 35 marks (35%) of the total mark. The Persuasive Essay-Writing Assignment provided students with a context (situation) and a collection of materials that students could use if they wanted to.

Part B: Reading consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions worth 65 marks (65%) of the total mark. The reading selections were from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media.

How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* in 2011 are similar to 2010, as shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 100 (parts A and B), the provincial average was 64.7%. The results represented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students who wrote the test, including those in French Immersion and Francophone programs.



■ 2010 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2010 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

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Part A: Writing—2011 Test Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2011 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities; it also provides a description of the writing assignments and the achievement standards.

<p>Description of Writing Assignment</p>	<p>The writing assignment requires students to respond to a prompt that provides a given context (situation) and a collection of materials that students may use, if they wish. These materials may include graphics, quotations, and short literary excerpts. Students may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. Students are to respond by writing a persuasive essay.</p>
<p>Reporting Category</p>	<p>Content* (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students respond to a given topic by writing an essay. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve the purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.</p> <p>Organization* (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent essay that links details, sentences, and paragraphs, and that supports the purpose.</p> <p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) Students control sentence structure and use a variety of sentence types, sentence beginnings, and sentence lengths to enhance communication.</p> <p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) Students choose specific words and expressions that are appropriate for their audience and effective in establishing a voice/tone that will help to achieve their purpose.</p> <p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>
<p>Standards</p>	<p>Student achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent Proficient Satisfactory Limited Poor INS (insufficient)

**Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Part A: Writing—2011 Student Achievement

In 2011, 78.6% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part A: Writing* of the Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 7.2% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are similar to the previous administration of *Part A: Writing* of the achievement test.

Student Achievement by Assignment and Reporting Category

The chart below illustrates the percentage of students achieving writing standards for each writing assignment and reporting category.

		Essay-Writing Assignment				
		Reporting Category				
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions
Writing Standard	Score*	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students
Excellent	5.0	2.1%	1.3%	1.2%	1.6%	2.0%
	4.5	2.3%	1.7%	1.1%	1.7%	0.7%
Proficient	4.0	13.2%	12.2%	7.4%	10.5%	9.4%
Satisfactory	3.5	13.1%	12.9%	9.2%	13.0%	10.6%
	3.0	37.7%	37.8%	38.7%	52.2%	34.6%
	2.5	14.4%	12.5%	17.2%	11.4%	16.9%
Limited	2.0	13.0%	16.6%	19.7%	6.8%	19.7%
	1.5	2.1%	2.2%	3.0%	1.4%	3.1%
Poor	1.0	1.3%	1.8%	1.6%	0.4%	2.1%
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%

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

Part A: Writing—*Commentary on 2011 Student Achievement*

During the 2011 scoring session, teachers from throughout the province scored 1 315 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were generally pleased with the quality of most papers. Students who wrote *Part A: Writing* of the 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved an average of 20.6 out of a raw score of 35. The provincial average on the Essay-Writing Assignment was approximately 59%.

Essay-Writing Assignment

In the 2011 Essay-Writing Assignment, students were required to respond to a prompt that provided a context and a collection of materials that students may use, if they wish. Students were to respond in the form of a persuasive essay. The wording of the assignment in posing the question, “Should the homework policy be changed?” and inviting students to “Write a persuasive essay to present to the superintendent of the Centreville School Board that clearly states your point of view on the new homework policy” encouraged students to bring their knowledge and experiences into their writing.

Training for the marking session always emphasizes the need to look at the strengths of the writer and to only mark what is written. When marking, markers conscientiously examined the “Focus” section of the scoring categories to orient themselves to distinctions within the scoring criteria as well as the various scoring descriptors in each scoring scale in order to arrive at judgments regarding the qualities of a response. Markers conscientiously used their exemplar documents to support the scoring criteria in helping distinguish between 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 to the prompt bringing their prior knowledge and experience into their writing. Teachers who took part in the marking session noted that many students were adept at listing the pros and cons related to the issue and responded in a realistic manner.

The following excerpts contain examples from responses that achieved “Satisfactory” scores:

- “With this new home work policy I don’t have to go home worrying about homework assignments over night.”
- “Kids want to be able to have a life and do things after school, but we can’t if we have a load of homework to do.”
- “Homework has bin a study method or an educational guide for quite along time.”

In responses such as those from which these excerpts were taken, students explored the topic in a clear and plausible manner. The writer’s point of view was evident and students approached the topic from both sides of the issue. The ideas and details provided were appropriate and supporting details tended to be relevant, but general in nature. The student’s introduction was functional and a focus was generally maintained. Ideas were developed in a discernible order. However, coherence tended to falter at times. Transitions tended to be mechanical and generally connected ideas within sentences and less so between paragraphs. Also evident in such student responses was sentence structure that was generally controlled and sentence type and sentence length that was sometimes effective and varied. Some variety of sentence beginnings was evident. Words and expressions were generally used appropriately to support the writer’s position. A discernible tone or voice was evident and it was noted that the topic seemed to be engaging for students. Generally correct use of conventions was evident.

The following excerpts contain examples from responses that achieved “Proficient” or “Excellent” scores.

- “If we have homework we wont have time to get to our jobs or we will go to our jobs and not be able to finish our homework.”
- “No homework! It’s so boring and pointless! Many kids say this but homework isn’t pointless and doesn’t have to be boring.”
- “Children learn about responsibility. They learn that they have to set aside a time to do homework and they learn that this is part of their jobs as a student. It helps students become better adults and makes them more successful.”

In responses such as those from which these excerpts were taken, students demonstrated work in which the exploration of the topic was adept and/or logic or insightful and/or discerning. The introductions were purposeful or engaging and conclusions reinforced or enhanced the focus. Sentence structure was consistently controlled and sentence type, length, and beginnings were consistently varied. Words and expressions were well-chosen and supported or enhanced the writer’s positions. Few errors in conventions were evident.

Overall, student performance on the *Part A: Writing* of the 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test was similar to that of the previous year.

Part B: Reading—2011 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2011, 83.0% of students who wrote the test achieved the *acceptable standard* on *Part B: Reading* of the Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test, and 21.2% of students achieved the *standard of excellence*. These results are similar to the previous administration of *Part B: Reading* of the achievement test.

Student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 33.9 out of 50 (approximately 68%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2011 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities, and it shows 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 construct meaning by recognizing explicit or implicit ideas and details and make inferences about the relationships between ideas, details, and events.			10.7/16 (66.9%)
Interpreting Text Organization Students identify and analyze the author's use of genre. Students identify and analyze the author's choice of form, text features, organizational structure, style, literary techniques, and conventions.			5.3/8 (66.3%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the denotative and connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, idioms, irony, symbolism).			4.9/7 (70.0%)
Synthesizing Ideas Students draw conclusions and make generalizations by integrating information in order to identify the tone, purpose, theme, main idea, point of view, or mood of a passage.			13/19 (68.4%)
Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)	17/24 (70.8%)	16.9/26 (65.0%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 33.9/50 (67.8%)

Part B: Reading—*Commentary on 2011 Student Achievement*

The following is a discussion of student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2011 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions are provided to highlight levels of achievement of students who met the *acceptable standard*, students who met the *standard of excellence*, and students who did not meet the *acceptable standard*. For each question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk.

Students were presented with a variety of Informational and Narrative/Poetic texts which included; an excerpt from an illustrated story, poems, an excerpt from a novel, a web page, cartoons, brochures, posters, and e-mails.

In the content area of **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details**, students were expected to construct meaning by recognizing explicit or implicit ideas and details and making inferences about the relationships between these ideas and details.

Multiple-choice question 25 required students to locate a key detail.

25. Greyeyes did **not** serve in the Pacific because

- *A. Japan surrendered
- B. his rank was too high
- C. his farm required attention
- D. he was training Canadian soldiers

72.4% of the students chose A (correct answer)

4.6% of the students chose B

3.4% of the students chose C

19.4% of the students chose D

Approximately 74.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 95.3% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Interpreting Text Organization**, students were expected to identify and analyze the author’s use of genre. Students identified and analyzed the author’s choice of form, organizational structure, style, literary techniques, text features, and conventions.

Multiple-choice question 43 required students to recognize the use of capital letters to convey feelings.

43. It can be inferred that the word “NOW” is capitalized because Superman is

- *A. angry
- B. excited
- C. flexible
- D. anxious

86.4% of the students chose A (correct answer)

5.1% of the students chose B

2.2% of the students chose C

5.9% of the students chose D

Approximately 90.8% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 96.1% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Associating Meaning**, students were expected to use contextual clues to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.

Multiple-choice question 1 required students to identify the meaning of a word from context.

1. In frame 3, “TWO-PLANKERS” are

- *A. skiers
- B. snowboarders
- C. helicopter pilots
- D. mountain climbers

83.5% of the students chose A (correct answer)

15.2% of the students chose B

0.05% of the students chose C

0.06% of the students chose D

Approximately 86.7% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 95.3% of students who met the *standard of excellence* chose the correct response.

In the content area of **Synthesizing Meaning**, students were expected to make generalizations by integrating information from a selection in order to identify the purpose, theme, main message, point of view, or mood of the selection.

Multiple-choice question 44 required students to integrate information to draw a conclusion related to the establishment of tone.

44. From Part A of “A Super Battle” to Part B of “A Super Battle,” the tone of the e-mails changes from
- A. polite to worried
 - B. angry to friendly
 - C. serious to humorous
 - *D. polite to competitive

2.5% of the students chose A

10.4% of the students chose B

21.6% of the students chose C

65.2% of the students chose D (correct answer)

Approximately 70.0% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 84.3% 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 this path: *Teachers > Provincial Testing > 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 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, and grades 6 and 9 Mathematics, 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 writing samples documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales that relate student work to the scoring categories and scoring 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 versions of released items and/or 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.