

Grade 6

Assessment Highlights

English Language Arts

Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing 2018–2019

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ Grade 6 English Language Arts
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

Alberta Education, Government of Alberta

2019–2020

English Language Arts 6 Assessment Highlights

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You can find [provincial achievement test-related materials](#) on the Alberta Education website.

Additional topics of interest are found in the [General Information Bulletin](#).

This document contains assessment highlights from the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts 6 Provincial Achievement Test*.

Assessment Highlights provides information about the overall test, the test blueprint, and student performance on the provincial achievement test that was administered in 2019. Also provided is information on student performance at the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on selected items from the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts 6 Provincial Achievement Test*. This information is intended for teachers and is best used in conjunction with multi-year and detailed school reports that are available to schools via the Stakeholder File Exchange (SFX). *Assessment Highlights* for all provincial achievement test subjects and grades are posted on the Alberta Education website every year in the fall.

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The 2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of those students who wrote the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts 6 Provincial Achievement Test*. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How many students wrote the test?

A total of 49 639 students in Alberta wrote the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

What was the test like?

The *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* had two parts that were weighted equally.

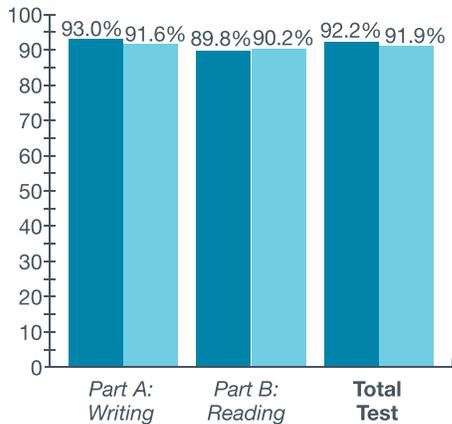
Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative writing assignment provided a coloured picture to which students were to respond in narrative form. The functional writing assignment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

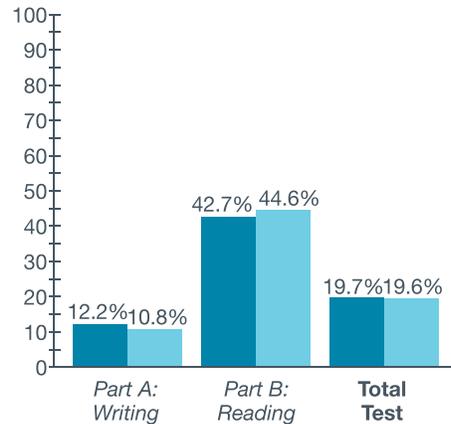
How well did students do?

The percentages of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2019 and 2018 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 100 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 68.4/100 (68.4%). 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 (%)



-  2018 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the *2018 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* (based on those who wrote)
-  2019 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* (based on those who wrote)

Part A: Writing—2019 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2019 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 Writing		
<p>Content* (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) 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. 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 standard of excellence</p> <p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p> <p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p> <p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Organization* (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) 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) 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 accurate and effective and that enhance voice.</p>		
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>		
Assignment II: Functional Writing		
<p>Content* (thought and detail) 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>Insufficient</p>
<p>Content Management* (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) 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—2019 Student Achievement

In 2019, 91.6% of students who wrote the *Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* achieved the acceptable standard on *Part A: Writing* and 10.8% of students who wrote the test achieved the standard of excellence. These results are consistent with previous administrations of *Part A: Writing* of the provincial achievement test.

Student achievement by assignment and reporting category

The quality of the writing on the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial 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 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	2.9	2.6	3.4	3.6	3.6	1.3	1.7
	4.5	4.6	4.3	5.0	5.2	4.8	2.7	3.1
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	4.0	12.9	12.6	14.9	15.1	16.6	10.0	11.6
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	3.5	17.8	17.4	16.8	17.5	15.7	15.0	14.9
	3.0	49.4	48.4	45.6	50.1	39.6	46.5	44.4
	2.5	7.4	9.0	8.6	5.8	10.3	11.5	11.7
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	2.0	4.2	4.9	4.8	2.1	8.1	9.8	10.2
	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.8	1.5	0.6
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	1.1	0.6
Insufficient/ No Response	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.6

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2019, approximately 77% 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 5.47%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2019 Student Achievement

During the 2019 scoring session, 196 teachers from throughout the province scored 51 605 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing of the 2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 68.4 out of a total of 100 (68.4%). The provincial average on the Narrative Writing Assignment was 22.9 out of 35 (65.4%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.2 out of 20 (61%).

Narrative Writing Assignment

In the 2019 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows a busy boat dock with a giant green sea creature nearby.

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 some student responses to the picture prompt at the acceptable standard:

- There is an underwater kingdom splatcake all the splatodian live there. there is one splatodian who like to go the surface is name was ron. One day his parents caught him sneaking up to the surface and they locked him in the duegon.

Ron sat in the rust dungeon for 3 whole day with no food or nothing to do. he as starveing and he needed out. He first tried using his to smash through the bars of his cell but failed His head was aching and he hadnt even made a dent.

- Kate and her family went cannoing all around the lake, it took a hour and an half to go all around the lake. Soon kate and her family went back to the dock to take a break and have lunch. Kates mother make turkey sandwiches. 5 minutes later kate and her family finished eating.

Sudently a myserous green and weird looking think comes out of the water. Everyone started to Scream. Ahhhhhhhh. But Kate and her brother did not care they went up to the thing and started to pet it. The myserose thing looked me, and sleepy. Everyone was shocked because they have never seen anything like this.

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:

- SCREEECH! The school bus jolted to a stop, tossing me into the front of my seat. The chatter of kids filled my ears and we began to unload. It was the last week of school and the annual Gable lake marina visit had started. Every year, all the grade 5\6 students get to go spend the day in the sun, playing games and swimming in the lake. I jumped to my feet and scampered towards the doors, carrying my bag in one hand and my towel in the other. The group nearly sprinted across the dock as we stepped out into the fresh air. Boats cruised through the perfectly clear, glass-like water, splashing a misty spray as they went. I caught up with my friends, Kirk and Elle. We met in the second grade when Kirk came to the school and have been inseparable ever since. Quickly we ran to get our spot on the east side of the deck...

"Kids, I know you are all very excited but we do need to go over some ground rules..." My teacher, Ms. Stone spoke loudly. I zoned out as she droned on about water safety. That's when I noticed a strange bubbling on the surface of the lake.

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 2019 Functional Writing Assignment presented students with the situation of writing a news article. The students were provided with information about bison being moved from Elk Island to Banff 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 "who," "what," "when," "why," "where," and "how" 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 relocation of 16 bison

People relocate 16 bison to banff national park!!!

in January 2017 16 bison were relocated from elk island national park to Banff national Park to reintroduce bison into banff national Park. Your Probably wondering how they transport 16 bison From elk island national Park to banff national park. Well they use Helicopters and trucks to transport them. now remember it's a 400 kilmometre ride from elk island Park from banff national park. There were 10 Female bison and 6 male bison. They used big shipping containers to transport with truck and for helicopter They carried the bison in a shipping container too across the mountains.

- The Relocation of the Bison

The Bison are being relocated from Elk Island National Park, Alberta to Banff National Park, Alberta. This is happening in January of 2017. There are 16 Bison being transported to Banff. Ten female and six male bison are transported by trucks carrying long shipping containers, and then carried by helicopter over mountains to remote grassy areas. After the relocation, the bison are carefully monitored for 16 months to make sure they are adapting to their new home. These bison provided important resources for first Nations and Metis living in the prairie. 30 million bison roamed prairies before over hunting in the 1800's Bison have been absent from the Banff National park for more than 140 years. In 2014 Northern Tribes Buffalo Treaty was created to return bison to original grazing lands.

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:

- Bison Relocation

During January 2017, 16 wild bison went on a grueling trip from Elk Island National Park to Banff National Park to introduce Bison there.

The four hundred kilometre trip was made by truck and helicopter. "It was a long, frigid trip," inform George Brown, a truck driver, "and we kept the bison in long shipping containers." Before the bison were transported, members of the Samson Cree Nation held a blessing ceremony to send off the ten female bison and six male bison, and to ensure they had a safe journey. As for the trip by helicopter, the bison were carried over massive mountains and were then safely deposited at remote, grassy areas.

"That was a lengthy trip," remarked a helicopter pilot, "as these bison can weigh from 600 – 900kg. After the landing at Banff, the bison were monitored closely for 16 months to check on their well-being."

This trip was crucial to ensuring the survival to this species. 30 million bison used to live in the prairies. They were a major factor in helping the First Nations and Metis survive Alberta's harsh winters. Bison were used for many things. They were so significant that they are a important spiritual symbol for the First Nations and Metis. However, bison populations quickly dropped after overhunting in the 1800s. The animal nearly became extinct since then, bison have not been present at Banff National Park for more than 140 years, despite recent efforts. Because

of this, in 2014 the Northern Tribes Buffalo Treaty was created to return bison to their original grazing lands, which are places like Banff.

So far, one goal has been met and many, many more will be met soon to save the bison.

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 2019 *Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial 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—2019 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2019, 90.2% of students who wrote the *Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* achieved the acceptable standard on *Part B: Reading*, and 44.6% of students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence. These results are consistent with previous administrations of *Part B: Reading* of the provincial achievement test.

Student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* averaged 36.5 out of a total score of 50 (73%).

The blueprint on the following page shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2019 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	
<p>Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details Students recognize explicit or implicit ideas and details, and make inferences about the relationships between ideas and details.</p>			10.3/13 (79.2%)
<p>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, literary techniques, text features, and conventions.</p>			7.4/11 (67.3%)
<p>Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.</p>			7.2/10 (72%)
<p>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.</p>			11.6/16 (72.5%)
<p>Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage</p>	14.3/20 (71.5%)	22.2/30 (74.0%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2019 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*. Sample questions from the *2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Provincial 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 provincial achievement tests.

Multiple-choice question 16 required students to infer the mood of a character from a phrase in an excerpt from a novel. This question belongs in the Associating Meaning reporting category.

- 16.** Which of the following phrases suggests that Mel feels at ease in the store?
- *A.** “as Mel breathed in the cool air, the corners of her mouth lifted” (lines 11–12)
 - B.** “She made a mental list of the products she liked” (lines 15–16)
 - C.** “Mel had never seen or heard anything like it” (line 32)
 - D.** “what she really wanted to do was ask him to tell her more” (lines 51–52)

This question was fairly straightforward with 69.5% of students answering correctly. Option B was chosen 7.1% of the time. Option C was chosen 8.7% of the time. Option D was chosen 14.6% of the time. Approximately 72.2% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 91.1% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 17 required students to identify the use of an ellipsis in an excerpt from a novel. This question belongs in the Interpreting Text Organization reporting category.

- 17.** The writer uses an ellipsis (...) in line 34 to indicate that Mel is
- A.** speaking slowly
 - B.** waiting for a response
 - *C.** interrupted by the storekeeper
 - D.** thinking of what she wants to say

This question was also straightforward with 66.6% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 5.4% of the time. Option B was chosen 8.6% of the time. Option D was chosen 19.3% of the time. Approximately 71.0% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 87.0% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 18 required students to synthesize information to identify author's purpose for a section of an excerpt from a novel. This question belongs in the Synthesizing Ideas reporting category.

- 18.** The first three paragraphs of the excerpt are **mainly** used to
- A.** provide plot details
 - *B.** establish the setting
 - C.** develop character traits
 - D.** create conflict between characters

This question was also straightforward with 66.2% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 18.7% of the time. Option C was chosen 9.6% of the time. Option D was chosen 5.3% of the time. Approximately 70.0% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 90.5% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 19 required students to identify a key detail in an excerpt from a novel. This question belongs in the Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details reporting category.

- 19.** Which of the following objects remind Mel of her mother?
- A.** Penny candies
 - *B.** Four-leaf clovers
 - C.** Cheap sunglasses
 - D.** Red Label milk cans

This question was fairly straightforward with 71.1% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 7.7% of the time. Option C was chosen 9.6% of the time. Option D was chosen 5.3% of the time. Approximately 74.0% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 93.9% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Provincial Achievement Testing Program Support Documents

The Alberta Education website contains several documents that provide valuable information about various aspects of the provincial 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.

Provincial 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 Provincial Achievement Test 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 provincial 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 provincial 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. The exemplars documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales that relate student work to the scoring categories and scoring criteria.

Previous provincial achievement tests and answer keys

All January provincial achievement tests (parts A and B) for Grade 9 semestered students are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education. All May/June provincial 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 Provincial Achievement Test Program and provides descriptions of and sample questions for each provincial achievement test subject.

Involvement of teachers

Teachers of grades 6 and 9 are encouraged to take part in activities related to the Provincial Achievement Test 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 provincial achievement test results to improve student learning.