

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2012–2013**

**GRADE
9**

**Knowledge and Employability
English Language Arts**

Alberta  Government

This document was written primarily for:

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

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The 2013 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 2013 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 1 169 students wrote both parts of the 2013 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

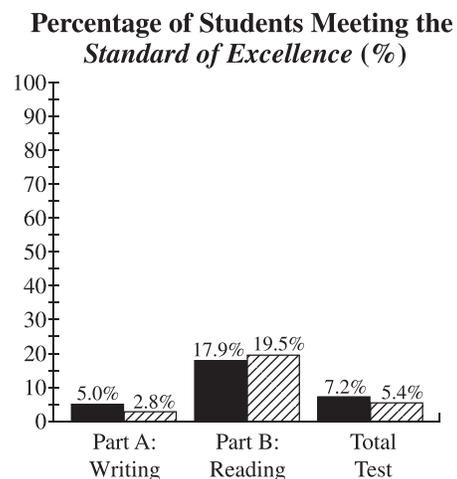
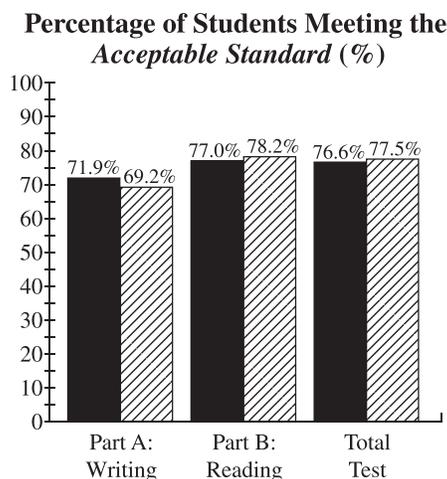
The 2013 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts:

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 2013 are similar to 2012, as shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 100 (parts A and B), the provincial average was 62.5%. 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.



 2012 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2012 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

 2013 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence* on the 2013 Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

Part A: Writing—2013 Test Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2013 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—2013 Student Achievement

In 2013, 69.2% 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 2.8% of students who wrote achieved the *standard of excellence*.

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	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.9	0.6
	4.5	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.5
Proficient	4.0	4.7	7.6	3.8	7.7	4.8
	3.5	11.2	11.3	8.3	10.1	8.1
Satisfactory	3.0	39.9	36.6	35.6	51.4	37.7
	2.5	16.9	16.2	17.9	13.1	19.5
	2.0	18.3	18.8	25.0	11.6	20.4
Limited	1.5	3.0	3.3	3.2	1.3	4.0
	1.0	3.1	4.4	4.3	5.9	3.2
Poor	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Insufficient / No Response						

* 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 2013 Student Achievement*

During the 2013 scoring session, teachers from throughout the province scored 1 169 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 2013 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved an average of 19.2 out of a raw score of 35. The provincial average on the Essay-Writing Assignment was approximately 55%.

Essay-Writing Assignment

In the 2013 Essay-Writing Assignment, students were required to respond to a prompt that provided a context and a collection of materials that students could use, if they wished. Students were to respond in the form of a persuasive essay. The wording of the assignment in posing the question, “Should schools stop selling junk food?” and inviting students to “Write a persuasive essay to submit to the superintendent of the Carely School Board that clearly states your point of view on the junk food ban” 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 mark only 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:

- “If you eat sweets and other junk food for a life time there will be problems.”
- “When you put a ban on junkfood, you take away a child’s privilege to have choice.”
- “I also think that healthy food will also promote a healthy living which is always a good thing especially for kids.”

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, for the most part, students approached the topic from one side of the issue. The ideas and details provided were appropriate, and supporting details tended to be relevant but general in nature. At times, additional supporting details would have enhanced the writing. The introduction was functional and established a focus that was generally maintained. The conclusion was related to the focus. 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 but less so between paragraphs. Also evident in such student responses was sentence structure that was generally controlled. Sentence type and sentence length were sometimes varied, and some variety of sentence beginnings were evident. Words and expressions were generally used appropriately. The tone or voice created by the writer was evident, and it was noted that the topic engaged the students. Generally correct use of conventions was evident, although errors that were present occasionally reduced the clarity and flow of the response.

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

- “By having junk food they are not only affecting themselves but are distracting the students around them.”
- “If children and even some teens learn now in school how to control what they buy as food it can help future choices.”

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 logical or insightful and/or discerning. The introductions were purposeful or engaging, and the conclusions reinforced or enhanced the focus. Sentence structure was consistently controlled and sentence type, length, and beginnings were consistently varied. Words and expressions were used accurately and effectively, and the tone or voice created by the writer was distinct. Few errors in conventions were evident, and any errors that were present rarely reduced the clarity and flow of the response.

Overall, student performance on the *Part A: Writing* of the 2013 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test was somewhat similar to that of the previous year.

Part B: Reading—2013 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2013, 78.2% 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 19.5% 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 2013 Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 33.3 out of 50 (approximately 66.6%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2013 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.			10.9/16 (68.1%)
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.			4.3/7 (61.4%)
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).			6.5/9 (72.2%)
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.			11.6/18 (64.4%)
Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)	16.3/25 (65.2%)	17.0/25 (68.0%)	Part B: Reading Total Test Raw Score = 33.3/50 (66.6%)

Part B: Reading—*Commentary on 2013 Student Achievement*

The following is a discussion of student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2013 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 emails.

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 **2** required students to locate a key detail in an informational article.

2. According to the source, which of the following academic subjects is **not** offered by the Pre-Trade Program?
- A. Science
 - B. Mathematics
 - C. Social Studies
 - D. Language Arts

4.5% of the students chose A

3.1% of the students chose B

88.5% of the students chose C (correct answer)

4.2% of the students chose D

Approximately 92.9% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 98.4% 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 **44** required students to recognize and identify the use of italics to convey specific meaning.

- 44.** The words “*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*” (lines 3 to 4) and “*CSI*” (line 13) are written in italics because they
- A.** indicate direct speech
 - B.** indicate a sarcastic tone
 - C.** identify television program titles
 - D.** emphasize the importance of the information

9.0% of the students chose A

7.8% of the students chose B

67.2% of the students chose C (correct answer)

16.0% of the students chose D

Approximately 73.5% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 90.5% 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 determine the meaning of a word from context.

- 1.** The word “academic” (line 1) means
- A.** ordinary
 - B.** practical
 - C.** workplace
 - D.** educational

3.6% of the students chose A

4.5% of the students chose B

6.1% of the students chose C

85.9% of the students chose D (correct answer)

Approximately 90.5% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 100% 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 **31** required students to synthesize information from a letter to draw a conclusion related to the author's feelings.

- 31.** This student's **main** source of concern is her father's attitude toward
- A.** her career choice
 - B.** her music choice
 - C.** being a respectable citizen
 - D.** completion of her education

53.4% of the students chose A (correct answer)

21.2% of the students chose B

5.8% of the students chose C

19.3% of the students chose D

Approximately 57.2% of students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to answer this question correctly, whereas about 74.6% 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 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 3, 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 3, 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 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 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 as well as descriptions of and sample questions for each achievement test subject.

Involvement of Teachers

Teachers of grades 3, 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.