

**Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment
Highlights
2016–2017**

**GRADE
6**

English Language Arts

Alberta  Government

This document is an assessment highlights report on the 2017 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 2017 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 2016 and 2017 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.

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The [Alberta Education](http://www.education.alberta.ca) website address is [education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca).

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

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The 2017 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 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 44 730 students in Alberta wrote the 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

What Was the Test Like?

The 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

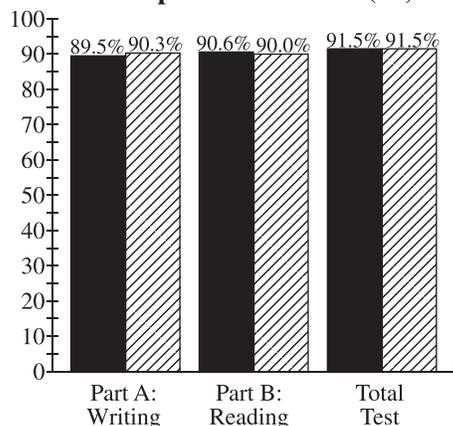
Part A: Writing consisted of a narrative/essay writing assignment (worth 35 marks) and a functional writing assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The narrative/essay writing assignment provided students with a coloured picture to which they were to respond in narrative form. The functional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

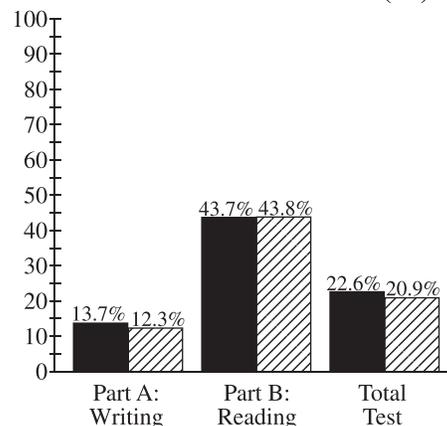
How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2017 and 2016 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total score of 100 on the test (parts A and B), the provincial average was 66.7/100 (66.7%). 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 (%)



-  2016 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2016 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).
-  2017 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province that met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

Part A: Writing—2017 Test Blueprint

The blueprints for *Part A: Writing* identify the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2017 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>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>Meets the standard of excellence</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>Approaches the standard of excellence</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>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>			<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</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 acceptable standard</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>		<p>Insufficient</p>	

*These scoring categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Part A: Writing—2017 Student Achievement

In 2017, 90.3% of students who wrote the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part A: Writing* and 12.3% of students who wrote the test 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 2017 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	% of Students
Meets the Standard of Excellence	5.0	3.5	3.0	3.8	4.0	4.1	2.1	2.6
	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.9	5.1	5.8	3.4	4.0
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	4.0	14.0	13.0	14.0	15.1	16.3	11.3	12.9
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	3.5	17.3	16.9	16.4	17.4	15.0	15.0	15.6
	3.0	47.3	46.6	45.0	50.3	39.9	39.6	42.0
	2.5	7.6	9.3	8.6	5.3	9.9	12.3	10.4
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	2.0	4.5	5.5	5.4	2.0	8.2	11.9	9.8
	1.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	1.0	1.8	1.1
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.4	1.8	0.8
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.8

* Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2017, approximately 75% of papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third adjudicating reading. The third reading rescore rate was 7.35%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2017 Student Achievement

During the 2017 scoring session, 180 teachers from throughout the province scored 46 008 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were pleased with the quality of most papers.

On *Part A: Writing* of the 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test, students who wrote the test achieved an average of 35.1 out of a total of 55 (63%). The provincial average on the Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment was 22.9 out of 35 (65.4%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 12.3 out of 20 (61.5%).

Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment

In the 2017 Narrative Writing Assignment, students were required to use a picture prompt to write a narrative response. The colour picture prompt shows two hands, each one holding a part of a rock that has been separated into two pieces. There is an impression of a dragonfly inside.

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 a few student responses to the picture prompt at the acceptable standard:

- Bang! A boy found two rocks. the rocks were just laying there. so the boy just picked up the rocks. "Ow" he said. the sand is so hot. So the boy tryed again he picked up the rocks and he smased them together. Then he just found a folsle. It's a Drogen fly Folsle. he Brought it to his mom. he asked "Mom do you know when it was alive" she said "I Don't know." So it looked like it was over a 10,000 years old and it had blue and wight strips. he asked his mom if he can keep it. ...
- ... When he found a good place to start digging he got on his hands and knees and started digging. Once he got down a cupple inches he found a big rock he put it aside so he could use it to crack the rest of the rocks.
Right before he gave up he saw something sticking out of the ground he start to dig around it so it would losen once he got it out he laid it on the ground so he could crack it open.
As he lined the two rock up to crack one his dad come to give him something to eat and drink ...
... Sam grabbed another large rock and slammed it on the other one until it cracked open. Same noticed an odd shape inside the rock. "It look's like a dragonfly." Sam said to himself. Just then Samm realized what it was. "a-a-a fossil!"
Same ran to his mom and showed her what he found.
"Call uncle Ben!" Sam's mom shouted.
As Sam was talking to his uncle he decided to bring the fossil to the local museum
"Extrordinary!" Shouted the museum manager. "We shall place this fossil here at the museum. ...

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:

- “Good morning!” James yelled from the hallway. He looked outside at the sun, shining brightly in the crystal clear sky. James knew exactly what he’d do today. “Hey Mom!” his voice echoed through the little cottage as if there was someone mimicking his every word. He beamed. How amazing! “Echo!” He called out.
“James, you awake all ready?” What a strange echo...he thought as he strolled towards the kitchen. James was surprised he remembered how to get there! He was still getting used to the new house so getting around wasn’t the easiest thing.
“Hey Mom, can I go to the beach today?” James questioned his mother as he entered the tiny kitchen. He glanced over at his mom who was sitting at the table. That’s strange James thought. There wasn’t a single pancake or piece of bacon in sight. ...
... James grasped the first branch in his hand and lifted his head to look up. The rest was surprisingly close, about 7 branches up. James got to work immediately! He hoisted himself up to the next branch and placed his foot on the last one. This is going to be easy! He grabbed the next branch and then the next and ... he stopped. Oh no! He looked at the empty pile of sticks. Not an egg in sight. Well that was a waste! He looked back down. And my pants got ripped too! He jumped down. By this point, he felt hopeless.

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 2017 Functional Writing Assignment presented students with the situation of writing a news article for their school newspaper. The students were provided with information about dark-sky preserves, 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,” “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:

- **A School Trip**
Last week In Alberta a class came to visit a dark sky preserve. The purpose was to learn more about the dark-sky preserve and why they are important to humans and animals.
There are four dark-sky preserves in Alberta. From one of the spots you can get an amazing view of the milky way. From another spot several planets are visible to the naked eye.
Some animals use darkness to hide from thier predators. Many night sky objects are invisible near the artificial lighting. The light polution affects animals

- Preserve our night sky at a night sky preserve
 Last week on June 3 the grade 6 class of Kindler Elementary school attend the Wood Buffalo National Park.
 Wood Buffalo National Park is a dark sky preserve, it is actually the biggest one in the world. It is located in Alberta in a remote area away from any towns and cities.
 There are 4 dark sky preserves in Alberta.
 “it was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen” said Sindy Edge.
 All of us learnt a lot about animals, planets and many other things like... .

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:

Discovering Beauty

By Taylor Greene

Last week, on April 26th a grade six class visited a dark sky preserve in Alberta to learn more about dark sky preserves and why they're important to animals and humans. Leslie, a student in the class states, “You never know what you can learn about nature.”

Did you know there are 4 dark sky preserves in Alberta, and one of the largest sky preserves in the world is located also in Alberta? Dark sky preserve are a place or area where there's very little light pollution from artificial lights, and is usually located in remote areas away from busy cities and towns. That way, they're much more peaceful and is much easier to see the atmosphere.

Dark sky preserves help humans see stars, planets, constellations and much more. There's incredible views of the milky way and usually there are several planets visible to the naked eye. Some of these things are hard to see near artificial lighting so it's very different to see the stars and planets. ...

... Sometimes, you don't know what you're missing. So go look at a dark sky preserve, enjoy nature, learn new things and look at the beauty of our world.

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 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts 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—2017 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2017, 90.0% of students who wrote the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part B: Reading*, and 43.8% 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 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test averaged 34.7 out of a total score of 50 (69.4%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2017 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.			9.3 / 13 (71.5%)
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.			8.4 / 12 (70%)
Associating Meaning Students use contextual clues to determine the connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language.			8.2 / 11 (74.5%)
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.			8.8 / 14 (62.9%)
Provincial Student Achievement Average Raw Score and Percentage	13.4 / 18 (74.4%)	21.3 / 32 (66.6%)	<i>Part B: Reading</i> Total Test Raw Score = 50

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2017 Student Achievement

The following discussion addresses specific areas of strength and weakness demonstrated by students who wrote the 2017 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Sample questions from the 2017 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 17 required students to identify the purpose of quotation marks in an informational article. This question belongs in the **Interpreting Text Organization** reporting category.

17. Quotation marks are used twice in line 1 in order to identify
- A. a word and its antonym
 - * B. a word and its definition
 - C. words that are spoken out loud
 - D. words that are difficult to pronounce

This question was straightforward, with 71.1% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 11.5% of the time. Option C was chosen 15.2% of the time. Option D was chosen 1.6% of the time. Approximately 73.8% 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 18 required students to identify the relationship between key details in an informational article. This question belongs in the **Synthesizing Ideas** reporting category.

18. According to the article, in order for spies to be successful at their jobs, the most important thing to have is
- * A. excellent observational skills
 - B. knowledge about the enemy
 - C. effective writing skills
 - D. high-tech equipment

This question was easier than the previous one, with 80.9% of students answering correctly. Option B was chosen 7.6% of the time. Option C was chosen 3.8% of the time. Option D was chosen 7.7% of the time. Approximately 86.5% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 97.3% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 19 required students to draw a conclusion from key details in an informational article. This question belongs in the **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details** reporting category.

19. According to the article, in order to “blend into your surroundings so you can observe without being noticed” (line 22), a spy would **most likely**
- A. work as part of a team of spies
 - B. use a small notepad and pen
 - * C. wear dark, ordinary clothing
 - D. operate under a code name

This question was equally as challenging as the previous one, with 80.8% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 4.1% of the time. Option B was chosen 7.8% of the time. Option D was chosen 7.3% of the time. Approximately 84.2% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 94.9% of students who met the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Multiple-choice question 20 required students to compare the meaning of a word in an alternative context in an informational article. This question belongs in the **Associating Meaning** reporting category.

20. Which of the following statements uses the word *ring* in the same way as the information provided under the “**SPY LINGO**” heading?
- A. The ring of the telephone awakened the agent.
 - B. The agent spotted the special ring in the jewel case.
 - C. The witnesses stood in a ring as they watched the event.
 - * D. The entire ring was responsible for tracking suspicious people.

This question was slightly more challenging than the previous one, with 77.8% of students answering correctly. Option A was chosen 8.4% of the time. Option B was chosen 13.9% of the time. Option C was chosen 6.9% of the time. Approximately 83.3% of students who met the acceptable standard were able to answer this question correctly, whereas approximately 97.5% 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.

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 testing program. Sections in the bulletin contain information pertaining to schedules and significant dates; security and test rules; test administration directives, guidelines, and procedures; calculator and computer policies; test accommodations; test marking and results; field testing; resources and web documents; forms and samples; and Provincial Assessment Sector contacts.

Subject Bulletins

At the beginning of each school year, subject bulletins are posted on the Alberta Education website for all 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 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 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 testing program and provides 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 provincial 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 provincial achievement test results to improve student learning.