

Guidelines for Interpreting Achievement Test Multiyear Reports

Provincial assessments are meant to complement day-to-day classroom assessment. As such, achievement test results provide only part of the overall picture of the province's, a school authority's, or a school's performance. Although provincial assessments are designed to assess the achievement of provincial standards, some learning outcomes cannot be effectively measured by time-limited paper-and-pencil tests. In addition, the interpretation of achievement test results involves considering many factors that contribute to achievement. The local school and school authority are in the best position to accurately interpret, use, and communicate provincial assessment results for the school or school authority. For this reason, information about school or school authority results should be obtained from the school or school authority. For more detailed information on the calculation and use of these data please contact Nicole Lamarre, Director of Student Learning Assessments and Achievement Testing, or Gilbert Guimont, Director of French Assessment, Provincial Assessment, at (780) 427-0010, toll free at 310-0000 or by email at Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca or Gilbert.Guimont@gov.ab.ca

1. To facilitate the use of PAT multiyear data, reports at the province, school authority and school levels are also provided in Excel format. To gain a better understanding on each column header in the Excel files, please use the PDF version of the PAT multiyear reports as references.
2. When reading this report, note the number of students who wrote the test. The fewer the students, the more carefully the information must be interpreted, as overall results for small groups can be greatly influenced by the scores of one or two individuals. Look at the percentage of students who wrote the test. If more than 10% of students did not write, these results may not be representative of the total school or school authority. The percentage of students in the "Absent" category includes students who were absent at the time of testing, or who wrote but whose results were withheld. For English Language Arts, this category also includes students who wrote only one part of the test. **Results on provincial assessments for individual students and for groups of fewer than six students are not publicly released.**
3. Because the difficulty of the test varies slightly from year to year and to facilitate the comparison of student performance over time, Alberta Education adjusts the cut-scores that define the Acceptable Standard and the Standard of Excellence each year. This makes it possible to identify trends in the percentage of students meeting standards across the five years of 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 for subjects where the curriculum and standards have remained the same.

4. While the percentages of students meeting the Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence are directly comparable over time, the average scores of tests are not, as they are based on raw scores that are not adjusted to remove the variation caused by differences in test difficulty from one year to another. That being said, comparisons of each of these school or school authority average scores with the provincial average for the same school year can help determine relative strengths and weaknesses in the school's or school authority's performance. Evaluating the importance of and reasons for differences between school or school authority and provincial results requires careful consideration of the practical significance of differences. Also, it is important to consider local targets for student achievement relative to provincial achievement standards.
5. For school authorities with new boundaries, the statistics have been recalculated based on those schools that were within the new boundaries at the time of testing.
6. The 2015-2016 results do not include students who were exempted from writing the test because of the Fort McMurray wildfires.
7. Part A, which requires students to complete number-operation questions without using calculators, has been added to Mathematics 6 since 2016/2017 and to Mathematics 9 since 2017/2018.
8. Since 2014/2015, Grade 3 achievement tests are no longer administered. Instead, the digital Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) are now available to be administered at the beginning of the school year in Grade 3. They assess outcomes related to literacy and numeracy in language arts and mathematics in Alberta's current Grade 2 provincial programs of study. For the 2019/20 school year, Alberta Education is providing school authorities with flexibility for administering SLAs. To that end, school authorities may select which schools within an authority will administer the SLAs. In addition, these schools may administer select parts of the SLAs. School authorities that wish to participate are expected to administer SLAs within a four-week window, from September 9 to October 7, 2019. For detailed information, please visit Alberta Education site at <https://www.alberta.ca/student-learning-assessments.aspx>