



Grade 9

Assessment Highlights

English Language Arts

Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing 2018–2019

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ Grade 9 English Language Arts
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

Alberta Education, Government of Alberta

2018–2019

English Language Arts 9 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 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

Assessment highlights provide information about the overall test, the test blueprints, and student performance on the provincial achievement test. Also provided is commentary on student performance at the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on selected items from the test. 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. **Assessment highlights reports** for all provincial achievement test subjects and grades are **posted on the Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

The examination statistics that are included in this document represent both French and English writers. If you would like to obtain English-only statistics or French-only statistics that apply to your school, please refer to your detailed reports, which are available on the Stakeholder File Exchange (SFX).

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The 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of all students who wrote the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

How many students wrote the test?

A total of 42 002 students in Alberta wrote both parts of the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

What was the test like?

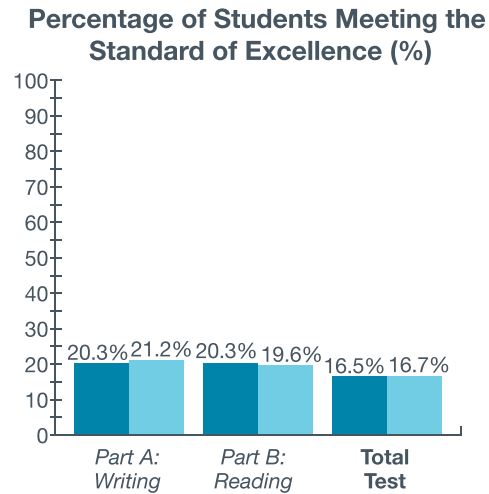
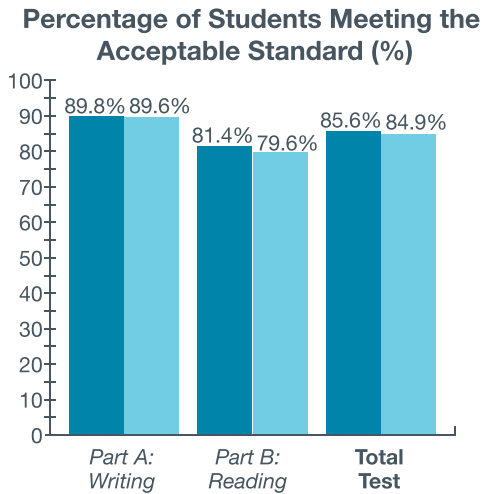
The *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* had two parts that were weighted equally.



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 topic and some graphic and textual prompts to which they were to respond in the format of either a narrative or an essay. The Functional Writing Assignment required students to respond to a specific situation by addressing an envelope and writing a business letter to a specific audience.

Part B: Reading consisted of 55 multiple-choice questions based on ten 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 are consistent with 2018, as shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 110 (parts A and B) on the test, the provincial average on the test was 72.4 (65.8%).



-  2018 Achievement Standards: The percentages of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the *2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* (based on those who wrote)
-  2019 Achievement Standards: The percentages of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* (based on those who wrote)

Part A: Writing—Test Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2019 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities. It also provides a description of the writing assignments and the achievement standards on the *Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

Assignment I—Narrative/Essay Writing

Writing Assignment and Scoring/Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Achievement Standards
<p>Content* (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students respond to a given topic by writing a narrative or an essay. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve their purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.</p> <p>Organization* (3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent narrative or essay that links events, details, sentences, and paragraphs, and that supports their purpose.</p> <p>Sentence Structure (4.1, 4.2)** (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 (4.1, 4.2)** (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 (4.2)** (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>	<p>The Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment requires students to respond to a prompt that consists of a topic, as well as a collection of materials that students may use if they wish. These materials include graphics, quotes, and short literary excerpts. Students may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. Students are to respond by writing a narrative or an essay.</p>	<p>Student achievement in each scoring/reporting category is identified by the following descriptors:</p> <p>Excellent</p> <p>Proficient</p> <p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Limited</p> <p>Poor</p> <p>Insufficient</p>

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

**Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Grade 9 English Language Arts Program of Studies to which the scoring categories are cross-referenced.

Assignment II – Functional Writing

Writing Assignment and Scoring/Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Achievement Standards
<p>Content* (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (thought and detail) Students develop, organize, and evaluate ideas for a specified purpose and audience.</p> <p>Content Management* (4.1, 4.2)** (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>	<p>The Functional Writing Assignment requires students to write to a specified audience in the context of a business letter. They are also required to address a blank envelope correctly.</p>	<p>Student achievement in each scoring/reporting category is identified by the following descriptors:</p> <p>Excellent</p> <p>Proficient</p> <p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Limited</p> <p>Poor</p> <p>Insufficient</p>

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

**Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Grade 9 English Language Arts Program of Studies to which the scoring categories are cross-referenced.

Part A: Writing—2019 Student Achievement

In 2019, 89.6% of all students who wrote the *Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* achieved the acceptable standard on *Part A: Writing*, and 21.2% of all students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence.

Student achievement by assignment and scoring/reporting category

The following charts illustrate the percentages of students achieving writing standards for each writing assignment and scoring category.

Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment

		Scoring/Reporting Category				
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions
Writing Standard	Score*	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students
Excellent	5.0	4.1%	3.6%	4.3%	4.6%	4.5%
	4.5	7.3%	6.8%	7.6%	7.3%	7.7%
Proficient	4.0	20.2%	18.6%	21.0%	20.7%	21.5%
Satisfactory	3.5	18.5%	19.1%	18.2%	19.1%	17.6%
	3.0	32.5%	33.0%	32.6%	38.9%	28.4%
	2.5	8.5%	9.4%	8.7%	5.7%	9.9%
Limited	2.0	6.5%	7.4%	6.1%	2.8%	8.5%
	1.5	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	0.3%	1.1%
Poor	1.0	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%

*Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2019, 33 977 (80.9% of the total of 42 002) papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third reading. The third-reading rescore rate was 6.8%.

Functional Writing Assignment

		Scoring / Reporting Category	
		Content	Content Management
Writing Standard	Score*	% of Students	% of Students
Excellent	5.0	5.9%	6.6%
	4.5	8.3%	9.0%
Proficient	4.0	20.3%	22.2%
	3.5	15.4%	15.6%
Satisfactory	3.0	28.7%	26.6%
	2.5	9.3%	8.2%
	2.0	8.7%	8.7%
Limited	1.5	1.6%	1.3%
	1.0	1.2%	1.0%
Poor	0	0.7%	0.7%
Insufficient / No Response			

*Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2019, 33 977 (80.9% of the total of 42 002) papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third reading. The third-reading rescore rate was 6.8%.

Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2019 Student Achievement

During the 2019 scoring session, 204 teachers from throughout the province scored 42 002 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 *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* achieved an average of 37.0 out of a total raw score of 55 (67.3%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 23.4 out of 35 (66.9%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 13.4 out of 20 (67.0%).

Throughout the 2019 marking session, every effort was made to reward student strengths where evident rather than to critique what was missing or speculate on what a student should have added or included. When marking student responses, markers were encouraged to conscientiously return to the “**Focus**” section of the scoring categories to consider the extent to which each student had demonstrated competence in the criteria listed. There were several scoring descriptors in each scoring category to be assessed in order to arrive at judgments regarding the qualities of a response. Markers were encouraged to review—at the start of each marking day—each assignment and the prompt materials provided in the test booklet with the expectation that many students’ ideas regarding the assignments were informed by details within the prompts. Occasionally, markers needed to re-read a response to appreciate what a student had attempted and, in fact, accomplished. All markers acknowledged that student responses were first drafts.

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: General impressions

In the **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment**, students were required to “Write either a narrative or an essay about **the importance of taking personal responsibility in one’s life.**” This assignment was accessible for students at all levels of achievement. The **literary prompts**—which included quotations from Louis Nizer, Alexander Graham Bell, and Brené Brown as well as an excerpt from *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*—provided students with a variety of ideas to explore. In both narrative and essay responses, students often discussed the value of taking personal responsibility in embracing opportunities for learning in classes at school, from parents at home, and from members of the community. In some responses, students examined character traits demonstrated by people who assume responsibility for their actions, such as confidence, determination, honesty, independence, concern for others, as well as being organized, industrious, focused, determined, and reliable. Personal responsibilities discussed by students included doing daily household chores, completing homework, obeying rules, and treating others with respect. In other responses, students reflected on the challenges a person may face when assuming responsibility for wrongdoing, dishonesty, or mistreatment of others. However, students also reflected on the benefits of behaving responsibly in terms of the maturity gained, respect earned, and contentment that may result. The **visual prompts**—which included two individuals talking to one another about preparing for a group presentation, a person telling another individual about the importance of being environmentally conscious, a school graduate looking forward to the future, an individual telling a group of people about welcoming others to Canada, and two individuals playing soccer discussing the importance of being a responsible member of a team—also offered students a variety of ideas to explore. In both narrative and essay responses, many students commented on how taking personal responsibility involves

being accountable for what one has done and being willing to admit to mistakes, from which experience is gained that influences decisions made later in life. Other students emphasized how taking responsibility is a valuable life skill that enhances a person’s ability to solve problems, work with others, and become self-reliant. Still others discussed the insights gained by people who assume responsibility for the choices they make in influencing the direction taken by their lives. In most responses, students were successful in presenting their ideas regarding the importance of taking personal responsibility in one’s life.

As in other years, some students chose to support their ideas with a discussion of the topic in relation to the lives of renowned athletes (such as Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, Michael Phelps, Wayne Gretzky, Connor McDavid, and Sidney Crosby) and popular celebrities (such as Ice Cube, Eminem, Prince, Selena Gomez, and Justin Timberlake). Others spoke of the efforts made by notable individuals—such as Malala Yousafzai, Barack Obama, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Terry Fox, Neil Armstrong, Helen Keller, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa—to assume responsibility for themselves and others. Other students cited examples from literary works (including *The Golden Compass*, *The Wild Children*, *Touching Spirit Bear*, *The Giver*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Ender’s Game*, *The Princess Bride*, *The Hunger Games*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Of Mice and Men*) and commented on experiences undergone by characters when taking responsibility for their actions.

The **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment** provided each student with the opportunity to successfully demonstrate his or her attainment of text creation outcomes in the Program of Studies. Most students succeeded in meeting the achievement standards expected of students in the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment on *Part A: Writing of the 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that met the acceptable standard

In both narrative and essay responses that received a score of “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” many students approached the topic by presenting ideas regarding how people have responsibilities in their daily lives and examining the consequences for individuals who do or do not take responsibility for their actions. Such responsibilities included taking out garbage, recycling products, walking a dog, mowing a lawn, weeding a garden, cleaning a house, doing laundry, making dinner, or washing dishes. Most students acknowledged that taking personal responsibility involves acknowledging mistakes and learning from them, accepting blame for being dishonest or offending another person, and facing the consequences of behaving irresponsibly. Others commented on the negative impact of shirking responsibilities at home, in school, or on a job, such as breaking rules, ignoring curfew, not doing chores, or failing to get work done. Still other students examined the need to face the truth, be accountable for decisions made, consider how others are affected by an individual’s choices, apologize for wrongdoing, and ask for help from others when necessary, as the outcome can have a lasting influence on a person’s future.

In narrative and essay responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” the exploration of the topic was clear and/or logical and the student’s purpose was evident. Relevant and/or generic details were provided to support appropriate and/or predictable ideas, and the writing was straightforward and/or generalized and occasionally appealed to the reader’s interest. The “**Organization**” of such responses was characterized by a functional introduction that established a focus that was generally sustained, events and/or details that were developed in a

discernible order, transitions that mechanically connected events and/or details within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs, and a mechanical and/or moralistic closure that was related to the focus. Student responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Sentence Structure**,” “**Vocabulary**,” and “**Conventions**” demonstrated generally controlled and sometimes effective and/or varied sentence structure, general words and expressions that were generally used appropriately, a discernible voice or tone, generally correct use of conventions, and errors that occasionally reduced clarity and/or sometimes interrupted the flow of the response.

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that met the standard of excellence

In both narrative and essay responses that received scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” students often commented on the strength of character of individuals who embrace personal responsibilities, recognizing their willingness to accept shortcomings and be accountable to themselves and others. Many students spoke of individuals who have shown courage, been able to empathize with others, or made sacrifices in order to benefit others, and of how individuals may find themselves beset by unexpected obstacles that they must assume the responsibility to overcome. Some students purported that the ability to take responsibility for one’s life defines the individuality of each person. Other students reflected on the lasting impact of taking responsibility for a decision on one’s ability to achieve success and find fulfillment in life. A number of students observed that personal responsibility entails interactions with others, whereas others commented on instances in which a person must rely on his or her own resources to come to terms with choices made. Some students argued that assuming responsibility for one’s life is necessary for gaining maturity, forging relationships with family members, and discovering personal strengths. Others reflected on the guilt and regret that accompany irresponsible behaviour, and the challenges of taking ownership of such actions. Still other students drew analogies related to how personal responsibility can have a domino effect on others, uncover hidden talents, serve as a guiding light through dark waters, or tilt the balance between success and failure toward a desired outcome.

In responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” students explored the topic in an adept and/or plausible or insightful and/or imaginative manner. The student’s purpose was intentional or deliberate. Ideas presented were thoughtful and/or sound or perceptive and/or carefully chosen. Supporting details were specific and/or apt or precise and/or original. The writing was considered and/or elaborated or confident and/or creative and drew or held the reader’s interest. In “**Organization**,” “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” responses contained a purposeful or engaging introduction that clearly or skillfully established a focus that was capably or consistently sustained. Events and/or details were developed coherently in a sensible or judicious order. Transitions clearly or fluently connected events and/or details within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs. An appropriate or effective closure was related to the focus. Student responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Sentence Structure**,” “**Vocabulary**,” and “**Conventions**” demonstrated consistently controlled and usually or consistently effective and varied sentence structure. Specific or precise words and expressions were used accurately or deliberately. The voice or tone created by the student was distinct or convincing. Minor convention errors rarely, seldom, or in no way reduced clarity or interrupted the flow of the response.

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that did not meet the acceptable standard

In both narrative and essay responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content**,” students struggled to convey their thoughts clearly and completely. In some responses, students presented naive illustrations of how taking personal responsibility “is a waste of time you should spend doing other stuff,” “isn’t worth the effort required to do it,” or “always leads to a good or bad future.” In some responses, students quoted randomly from the prompts provided without elaborating on them or connecting them to ideas presented. Some students reduced the topic to a passing reference to having forgotten something, overlooked a mundane task, or behaved disobediently. In other responses, students depicted scenarios in which little context was provided regarding a character’s personality, circumstances, or behaviour in the synopsis of events presented. In such responses, students presented largely unsupported generalizations or randomly recounted elements of experiences that were weakly connected to the importance of taking personal responsibility in one’s life.

In student responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content**,” the exploration of the topic was tenuous and/or simplistic or minimal and/or tangential, the purpose was vague or insubstantial, and the ideas presented were superficial and/or ambiguous or overgeneralized and/or underdeveloped. Supporting details were imprecise and/or abbreviated or irrelevant and/or scant, and the writing was unsubstantiated and/or incomplete or confusing and/or lacking in validity with little appeal to the reader’s interest. In “**Organization**,” the introduction lacked purpose and/or was not functional or obscure and/or ineffective, and any focus established provided little or no direction and was not sustained or was undeveloped. The development of events and/or details was not clearly discernible or was haphazard and/or incoherent. Transitions were lacking and/or indiscriminately used or absent and/or inappropriately used within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs. Closure was abrupt, contrived, and/or unrelated to the focus or ineffectual and/or missing. “**Sentence Structure**,” “**Vocabulary**,” and “**Conventions**” in responses receiving scores of “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” typically demonstrated a lack of control and little or no variety in sentence structure or sentence beginnings. Imprecise or ineffective words and expressions were used inexactly or inaccurately. The voice or tone created by the student was not clearly established, indistinct, not evident, or indiscreet. Errors in conventions weakened or impaired communication, blurred or severely reduced clarity, and interrupted or impeded the flow of the response.

As in other years, the connection between the assignment and the ideas contained in some student responses was difficult to determine. Markers were to consult with group leaders when drawing conclusions about whether or not a response sufficiently addressed the task presented in the assignment. Most often, there was evidence that students had implicitly addressed the topic and/or prompts, and the responses were assessed accordingly. If, however, extensive examination of a student’s work by both a marker and a group leader led to the conclusion that a response was “**Insufficient**,” then the floor supervisors in consultation with the examination manager made a final judgment.

Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: General impressions

In the **Functional Writing Assignment**, nearly all students were able to connect the context provided in the “**Situation**” to their own experiences. From the viewpoint of “Dana Cline” (“a Grade 9 student who attends Granite Hills School” and is “interested in establishing a school-

based mentorship program that would provide Grade 9 students with the opportunity to mentor younger students”), the majority of students were able to successfully present ideas regarding “positive role models,” “the potential merits of a mentorship program,” and “Positive aspects of a mentorship program, for both mentors and the students that they mentor.” Many students cited how Granite Hills School “does not have a mentorship program” and commented on how a mentorship program could provide opportunities for “older students” to “have a positive influence on younger ones.” Some students also added “suggestions regarding how to ensure the success of the program” with regard to organizing, timetabling, and supervising the participants in the program.

Many students directly referenced information provided in the “**Situation**” regarding the “establishment of a mentorship program at Granite Hills School” and the “advantages for all participants in such a program” including “fulfillment of personal goals,” “social interaction,” “academic success,” “strengthening of communication skills,” “practical life experience,” and “increased self-confidence and self-esteem.” When assessing student responses, markers recognized that, although many students adhered closely to the information provided in the test booklet, doing so was acceptable given the manner in which the assignment was framed primarily within outcomes specified in **General Outcome 3: Managing Ideas and Information**. The extent to which these guidelines were analyzed and particularized to achieve the student’s purpose in the “**Assignment**”—to “Write a business letter to Ms. Catherine Flores, principal of Granite Hills School,” to “**present your arguments that support the establishment of a school-based mentorship program**” and to “Provide enough information to **convince Ms. Flores of the benefits of such a program for both the mentors and the students that they mentor**”—distinguished the quality of student responses.

Most students were able to successfully present ideas aimed at encouraging Ms. Flores to consider the beneficial impact of one-on-one assistance, reassurance, and advice on students who are mentored. Some students commented on the success achieved by students who are mentored in attaining a goal such as passing a test, winning a race, or fulfilling a long-held dream. Other students analyzed how mentors gain experience in providing support to others, confidence in themselves in witnessing the success of those they mentor, and skills that will serve them well in adulthood. In other responses, students elaborated on the ability of mentors to serve as confidantes who provide encouragement by sharing insights and expertise, and offering suggestions regarding potential courses of action. In addition, some students included anecdotal illustrations of individuals who have acted as mentors, particularly close friends, family members, teachers, and community members, or shared personal experiences documenting the impact of a mentor on their lives.

As in other years, markers were to acknowledge that there was no prescribed length for responses to the Functional Writing Assignment. While some students concisely fulfilled the requirements of the task, others elaborated more fully on ideas that they presented. Such brevity or embellishment was neither beneficial nor detrimental in and of itself, and markers were to take into account the overall effectiveness of each response when assessing its quality. With regard to envelope and letter format, recommendations were provided in the guidelines of Canada Post. Other formats/styles were to be considered equally acceptable and markers were to assess the extent to which a student had been consistent in applying a chosen format to both the envelope and letter rather than “deduct marks” for deviations from the Canada Post guidelines. There were a number of student responses in which there were varying amounts of white space between the heading, inside address, and salutation in the letter, and some students single-spaced the body of the letter while others used double-spacing. These factors specifically were not to be viewed as detrimental to the quality of student work and were not to be penalized in the assessment of “**Content Management**.”

The **Functional Writing Assignment** provided each student with the opportunity to successfully demonstrate his or her attainment of text creation outcomes in the Program of Studies. Most students succeeded in meeting the achievement standards expected of students in the Functional Writing Assignment on *Part A: Writing of the 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that met the acceptable standard

Students whose responses received a score of “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**” typically recognized that “Grade 9 students have a lot to offer the younger students in the school” and “could share their experience and offer advice” to students that they mentor. Many students highlighted the benefits to the students who are mentored—including “having positive role models to follow,” “reaching a goal they didn’t think they’d achieve,” “passing a class they were failing,” and “being confident and able to communicate with other people”—as well as the benefits for mentors—including “having someone to look up to them,” “being a leader and showing how to do something,” gaining “maturity and the respect of others,” and “seeing how students that are mentored can become successful in their lives.” Some students elaborated on the sense of belonging experienced by participants in the program. Still others included reflections on positive experiences with mentors not only in school but in their personal lives as well as in the lives of family members. In some responses, students suggested that mentoring could “take place at noon or after school” or could involve “class time when mentors could give assistance to students in classes of teachers requesting it.” Most students understood the need to provide Ms. Flores, principal of the school, with information that would encourage her to support the establishment of a “mentorship program operated by students of the school.”

In responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” students presented appropriate ideas and adequately developed the topic. Relevant information was presented and supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. A tone appropriate for the addressee was generally maintained. In responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were generally accurate and occasionally effective. The writing demonstrated basic control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics and may have contained errors that occasionally impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained occasional format errors and/or omissions.

Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that met the standard of excellence

In responses awarded scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” students often broadened the discussion of the merits of establishing a school-based mentorship program to the wider implications of strengthening the relationships and interactions among students in the school and in the community beyond the school. In other responses, students examined how “the program will be cost-effective because all mentors will perform services on a voluntary basis,” how “mentors will be given guidelines and the training needed to be effective in providing guidance to those they mentor,” and how “Student Council members will assume responsibility for and coordinate the enlistment of mentors, identification of students in need of assistance, and monitoring of meetings between mentors and mentees.” Some students commented on the diverse backgrounds and interests of students and of the significance of mentors in

promoting the success of all students. Other students effectively contended that Ms. Flores and the teachers in the school would see an improvement in student behaviour and in their ability to perform well in their classes. In some responses, students referenced the example of other schools and evaluated the successful elements that could be incorporated into a program at Granite Hills School, while other students argued that such a program at Granite Hills School could provide an example to other schools in the jurisdiction to follow. Still other students reasoned that the connections made between mentors and the students they mentor could forge bonds that might have a lifelong impact on their lives.

Student responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**” were characterized by ideas that were thoughtful or perceptive, and development of the topic was generally effective or clear and effective. Significant or pertinent information was presented, and this information was substantiated or enhanced by specific or precise details that fulfilled the purpose of the assignment. A tone appropriate for the addressee was clearly or skillfully maintained. In responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were usually or consistently accurate and effective. The writing demonstrated either competent and generally consistent control or confident and consistent control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Any errors present rarely or in no way impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained few, if any, format errors or omissions.

Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from standards confirmation and central marking 2019: Qualities of student writing that did not meet the acceptable standard

Students whose responses demonstrated qualities characteristic of “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” scores in “**Content**” sometimes relied on verbatim reiteration of information presented in the assignment with little of their own thinking or development. Other students misconstrued the role of the writer of the letter to be that of the principal of Granite Hills School advocating the need for a school-based mentorship program or that of a parent wishing to become a mentor at the school. In other responses, students misrepresented information when contending that a mentorship program “Has been working for years at the school,” that the “costs of paying the mentors will be covered by bake sales or a gofundme page,” or that the program is dependent on “mentors who live in our community that might not want to work for free.” In some instances, students mistakenly argued against the need for a mentorship program or inappropriately contended that a mentorship program would “give students free time when they can get into trouble” or “benefit the teachers more than any of the kids.” In some instances, students used an inappropriately inflammatory tone in a misguided effort to persuade Ms. Flores to support the establishment of a school-based mentorship program at the school.

In student responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content**,” ideas were superficial, flawed, and/or merely a repetition of the situation presented in the assignment or overgeneralized, misconstrued, and/or essentially a verbatim reiteration of the situation presented in the assignment. Development of the topic was inadequate or ineffective. Information presented was imprecise, undiscerning, and/or simply a restatement of the prompt provided or irrelevant, missing, and/or essentially copied from the prompt provided. Supporting details were insignificant and/or lacking or obscure and/or absent, and the purpose of the assignment was only partially fulfilled or not fulfilled. Some or little awareness of a tone appropriate for the addressee was evident. In responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were vague, inexact, and/or frequently taken from the prompt or inaccurate, misused, and/or essentially quoted from the prompt. The writing demonstrated

either limited evidence or a lack of evidence of control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors that were present may have frequently or severely impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained frequent or numerous and glaring format errors and/or omissions.

As in other years, the connection between the assignment and the ideas contained in some student responses was difficult to determine. Markers were to consult with group leaders when drawing conclusions about whether or not a response sufficiently addressed the task presented in the assignment. Most often, there was evidence that students had implicitly addressed the topic and/or prompts, and the responses were assessed accordingly. If, however, extensive examination of a student's work by both a marker and a group leader led to the conclusion that a response was "**Insufficient**," then the floor supervisors in consultation with the examination manager made a final judgment.

Overall, student responses to both the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment and the Functional Writing Assignment in *Part A: Writing* of the 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test were strong. The vast majority of students (89.6%) achieved the acceptable standard, while 21.2% of all students achieved the standard of excellence. Of all students who wrote the *Part A: Writing* test, only 10.4% did not achieve the acceptable standard.

Part B: Reading—Test Blueprint and 2019 Student Achievement

In 2019, 79.6% of all students who wrote the *Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* achieved the acceptable standard on *Part B: Reading*, and 19.6% of all students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence. On *Part B: Reading* of the 2019 *Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*, students achieved an average score of 35.4 out of a total possible score of 55 (64.4%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2019 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	
<p>Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)* Students construct meaning by interpreting ideas and details pertaining to setting/atmosphere/context, character/narrator/speaker (actions, motives, values), conflict, and events.</p>			<p>11.3/17 (66.5%)</p>
<p>Interpreting Text Organization (2.2, 2.3)* Students identify and analyze the text creator’s choice of genre, form, tone, point of view, organizational structure (e.g., chronology, cause and effect, comparison and contrast), style, diction, rhetorical techniques (e.g., repetition, parallelism), text features (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, dialogue, flashback, foreshadowing, suspense), and conventions.</p>			<p>6.8/11 (61.8%)</p>

*Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Grade 9 English Language Arts Program of Studies to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

Reporting Category	Language Function		Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic	
Associating Meaning (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)* Students use contextual clues to determine the denotative and connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, irony, symbolism).			7.1/11 (64.5%)
Synthesizing Ideas (2.2)* Students draw conclusions and make generalizations by integrating information in order to identify the tone, purpose, theme, main idea, or mood of a passage.			10.2/16 (63.8%)
Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)	13.9/22 (63.2%)	21.5/33 (65.2%)	<i>Part B: Reading Total Test</i> Raw Score = 55

*Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Grade 9 English Language Arts Program of Studies to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2019 Student Achievement

The following is a discussion of student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight the 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.

In the blueprinting category of **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details**, students were expected to construct meaning by interpreting ideas and details pertaining to setting/atmosphere/context, character/narrator/speaker (actions, motives, values), conflict, and events in ten reading selections. In the three informational texts—two magazine articles and an excerpt from a memoir—students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to recognize interrelationships among ideas and details, identify key elements of information presented, and acknowledge the impact of personal experience on an individual. Students who achieved the standard of excellence additionally illustrated strengths in making inferences regarding the significance of personal reflections on experiences described and in discriminating among details in order to determine those most relevant to an idea under discussion. Students who did not meet the acceptable standard were generally able to identify explicit ideas and details in informational texts, but many encountered difficulty with questions that required recognition of connections among ideas presented or identifying the central focus of details presented. The seven narrative/poetic texts—including two poems, two cartoons, and excerpts from three novels—enabled many students who met the acceptable standard to demonstrate their ability to determine the motivation underlying a character’s actions, recognize how characters interact with others, and identify what details suggest about an individual’s character. In addition, students who achieved the standard of excellence were capable of acknowledging the complexities of interpersonal relationships among characters and appreciating the indelible impact of pivotal events on characters’ lives. Those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, while generally able to recognize causality between directly related events, sometimes struggled with questions involving interpretation of the implicit meaning of ideas pertaining to interactions among characters. The following question illustrates some of these differences in student achievement on the 2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

In question 18, students were required to identify the detail that most directly reinforces an idea presented by the writer in specified lines of a magazine article (SO 2.1).

18. The idea that “Dad actually rebelled against this plan more than Kyle did” (line 33) is **most directly** supported by the description of how the writer’s father
- A. “would whine” (line 35)
 - *B. dropped “illegal bits of food under Kyle’s nose” (lines 35–36)
 - C. “lounged, semiconscious, in front of the TV” (lines 37–38)
 - D. is “napping. Again” (line 41)

Of all students who wrote the test, 53.9% chose the correct answer (option **B**). These students were able to determine from context that the writer’s observation regarding how her father was opposed to the “weight-loss regimen” and “workout program” identified in lines 28 to 29 planned to be “put in place...for Kyle”—evident in lines 33 to 34 in how he “actually rebelled against this plan more than Kyle did, since he feared his lazy sidekick might find a new best friend through fitness”—is most directly demonstrated by the description in lines 35 to 36 of his overt defiance of the plan in dropping “illegal bits of food under Kyle’s nose to sabotage the process.” Of those students who did not select the keyed response, 24.5% chose option **A**. This alternative presents a description of how the writer’s father “would whine” in complaint that Kyle was “starving” in line 35, but this response demonstrates his disapproval of the plan more than an effort to rebel against it. Option **C** was chosen by 15.4% of all students, a choice that refers to the description in lines 36 to 38 of how the writer’s father “lounged, semiconscious, in front of the TV” while her mother “rolled up her already-swamped sleeves and added ‘personal trainer’ to her household repertoire,” but his actions illustrate his indifference to the plan more than rebellion against it. Option **D**, which was chosen by 6.1% of all students, refers to the description in line 41 of how the writer’s father was “napping. Again” while her mother was “up to her eyeballs in housework and feline-girth maintenance,” but this behaviour reveals how he is uninvolved more than rebelling against the plan. Of those students who achieved the acceptable standard, 53.1% selected the correct answer. A total of 76.7% of those students who achieved the standard of excellence chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard on the *Part B: Reading* test, 32.1% chose the correct answer.

In the section of the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* blueprinted for curricular content pertaining to **Interpreting Text Organization**, students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to identify textual features that include the use of punctuation (such as quotation marks and dashes) and sound devices (such as onomatopoeia) to enhance meaning by writers of informational texts. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were, in addition, able to analyze how the presentation of a writer’s ideas is enhanced through rhetorical choices that include the use of comparison and contrast as well as sentence fragments and repetition. Students who did not meet the acceptable standard demonstrated weaknesses in identifying how the organizational choices employed by the writers of informational texts provide a structure for the development of ideas. In narrative/poetic texts, students who achieved the acceptable standard could typically identify the effects achieved by writers through the development of suspense to enhance the presentation of ideas. Students achieving the standard of excellence could additionally detect elements central to the conflict faced by characters as well as subtleties of tone in interactions among characters. Many students who did not achieve the acceptable standard encountered difficulty with questions that tasked students with recognizing the impact of the writer’s sequencing of events on the development of the central conflict in narrative/poetic texts. Some of these differences in student achievement on the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* are demonstrated in the following question.

Question 17 required that students identify how a rhetorical technique used by the writer of a magazine article enhances the presentation of ideas (SO 2.2).

17. In lines 17 to 18 and line 26, the writer’s purpose in using dashes is to
- A. emphasize key ideas
 - *B. add descriptive detail
 - C. include personal opinions
 - D. incorporate humorous commentary

The correct answer (option **B**) was selected by 63.2% of all students who wrote the test. These students could identify how the writer’s purpose in using dashes (in the references to how the writer’s parents “walked out with papers to make Kyle – an adorable, plus-size tabby cat – the newest member of the family” in lines 17 to 18 and how “in less than a year, Kyle – who was already rather plump – actually managed to gain seven pounds” in lines 26 to 27) is to add descriptive detail regarding Kyle’s physical appearance. Each of the incorrect alternatives—option **A** (selected by 12.5% of all students), which suggests that the writer’s use of dashes adds emphasis to key ideas, option **C** (selected by 12.2% of all students), which suggests that the writer uses dashes to include personal opinions, and option **D** (selected by 12.0% of all students), which suggests that dashes are used by the writer to incorporate humorous commentary—identifies a rhetorical purpose of a writer’s use of dashes, but none of these choices is applicable to the characterization of Kyle in the lines cited in the question. Of those students who achieved the acceptable standard, 64.0% chose the correct answer. Of those students who met the standard of excellence, 81.2% chose the correct answer, whereas 39.7% of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard chose the correct answer.

With regard to questions blueprinted in the **Associating Meaning** category, students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to identify the denotative meanings of words and phrases and could recognize metaphorical comparisons in informational texts. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally able to appreciate how connotations of words and phrases reinforce meaning and how metaphorical comparisons enrich the reader’s understanding of the similarities between familiar and unfamiliar experiences. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard typically struggled with distinguishing the meaning of specific words and phrases presented and showed a limited understanding of figurative language in informational texts. Students who achieved the acceptable standard could generally recognize the use of metaphor, hyperbole, and personification in straightforward narrative/poetic texts. Students who achieved the standard of excellence demonstrated additional strengths in abstracting from figures of speech a deeper understanding of ideas presented by writers of narrative/poetic texts. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were often challenged by questions that required the use of contextual clues to determine the meaning of words and phrases and sometimes encountered difficulty identifying figurative comparisons in narrative/poetic texts. Such differences in student achievement on the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* are shown in the following question.

Question 16 required that students identify what is meant by a phrase used by the writer in a magazine article (SO 2.1).

16. Context reveals that the phrase “naive-in-hindsight logic” (line 20) refers to how the writer’s parents were
- *A. unaware their initial expectations were flawed
 - B. discouraged by their inability to find happiness
 - C. disinterested in achieving goals that they had set
 - D. unwilling to change plans they had previously made

Of all students who wrote the test, 72.6% were able to choose the keyed response (option **A**) by correctly recognizing that the parents’ expectation in lines 20 to 21 when adopting Kyle—that “a cat would probably keep Dad just as busy as a dog would”—is “mistaken” according to the writer’s description in lines 22 to 27 of how Kyle “didn’t exactly drop-kick Dad’s inertia,” was “a kindred listless spirit,” and “didn’t inspire activity so much as reaffirm to Dad that sleeping and eating are two fantastic life goals.” Option **B** (selected by 5.2% of all students) presents the inference that the writer’s parents were seeking happiness in adopting Kyle and were subsequently discouraged by their lack of success, but this inference—which may be based on details in line 28 regarding how her mother became “Fed up” and “sprang into action”—does not account for her father’s contentment in lines 25 to 26 regarding how his “leisure-filled days continued uninterrupted.” Option **C** (selected by 14.3% of all students) presents the idea that the parents’ adoption of Kyle reflects their loss of interest in the goal identified in lines 11 to 12 of getting her father “out of his chair and (Mom prayed) out of the house for more than five minutes at a stretch,” but this idea is contradicted by their maintenance of the belief that a cat would keep her father busy as well as a dog would. Option **D** (selected by 7.7% of all students) presents the suggestion that the parents were unwilling to make changes to previously made plans, but this suggestion is proven untrue by their willingness in lines 16 to 21 to adopt a cat from the SPCA instead of a dog in order to occupy her father’s time. A total of 75.6% of students who achieved the acceptable standard answered this question correctly. Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence, 90.1% chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, 40.0% selected the keyed response.

In the blueprinting category of **Synthesizing Ideas**, students achieving the acceptable standard were typically able to identify main ideas in informational texts and determine the central focus of a writer’s reflections on personal experiences. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally capable of synthesizing ideas in informational texts in order to formulate conclusions pertaining to the basis for a writer’s inclusion of particular content and perceive the overarching ideas of information presented. Many of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were able to identify explicit facts presented but frequently found it difficult to answer questions that required synthesis of ideas to arrive at a generalization encapsulating the content of information presented or extrapolation from a writer’s reflections on the significance of specific events. In narrative/poetic texts, students who achieved the acceptable standard generally demonstrated the ability to recognize differing viewpoints among characters and determine central themes from events portrayed. Students achieving the standard of excellence could additionally evaluate the effectiveness of characters’ choices through the writer’s omniscience in exploring their actions and appreciate the main purpose underlying the writer’s presentation of events in narrative/poetic texts. Those students who

did not meet the acceptable standard often struggled with questions that required formulating conclusions regarding the intended impact on readers of events depicted and were often challenged by questions regarding the resolution of conflict through the events documented in narrative/poetic texts. The following question illustrates some of these differences in student achievement on the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test*.

In question 19, students needed to synthesize ideas in order to identify the outcome of a decision made by the parents of the writer of a magazine article (SO 2.2).

19. Which of the following quotations **most clearly** identifies the ironic outcome of the decision of the writer’s parents to adopt Kyle?
- A. “‘We have to take him,’ my mother said, eyes filled with love, a half-second after Kyle literally leaped into her arms, purring loudly” (lines 18–20)
 - B. “Rations were cut, exercise was mandated, and the sound of thundering paws could be heard running drills through the living room” (lines 31–32)
 - *C. “Undeterred, Mom rolled up her already-swamped sleeves and added ‘personal trainer’ to her household repertoire, while Dad lounged, semiconscious, in front of the TV” (lines 36–38)
 - D. “These days, Kyle is much healthier, though he still frequently drifts into comalike siestas” (lines 39–40)

The correct answer (option **C**) was selected by 45.5% of all students who wrote the test. These students were able to recognize the irony underlying the events that result from Kyle’s adoption—in which the hope of the writer’s mother in line 13 that “endless hours might also be spent on pet projects” by the writer’s father is dashed—wherein her mother’s household duties increase after Kyle’s arrival, while the writer’s father continues to irresponsibly lounge in front of the television. Option **A** (selected by 22.7% of all students) identifies how the writer’s mother is initially captivated by Kyle—described in lines 17 to 18 as “an adorable, plus-size tabby cat”—but her continued interest in Kyle’s well-being is not an ironic outcome of the decision to adopt Kyle to encourage her husband to be active. Option **B** (selected by 14.8% of all students) identifies how the writer’s mother is concerned about Kyle’s wellness—evident in her reduction of his food rations and implementation of a fitness regimen—but her initiative in doing so is also not an ironic outcome of the decision to adopt Kyle to occupy her husband’s time. Option **D** (selected by 16.9% of all students) identifies how Kyle’s health has improved—despite the frequency with which he sleeps—but this characterization of his state of being is also not an ironic outcome of the decision to adopt Kyle to motivate her husband to be less inactive. Of those students achieving the acceptable standard, 44.3% chose the correct answer. A total of 73.7% of students who achieved the standard of excellence chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, only 19.6% answered this question correctly.

Overall, student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the *2019 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test* was strong. Most students (79.6%) were able to achieve the acceptable standard on the *Part B: Reading* test, and 19.6% of all students achieved the standard of excellence. Of all students who wrote the *Part B: Reading* test, 20.4% did not achieve the acceptable standard.

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.