EQAO: Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

Questions and Answers

- General Questions
- Reporting Results 2001-2002
- Grade 3 Assessments
- Grade 6 Assessments
- French Immersion
- Questionnaires

- Multiple-Choice
- School and Board Reports
- Gender-Based and Sub-Group Differences

in the Overall Results in EQAO's Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments.

General Questions

1. Are the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments based on The Ontario Curriculum?
Yes. The 2001-2002 Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments are based on the reading, writing and mathematics expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8*.

2. What role do EQAO assessments play in ongoing classroom assessment?
EQAO's province-wide assessments provide a snapshot based on student achievement during a five-day assessment unit. These assessments are based directly on the provincial curriculum. They add to the more comprehensive information that teachers collect throughout the year from classroom assessments, daily observations and conversations with parents.

3. How stressful are EQAO's assessments?
EQAO's assessments are designed to be challenging yet enjoyable for all students. The assessments are designed by classroom teachers and principals to resemble the work that students do in class every day. The specific questions and activities are reviewed by committees of educators to make sure they are grade- and age-appropriate; they are also field-tested extensively with students throughout the assessment-development process. The assessments are administered to students by their classroom teacher in their own classroom setting.

4. Is there added value in providing province-wide testing?
Assessment is a natural and necessary part of learning. Students, teachers and parents need feedback on how well students are doing. EQAO's province-wide assessments are based directly on the provincial curriculum. As a result, they reinforce and extend the knowledge and skills students have been working with all year.

5. Will teachers begin teaching to EQAO's tests?
Two factors discourage teachers from narrowing instruction to focus on the tests. First, the content of
EQAO: Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

EQAO's tests change every year, so it is impossible for teachers to anticipate specific questions and activities. Second, EQAO's tests cover a range of expectations in the curriculum. The best way to prepare students for EQAO's tests is to address all of the expectations in the curriculum.

6. **How does EQAO ensure that assessments do not discriminate against certain groups?**
   All EQAO assessment materials are reviewed by educators, as well as experts in gender and race equity, to ensure that they are fair, appropriate and free of bias.

7. **Are all students expected to participate in EQAO assessments?**
   Yes. The Education Quality and Accountability Office Act states that all students are required to participate in EQAO's province-wide assessments. EQAO's exemption policy permits school principals to exempt students individually, based on extenuating circumstances or special needs. Please see the answer to question 12.

8. **Can school boards or individual students choose not to participate in an assessment?**
   No. The legislation that established EQAO (Bill 30) requires all students in publicly funded schools to participate in provincial assessments. Students are exempted or accommodated on an individual basis and only for reasons outlined in EQAO's Policy on Exemptions and Accommodations. Students in special education programs, unless exempted, are required to participate in provincial assessments. Accommodations are provided according to the student's needs and the EQAO policy. These include allowing extra time, assisting with pacing, providing a quiet work place, providing assessment tasks in a different format (e.g., Braille text) or allowing the use of various technological resources (e.g., voice-activated computer).

9. **How do EQAO’s assessments benefit teachers?**
   EQAO's assessments give teachers valuable information about strengths and weaknesses in their students' learning. Since teachers administer the assessments, the tests also provide opportunities for them to observe how their students solve problems and answer questions. In addition, many teachers and principals across Ontario are actively involved in developing, field-testing and marking the assessments. These experiences provide excellent professional development in curriculum and assessment and give teachers and principals opportunities to share assessment strategies and practices with colleagues.

10. **Do Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessment results count towards students' regular grades?**
   No. However, EQAO provides individualized feedback to the parents and teachers of every child who takes part in an assessment.

11. **Does EQAO release individual student work or individual results to the public after the assessment?**
    No. Individual student work and results are strictly confidential. Each child's assessment booklets and Individual Student Report (ISR) are kept on file in the school for up to a year so that the child's parents and teachers can refer to it in their discussions and planning.

12. **What is EQAO’s policy on exemptions and accommodations?**
    Teachers and principals must make every effort to enable students with special needs to participate with their peers in all aspects of the assessment.

    Teachers are permitted to provide one or more of the specific accommodations described in EQAO's Administration Guide to students who normally receive accommodations as noted in their Individual Education Plan. For example, teachers can provide additional time, assist with organizing or pacing activities, provide a quiet workplace, allow assistive devices (e.g., Bliss boards), provide the assessment tasks in a different format (e.g., Braille text) or allow a student to use various technological resources (e.g., voice-activated computers).

    The principal is authorized to exempt a student from part or all of an assessment in a situation where, even with all possible accommodations, the student would be unable to participate productively and/or where the student's participation would be harmful. Before exempting any student, the principal is required to consult with the student's teacher and parents and obtain written parental consent.

http://www.eqao.com/eqao/home_page/05e/5_5e.html (2 of 8) [12/17/2002 3:55:06 PM]
13. **Are students allowed to use a calculator in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments?**

   Students are allowed to use a calculator to respond to mathematics questions except in the multiple-choice sections, where there are questions that require mental computation.

14. **Are students allowed to use spell checkers and dictionaries?**

   Students are permitted to use a dictionary and a thesaurus for the writing components of the assessments but they may not receive assistance from their teacher or peers.

15. **Why is so much money spent on testing?**

   Province-wide assessment is a response to public demands for greater quality and accountability in education. It provides accurate, objective and reliable information about student achievement and the quality of publicly funded education in Ontario. EQAO's assessment programs are also designed to provide information that teachers and parents can use to improve learning for their students and children.

---

**Reporting Results 2001–2002**

1. **When will students receive their individual reports?**

   Individual Student Reports for the 2001-2002 assessment will be sent to schools for distribution to students during the week of December 2, 2002.

2. **What is the deadline for requesting a review of a student's overall achievement levels from the 2001-2002 Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics?**

   The deadline is January 31, 2003.

3. **Are individual student results part of a student's permanent record?**

   No. One copy of each child's Individual Student Report (ISR) is sent to the school. The school must distribute the student's ISR to parents. EQAO also provides the school with an electronic file containing each student's results. The child's teachers and parents can refer to it in their discussions and planning.

4. **Are the four levels of achievement used on the Individual Student Report aligned with those on the Ontario Student Report Card?**

   Yes. The four levels of achievement that EQAO uses to report student results are based on the four levels in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8* and are aligned with those on the Ontario Student Report Card. EQAO uses an additional reporting designation, NE Level 1. A student receives this designation when the markers do not have enough evidence of his or her knowledge and skills to assign a Level 1.

5. **Is student work from the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments returned to schools?**

   Yes. All student booklets are returned to schools in the fall. Schools are encouraged to keep the booklets in the school until the end of the school year, in case a child's parents wish to go over the child's work or ask EQAO to review it.

6. **Can parents request a review of the achievement levels their child's work was assigned?**

   Yes. Parents who wish to request a review should contact the principal as soon as possible. The deadline for requesting a review of a student's overall achievement levels is January 31, 2003.

7. **How can I see the school's or board's results?**

   School board results will be available on EQAO's Web site on January 30, 2003. School results are released locally—either by the school or by the school board. The principal will be able to tell you how and when the school's results will be released.

8. **Can the results of the 2001-2002 Grade 3 and 6 assessments be compared with results from previous years?**
Yes. When you include the results from the 2001-2002 assessments, parents, educators, policy-makers and members of the public have access to six years of Grade 3 achievement data and four years of Grade 6 achievement data based on The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8. They also have five years of contextual data from the student, teacher, principal and home questionnaires. With all this data, it is possible to make some year-to-year comparisons and to identify some general trends.

**The overall levels of achievement are comparable from year to year.** EQAO uses overlapping questions on the multiple-choice components of the assessments and combines performance-based and multiple-choice components of the assessments to calibrate overall scores. These procedures ensure that overall scores from the 2001-2002 assessments can be compared with those from previous years.

9. **What does the term "insufficient information to score" (IIS) mean?**
   This term appears if large sections of a student's work are missing due to absence or for other reasons.

10. **What does the term "Not enough evidence of Level 1" (NE Level 1) mean?**
    A student receives this designation when the markers do not have enough evidence of the student's knowledge and skills to assign a level.

11. **What does the term "No data" mean?**
    If a student was not granted an exemption, yet EQAO does not receive a booklet from the student or receives a blank booklet, the term "no data" appears.

12. **What is EQAO's rationale for including "exempt," "no data" and "not enough information to score" in its reporting?**
    EQAO's mandate is to report on the achievement of all Grade 3 and Grade 6 students enrolled in the publicly funded education system, even if they were unable to participate in the assessment, unable to complete the assessment, or unable to provide enough information.

13. **What are EQAO's two methods of reporting?**

    **Method 1** expresses the number of students at each level of achievement as a percentage of all of the students in the grade, including students who were exempted and those who took part in the assessment but did not produce enough work to be scored. EQAO uses this method of reporting because publicly funded schools are accountable for the achievement of all students. Schools and school boards are required to use this method to ensure consistency of reporting across the province.

    **Method 2** is an alternative way of presenting the data. Method 2 expresses student results as a percentage of students who actually took part in the assessment and produced work that could be scored. Students who were exempt, or for whom there is no performance data, are excluded. Method 2 highlights the results of students who produced scorable work.

14. **What is EQAO's policy on ranking schools?**
    EQAO is opposed to ranking schools or school boards. Rankings tell us nothing about why scores are high or low. They invite simplistic and misleading comparisons that ignore the particular circumstances affecting achievement in each school. Ranking tends to distract people from addressing the critical issue of how to improve learning for all students.

15. **Is it possible to compare results of English-language students to those of French-language students?**
    No. Comparisons between the results of English-language students and French-language students cannot be made due to curriculum and assessment differences. French-language tests and English-language tests are developed in parallel by different writing teams based on the respective curricula.
Grade 3 Assessment

1. **How many students participated in the 2001-2002 Grade 3 assessment?**

2. **What knowledge and skills does the Grade 3 assessment cover?**
   The Grade 3 assessment is based on the reading, writing and mathematics expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8*. The assessment covers knowledge and skills that students begin working with early in their schooling and build upon throughout the primary grades.

   The assessment requires students to read and respond to passages, to write and to solve mathematical problems. It tests what students know and how well they can apply their knowledge and skills in everyday situations.

   The concept for the 2001-2002 Grade 3 assessment was Change. The unit allowed students to explore the concept of change, encouraging them to investigate ideas and make discoveries.

---

Grade 6 Assessment

1. **How many students participated in the Grade 6 assessment?**
   More than 145,100 students participated in the English-language assessment. More than 6,600 Grade 6 students participated in the French-language assessment.

2. **What knowledge and skills does the Grade 6 assessment cover?**
   The Grade 6 assessment is based on the reading, writing and mathematics expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8*. The assessment covers knowledge and skills that students have been working with throughout the junior grades.

   The assessment requires students to read and respond to passages, to write and to solve mathematical problems. It tests what students know and how well they can apply the knowledge and skills in everyday situations.

   The concept of the 2001-2002 Grade 6 assessment was Perspectives. The unit allowed students to explore the concept of perspectives and make discoveries.

---

French Immersion

1. **Were French Immersion classes included in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments?**
   Yes. For the Grade 3 assessment, individual school boards were able to choose among the following three options:
   1. Students participate in the English-language assessment and complete the reading, writing and mathematics components in English.
   2. Students participate in the English-language assessment, completing the reading and writing components in English and the mathematics component in French.
   3. Students complete only a French translation of the mathematics component.

   For the Grade 6 assessment, it was recognized that by the time students in French Immersion reach Grade 6 they should be able to work competently in English. Therefore, all Grade 6 French Immersion students...
EQAO: Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics

were required to participate in the regular English assessment. Students were allowed to use a bilingual glossary of mathematical terms provided by EQAO.

2. Why can't French Immersion students do the same test as the students in French-language schools?
French Immersion programs are offered in English-language school boards across Ontario. Students enrolled in French-language schools are taught the French-language curriculum. It reflects aspects of Franco-Ontarian culture that are generally unfamiliar to students in English-language schools, the schools that the students in French Immersion attend.

3. How many French Immersion students participated in the 2001–2002 assessment?
More than 9100 students participated in the French Immersion assessment.

4. Were teachers allowed to translate any parts of the test for a student?
No. In order to provide valid and reliable data, the assessment must be administered consistently across the province. Teachers must follow the procedures in the Administration Guide and are not permitted to adapt or alter the assessment questions or materials in any way. Students in French Immersion programs were permitted to use a glossary of bilingual mathematical terms that was developed by EQAO.

Questionnaires

1. Is EQAO allowed to collect information from teachers, principals and students through the questionnaires?
Yes. Subsection 9(6) of the Education Quality and Accountability Act authorizes EQAO to collect information that is relevant to its mandate. The questionnaires are all completed anonymously. EQAO tabulates the questionnaire responses and presents findings for schools, school boards and the province as a whole. EQAO respects provincial privacy legislation and does not release data if it would be possible for someone to trace the data to particular respondents.

2. Why are some teaching practices and assessment practices in reading, writing and mathematics reported as being done "a few times a week" and some as "a few times a month"?
Some practices would naturally be done more frequently than others. For example, in reading, students would naturally be asked to "talk about their responses to books and stories they have read" a few times a week. They would more likely be asked "to recognize elements of style" at least a few times a month. Similarly, in mathematics they might be assessed a few times a week using observation notes and checklists, and a few times a month using reports on investigations.

3. What is the purpose of the questionnaires?
The questionnaire data shed light on the factors inside and outside the classroom that affect student achievement. Since student achievement is affected by many factors, educators, parents and the public need to consider the contextual data from the questionnaires in order to use the assessment results responsibly and constructively.

Multiple-Choice

1. Why is there a multiple-choice component included in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments?
Multiple-choice questions measure students’ knowledge of important skills and concepts and help to ensure that assessment results are comparable from year to year. The multiple-choice questions in EQAO’s assessments are based on the same reading, writing and mathematics expectations as the performance-based activities.
School and Board Reports

1. **When will schools report their achievement results?**
   The deadline for schools to release their results to parents and their local communities is January 30, 2003.

2. **What if my school or board refuses to release school results?**
   School and board results must be made available to any member of the public upon request after the date of public release.

3. **Will EQAO be releasing school results?**
   Yes. EQAO will post board and school results on the EQAO Web site on January 30, 2003.

4. **Can boards or schools change the data in their reports?**
   No. The data provided by EQAO must not be altered in any way, although schools and boards are free to use graphs, tables, and charts. Schools and boards must release all of the information provided by EQAO and must at least present the results using Method 1. Schools and boards have the option of also presenting results using Method 2.

5. **How do schools and boards use the assessment information?**
   It is useful for boards to analyze their category, strand, and overall results in terms of the provincial results. Schools find it useful to analyze their category, strand and overall results, both in terms of the provincial results and the board results. School boards and schools can use these approaches to determine relative strengths and weaknesses in their students’ achievement and revise and update their Improvement Plans.

Gender-Based and Sub-Group Differences in the Overall Results in EQAO’s Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments.

1. **Is the gap between the results of boys and girls in the Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial assessments consistent across reading, writing and mathematics?**
   Yes. Girls outperform boys in reading, writing and mathematics in both the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments. The gap is wider in reading and writing than it is in mathematics.

2. **Why is there a difference in performance between girls and boys?**
   Research suggests that differences in reading and writing results between boys and girls may be due to several factors:
   - difference in maturity levels
   - difference in reading preferences
   - leisure reading (of which girls do more) is correlated generally with reading achievement
   - certain instructional practices are not as effective with boys as they are with girls

   In addition, cultural values play a part. For example, doing well in school may not be as important to the self-image of boys as it is to the self-image of girls. In order to provide more insight into this question, further research is required.

3. **What can be done to reduce the gender gap in the future?**
   More research will most certainly lead to a better understanding of the underlying causes of the gap and provide us with an array of possible solutions. In the meantime, school boards, schools, teachers and
parents would do well to discuss the matter in order to identify possible factors and to suggest short- and long-term strategies.

4. **What do you plan to do about gender differences in achievement?**

EQAO's reports provide school boards with a reliable method of assessing gender-based differences in achievement. Boards and schools are asked to develop specific strategies to address differences in achievement as part of their improvement plans.

5. **Is this gender gap also apparent in the national tests in reading and writing? What about mathematics or science?**

Yes. The gender gap is apparent in national tests. For the 2001 School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) Math Test, there was a significantly higher percentage of 16-year-old males achieving level 3 and above. There was no significant difference in the achievement of males and females for level 2 and above for the 13-year-old students. For the problem-solving component of the test, there was a statistically significant difference in favour of females at level 2 and above for the 13-year-old students. There were no statistically significant differences at level 3 and above for 16-year-old students.

In the written component of the 1999 SAIP Science Test, there were no significant differences in the distributions among the achievement levels of girls and boys at most levels. A slightly higher percentage of 16-year-old boys reached level 4 than girls. In the practical tasks assessment, there were no significant differences between boys and girls aged 16; however, there were significantly more 13-year-old girls than boys reaching levels 4 and 5.

In the 1998 SAIP Reading and Writing Test, both 13- and 16-year-old girls performed significantly better than boys at all levels, in both reading and writing.