

Highlights of Provincial Achievement Results

Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, 2002–2003

Key Observations

- There were improvements in Grade 3 reading, writing and mathematics achievement in the early years of the assessment; results have remained stable over the past two years.
- The results in Grade 6 reading and writing continue to show slow but steady improvement; results in mathematics have remained stable over the past three years.
- In both Grades 3 and 6, females outperformed males in reading, writing and mathematics; in mathematics, the differences were less pronounced.
- Gender differences in the reading and writing results were larger in Grade 6 than in Grade 3.
- In Grades 3 and 6, over the past four years, there has been a slow but steady increase in the percentage of English as a second language and English literacy development (ESL/ELD) students meeting the provincial standard for reading and writing

achievement; the percentage meeting the mathematics standard has remained relatively stable over the past three years.

- In Grades 3 and 6, over the past four years, there has been a slow but steady increase in the percentage of special needs students meeting the provincial standard for reading, writing and mathematics achievement.

Facts About the Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments

- The Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments are based on *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8*.
- This year's Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments took place between May 5 and May 22, 2003. The principal and teachers in each school chose the exact dates. Students participated in the assessment for up to two hours per day over five days.
- Approximately 141 000 English-language students participated in the Grade 3 assessment.

- Approximately 145 000 English-language students participated in the Grade 6 assessment.

Highlights of 2002–2003 Achievement Results (English-Language Students)

- EQAO uses a four-level scale to report on student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. This scale is based on *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8* and sets Level 3 as the provincial standard.

Method 1

Data for all students in the grade are reported. Method 1 expresses the number of students in each reporting category as a percentage of all students in the grade (i.e., students at the four levels of achievement and those in the exempt, no data, Not Enough Information to Score (NEIS) and Not enough Evidence for Level 1 (NE1) categories).

- In Grade 3, half the students achieved the provincial standard in reading (50%) and more than half achieved the provincial standard in writing (55%) and mathematics (57%).

Key Recommendations

EQAO recommends that

- each school, with the involvement of teachers, students and parents, design and implement school-wide initiatives to ensure student achievement of the provincial curriculum expectations in literacy and numeracy.
- school councils closely monitor student achievement and take an active role in school improvement.
- school boards establish school board improvement teams that review historical student achievement and contextual data to develop action plans for meeting school targets for achievement of the *Ontario Curriculum* standards in literacy and numeracy and to develop strategies that target areas and groups in need of additional support and improvement.
- faculties of education assist pre-service teachers in developing an awareness and understanding of the links among curriculum, teaching practices and assessment. Pre-service teachers must have exposure to a
- the Ontario College of Teachers ensure a balance of courses on core competencies through Professional Learning Program providers, to allow teachers across the province ample opportunities for professional development that focuses on the relationships among curriculum, teaching practices and assessment, which are essential to teaching and learning.
- the Ministry of Education use the Grade 3 and Grade 6 provincial assessment data accumulated over the past six years to further support literacy and numeracy, especially through the Early Reading and Early Math strategies, at the board, school and classroom levels.

wide variety of assessment formats, including large-scale performance-based assessment.

- In Grade 6, more than half the students achieved the provincial standard in reading (56%), writing (54%) and mathematics (53%).

Method 2

An alternative way of presenting the data, Method 2 expresses the distribution of results as a percentage of those students who took part in the assessment (i.e., students at the four levels of achievement and those in the NEIS and NE1 categories). Students in the exempt and no data categories are excluded.

- In Grade 3, more than half the students achieved the provincial standard in reading (53%), writing (59%) and mathematics (60%).

- In Grade 6, more than half the students achieved the provincial standard in reading (58%), writing (57%) and mathematics (56%).

Grades 3 and 6 Assessments Support Quality Assurance and Accountability

- Each assessment covers the knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics that students are expected to have acquired by the end of the grade being assessed. The assessments contain performance-based activities requiring written responses, and multiple-choice questions. This combination of question types allows

students to demonstrate both the depth and the scope of their learning and provides a variety of ways for students to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.

- The assessments are marked by certified educators.
- All Grade 3 and Grade 6 Ontario students in publicly funded schools are required to participate in the assessments.

The Grade 3 and Grade 6 Assessments Help Students Improve

- Students with special needs and those in ESL/ELD programs may be permitted one or more accommodations during the

assessment. Meeting their accommodation needs ensures that they can demonstrate their skills on the Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments.

- EQAO provides an Individual Student Report containing reading, writing and mathematics achievement information to each student. The report gives students, parents and teachers information they can use for improvement planning.
- Each year, school boards are required to develop and submit improvement plans to EQAO. The plans outline how teachers, principals and senior board staff will change conditions for students, to promote improved achievement.
- Many factors and organizations contribute to improved student achievement: curriculum, resources, teachers, students, principals, parents, school councils, school boards, the Ministry of Education, faculties of education and the Ontario College of Teachers.

instructional improvements, to show their students what good work looks like, to develop their own assessments and to prepare students for provincial assessments.

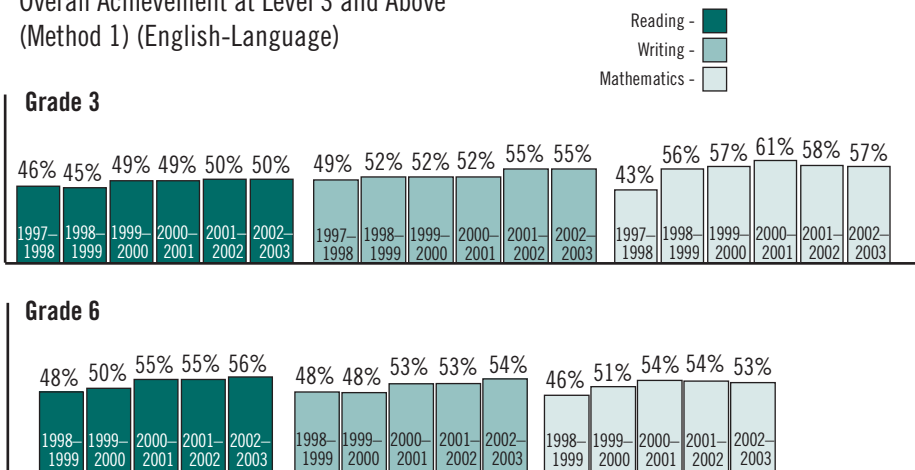
- School staff and school board staff must continue to implement school improvement plans, with the goal of increasing the number of students who reach the provincial standard. Staff in the other organizations should reaffirm their commitment to the contribution they make to supporting teachers in their work.
- School councils should work with school staff to reaffirm commitments to school improvement and to assist with implementing action plans.
- Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessment results should be used to improve teaching and learning, not to rank schools. Ranking provides no information about why scores are high or low, and it invites simplistic and misleading comparisons.

- Partner organizations will be invited to conduct research to describe the approaches and conditions that have contributed to high levels of achievement and improvement. To support this research, EQAO will identify schools and school boards in which a high percentage of students have consistently performed at the provincial standard or in which there has been significant improvement in student achievement.

Data Comparison Over Time

The Grade 3 and Grade 6 assessments are administered every May. The Grade 3 assessment was administered for the first time during the 1996–1997 school year. The Grade 6 assessment was administered for the first time during the 1998–1999 school year.

Overall Achievement at Level 3 and Above (Method 1) (English-Language)



Using the Results

- Principals reported they use the Grades 3 and 6 assessment results to determine where instructional and professional resources are needed and to revise school improvement or school action plans.
- Teachers reported they use the Grades 3 and 6 assessment results to identify areas of weakness in order to plan