
GENERAL COMMENTS

Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test (January 2011)

Student Performance—Observations

The following observations are based on local marking results and on comments made by markers during the sample marking session. These comments refer to common errors made by students at the provincial level and are not specific to school jurisdictions.

Information regarding how to interpret the provincial test and assessment results is provided in the *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* document available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html.

Various factors impact changes in performance over time: classroom-based, school-based, and home-based contexts, and changes to demographics. In addition, Grade 12 provincial tests may vary slightly in overall difficulty although every effort is made to minimize variation throughout the test development and pilot testing processes.

When considering performance relative to specific areas of course content, the level of difficulty of the content and its representation on the provincial test vary over time according to the type of test questions and learning outcomes addressed. Information regarding learning outcomes is provided in the document *Senior 4 English Language Arts: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Senior 4 Standards* (2000).

Total Test

The following chart indicates the provincial test means for the past six test administrations.

Means for:	June 2008	January 2009	June 2009	January 2010	June 2010	January 2011
Responding to Text	65.1 %	62.0 %	59.6 %	65.0%	62.7%	65.1%
Writing Task	70.5%	72.1 %	70.3 %	71.5%	69.2%	71.0%
Process Booklet	57.9%	60.5 %	57.2 %	58.6%	55.5%	55.0%
Total Score	65.8 %	65.9 %	63.6 %	66.4%	63.9%	66.1%

Responding to Text (provincial mean: 65.1%)

In January 2011 and in previous administrations, the means for the *Responding to Text* were not as high as those of the writing task, but were higher than those for the *Process Booklet*. Students found that some of the responding to text questions were difficult. One question that was cited by teachers as challenging asked students to explain how satire was used in a text (Outcome 2.3.2, Techniques and Elements).

Writing Task (provincial mean: 71.0%)

The test item students found the most challenging was when they were asked to explain connections among their writing variables (General Outcome 3—Managing Information). Students were unclear on the task and did not understand some of the terms, especially “context”.

Allowing students choices in the form, audience, and purpose for the writing task provided an opportunity to demonstrate skills in generating and organizing ideas, language choices, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. This flexibility likely explains in part why students performed better, on average, on the writing task than on the other three sections of the test.

Process Booklet (provincial mean: 55.0%)

Some students had difficulty with the discussion occurring prior to in-depth reading. The majority of students were familiar with this overview as an activating stage in their own classroom experience. Students found it challenging to connect ideas and reflect on their own work.

Marking Accuracy and Consistency

Information regarding how to interpret the marking accuracy and consistency reports is provided in the *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* document available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html.

These reports include a chart comparing the local marking results to the results from the departmental re-marking of sample test booklets. Provincially, local marking resulted in test scores an average of 3.4% higher than departmental marking. Test score agreement was within 6 percentage points for 50% of test booklets.

Survey Results

Teachers who supervised the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test in January 2011 were invited to provide comments regarding the test and its administration. A total of 284 teachers responded to the survey. 91% of the respondents agreed that the test was congruent with the emphasis of the Grade 12 English language arts curriculum. 96% of the respondents agreed that distributing the *Responding to Text* booklet before reading helps students focus on the readings. Teachers sometimes observed that students need to develop time management skills in all aspects of the test. One way to help students with this is to encourage them to think about their writing variables and their approach to the writing task in between the four test sessions. The majority of teachers (83%) agreed that the test provides students with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their proficiencies in English language arts.