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# GENERAL COMMENTS

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## Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test (January 2013)

### 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 document *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* available at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html](http://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).

### Summary of Test Results (Province)

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

	June 2010	January 2011	June 2011	January 2012	June 2012	January 2013
Responding to Text	62.7%	65.1%	63.9%	64.2%	61.2%	<b>62.7%</b>
Writing Task	69.2%	71.0%	70.3%	72.6%	71.0%	<b>70.4%</b>
Process Booklet	55.5%	55.0%	57.7%	60.0%	58.2%	<b>54.5%</b>
<b>Total Test</b>	63.9%	66.1%	65.7%	67.3%	65.1%	<b>64.8%</b>
<b>Pass Rate</b>	80.3%	85.2%	84.4%	87.3%	83.5%	<b>84.0%</b>

### Responding to Text (provincial mean: 62.7%)

In January 2013 and in previous administrations, the means for the *Responding to Text* were not as high as those for the writing task, but were higher than those for the *Process Booklet*. The first reading in the extended response question was challenging for some students. Perhaps strategies need to be developed for selecting the text that, for each student, is the most engaging and suitable, when there is a choice of responding to only one of two texts.

In the question assessing Techniques and Elements (Learning Outcome 2.3.2), the photograph to be analyzed was given context with a news article. Some students were over-reliant on the article, although the question referred directly to analysis of the visual elements of the photograph rather than specifics of the content of the article.

### **Writing Task (provincial mean: 70.4%)**

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 choice, 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: 54.5%)**

The test item students found most challenging was when they were asked to identify a strategy that could be used to enhance their written text for presentation or publication (Learning Outcomes 4.2.4 Enhance Artistry, and 4.2.5 Enhance Presentation). Instead of considering stylistic devices or strategies, some students discussed only editing and proofreading techniques. This was the Reflecting question, which is usually completed between writing the rough draft and the final copy.

### **Marking Accuracy and Consistency**

Information regarding how to interpret the marking accuracy and consistency reports is provided in the document *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* available at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html](http://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 on average 2.4% higher than departmental marking. Test score agreement was within 6 percentage points for 53% of test booklets.

### **Survey Results**

Teachers who supervise the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test in January 2013 were invited to provide comments regarding the test and its administration. A total of 275 teachers responded to the survey. A summary of their comments is provided below. After adjusting for non-responses:

- 91% agreed that the test was congruent with the emphasis of the Grade 12 English language arts curriculum.
- 90% agreed that “Activating Your Thoughts Through Group Discussion” before reading is congruent with classroom practice.
- 96% agreed that distributing the *Responding to Text* booklet before reading helps students focus on the readings.
- 96% agreed that clarifying terms (p.28 in the *Process Booklet*) was beneficial to students in selecting their writing variables.
- 96% agreed that students are given choices on selecting writing variables in regular classroom work.
- 85% agreed that the test provides students with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their proficiencies in English language arts.

Overall the teachers observed that students continue to have difficulty with the question asking them to identify and explain the connections among the writing variable, although they did believe that clarifying the terms was helpful.