
GENERAL COMMENTS

Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test (January 2014)

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.

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).

Responding to Text

In January 2014 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 response question was challenging for some students who had difficulty applying the concept of “bias” to the text (Learning Outcome 3.3.3). Some students did not understand that the author’s bias was directed towards corporations, although this was identified in the question.

Writing Task

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

Students struggle with the task of explaining how their chosen writing variables work together to make their text effective.

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.

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 3.4% higher than departmental marking. Test score agreement was within 6 percentage points for 50.6% of test booklets. 36.2% of booklets received a score of over 6 percentage points higher than departmental marking.

Survey Results

Teachers who supervised the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test in January 2014 were invited to provide comments regarding the test and its administration. A total of 266 teachers responded to the survey. A summary of their comments is provided below. After adjusting for non-responses:

- 95% agreed that the test was congruent with the emphasis of the Grade 12 English language arts curriculum.
- 95% agreed that “Activating Your Thoughts Through Group Discussion” before reading is congruent with classroom practice.
- 98% agreed that distributing the *Responding to Text* booklet before reading helps students focus on the readings.
- 89% agreed that directing students to preview the writing task during group discussion ensures students focus earlier in the process.
- 97% agreed that students are given choices on selecting writing variables in regular classroom work.
- 84% agreed that the test provides students with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their proficiencies in English language arts.