



# **Provincial Literacy Assessment Pilot at Grade 4**

**Information Bulletin  
2006**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education administers a comprehensive Provincial Evaluation Program to monitor overall student achievement at particular points in the system. This provides important feedback at provincial and local levels about students' knowledge and skills.

In support of the provincial literacy initiative, the Grade 4 Literacy Assessment Pilot will take place in elementary schools in May/June 2006. The results of this pilot will be important to the Department of Education in developing and finalizing the Provincial Grade 4 Literacy Assessment.

The assessment components will include writing and reading comprehension.

The assessment will take place over four sessions of approximately 45 minutes each, two sessions per component.

- The writing component will be completed between May 23 and June 13.
- Reading comprehension will be carried out from June 7-13.

Assessment materials will be sent to schools in late May.

Students in the English program will be tested in English, those in French Immersion in French.

### **Who will participate?**

To obtain a realistic picture of student achievement after five years of schooling, virtually all grade 4 students will be involved in this assessment. Modifications to administrative procedures may be considered to enable students with special needs to participate. For details, see Eligibility: Elementary Assessments in the Appendix to this document.



## **Reading Comprehension**

The grade 4 reading comprehension component will consist of 8 reading passages and approximately 45 multiple-choice questions. Students will circle their answers directly in the test booklets.

Classroom teachers will administer the reading component on a flexible schedule. The reading comprehension component will take approximately two sessions of 45 minutes. At the discretion of the teacher, these sessions may be subdivided into sessions of shorter length.

## **Writing**

The guidelines for writing are as follows:

- The writing component will be completed over 2 sessions, each lasting about 45 minutes. At the discretion of the teacher, these sessions may be subdivided into sessions of shorter length. This will not be a closely timed test.
- Students will be able to select from a list of topics or choose an original topic of their own. They may write a story, a description or a letter, or do a retelling (recount) of a personal experience or event. They are not to submit a poem, questions and answers, or a research report as these types of writing are more difficult to assess using a writing rubric.
- The writing is intended to reflect the student's ability to write independently. Children should apply the strategies that they have learned and which were modeled throughout the year. They are expected to do their own individual brainstorming. Also, any edits or revisions will be initiated and completed by students with no teacher or student conferencing.

## **Writing Performance Scoring for English and French Immersion Classes**

Before returning the writing to the Department of Education, teachers will assess student writing according to the Provincial Writing Performance Standards. The performance levels to be used are:

- strong performance,
- appropriate performance, or
- experiencing difficulty.

Teachers are to record the student's writing score in the space provided on the front of the assessment booklet.



Student writing will also be assessed at a provincial marking session. Scoring will take place in July. Experienced educators, primarily practising teachers, will be invited to score student work according to the provincial performance standards. Marking sessions will be organized and supervised by the Assessment and Evaluation Branch.

**How will results be reported?**

Early in the new school year, results will be reported. Districts and schools will be provided provincial, district and school level information regarding reading comprehension. Districts will also be provided with provincial and district level writing performance scores.



## Appendix

### Eligibility: Elementary Assessments

#### Total Exemptions

Total exemptions from an Elementary Assessment should be considered for those students who have a cognitive deficit, multiple handicapping conditions or a specific Learning Disability to such a degree as would render the assessment inappropriate and/or emotionally harmful to them. Exemptions will be allowed for students who have been identified with exceptionalities and have current Special Education Plans, which document the need for exemption.

#### Partial Exemptions

Partial exemptions may be considered for students who are unable to attempt specific components of the assessments.

#### Accommodations

Teachers and principals should make every effort to enable students with special needs to participate in the assessment to the best of their ability with their peers. Appropriate accommodations should be provided to preserve students' self-respect and sense of belonging. Schools are encouraged to include as many students in the assessment as possible.

**Scribes.** The use of scribes is not considered appropriate for an assessment of young children which aims at reporting students' writing abilities. An exemption from the writing section should be considered for students completely unable to write.

Scribes may be allowed when appropriate for constructed responses on mathematics assessments. Scribes should be provided with the Guides for Scribes sheet and should receive training beforehand.

A scribe should write exactly what the student dictates; no interventions are appropriate. A scribe should not ask leading questions, offer advice, nor in any way suggest changes or elaboration to the student's responses. As a general rule, a scribe for a student should not be a parent or immediate family member.

**Additional time.** The elementary assessments are not timed tests in the way that many of those later in the school system are. By and large, all students can take the time they need to finish the various parts of the assessment. Additional time may be



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requested for students who need it, such as those with identified processing difficulties.

**Alternate setting.** An alternate individual or small group setting may be provided for students whose learning difficulties make concentration a problem, or whose behavior may distract other students.

**Provision of test in different format,** e.g., large print, Braille.

**Extended use of technology** where appropriate; for example, documented students may respond exclusively using a word processor.

**For reading assessments,** verbatim reading of directions only. (Reading comprehension passages and questions accompanying them may not be read out loud to students.) Partial exemptions may be requested for students completely unable to read, where ongoing documentation exists at the district office.

**Use of Sign Language or personal FM system**

**Verbatim scribing of responses.** (See **Scribes.**)

## Process

### Total and Partial Exemptions

The required forms should be completed by the Resource teacher in consultation with appropriate teachers and the school principal, and signed by the principal and a parent or guardian.

Completed forms should be sent to the district Director of Education for confirmation and signature. The Director of Education will then forward them to the Evaluation Branch.

### Accommodations

The required forms should be completed by the classroom teacher or Resource teacher and signed by the principal.

Completed forms should be returned to the Evaluation Branch with copies sent to the Director of Education.

