

Context Statement

Social Context

In 2002, Ontario had a population of 12,068,301. Through immigration, Ontario receives approximately 68% of Canada's newcomers. Therefore, a critical issue in the provision of education programs and services is the diverse ethnocultural composition of Ontario's student population. To overcome language and cultural barriers that could affect student achievement, English-language boards and schools (especially in urban areas) provide instruction in English as a second language, as well as community outreach services. French-language boards and schools offer awareness and upgrading programs in Français as well as a beginners' English program. School boards provide community programs and services through partnerships between the school and the community.

Ontario is characterized by a variety of district school boards, ranging from large urban boards that serve densely populated communities to northern boards that serve small numbers of students spread over wide geographic areas. The school board system is made up of 60 English-language boards, 12 French-language boards, and 34 school authorities that are responsible for schools in small and remote communities.

Organization of the School System

Ontario has two types of publicly funded school boards: public boards, which enrol approximately 70% of the student population, and Catholic boards, which enrol the other 30% of the student population.

In 2000–01, Ontario had 1,434,745 students enrolled in 3,963 elementary schools and 708,854 students enrolled in 830 secondary schools. There were 120,319 full-time teachers and administrators. Five per cent of the student population was enrolled in French-language schools. The majority of the English-language boards offer French Immersion. The school program can extend from junior kindergarten (age 4) to the Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). OACs, usually taken in the final and fifth year of secondary school, were designed to prepare students for postsecondary education. However, since the fall of 1999, students who enter grade 9 follow a new curriculum developed for a four-year secondary program.

Language Teaching

Ontario has restructured and refocused programs and program delivery in grades 1 through 12. English is a compulsory subject in all grades for English-language schools. Français is a compulsory subject in all grades for French-language schools.

The Ministry of Education worked with language experts and other education partners to develop curriculum policy documents that are mandated by the province. These documents contain the overall and specific expectations for the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade or course. At the school and classroom level, teachers implement the curricula based on school and community resources, students' needs and abilities, and community needs.

At the elementary level, grades 1–8, there is one language curriculum for all students. For English-language schools, expectations for the language curriculum are organized under three strands of knowledge and skills: Writing, Reading, and Oral and Visual Communication. For French-language schools, the strands are Writing, Reading, and Oral Communication.

At the secondary level, in grades 9 and 10, students can choose between two different types of courses — academic and applied. In grades 11 and 12, three types of compulsory courses are offered based on students' destinations: university, college, and the workplace. For English-language schools, expectations for the compulsory English program for grades 9–12 are organized under four strands of knowledge and skill: Literature Studies and Reading, Writing, Language, and Media Studies. For French-

language schools, the strands for the compulsory Français program for grades 9–12 are Reading, Writing, Oral Communication, and Technologies of Information and Communication. Additional optional courses are available to students in grades 11 and 12. These optional courses are offered as university, university/college, college, workplace, and open courses. These optional courses may use different strands to organize the expectations of the course.

The following principles and practices are common to all language programs in Ontario:

- Language is essential to emotional, intellectual, and social development and is the basis for thinking, communicating, and learning.
- Language learning is developmental and cumulative across the grades — students develop flexibility and proficiency in their understanding and use of language over time.
- Writing is a complex process that involves a range of complementary thinking and composing skills, as well as other language processes, including reading, speaking, and listening.
- A central goal of the Writing strand is to promote students' growth as confident writers who can communicate competently using a range of forms and styles to suit specific purposes and audiences.
- The ability to communicate with clarity and precision will help students thrive in the world beyond school.
- In communicating their ideas, students are expected to use language structures effectively while respecting the conventions of standard Canadian English.

Language Testing

Classroom teachers are responsible for classroom evaluation and promotion to the next grade level; Ontario does not conduct province-wide examinations for these purposes. However, in the past decade Ontario has introduced province-wide assessments as a means of improving student achievement. These assessments generate individual student reports that allow students and their parents to clearly identify student strengths and areas for improvement. The assessments also generate provincial, board, and school reports that are used to inform board and school improvement planning.

In 1993–94 and again in 1994–95, a provincial review of grade 9 reading and writing was expanded into a reading and writing test for all grade 9 students in the province. The test was designed to give students, their teachers, and their parents an indication of students' level of performance. Individual student performances in reading and writing were measured against a descriptive six-level provincial scale. The test was a unit of work that integrated the testing of reading and writing into day-to-day classroom activities. Trained markers scored student work centrally. Writing was evaluated by marking three pieces of student writing — two generated from the unit of work and one selected by the students from their personal portfolios. Reading was assessed by evaluating student responses to questions based on a variety of reading passages.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was established in 1995 to ensure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of education in Ontario. The EQAO now conducts annual assessments for reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3 and 6, for mathematics in grade 9, and for literacy in grade 10. Students must pass the grade 10 literacy test to obtain a graduation diploma. The grade 3 assessment was introduced in 1996–97, the grade 6 in 1998–99, the grade 9 in 1999–2000, and the grade 10 as a graduation requirement in 2001–02. These provincial assessments are based on the expectations and four levels of achievement outlined in The Ontario Curriculum. With respect to the language program, Ontario has a history of involvement in international assessments, such as those conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and, more recently, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

When the SAIP Writing III Assessment (2002) was administered, most 13-year-old students were enrolled in grade 8 or grade 9. Most of the 16-year-old students in the assessment would have been taking a grade 11 university, college, or workplace English or Français course.

Results for Ontario (English)

When confidence intervals are taken into account, writing results for both age groups are similar to the Canadian English performance at all levels. Over 85% of 13-year-olds demonstrate at least some control of the elements of writing with some integration and a simple meaning (level 2). More than 40% perform at level 3 or better.

Almost 60% of 16-year-olds demonstrate control of the elements of writing with some integration and a clear perspective (level 3). Almost 20% perform at more effective writing levels (levels 4 and 5).

CHART ON(E)1

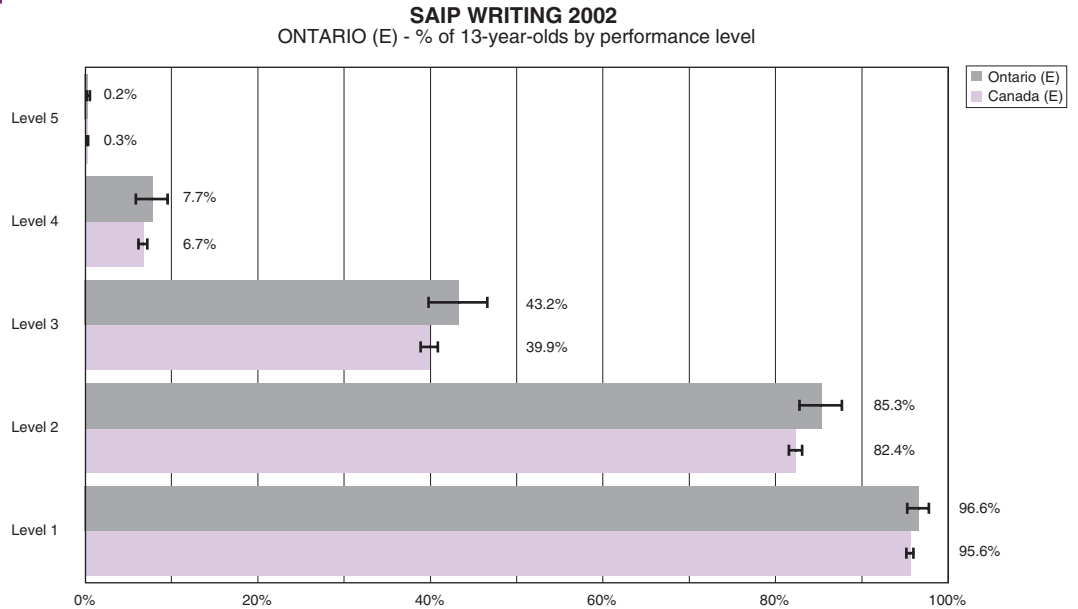
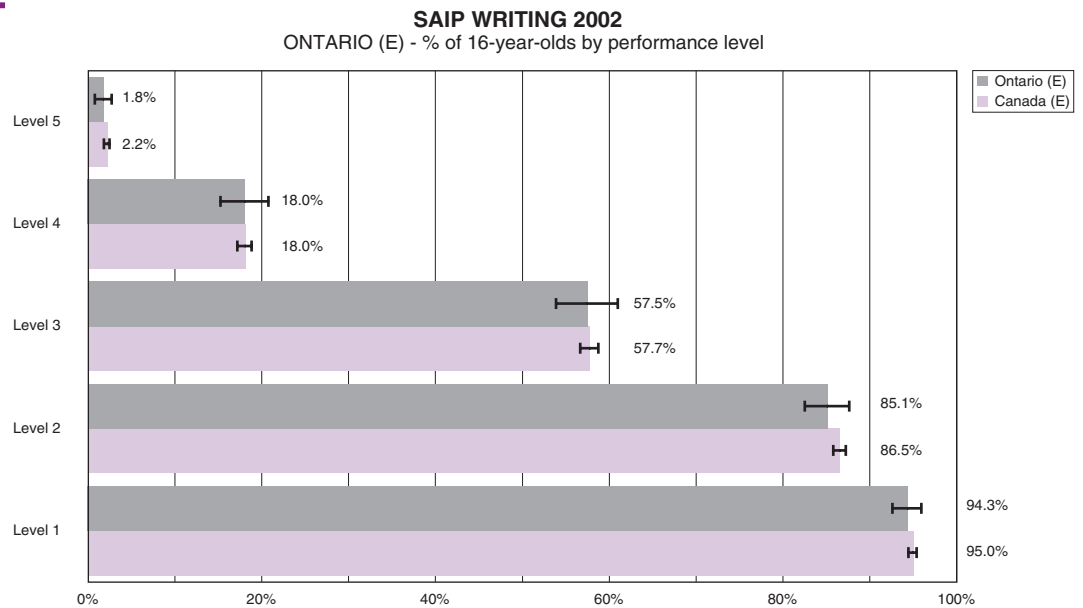


CHART ON(E)2



Results for Ontario (French)

There are significant differences for 13-year-olds between this jurisdiction's performance and the Canadian French performance at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4. For 16-year-olds, the significant differences are at levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, at levels 2, 3, and 4, the 2002 differences are considerably less than the differences in 1998 for 13-year-olds. Almost 80% of 13-year-olds demonstrate some control of the elements of writing with some integration (level 2), and 30% demonstrate at least a control, integration, and clear perspective in writing (level 3).

Almost 80% of 16-year-olds show some control of the elements of writing with some integration (level 2), while 45% demonstrate control, integration, and a clear perspective in writing (at least level 3).

CHART ON(F)1

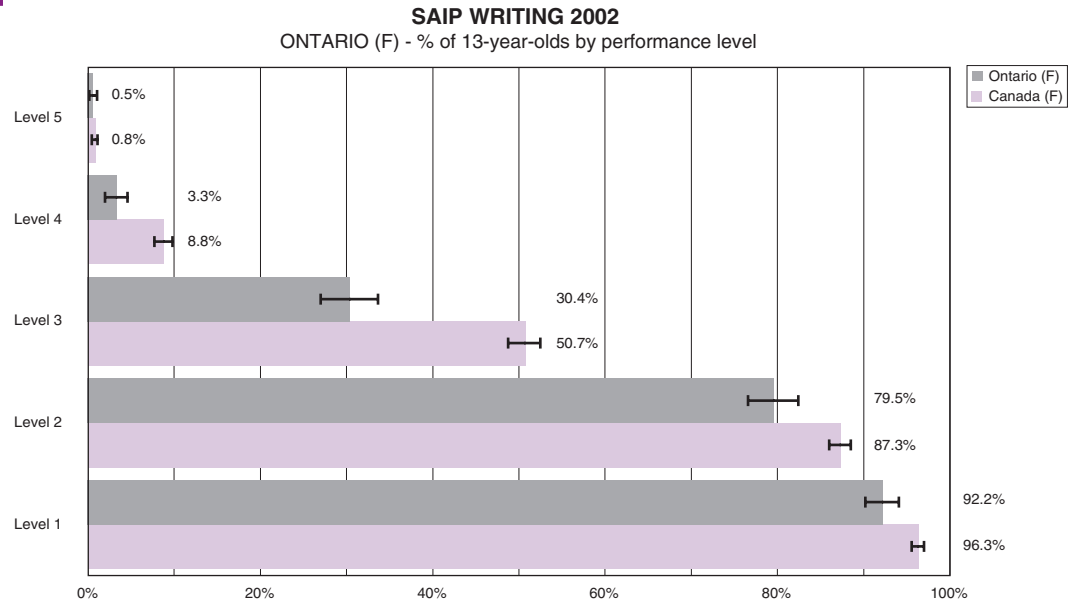
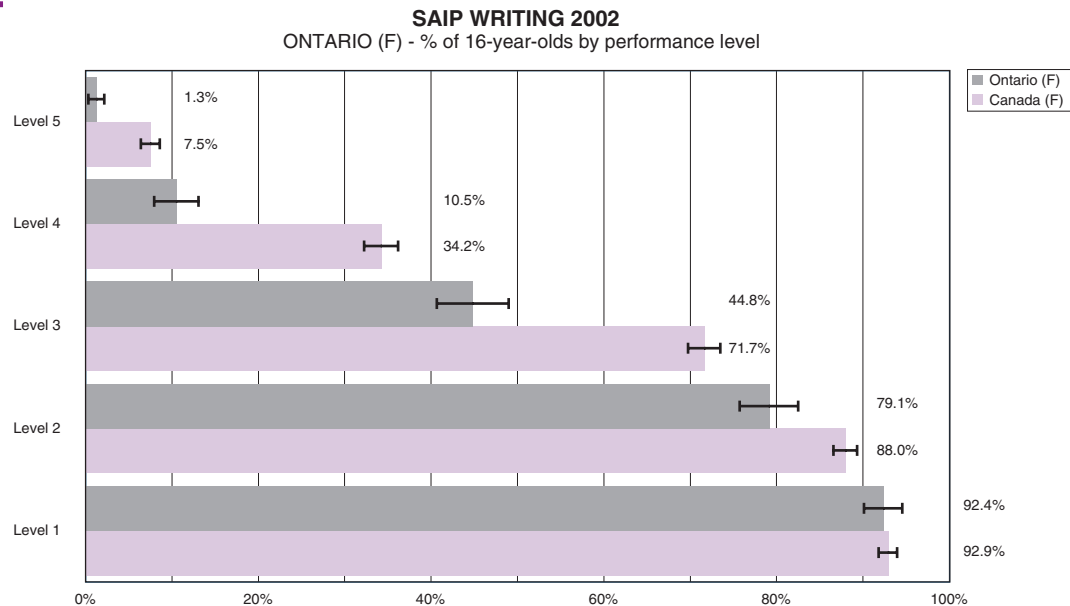


CHART ON(F)2



Context Statement

Social Context

For some years now, Quebec has been modernizing its education system in order to meet the requirements of today's society. The current education reform is the result of a democratic process. The Estates General on Education, initiated in 1995, were structured to involve people throughout Quebec in consultations on the problems in the education system, on the measures needed to remedy these problems, and on medium- and long-term adjustments required to ensure that the system adapts to the socioeconomic and sociocultural changes that are emerging at the dawn of the 21st century.

Quebec's population of over seven million is concentrated in the south of the province, mostly in its largest city, Montreal, and its capital, Quebec City. The official language of Quebec is French. Francophones account for 80% of Quebec's total population. Anglophones make up about 9% and have access to a system of English educational institutions from preschool to university. There are eleven Native peoples in Quebec: eight under federal jurisdiction and three under the jurisdiction of the Quebec Ministry of Education. Funding for education is provided by both levels of government.

In addition, an increase in immigration, especially in the Greater Montreal area, has resulted in a massive inflow of students whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. These students attend French schools. Fully aware of the needs of this new client group, schools have implemented special measures, including initiation and francization programs and welcoming classes.

Organization of the School System

Quebec has four levels of education: elementary, secondary, college, and university. Children are admitted to elementary school at 6 years of age, and school attendance is compulsory until the age of 16. The official language of instruction at the elementary and secondary levels is French. Education in English is available mainly to students whose father or mother pursued elementary studies in English in Canada. Approximately 10% of Quebec students are educated in English.

Elementary school is usually preceded by one year of full-time kindergarten for five-year-olds. Almost all five-year-olds attend kindergarten, even though it is not compulsory. Some children from underprivileged backgrounds may have access to half-day kindergarten from the age of 4.

Elementary school lasts six years. The school year is made up of 180 days of classroom teaching. A normal school week consists of five full days and 23.5 hours of teaching. Students who experience learning difficulties or who have behavioural problems or minor disabilities are integrated into regular classrooms. Those with more significant problems attend special classes with fewer students.

Secondary school lasts five years and is divided into two levels. The school week is made up of five days and must include a minimum of 25 hours of educational activities. The first level or "cycle" (years 1 to 3) focuses on basic education. In the second cycle (years 4 and 5), students continue their general education, but also take optional courses to explore other avenues of learning before going on to college. In year 4, students can also undertake a two- or three-year vocational course of studies to prepare for a trade. Requirements for the secondary and vocational school diplomas are set in the basic school regulation.

At age 13, most students are in the second year of secondary school. At age 16, most are completing the fifth year of secondary school, while approximately 5% are starting college studies.

In 2001–02, a total of 1,111,502 students were enrolled in Quebec's 2,999 public and private elementary and secondary schools run by 72 schools boards and 339 private schools.

Language Instruction

In Quebec, instruction in French or English is compulsory for all elementary and secondary students. Instruction in French or English takes up at least seven hours per week at the elementary level and approximately five hours per week at secondary level. Time allocated to the language of instruction at the elementary level has increased since September 2000 and will increase at the secondary level starting in September 2004.

For students enrolled in French-language schools, instruction in French is compulsory in all grades at the elementary and secondary levels. The students are also required to learn English as a second language from the third year of elementary school until the end of their secondary studies.

For students enrolled in English-language schools, instruction in English is compulsory in all grades at the elementary and secondary levels, and the teaching of French as a second language begins in the first year of elementary school. It should be noted that many anglophone parents choose to send their children to French immersion classes from the first year of elementary school and that these students only begin English Language Arts courses in grade 3.

The Ministry of Education sets the content of language and other compulsory curriculum. The curriculum for French as a language of instruction is different from the curriculum for English as a language of instruction. Elementary and secondary French curriculum emphasizes reading and writing skills for both literary and everyday texts as well as for oral communication. The English curriculum integrates reading, writing, and oral communication while emphasizing the integration of literature, written and oral material, and media.

Language Assessment

Most summative assessment activities are carried out by teachers and school boards.

In French as a language of instruction, the Ministry of Education administers a single writing assessment at the end of the fifth year of secondary schooling. This assessment is scored by the ministry and the results make up of half of the year's writing mark.

In English Language Arts, the ministry administers a single test at the end of secondary schooling, integrating reading, writing, and oral communication. Teachers mark their own students' examinations.

To obtain a secondary diploma, students must pass French or English as a language of instruction courses in secondary 4 and 5, as well as the secondary 4 second-language course.

As for all other subjects, the pass mark is set at 60%. The weighted marks in school-administered assessments make up half of the final marks, with the other half based on ministry examination results.

Results for Quebec (English)

When confidence intervals are taken into account, writing results for 13-year-olds are similar to the Canadian English performance at all levels. There are significant differences at levels 2 and 3 for 16-year-olds. Almost 80% of 13-year-olds write with at least some control of the elements of writing and with integration of some elements (level 2). Almost 40% write with control, integration and a clear perspective (level 3).

Over 65% of 16-year-olds demonstrate at least control of the elements of writing, general integration, maintained development, and clear perspective (level 3). Over 20% of this age group perform at the higher levels of effective writing (levels 4 and 5).

CHART QC(E)1

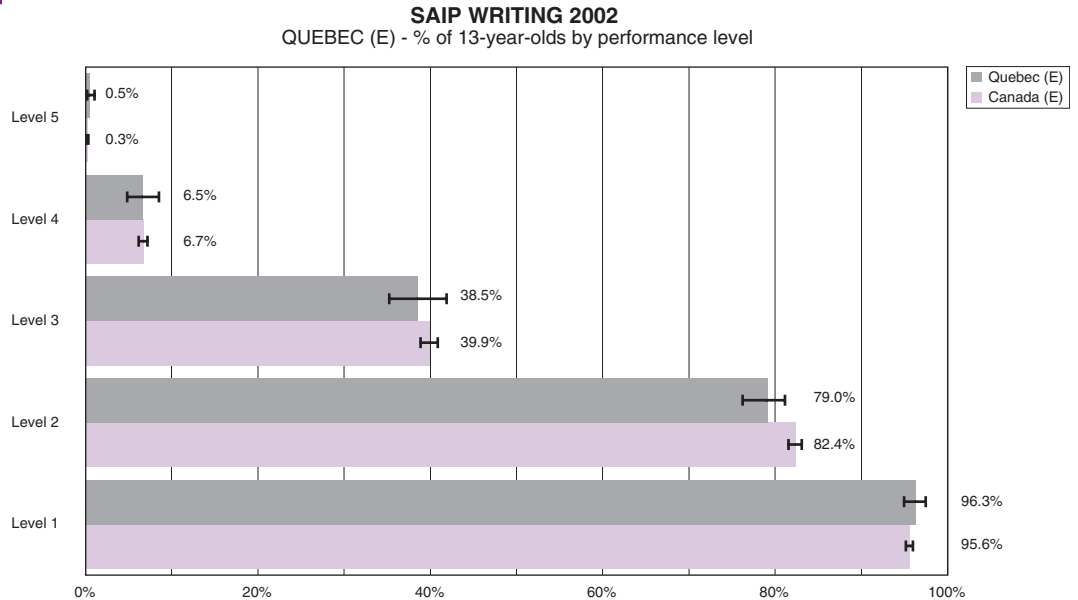
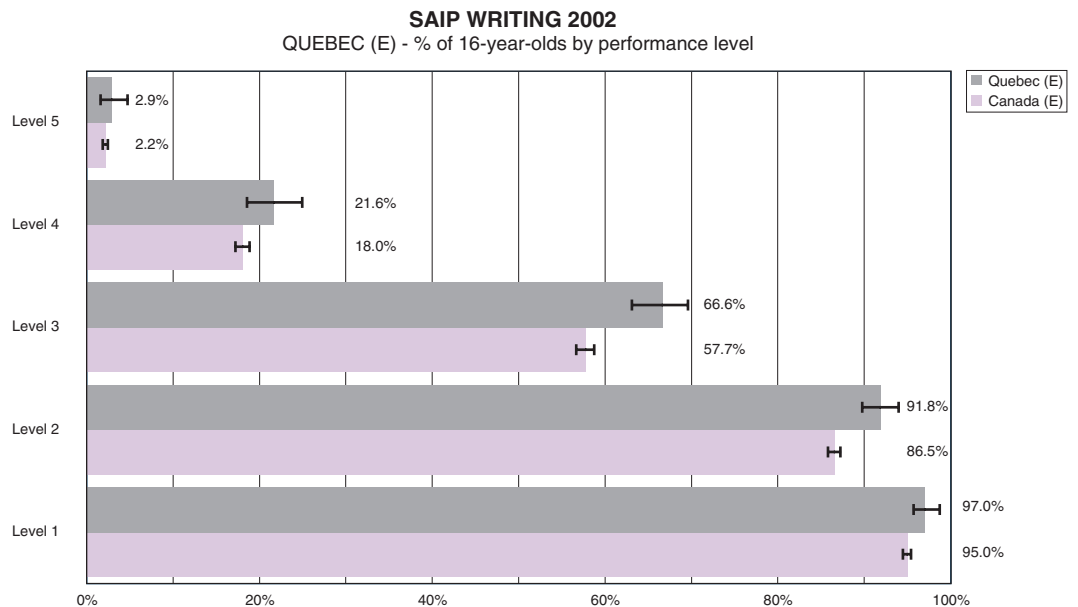


CHART QC(E)2



Results for Quebec (French)

There are no significant differences between this jurisdiction's performance and the Canadian French performance at any level for either age group. Almost 90% of 13-year-olds have some control of the elements of writing (level 2), and more than 50% produce writing that is at least generally integrated with a clear perspective (level 3).

About 75% of 16-year-olds have control of the elements of writing (level 3), and more than 35% perform at the higher levels of effective writing (levels 4 and 5).

CHART QC(F)1

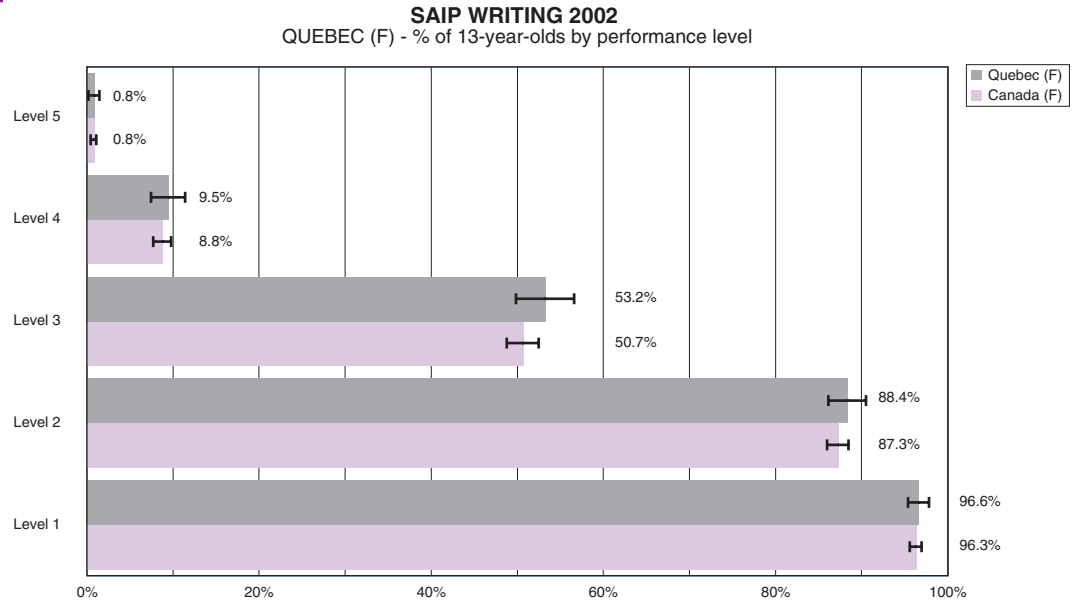


CHART QC(F)2

