


School Achievement Indicators Program

Writing Assessment III

Handbook for
Schools



2002

 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)

© 2002 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

Funds for the School Achievement Indicators Program have been provided by participating jurisdictions through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and by the Government of Canada through Human Resources Development Canada.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of The Corporation of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada/La Corporation du Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada).

May be reproduced for educational purposes only.

CONTENTS

1. The School Achievement Indicators Program	1
1.1 What Is It?	1
1.2 The 2002 Assessment	1
1.3 Overview of the Writing Assessment	1
1.4 General Description	2
1.4.1 Assessment Session A (1 hour)	2
1.4.2 Assessment Session B (2½ hours)	2
2. Role of the School Coordinator	4
2.1 Prior to Administration	4
2.1.1 Review student lists	4
2.1.2 Identify students with special needs.....	4
2.1.3 Plan support for students with special needs	5
2.1.4 Identify students with very limited writing ability for exemption	5
2.1.5 Inform participating students, their families, and other school staff.....	5
2.1.6 Arrange for a suitable time and location	6
2.1.7 Check materials	6
2.1.8 Verify identification numbers	7
2.1.9 Distribute questionnaires to teachers and principal	7
2.2 Administration of the Assessment	7
2.2.1 Materials needed	7
2.2.2 Assessment Session A	7
2.2.3 Assessment Session B	8
2.3 Following Administration of Assessment Session B	9
2.3.1 Make-up session	10
2.3.2 School Coordinator's Report.....	10
2.3.3 Return materials	10
Appendix A	
Rationale for the task	11
Conceptual framework for the writing task.....	11
Descriptive scale for the writing task.....	12
Appendix B: Sample Letter to Parents	14
Appendix C: Script A	15
Appendix D: Script B	17
Appendix E: Example Participation Status Codes	19
Appendix F: List of Selected Students	20
Appendix G: Frequently asked Questions	21

1. THE SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS PROGRAM

1.1 *What Is It?*

Canadians have long been interested in how well their education systems are meeting the needs of students and society. To answer this question, the provinces and territories, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), have developed the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP). This is the first Canadian project of its kind.

One purpose of the program is to gather current information about how well students are performing in mathematics, in reading and writing, and in science. This information will help decision makers in education as they set priorities, develop policy, and plan for the future. The results will also provide the Canadian public with information about nationwide achievement levels.

1.2 *The 2002 Assessment*

In April and May 2002, a random sample of 13- and 16-year-old students in schools across Canada will participate in a writing assessment as part of SAIP. In jurisdictions where there are small student populations, all students in these two age groups will be tested.

The CMEC will report the assessment results. The percentage of students attaining each of five performance levels described in this handbook will be reported provincially or territorially, nationally, and by language of instruction.

A general summary of results will be available to all interested parties. Each province or territory will also receive detailed technical information. Results for individual students, schools, or school jurisdictions will not be reported.

1.3 *Overview of the Writing Assessment*

The writing assessment will take place in two sessions. Session A will take one hour and will include a short writing/thinking exercise as well as a discussion of readings provided to the students.

Session B will occur two to five days later. This longer session will take approximately two and one-half hours, during which students will compose a longer piece of writing and will answer a student questionnaire.

The framework and descriptive scale for the main writing task are found in Appendix A, pages 11 to 13.

1.4 General Description

Students are required to attend the two assessment sessions:

1.4.1 Assessment Session A (1 hour)

During this session, students will read a short text in *Student Writing Booklet A* and write a personal response to it. This activity will serve to engage students in reflecting on the general theme of the assessment and will provide evidence of how student thinking unfolds in a typical school activity.

Next, the *Student Resource Booklet* will be distributed. This booklet will provide students with materials designed to prompt their thinking on the general theme of the assessment. The School Coordinator will guide students in a discussion of these materials and students will be encouraged to continue reading at home. Students may use the “Thoughts” page provided at the back of the *Student Resource Booklet* to jot down ideas while examining the resources. These activities will prepare students for the main writing task, which will be given in the second session. Students should bring their *Student Resource Booklet* with them to Session B.

1.4.2 Assessment Session B (2½ hours)

This session **must** be scheduled within two to five days after Assessment Session A and will take approximately two and one-half hours to complete. During this session, students will be given *Student Writing Booklet B* and will be asked to respond to the writing task presented. They will be allowed to refer to the *Student Resource Booklet* and their “Thoughts” page when developing their piece of writing. The School Coordinator should encourage students to plan their writing, and to choose a form and style of writing that best suits their purpose and ideas – a style they feel comfortable using. A “Reminder!” is provided at the back of *Student Writing Booklet B* that may assist students when planning and editing their writing. The first 10 minutes of the session will serve as an opportunity to refocus on the materials and share thoughts on what has been read.

After completing the writing task, students will answer the “Student Questionnaire” found at the back of *Student Writing Booklet B*. This questionnaire will serve to gather basic demographic data as well as information about the student’s writing interests and practices.

Although most students should be able to complete the writing activity and questionnaire within two and one-half hours, those requiring more time should be given an additional 30 minutes to complete their work.

Students will not be allowed to use computers during this assessment. However, students are permitted to use any other resources that they are accustomed to using in the writing classroom. The school should provide necessary reference materials, such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and writing handbooks for student use during the assessment.

Following the assessment, the *Student Resource Booklet* can be kept in the school. Teachers may wish to keep these materials for future use in English Language Arts (ELA) activities with all students.

2. ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COORDINATOR

It is essential that the SAIP Writing Assessment III be administered in a consistent manner across Canada. Jurisdictional Coordinators assume overall responsibility for administration of the SAIP Writing Assessment III within each jurisdiction. Each school selected to participate in this assessment is required to designate a School Coordinator who will be responsible for administering the assessment in his or her school, according to the procedures outlined in this handbook.

2.1 Prior to Administration

2.1.1 Review student lists

Included with this handbook is a *List of Selected Students* for each age group participating in the assessment in your school (see example in Appendix F, page 20).

- Check the *List of Selected Students*. The student names listed should be a selection of those names submitted previously by your school to your Jurisdictional Coordinator. If a student no longer attends the school or for some other reason cannot participate, he/she will be assigned a particular participation status code (see list of participation status codes, Appendix E, page 19).

Confidentiality

The Jurisdictional Coordinator will destroy all information that may identify individual students once all assessment materials have been accounted for.

For this reason, do not be concerned about any spelling errors on the student lists, as long as you can identify the student selected.

Only those students identified on the student list(s) are permitted to participate. Schools MUST NOT substitute other students.

Inclusiveness

The School Achievement Indicators Program is intended to be as inclusive as possible in order to provide a complete picture of the range of performance among 13- and 16-year-old students.

ALL students of the specified ages were included in the initial student lists from which the sample of students was selected.

Please make provisions to enable students with special needs to participate.

2.1.2 Identify students with special needs

- Students requiring Braille or large-print versions of the assessment booklets should have been previously identified when your school submitted its list of eligible students.
- If a discrepancy exists, notify your Jurisdictional Coordinator as soon as possible to ensure that these versions are included in your school package.
- You and other school staff must review the *List of Selected Students* **during March** to identify students with additional special needs as well as those to be exempted from participation.
- **We appreciate your help in ensuring that as many students as possible participate in the assessment.**

2.1.3 Plan support for students with special needs

- As a general guideline, you should use procedures set by your school for administering tests to students with special needs.
- Students with special needs may be given additional time to complete this assessment. As well, administration of the assessment can be spread over several sessions.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) students may require varying types of assistance. Some ESL students may require an interpreter to assist in reading the materials provided and in clarifying vocabulary.
- **You will be required to describe any modifications made to the administration procedures when completing the *School Coordinator's Report* included with the assessment materials.**
- **Assistance to students should be restricted to helping with reading the materials and explaining the procedures. Do not interpret the materials provided or guide the student's writing.**

2.1.4 Identify students with very limited writing ability for exemption

- Meet with the school principal and other school staff to review the description of Level 1 performance from Appendix A, page 13, and discuss student ability relative to this description.
- For those students on the list with very limited writing ability, the school can designate them as below Level 1, and exempt them from writing the assessment.
- Record a “**D**” in the participation status column of the *List of Selected Students* and on the front cover of *Student Writing Booklet A* and *Student Writing Booklet B* assigned to the student (see Appendix E, page 19).

2.1.5 Inform participating students, their families, and other school staff

- At least two weeks before the assessment date, inform participating students about the assessment.
- Distribute copies of the *Information for Parents and Students* brochure. A “Sample Letter to Parents” is included in Appendix B (page 14), should you wish to use it.
- Ask students to identify their current ELA teacher(s) and arrange to distribute teacher questionnaires to these teachers.
- One week before the date set for Assessment Session A, inform students of the time and location of the assessment sessions. Inform students that they must bring a blue or black ball-point pen to both assessment sessions.

We encourage you to announce the school's participation in this national project and discuss its importance with all teachers and students.

Balancing inclusiveness and student well-being

We want all students to have the opportunity to be represented in this assessment. However, we do not want students with special needs to be overly pressured to participate in the assessment if they would be adversely affected or if appropriate arrangements cannot be made for them.

For those unable to participate, record the appropriate code in the participation status column of the *List of Selected Students* and on the front cover of *Student Writing Booklet A* and *Student Writing Booklet B* assigned to the student (see Appendix E, page 19, for a list of participation status codes).

Exemption

We expect that most 13- and 16-year-old students have sufficient writing ability to achieve Level 1 or higher on this assessment. However, we recognize that some students may not have even basic writing skills and that it would serve no purpose to have them attempt this assessment. It is for these students that exemption is provided (see Appendix E, page 19, for other exemption codes).

In the report, these students will be classified as being below Level 1 in writing achievement.

Doing their best

Since student motivation can have a strong influence on performance levels, it is important that students be encouraged to do their best. This can ensure that results will be a true indication of how well all students can write.

2.1.6 Arrange for a suitable time and location

- This assessment will take place in two sessions. Therefore, a suitable location must be secured for both Assessment Session A (1 hour) and Assessment Session B (2½ hours). **The two assessment sessions must be scheduled within two to five days of each other.**
- If students from your school have been selected to participate in both 13- and 16-year-old samples, please schedule their assessments for the same time and date.
- If possible, schedule the administration of both assessment sessions for the morning in order to obtain the best student performance.
- The assessment must be administered between April 1 and May 10, 2002 (unless specified otherwise by your Jurisdictional Coordinator).
- Please find a quiet area with sufficient desk or table space where students have time to complete the assessment without interruption.

2.1.7 Check materials

Please confirm that the following were included in your package:

- *School Packing List*
- *List of Selected Students* (one per age group sampled)
- *Teacher's Questionnaire* – one for each ELA teacher of the participating students
- *School Questionnaire* – one per school
- *Student Writing Booklet A* – one for each participating student
- *Student Resource Booklet* – one for each participating student plus extra copies
- *Student Writing Booklet B* – one for each participating student (includes Student Questionnaire)
- *School Coordinator's Report*

Student ID Numbers

Care must be taken during administration to ensure that each student receives the three assessment booklets bearing his/her assigned student ID number.

Photocopying and Security

You may photocopy booklets only if there is a shortage and you cannot obtain copies from the Jurisdictional Coordinator in time for the assessment.

Please keep assessment booklets secure prior to the administration. All copies of student writing booklets A and B, including any photocopies, must be returned at the completion of the assessment.

2.1.8 Verify identification numbers

Each student selected to participate in this assessment has been assigned a specific Student Identification Number.

- Ensure that all numbered student booklets included in the package correspond to the personal ID numbers assigned to your students as recorded on the *List of Selected Students*.
- If a discrepancy exists, contact the Jurisdictional Coordinator as soon as possible.

2.1.9 Distribute questionnaires to teachers and principal

After meeting with participating students, compile a list of teachers currently teaching them ELA.

- Assign a questionnaire ID number for each of the teachers and keep a record.
- Distribute teacher questionnaires and inform them that you will collect the completed questionnaires following Assessment Session B. Each teacher currently teaching ELA to any of the selected students should fill out the *Teacher's Questionnaire*.
- Ask the school principal to complete the *School Questionnaire*.

2.2 Administration of the Assessment

2.2.1 Materials needed

- Scripts A or B (Appendices C and D, pages 15 to 18)
- *List of Selected Students* (one per age group sampled)
- For each participating student, individually numbered copies of:
 - *Student Writing Booklet A*
 - *Student Resource Booklet*
 - *Student Writing Booklet B*
- Resources normally available to students in their writing classroom, e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses, and writing handbooks
- Spare blue or black ball-point pens

2.2.2 Assessment Session A

- Prior to arrival of the students, write the names of all ELA teachers and their corresponding ID numbers on the board or on a chart.
- Begin reading Script A to the students.
- Distribute *Student Writing Booklet A*. **Make sure that each student receives the booklet with his/her personal ID number.**
- Ask students to code the front cover of their writing booklet with:
 - their participation status (students present are **participation status code B**)
 - their age
 - their sex

Confidentiality

Do not forward any teachers' names to us.

Any method used to link teachers' names with teacher questionnaire ID numbers is intended to help you and the students properly link student ID numbers with teacher ID numbers.

Please destroy any lists containing teachers' names after the assessment.

- the teacher ID number(s) of **all** teachers currently teaching them ELA (listed on the board or chart).
Students not currently studying ELA should leave this blank.
- Ask the students to begin *Student Writing Booklet A* and inform them that they will have 20 minutes to complete the assigned writing exercise.
- Complete the *List of Selected Students* by recording the following for each student (including those students exempted or absent from the assessment):
 - their age
 - their sex
 - their participation status code (see list of participation status codes, Appendix E, page 19)
 - the questionnaire ID number assigned to each of their current ELA teachers. **If they are not currently studying ELA, leave this blank.**
- For students exempted or absent from the assessment, code their sex, age, participation status, and teacher ID on the front cover of all assessment booklets assigned to them (see list of participation status codes, Appendix E, page 19).
- Check to ensure that all students have coded the front cover of their *Student Writing Booklet A* as instructed.
- After 20 minutes, collect *Student Writing Booklet A*.
- Distribute the *Student Resource Booklet*. **Again, ensure that each student is given the booklet with his/her personal student ID number.**
- Continue reading Script A.
- At the end of this session, collect and secure all assessment materials (except the *Student Resource Booklet*) until Assessment Session B.

2.2.3 Assessment Session B

- One day prior to Assessment Session B, remind selected students of the location and time of the administration and tell them to bring their *Student Resource Booklet* and a blue or black ball-point pen to the assessment.
- Again, before students arrive, record the names of all ELA teachers and their corresponding ID numbers on the board or a chart.
- Begin reading Script B to the students.
- Ensure that all students have a copy of the *Student Resource Booklet* (extra copies are provided for students who forgot their booklets).
- In order to reintroduce students to the general theme of the assessment, take approximately 10 minutes to discuss the *Student Resource Booklet*.
- Distribute *Student Writing Booklet B*. **Make sure that each student receives the booklet with his/her personal ID number.** In order to verify that each student has received the correct writing booklet, ask students to verify that the ID numbers on the *Student Resource Booklet* and *Student Writing Booklet B* are the same. This will

- not apply to students using a spare resource booklet.
- Ask students to code the front cover of *Student Writing Booklet B* with:
 - their participation status (students present are **participation status code B**)
 - their age
 - their sex
 - the teacher ID number(s) of **all** teachers currently teaching them ELA (listed on the board or chart).
Students not currently studying ELA should leave this blank.
 - Ask the students to begin *Student Writing Booklet B* and inform them that they will have two and one-half hours to complete the assigned writing exercise and questionnaire. Students who require extra time may be given an additional 30 minutes to complete their work.
 - Complete the *List of Selected Students* by recording the following for each student, including those students exempted or absent from the assessment:
 - their age
 - their sex
 - their participation status code (see list of participation status codes, Appendix E, page 19)
 - the questionnaire ID number assigned to each of their current ELA teachers. **If they are not currently studying ELA, leave this blank.**
 - Again, for any students exempted or absent from the assessment, complete the sex, age, participation status code, and teacher ID number sections on the front cover of all assessment booklets assigned to them (see list of participation status codes, Appendix E, page 19).
 - Check to ensure that all students have coded the front cover of *Student Writing Booklet B* as instructed.
 - Students should be given at least two and a half hours to complete this portion of the assessment. Once students have finished writing, and have completed the student questionnaire at the back of *Student Writing Booklet B*, collect their writing booklets.
 - It is not necessary to return the copies of the *Student Resource Booklet* supplied with this assessment. You may choose to collect these from the students for future use in your classrooms.

2.3 Following Administration of Assessment Session B

- If students have completed the assessment using Braille or large-print forms, transfer students' work from these versions to the assigned student writing booklets (A and B).
- Collect completed school and teacher questionnaires distributed prior to the assessment.
- Secure all student writing booklets (A and B) and questionnaires until shipping.

2.3.1 Make-up session

- Calculate the percentage of students who participated in the regular sessions for Assessment Session A and Assessment Session B.
- Count the number of **B**'s, **A**'s and **D**'s that you recorded on the *List of Selected Students* for each of the assessment sessions (ignore all other codes for this calculation).
- Calculate the participation rate for **each** session using the formula
$$\frac{(B+D)}{(A+B+D)} \times 100\%$$

If the participation rate for Assessment Session A or B is less than 85%, a make-up session must be conducted before May 10, 2002.

If make-up sessions are necessary (as indicated by the calculations above), schedule Assessment Sessions A and B to include as many of the absent students as possible. If a student completes the assessment during the make-up session, change the participation status code for that student from “**A**” to “**C**” on the *List of Selected Students*.

Ensure that “**C**” is coded on the front cover of the assigned student writing booklets (A and B).

2.3.2 School Coordinator's Report

- Complete the *School Coordinator's Report* included with the assessment materials.

2.3.3 Return materials

- Complete the *School Packing Slip* to indicate the numbers of each of the items being returned to the Jurisdictional Coordinator.
- Package the following:
 - *School Packing Slip*
 - *School Coordinator's Report*
 - Completed *List of Selected Students*
 - Completed *School Questionnaire*
 - All *Teacher Questionnaires* in ascending numerical order
 - All completed student writing booklets (**A** and **B**) in ascending numerical order
 - All unused student writing booklets and any photocopies
- Return the package to the Jurisdictional Coordinator as soon as possible after the assessment and no later than **May 17, 2002** or the date specified by your Jurisdictional Coordinator. Please use the return address label and way-bill provided by the Jurisdictional Coordinator.

APPENDIX A

Rationale for the task, Booklet A

This part of the assessment requires students to respond to a short, accessible text that has a depth of inferred meaning. It is time-limited: students will have only 20 minutes to read, consider, and respond.

This short thinking/writing exercise serves two purposes:

- to gather evidence of students' habits of mind when asked to respond to a text in a manner typical of schooling activities. How does student thinking unfold?
- to engage students in reflection on the theme of the *Student Resource Booklet* and the main writing task

The exercise will allow us to examine the degree to which students move beyond denotation to connotation, beyond explicitness to inferred meaning, beyond concrete references and illustrations to abstraction and application, beyond observation to critical and aesthetic judgment.

Conceptual framework for the writing task, Booklet B

Writing takes place within a specified context or situation. Therefore, the situation, purpose, and intended audience form the framework that governs how all writing elements function within the text. This SAIP assessment will consider the writer's skill in integrating such elements as development of ideas, organization, language conventions and usage, and stylistic features employed in carrying out a purpose.

Writing is socially situated in that it is meant to be read. This social dimension calls for particular qualities such as clarity of communication and correctness of language. In this assessment, consideration will be given to the overall effectiveness of communication.

Writing is also social in the sense that it is intended for specific discourse communities such as the academic milieu or the workplace. In curricular practices across the Canadian education community, writing serves as a means of generating and communicating thought and understanding across all subject areas. In this SAIP assessment, the instrument will take the writing task beyond the language classroom to reinforce an increasing awareness that writing is a general competency that supports learning across the curriculum and, for that matter, for life. The assessment attempts to link school writing demands to writing demands beyond the classroom.

Writing is a complex process that includes: drawing on prior knowledge and experience; developing and organizing ideas; choosing and shaping the form of presentation associated with a specific purpose; selecting the words, syntax, and stylistic devices; and applying the rules of language accurately and purposefully. Students need sufficient time during assessments to apply these strategies in order to demonstrate their abilities effectively. In this assessment, students will be provided with a resource booklet of readings so as to ensure equal access to sufficient background knowledge pertinent to the task. They will have the opportunity to take the readings home. The assessment will take place over two sessions within a two- to five-day period in order to give students time to reflect and prepare.

Writing is a means of generating ideas and information as well as a medium of communication: it is a way of creating, exploring, and refining ideas. Just as there are divergent learning styles, there are preferential modes of expression. This test design will allow students to respond in either an analytic or a narrative mode. Both modes require integration of the common writing elements, and both will allow students to demonstrate their ability to assimilate, interpret, and convey ideas and information. Moreover, both analytic and narrative modes offer a wide variety of options for writing such as stories, opinion pieces, accounts of personal or imaginary experiences, magazine or news articles, speeches, and scripts.

Descriptive scale for the writing task, Booklet B

Level 5

The writing demonstrates an effective and confident command of the elements of writing appropriate to purpose.

The writing is thoroughly integrated, precisely and fully developed, and the elements enhance one another. The writing conveys an insightful and sophisticated perspective.

- *The writing clearly fulfills the demands of the task.*
- *The overall idea(s) and development are thoughtful and well considered.*
- *Tone/Voice/Stance are confident and enhance the impact of the writing.*
- *Command and control of stylistic features, syntax, and the rules of language effectively enhance communication. Errors are minimal.*

Level 4

The writing demonstrates an effective control of the elements of writing appropriate to purpose. The writing is integrated, clearly and fully developed, and comes together as a secure whole. The writing conveys a thoughtful perspective.

- *The writing fulfills the demands of the task.*
- *The overall idea(s) and development are thoughtful, clear, and purposeful.*

- *Tone/Voice/Stance are assured and appropriate.*
- *A solid control of stylistic features, syntax, and the rules of language is evident and effective. Errors are minimal.*

Level 3

The writing demonstrates a control of the elements of writing appropriate to purpose. The writing is generally integrated, and development is generalized, functional, and usually maintained throughout. The writing conveys a clear perspective.

- *The writing addresses the demands of the task.*
- *The overall idea(s) and development are straightforward and clear, but may be more general than specific.*
- *Tone/Voice/Stance are clear and appropriate.*
- *Control of conventional stylistic features, syntax, and the rules of language is evident. Errors do not interfere with communication.*

Level 2

The writing demonstrates an uneven and/or uncertain control of the elements of writing relative to purpose. Integration of some of the elements is apparent, but development is sketchy and/or inconsistently maintained. The writing conveys a simple and/or uneven meaning.

- *The writing demonstrates some evidence of addressing the demands of the task.*
- *The overall idea(s) and development are limited but discernible.*
- *Tone/Voice/Stance are discernible but may be inconsistent or uneven.*
- *Control of syntax and the rules of language is clearly limited. Errors are distracting and interfere with communication.*

Level 1

The writing demonstrates an elementary and uncertain grasp of fundamental elements of writing relative to purpose. Integration of those elements is not evident. The writing conveys simplistic and/or partial and/or fragmented meaning.

- *The writing demonstrates little or no evidence of addressing the demands of the task.*
- *The overall idea(s) and development are rudimentary and may not be clear.*
- *Tone/Voice/Stance are discernible but may be ambiguous, inappropriate, and/or unclear.*
- *Lack of control of syntax and the rules of language obscures communication.*

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter to Parents

(Province/Territory) is continuing its participation in the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). This year, SAIP will conduct a pan-Canadian assessment of the writing ability of 13- and 16-year-old students.

The first reading and writing assessment took place in 1994 and results were released in December 1995; a second reading and writing assessment was conducted in 1998 with the results being released in January 1999. This assessment of writing is scheduled for administration in April and May of 2002.

As in the past, this assessment will be administered by local school personnel. In (Province/Territory), (number) English-language schools and (number) French-language schools have been selected to participate in this round of SAIP. In these schools, a total of (number) 13- and/or (number) 16-year-olds will be randomly selected to write the assessment.

Enclosed is a brochure describing the SAIP writing assessment.

The summary report of the results will be published in 2003. The results will be compiled on a national and provincial scale for both official language groups. The results will not be published by school district, school, or student.

Thank you for supporting your child's participation in the SAIP 2002 writing assessment.

(Enclosure)

APPENDIX C

Script A – [To be read in Session A]

Good morning. Our school has been chosen to take part in an important pan-Canadian project to discover how well Canadian students write. You and other students from all of Canada’s provinces and territories have been chosen to assist and represent [your province/territory] in this important assessment.

So that the best information possible is gathered from this project, it is important that you give this assessment your best effort. Your results will help to get a picture of the performance of all [province/territory] students as well as that of all Canadian students.

There are two parts to this assessment. The first part is a written response to a short text. This piece will introduce the general theme of the assessment, which is *Sharing Living Spaces*. Your response will be looked at primarily for your thinking in response to the text.

I will now hand out *Student Writing Booklet A*. On the cover of this booklet, you will find a box with letters. This indicates your participation status. All of you here today should shade in the circle “B” which indicates that you are participating today. Also, please indicate your age and sex, and your current English Language Arts teacher’s ID number in the appropriate boxes. If you are not currently taking English Language Arts, please leave the teacher ID box blank.

You will have the next twenty minutes to do this part of the assessment. Open your booklet and begin the assessment.

[TWENTY MINUTES LATER]

The twenty minutes are up.

I will now distribute the *Student Resource Booklet*. This booklet has your personal ID number on it. Please be sure that the numbers on both your booklets are the same.

I will now collect your *Student Writing Booklet A*.

When we meet again [insert date of Session B], you will be asked to produce a longer piece of writing on the same theme of *Sharing Living Spaces*. At that time, you will be given a specific writing task that relates to the theme.

This resource booklet provides some background information and a “Thoughts” page for you to record some of your thoughts.

[To introduce students to the Student Resource Booklet, the theme, and the writing task that will be presented in Session B, orally present the “General Instructions” given on page 3 and then direct students to page 7 of the Student Resource Booklet. Share the two short texts found on this page.]

What did you get out of these texts? [Open discussion directed by you as required. Discussion of these passages should emphasize the main theme of *Sharing Living Spaces* and should touch on examples from your local community.]

For the rest of this session, you may read quietly. I encourage you to take your resource booklet home and continue the reading. Please feel free to share what you have read with family, friends, students, and other teachers. The next time we meet, on [insert day], we will be doing the second part of the assessment; please be sure to bring back your resource booklet and a blue or black ball-point pen.

Are there any questions?

[END OF SESSION A]

APPENDIX D

Script B – [To be read in Session B]

Welcome to the second session of this writing assessment. Today, you will be completing the longer piece of writing. Do you all have your *Student Resource Booklet*? For those of you who forgot yours, I have a few spare copies.

I hope that you took some time to explore this resource booklet at home. Let’s take about 10 minutes to discuss what you have read and to reintroduce the theme of *Sharing Living Spaces*. [Open discussion directed by you, as required]

I will now hand out *Student Writing Booklet B*. Please check that the numbers on both your booklets are the same. On the cover of this booklet, you will find a box with letters. This indicates your participation status. All of you here today should shade in the circle “B” which indicates that you are participating today. Also, indicate your age and sex, and your current English Language Arts teacher’s ID number in the appropriate boxes. If you are not currently taking English Language Arts, please leave the teacher ID box blank.

Now, turn to the “General Instructions” on page 1. Let’s take the time to read this together. [Read aloud.]
Any questions?

Now, let’s read The Writing Task on page 2. [Read aloud and answer any questions that refer to the task instructions so that students have a clear understanding of what they are to do].

On the inside back cover of your *Student Resource Booklet*, you will find an explanation of how your writing will be judged. Let’s go over it together. [Read aloud and explain if necessary].

Once you have a clear understanding of what you are being asked to do, please begin. Remember you can return to your *Student Resource Booklet* and your Thoughts page as you plan and produce your writing. There is also a “Reminder” on page 8 of your *Student Writing Booklet B* to help you with your final editing.

Once you've finished writing, please respond to the questionnaire at the end of this booklet.

Are there any questions?

You have up to two and one-half hours to complete this assessment. If you need more time to finish your work, you may have up to thirty extra minutes to finish the assessment.

If you finish early, you may return to your regular class. [Follow local policy in this matter.]

I urge you to do your best. I know that you and other students in our school are capable of producing good work.

Let's begin!

[An extra half-hour may be provided for those students who require additional time.]

APPENDIX E

Participation Status Codes

- A** - Absent (and not previously categorized as code **D** to **L**)
- B** - Participated during scheduled session
- C** - Participated during make-up session
- D** - Exempted: School designates student's writing ability at below Level 1
- E** - Excluded because interpretation assistance is unavailable for a student who does not understand English or French well enough to attempt the assessment.
- F** - Excluded because of emotional reasons
- G** - Excluded for physical reasons
- H** - Excluded because appropriate modifications could not be made to accommodate the student's special needs (see page 5)
- I** - Wrong birth date (student's birth date is not between September 1, 1984, and August 31, 1985, **OR** between September 1, 1987, and August 31, 1988)
- J** - No longer enrolled in this school
- K** - Student refusal: school staff is unable to persuade the student to participate
- L** - Parent refusal: parent of the student demands that the student not participate

Tracking the participation status of all selected students allows fair sampling from each province and territory. After compiling totals, **any lists containing student names are destroyed.**

In some circumstances, the assessment may trigger emotional or physical reactions that a principal may consider harmful for particular students. Participation Status Codes F and G can be used to exempt such students.

APPENDIX F

Example List of Selected Students

List of Selected Students

School Number: XS123456 **School Name:** I.M. Learning High School **Age:**16

Student Name	Sex F/M	Student ID Number	*Participation Status		ELA Teacher Questionnaire Number (s)
			Session A	Session B	
Adams, R.	M	X12345	B	B	XT1234
Anderson, D.	M	X12346	B	B	
Bourassa, D.	M	X12347	B	B	XT1232
Brown, J.	F	X12348	B	B	XT1233
Chiasson, F.	M	X12349	A	A	XT1234
Genge, D.	F	X12350	B	B	XT1233, XT1234
Gillap, D.	F	X12351	B	B	XT1234
Hall, J.	M	X12352	B	B	XT1233, XT1234
Kanerva, E.	F	X12353	D	D	XT1234
Kassen, W.	F	X12354	D	D	
Lizaire, F.	M	X12355	B	B	XT1235
Ouellet, H.	F	X12356	B	B	XT1234
Pietschmann, F.	F	X12357	A	A	XT1235
Sherwood, P.	M	X12358	B	B	XT1232
Williams, T	F	X12359	B	B	XT1233

***Ensure that the participation status code, sex, and ELA teacher ID number(s) for each student is coded on the front cover of each booklet assigned to the student.**

A - Absent

B - Participated during scheduled session

C - Participated during make-up session

D - Exempted: school designates student's writing ability at below Level 1

E - Excluded because interpreter not available

F - Excluded because of emotional reasons

G - Excluded for physical reasons

H - Excluded because appropriate modifications could not be made

I - Wrong birth date

J - No longer enrolled in this school

K - Student refusal: did not participate

L - Parent refusal: did not participate

Calculate participation rate for each of Assessment Sessions A and B:

If $\frac{(B + D)}{(A + B + D)} \times 100\%$, < 85% for *either* session, a make-up session is required.

All participation status codes are explained in the *Handbook for Schools*.

APPENDIX G

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this writing assessment valid and authentic for our students?

Students' performance on this assessment will represent a snapshot of their ability to use language in its written form. Although different provinces and territories have different English Language Arts curricula, all have approved the conceptual framework and rationale of this assessment as well as the descriptive scale that will be used in scoring. Moreover, the various components of this writing assessment have been reviewed by provincial and territorial education personnel and have been field-tested throughout the country to verify their suitability. The writing task itself is designed to allow students a choice of form and style so as to elicit their best performance. In addition, this assessment subscribes to the notion that writing is a process requiring time for planning and reflection. Therefore, it comprises two sessions staged over a 2- to 5-day period.

Why do 13-year-old and 16-year-old students write the same assessment?

Administering the same assessment to 13- and 16-year old students allows educators to gauge the development that takes place between these two age cohorts: the results show the effect of three additional years of schooling and maturity and, in addition, demonstrate the full range of achievement for each age group. It is expected that most 13-year-olds will achieve at least Level 2 on the performance scale and that most 16-year-olds will achieve at least a Level 3.

Questions Relating to Sampling Procedures and the Use of Results

How do our students and the school benefit from participating in the assessment?

Jurisdictional results will help educators and other decision makers in planning initiatives to enhance teaching and learning for all students. Participating students and schools do not, however, receive individual results. Nonetheless, the assessment, designed by a pan-Canadian consortium of teachers and consultants, is itself a valid learning activity and students stand to benefit from the experience.

Can students find out how well they did in this assessment? Can our school find out how well our students did in the assessment?

Principles of anonymity and confidentiality do not allow individual results to be shared with students. Lists linking student names with response booklet numbers remain in the province or territory where the student resides; they are not

sent to the marking centre. Once all assessment materials have been scored, these lists are destroyed, thereby ensuring anonymity and disabling individual reporting.

For the same reason, schools cannot find out their students' individual results. Sampling is conducted to provide a jurisdictional picture of students' achievement levels, but the size of the sampling is not sufficient to accurately represent the achievement levels of students in a particular school or school district.

What if the sample for our school does not represent the range of writing ability evident in our school?

The sample is not intended to represent the range of writing ability in a particular school or school district. It is intended to provide a jurisdictional picture of students' achievement in writing. It is quite possible that a given sample from a school may have a disproportionate number of low-level or high-level writers. However, such disproportion balances out when results are compiled from the many schools that contribute to the jurisdictional profile of writing achievement.

What if students with poor writing skills are chosen as part of the sample?

It is anticipated that most 13- and 16-year-old students will experience some success on this assessment by demonstrating at least Level 1 or Level 2 achievement. We suggest that you encourage as many as possible of the students selected in your school to write the assessment. Nonetheless, certain students may have such limited writing skills that they would experience great frustration in even attempting to write. For these few students, school personnel can pre-determine that they are below Level 1 and can exempt them from the assessment. During data analysis, they will be treated as if they had written the assessment and had been rated below Level 1.

Why not have an intact English Language Arts class write this assessment instead of pulling out students from several classes?

The goal of the assessment is to provide a snapshot of the full range of student writing ability. Sampling theory suggests that this is best achieved by sampling from the pool of all age-appropriate students, not by using intact classes that might have some homogeneous grouping. We realize this may cause a disruption to school schedules similar to that experienced when students from a school team are absent from class for a tournament. We know your involvement as School Coordinator requires time and effort in this regard, and we appreciate your contribution to this project.

Are individual results and questionnaire answers kept confidential?

Yes. Any links that identify student, teacher, or school responses are destroyed after all provincial or territorial data have been collected and before any data are forwarded for analysis at the national level.

Questions Related to Preparation for the Assessment and its Administration

What can be done to encourage students to do their best?

Individual students are motivated in different ways, some responding better to extrinsic motivational factors and rewards and some to intrinsic factors. You probably know what is best in your situation. In the past, teachers have reported doing the following:

- giving public recognition of students' participation through announcements at school; awarding certificates of appreciation from school principals or directors of education
- appealing to students' pride in representing their province or territory so as to benefit English Language Arts education across the country
- providing a breakfast before the assessment or offering a celebration with snacks or a pizza party afterward

Are there suggestions for organizing and running the administration of the assessment?

This handbook contains directions for administering the assessment. Two commonly used ways of distributing the materials to ensure each student has the correct booklet(s) are:

1. Lay out at each workspace the booklet(s) along with a name tag corresponding to the booklet number (as designated on the *List of Selected Students*). When students enter the room, ask them to find the workspace labelled with their name and to await further instructions.
2. After all students have arrived, ask them to be seated at any workspace. From the *List of Selected Students*, read out the name of each student and ask them to come and receive the booklet(s) assigned to them. Have them return to their workspace to await further instruction.

Scripts (Appendices C and D) have been prepared to help you introduce the assessment and guide the students.

Is there a time limit for the assessment?

Assessment Session A is one hour in length. The first part of this session is a timed 20-minute exercise; the remaining 40 minutes is intended to allow students to begin exploring the *Student Reference Booklet* under your guidance.

For Assessment Session B, students have two and one-half hours. For most students this should provide ample time to complete the writing task and the student questionnaire. However, some students may require extra time. We suggest allowing an extra 30 minutes for these students.

Can students take breaks during the assessment?

We invite you to make the appropriate arrangement in your circumstances so as to ensure an orderly administration. The second session is long and students may require washroom or relaxation/stretching breaks. You should decide on the number of breaks (if any) and whether students should leave individually, in groups, or all together for these breaks.

How can I help students prepare for the assessment?

The most important aspect of preparation for the main writing task in this assessment is the *Student Resource Booklet*, and the time allowed both during school hours and at home for exploring its contents. It contains a variety of short texts designed to prompt reflection on the general theme of the assessment. You will distribute this booklet during Assessment Session A and, with the help of a script, engage students in a general discussion of its theme. You must also direct students to continue exploring the booklet during the intervening days leading up to the Assessment Session B. For this purpose they should be encouraged to take the booklet home and, if they like, to discuss it with friends and family.