

Student Assessment

What are the different kinds of student assessment?

1. Alberta Provincial Achievement Tests

Provincial achievement tests are administered annually in English and Français/French language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in grades 6 and 9. Provincial diploma examinations are administered quarterly and in the summer (some subjects only administered in January, June, and August) in most academic subjects areas in English and Français. These are standard based tests aligned with the Outcomes in the Alberta Programs of Study. They are **summative assessments** to determine how well students learned what they are expected to learn, to inform Albertans about students' achievement relative to provincial standards, and to assist schools, school authorities, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning. Diploma examinations now constitute 30% of a student's final grade (previous to 2015-16 school year, it was 50%).

The tests have "standards" of achievement. Acceptable standard (student "passes" the test or meets acceptable standard) and standard of excellence (around 80%– the student exceeds the standard).

In general....

Achievement levels/Proficiency levels - Descriptions of an individual's competency in a particular area of knowledge or skill, usually defined as ordered categories on a continuum, often labeled from "basic" to "advanced," that constitute broad ranges for classifying performance. The exact labeling of these categories may vary from one assessment or testing program to another. See also: Cut Score.

2. Alberta Student Learning Assessments (SLA's)

Implemented for two years (2014 and 2015 fall) in "pilot" administrations at the grade 3 level. The Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) are digitally-based beginning of the year "check in" provincial assessment tools that Alberta is developing to enable the identification of student strengths and areas of growth at the start of the school year. **Formative assessment** intended to inform instruction. With the introduction of the Grade 3 SLA (SLA3), the Grade 3 Provincial Assessment Tests were concluded in June 2014.

These tests are based on "performance assessment" models.

In general.... Performance Assessment - Product- and behavior-based measurements based on settings designed to emulate real-life contexts or conditions which specific knowledge or skills are actually applied. In the strictest sense, performance assessments involve some motor or manual response on the part of the examinee and tend to minimize the role of language. However, performance assessments have, within recent years, been used to denote tests that require the examinee to produce a work-sample or written response, and have become synonymous with tests that are composed of mostly constructed-response items.

3. Grade Equivalent Tests:
Usually specific to literacy and numeracy, but there are some in science. Examples include CTBS (Canadian Tests of Basic Skills).

In general..... Grade Equivalent - The grade equivalent is a number that describes a student's location on an achievement continuum. Grade Equivalents are expressed in terms of grade and months into grade, assuming a 10-month school year (e.g., 8.4 means after 4 months of instruction in the 8th grade). The Grade Equivalent corresponding to a given score on any test indicates the grade level at which the typical student obtains this score.

Why give a grade equivalency test in school. It is a "universal measure" that can serve as a benchmark for growth; flag need for intervention or further testing. A grade equivalent test will show what equivalent grade level he/she is achieving at in a particular area, but it will not provide in-depth information regarding what specific areas need to be addressed to remediate any gaps or challenges.

4. Diagnostic Test - An intensive, in-depth evaluation process with a relatively detailed and narrow coverage of a specific area. A diagnostic test is primarily used to identify specific areas of strength or weakness, locate learning difficulties, or to identify special needs; determine the nature of any deficiencies; and if possible, to identify their cause. The results of a diagnostic test are used to prescribe a solution to meet the learning needs of the student through either regular or remedial classroom instruction.

Examples include Fountas and Pinnell for reading, DIBELS for reading, The scores may be Stanine or grade equivalency.

Why use them at a school? Provides the teacher with more in-depth information regarding student proficiency in an area and is narrow enough that instruction can be designed to meet specific learning needs (e.g. reading intervention program/ leveled reading in a classroom/ guided reading in a classroom).