



CHAPTER 8: PROVINCIAL ASSESSMENTS

In 2012/13, students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 completed the English Language Arts provincial assessment. This assessment produces two performance measures - an average score based on student performance on the multiple choice section and student proficiency or the percentage of students performing at or above grade level. This chapter will focus on reporting student proficiency. While the average score on the multiple choice section is not included in the chapter, it is reported in Appendix A.

In 2012/13, the format and scoring of the provincial assessment was revised. While provincial multiyear trends are reported, the charts must be viewed with caution because of this. District trends are reported in Appendix A.

Primary level

The primary assessment focuses on two strands of the ELA curriculum: 'Reading' and 'Writing'. For reading, students must read two types of writing (a fiction and a non-fiction sample) and answer a series of multiple choice and closed response questions. To assess writing ability, students compose two writing samples – an example of creative writing and one of persuasive writing. For one sample, students are provided with a written prompt and a visual prompt for the second.

Reading and writing performance

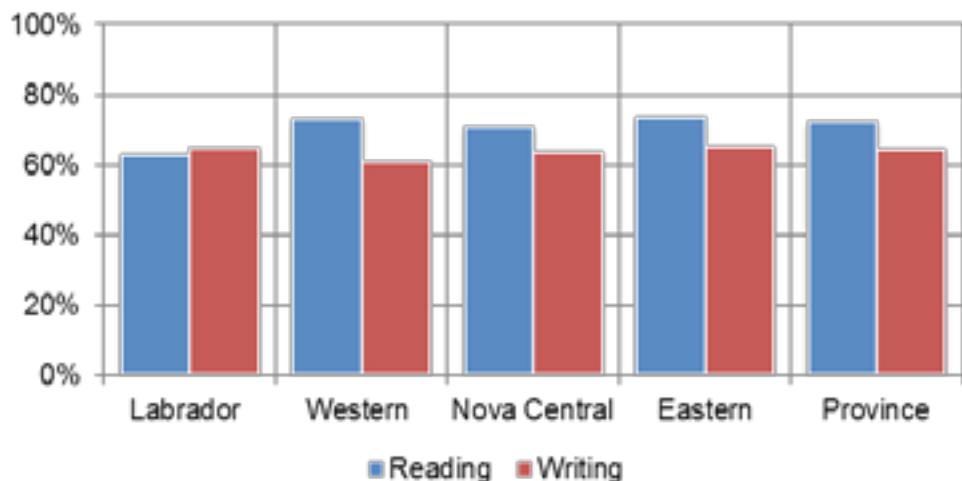
Students tended to perform slightly better in reading than writing with 73.6% and 64.4% respectively performing at/above grade level (see figure 20a). At the district level, this percentage ranged from 62.9% to 73.6% for reading compared to between 60.7% to 65.3% for writing. The exception was in the Labrador School District where the percentage was about the same (approximately 64%) for both reading and writing..

A higher percentage of girls were assessed to be at or above grade level in both reading and writing than boys (see figure 20b). The largest gender gap was in writing where the percentage of girls at/above grade level was 15.4 percentage points higher than the boys (72.5% vs 57.1%).

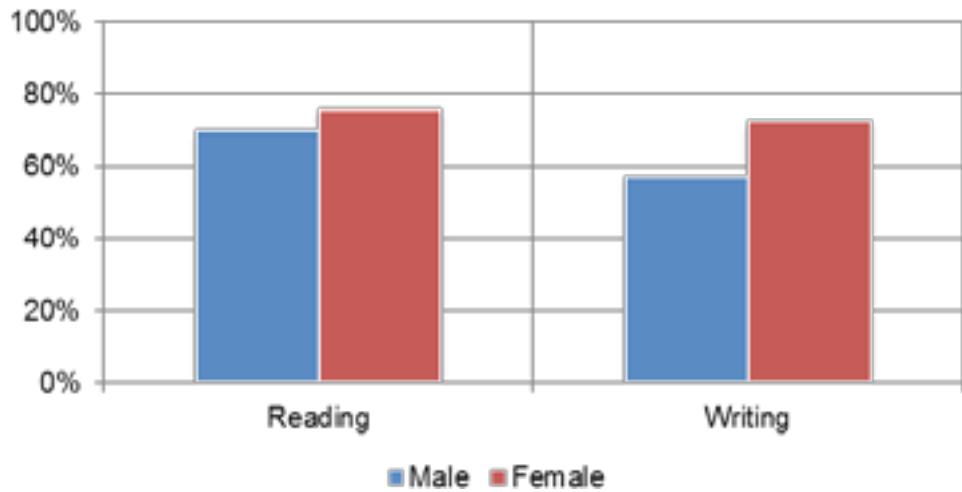
The impact of the changes made in the provincial assessment can be seen when student performance over the past five years is reviewed (see figure 20c). Before 2012/13, the percentage of students performing at/above grade level was decreasing in reading and increasing in writing. In 2012/13, this stopped with the percentage at/above grade level reading increasing by 16.4 percentage points from the previous year. For writing, this percentage decreased by 17.3 percentage points. To obtain a more accurate reflection of how students are performing over time, additional data from future assessments is needed.

Figure 20: Percentage of primary students performing at/above grade level

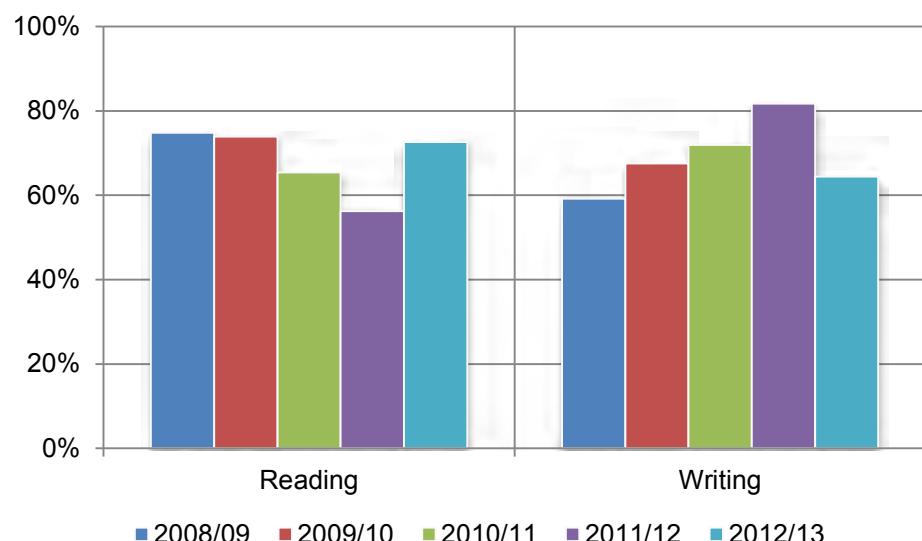
(a) District and provincial performance (2012/13)



(b) Gender differences (2012/13)



(c) Provincial trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)



(Source: Table 20)



Elementary level

During the elementary years, students continue to build upon the foundational language skills learned during the primary years. By the end of Grade 6, students are expected to be able to:

- Contribute thoughts, ideas, and questions to the group discussion and have the ability to support their opinions with evidence;
- Independently choose books and reading material appropriate to their range of interests and learning needs;
- Develop effective pieces of writing by using a range of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and presentation strategies; and,
- Use technology with increasing proficiency to create, revise, edit and publish texts.

As in the primary level, the provincial assessment evaluates reading by asking students to read two types of writing (fiction and non-fiction) and answer a series of multiple choice and closed response questions.

Reading and writing performance

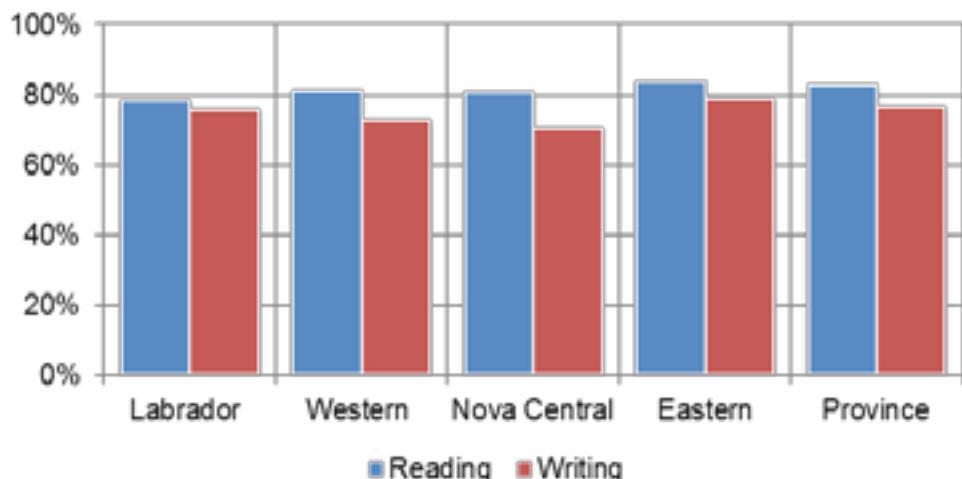
Overall, students tended to perform better in reading than writing (see figure 21a). Provincially, the percentage of students assessed at/above grade level was 82.9% for reading compared to 76.5% for writing. The same pattern was seen across the districts with the percentage of students performing at/above grade level in reading ranging from 78.5% (in the Labrador School District) to 82.9% (in the Eastern School District) compared to between 70.7% (in the Nova Central School District) to 78.9% (in the Eastern School District) for writing.

Girls fared better than boys on the assessment. Overall, there was a higher percentage of girls assessed at or above grade level in both reading and writing than boys (see figure 21b). The largest gender gap was in writing where the percentage of girls at/above grade level was 17.7 percentage points higher than the boys (85.5% vs 67.8%).

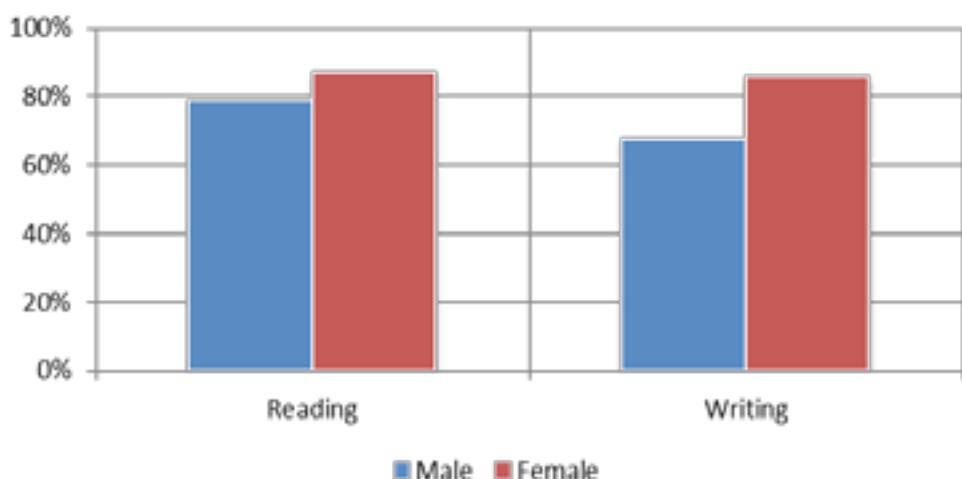
Figure 21c shows how elementary students performed over the past five years. While the percentage of the students at/above grade level for writing has hovered around 77% for the past five years, reading performance is somewhat more varied. Since 2009/10, the percentage of students performing at/above grade level has declined each year. In 2012/13, this stopped with the percentage increasing by 28.5% (from 54.4% in 2011/12 to 82.9% in 2012/13). However, it must be stressed that data from future provincial assessments is needed to provide a more accurate portrayal of student performance.

Figure 21: Percentage of elementary students performing at/above grade level

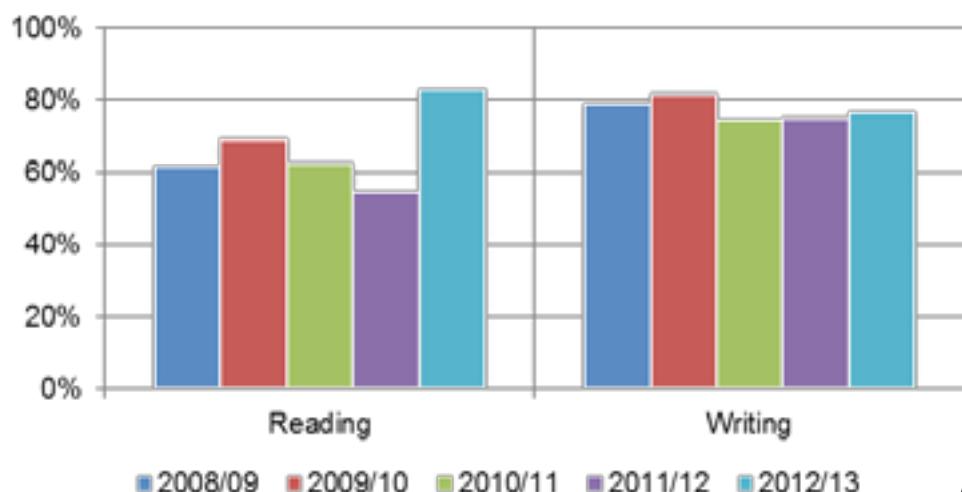
(a) District and provincial performance (2012/13)



(b) Gender differences



(c) Provincial trends (2008/09 – 2012/13)



(Source: Table 21)



Intermediate level

During the intermediate years, students continue to build upon and broaden their language arts skills. They should have developed a good understanding of the skills needed for effective verbal and written communication.

By the end of Grade 9, students are expected to be able to:

- Examine other peoples' ideas and actively take part in small and large group discussions and debate;
- Demonstrate active listening and respect for the needs, rights, and feelings of others. In other words, students must be able to go beyond simply listening to the words that are being said to actually hearing and understanding the message being presented;
- Critically evaluate and question information;
- Adapt their writing style to meet the needs of specific audiences; and,
- Integrate information gathered from several sources to create and communicate meaning.



Reading and writing performance

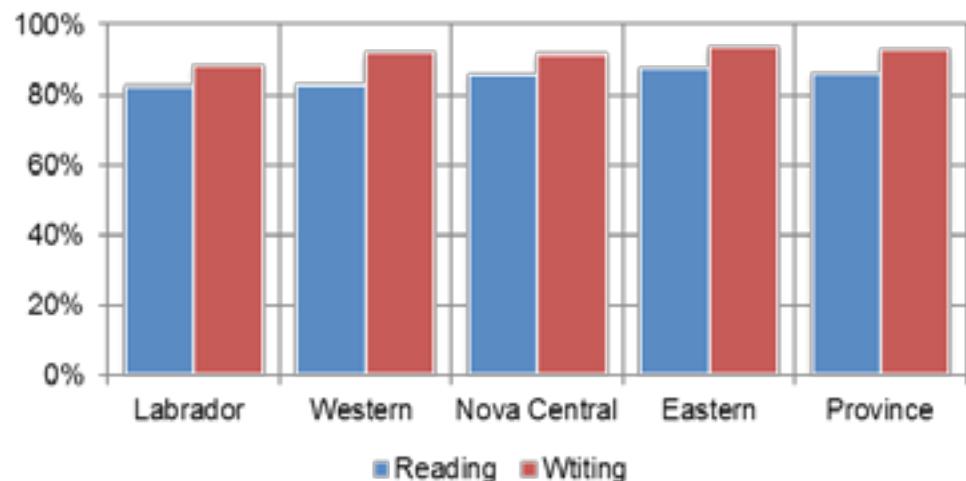
The majority of intermediate students performed at/above grade level in English Language Arts. The percentage was slightly higher for writing (92.7%) than reading (86.2%). As shown in figure 22a, there was little difference in this percentage across the four school districts.

In terms of gender, a familiar trend is seen – girls outperform boys. In both the reading and writing sections, the percentage of girls at/above grade level was approximately 7.5 percentage points higher than the boys (see figure 22b).

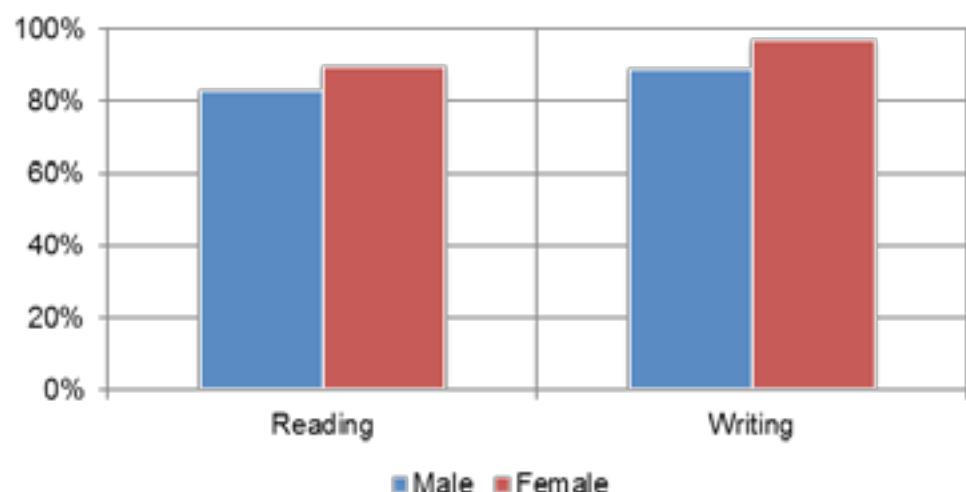
Looking back over the past five years, the percentage of students at/above grade level in reading has been somewhat more varied than writing. As shown in figure 22c, the percentage decreased from 77.5% in 2008/09 to 65.3% in 2010/11. In 2011/12, this percentage increased by 25.4 percentage points before declining slightly the following year. For writing, the percentage was stable for the first three school years at approximately 84% followed by slight increases during the next two years (from 90.2% to 92.7%).

Figure 22: Percentage of intermediate students performing at/above grade level

(a) District and provincial performance (2012/13)



(b) Gender comparison (2012/13)



(c) Provincial trends



(Source: Table 22)