# 2015 Elementary Literacy Assessment

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**Teacher Information Guide**

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# Introduction

The purpose of this *Teacher Information Guide* is to provide teachers with information about the Elementary Literacy Assessment.

## Overview

The Elementary Literacy Assessment will be administered to Grade 6 students in May, 2015. It is a multi-session assessment of reading and writing outcomes as described in the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6*. The assessment will include fiction and non-fiction reading passages, and one writing assignment.

## What is the purpose of the assessment?

The purpose of the assessment is to obtain valid and reliable information about student achievement in the school boards/districts. This information will help guide and improve learning, teaching, and professional development. Knowledge gained will help districts/boards plan resources and support, along with helping the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development monitor student learning and target areas for improvement through curriculum redesign or program initiatives.

## When will the assessment be administered?

The assessment will be administered May 12 - 13 and May 20 - 21, 2015.

## Who is eligible to write this assessment?

All Grade 6 students will participate in this assessment. Students who have documented Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and/or documented Modified Programs who do not follow the prescribed Grade 6 curriculum will not participate in this assessment. Students who require adaptations in their regular schoolwork will participate with their documented adaptations in place. Details regarding exemptions/adaptations will follow in this guide.

## How is the assessment designed?

Some of the specific curriculum outcomes included in the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4 - 6* lend themselves quite readily to this type of assessment, while others do not. As a result, the assessment addresses only those selected outcomes associated with the reading and writing domains.

The assessment was developed by Grade 6 teachers under the direction and collaboration of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the English Language School Board.

## Curriculum Links - Reading and Viewing

The Elementary Literacy Assessment is based upon the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6.* Below are the General Curriculum Outcomes and Specific Curriculum Outcomes explicitly addressed by the assessment.

### General Curriculum Outcome - Reading and Viewing (GCO 4)

Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 80)*

### Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Reading and Viewing

### (SCO 4.3)

Students will be expected to use a wider range of pictorial, typographical, and organizational features of written texts to obtain, verify, and reinforce their understanding of information. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 80)*

## (SCO 4.4)

Students will be expected to use and integrate the various cueing systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic) and a variety of strategies with increasing independence to construct meaning. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 80)*

- identify main idea and supporting details of a text
- identify principles of order in text (time, cause and effect, space)
- interpret figurative language
- use clues from the text and personal experiences to gain an understanding of character
- recognize different emotions and empathize with literary characters
- recognize the elements of a story or plot
- making connections between what they read and their own experiences and knowledge

## General Curriculum Outcome - Reading and Viewing (GCO 6)

Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 84)*

## Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Reading and Viewing

## (SCO 6.2)

Students will be expected to reflect on and give reasons for their interpretations of an increasing variety of texts.*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 84)*

## General Curriculum Outcome - Reading and Viewing (GCO 7)

Students will be expected to respond critically to a range of texts applying their knowledge of language, form, and genre. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 86)*

## Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Reading and Viewing

### (SCO 7.3)

Students will be expected to respond critically to texts. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 86)*

- applying a growing range of strategies to analyse and evaluate texts
- demonstrating a growing awareness that all texts reflect a purpose and a perspective
- recognizing when language is being used to manipulate, persuade, or control them
- detecting prejudice, stereotyping and bias

## Text Types: Rationale

In keeping with the direction of the *Atlantic Canada Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6,* the reading portions of the Elementary Literacy Assessment are comprised of fiction and non-fiction texts.

## Question Types: Rationale

The Elementary Literacy Assessment will include a variety of question types. These include selected-response (multiple choice), open-response and sequencing questions. In keeping with fair assessment practices, a variety of question types allow students to communicate their understanding of what they have read using different response methods. A balance between recognizing a response and constructing a response was achieved for this purpose.

# Cognitive Levels

Reading Comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text. Cognitive level is determined by the mental process the student must engage in to answer the question.
Bloom's Taxonomy identifies six levels involved in learning within the Cognitive Domain. Bloom's Taxonomy includes far more than reading comprehension and does not include those specific processes involved in the understanding of a text. In 1978, Herber tried to relate Bloom's categories to three levels of reading comprehension.

- **Literal Comprehension** - understanding information that is directly stated
- **Inferential Comprehension** - understanding ideas which are not directly stated but are implied
- **Evaluative Comprehension** - analyzing information and forming conclusions about information

The Elementary Literacy Assessment includes a representative sample of the three levels of comprehension.

## Curriculum Links - Writing and Other Ways of Representing

The Elementary Literacy Assessment is based upon the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6.* Below are the General Curriculum Outcomes and Specific Curriculum Outcomes explicitly addressed by the assessment.

### General Curriculum Outcome - Writing and Other Ways of Representing (GCO 8)

Students will be expected to use writing and other forms of representation to explore, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and learning; and to use their imaginations.*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 88)*

### Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Writing and Other Ways of Representing

### (SCO 8.1)

Students will be expected to use writing and other forms of representation;

- to generate and organize language and ideas
- to record, develop, and reflect on ideas
- to describe feelings, reactions, values, and attitudes
- to record and reflect on experiences and their responses to them

*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 88)*

### (SCO 8.3)

Students will be expected to make language choices to enhance meaning and achieve interesting effects in imaginative writing and other ways of representing. *(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 88)*

## General Curriculum Outcome - Writing and Other Ways of Representing (GCO 9)

Students will be expected to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes.*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 90)*

## Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Writing and Other Ways of Representing

### (SCO 9.1)

Students will be expected to create written and media texts using an increasing variety of forms

- Demonstrate understanding that particular forms require the use of specific features, structures, and patterns

*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 90)*

### (SCO 9.2)

Students will be expected to address the demands of an increasing variety of purposes and audiences

- make informed choices of form, style, and content for specific audiences and purposes

*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 90)*

## General Curriculum Outcome - Writing and Other Ways of Representing (GCO 10)

Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing and media to enhance their clarity, precision, and effectiveness.*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 92)*

Specific Curriculum Outcomes - Writing and Other Ways of Representing

(SCO 10.2)

- Students will be expected to use the conventions of written language in final products
- punctuation - period, exclamation mark, question mark, apostrophe in contractions, in the possessive
- abbreviations - invitations, addresses, dates, days of the week, months of the year, organizations, acronyms
- use capitals for proper names, titles, places, organizations, days, months, holidays, beginning of sentences, first word in direct quotation
- paragraphs - topic sentence, grouping ideas, concluding sentence
- sentences - concept of sentence, kinds of sentences, run-on sentences, combining sentences (connectives), phrases, clauses
- spelling

*(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6, p. 92 and p. 231-233)*

## Writing Tasks

The writing task (transactional or personal expressive) will be written in response to a writing prompt. The writing modes (transactional and personal expressive) reflect the types of classroom writing that students practice regularly.

Students in Grade 6 will produce a **good copy of their writing**, which will allow students some time to revise and edit their work.

**Transactional** writing is done to convey factual information or to argue the validity of a point of view with evidence. Transactional writing is typical of the language of science, business, reporting, persuasion, argument and debate: reports, book reviews, letters (especially business), directions/instructions, autobiographies, biographies, advertisements, commercials, persuasive essays, expository essays, and research ... see p. 156 *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6*.

**Personal expressive** is intended for the writer's purpose - reflects the writer's immediate thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions: personal journals, diaries, response journals, learning logs, personal narratives, personal letters ... see p. 153 *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 4-6.*

# Writing Assessment Criteria

***Definitions***
***Criteria for Writing Rubric***

**Ideas -** demonstrates awareness of audience and purpose, generates ideas to develop and sustain the topic (idea) of the writing task to communicate information, and/or record, develop, and reflect on experiences, and/or describe feelings, reactions, values, and attitudes.

**Organization -** organizes ideas in a form or manner that communicates information (ideas are in logical order) demonstrating an awareness of audience and purpose.

**Conventions -** demonstrates awareness of audience and purpose by using the conventions of written language such as punctuation and capitalization, paragraphs, simple and complex sentences, and spelling.

***Correlations Between Outcomes and Criteria***

**Ideas**

8.1 - to generate and organize language and ideas
8.1 - to record, develop, and reflect on ideas
8.1 - to describe feelings, reactions, values, and attitudes
8.1 - to record and reflect on experiences and their responses to them
8.3 - to make language choices to enhance meaning and achieve interesting effects in imaginative writing

**Organization**

8.1 - to generate and organize ideas
8.1 - to record, develop, and reflect on ideas
9.1 - to create written and media texts using an increasing variety of forms
- demonstrate understanding that particular forms require the use of specific features, structures, and patterns

9.2 - to address the demands of an increasing variety of purposes and audiences
- make informed choices of form, style, and content for specific audiences and purposes

**Conventions**

8.1 - to describe feelings, reactions, values, and attitudes
9.2 - to address the demands of an increasing variety of purposes and audiences
- make informed choices of form, style, and content for specific audiences and purposes

10.2 - to use the conventions of written language in final products
- punctuation - period, exclamation mark, question mark, apostrophe in contractions, in the possessive
- abbreviations - invitations, addresses, dates, days of the week, months of the year, organizations, acronyms
- use capitals for proper names, titles, places, organizations, days, months, holidays, beginning of sentences, first word in direct quotation
- paragraphs - topic sentence, grouping ideas, concluding sentence
- sentences - concept of sentence, kinds of sentences, run-on sentences, combining sentences (connectives), phrases, clauses
- spelling

# Administration of the Assessment

## Security

The Elementary Literacy Assessment is a secure form; therefore,

- no part of the assessment, including student work, is to be photocopied
- non-grade 6 students in combined classes will not have the option to participate in the assessment.
- there will be no copies of the assessment provided for the teacher's use
- every copy of the assessment sent to the school must be returned to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

**Why must the assessment remain secure?**

Making this, and subsequent, year's assessments secure forms will allow us to equate forms year over year and will allow us to perform longitudinal studies on student performance. Imbedding 'baseline' pieces each year will allow for comparability.

## Student Practice

Assessment samples that teachers can use in their classrooms with the students will be sent to each Grade 6 teacher. Introducing students to the samples allows students to become familiar with the format of the assessment.

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**
**Common Assessment Program**
**Exemptions and Adaptations**

**Definitions:**

**IEP (Indivdualized Education Plan)**

A written record that documents the collaborative process for the development of an individualized plan for a student with special educational needs. This planning is a continuous and integrated process of instruction, assessment, evaluation, decision-making and reporting. The IEP outlines support services and educational program adaptations and/or modifications. (Department of Education, 2005, p. 75)

**Modified**

A process which changes the prescribed curriculum to meet a student's special needs. Modified courses do not provide the same credit as a prescribed course. Details of the modified course must be documented and included in the student's file and the student's record or transcript should indicate that the course has been modified. (Department of Education, 2005, p. 75)

**Adapted**

A documented process that allows a student with special needs to participate in a prescribed curriculum(course) with changes in format, instruction strategies and/or assessment procedures that retain the learning outcomes of the curriculum. This adaptation may include alternate formats, instructional strategies and/or assessment procedures. Full credit will be granted for such courses but adaptations used will be documented and kept on the student's file and/or transcript. (Department of Education, 2005, p. 73)

***Total Exemptions***

Total exemptions from the assessment should be considered for those students who have a cognitive deficit, multiple handicapping conditions or a Learning Disability to such a degree as would render the assessment inappropriate and/or emotionally harmful. Exemptions will be allowed for students who have been identified with exceptionalities and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Modified Program in place as of December 1, 2014. The entire booklet for those students must be returned to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with documentation attached, i.e., a photocopy of the front page of the IEP/Modified Program.

***Exemptions (Other)***

Specific circumstances may prevent a student from participating in the assessment. Such circumstances may include:

- **Long-term illness -** student was unable to write the assessment during the designated time frame.
- **Bereavement -** student was not able to participate during the designated time frame, due to a significant loss.
- **Other -** student was unable to participate due to some other circumstance not listed above. The nature of the circumstance must be specified in written format and attached to the student's assessment booklet before returning to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

***Partial Exemptions***

Partial exemptions from the assessment should be considered for those students currently identified with exceptionalities and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Modified Program. These students would be identified as children who are able, with adaptations/accommodations, to attempt a specific component of the assessment. Adaptations used to support the student during instruction should be provided during the assessment, if such adaptations do not compromise or alter the validity of the assessment, as it is important that the results of the assessment accurately reflect the **independent** abilities of the student. Appropriate documentation must be attached to the assessment booklet, i.e., a photocopy of the IEP/Modified Program and completed Adaptation/Accommodation form, before returning to the Department of Education.

***Adaptations***

Adaptations used to support the student during instruction should be provided during the assessment, if such adaptations do not compromise or alter the validity of the assessment, as it is important that the results of the assessment accurately reflect the **independent** abilities of the student. Photocopies of that documentation must be attached to the assessment booklet before returning to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Students currently working with adaptations are not eligible for exemption.

***English as an Additional Language (EAL)***

EAL students are expected to participate in the assessment. Appropriate adaptations/ accommodations, if required, should be provided and documentation of adaptations/ accommodations must be attached to the assessment booklet before returning to the Department of Education.

**Note:** Though it is expected that the English as an Additional Language student participate in the assessment, if the student's English language skills are not sufficiently developed, then a school-based decision involving, at minimum, the student, the student's parent or guardian, the student's teacher, and principal at the school may be to exempt the student from participating in the assessment.

**Acceptable Adaptations/Accommodations:**

**Additional Time**

Students for whom "additional time" is a documented adaptation may require more than the additional time given to the entire class during the assessment.

## Verbatim Scribing

*** Teachers with students who will use a scribe to complete the assessment will need to complete an application form prior to the assessment administration. The scribe application request can be directed to:**
**Linda MacDonald – Literacy Achievement Specialist - Department Of Education and Early Childhood Development.**

- **Please note – Scribing pertains to the reading comprehension component of the assessment only.**

*Students with a visual or physical impairment, injury, or learning disability, and for whom "verbatim scribing" is a documented adaptation.*

If a scribe is required, the scribe writes exactly what the student dictates. Scribes do not edit or proof-read student responses, nor do they advise, suggest, or imply that changes are required. The student is required to indicate where punctuation and capitalization are to be inserted.

## Verbatim Reading

*Students who need **instructions** or **prompts** read to them by the teacher or communicated through sign language.*

Only verbatim reading of directions or prompts should be used. Reading comprehension passages and questions accompanying them may not be read out loud to students.

## Alternate Setting

*Students for whom "alternate setting" is a documented adaptation.*

Students placed in alternate settings must complete the assessment independently. Ideally, the assessment should be supervised by the student's teacher, even in the alternate setting. However, if this is not possible, and someone other than the student's teacher is supervising the assessment, this supervisor must know the parameters of the assessment, and the integrity of the assessment must be maintained. The name and the role of the supervisor must be noted on the photocopy of the documented adaptation that is attached to the student's assessment booklet when the booklet is returned to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**Assistive Technology**

*Students with a visual or physical impairment, injury, or learning disability, for whom "assistive technology" is a documented adaptation.*

Students may use assistive technology in the writing portions of the assessment, if such assistive technology does not compromise or alter the validity of the assessment. Such assistive technology, therefore, should not include such features as cueing systems or grammar-or spell-checks, as these would compromise the validity of the assessment. The type of assistive technology(and software) used must be specified on the documented adaptation that is attached to the student's assessment booklet when the booklet is returned to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**Personal FM System**

Students who require a personal FM system during a regular school day.

**English - Foreign Language Dictionary**

EAL students are permitted to use an EAL dictionary (paper or electronic).