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Provincial Achievement Tests

THE TEACHING PROFESSION'S VIEW



The Alberta Teachers' Association



assessment \ ə-'ses-ment \ the process of collecting information on student achievement and performance.

A balanced assessment includes a variety of assessment tasks. Ongoing diagnostic assessment provides information to inform instruction and improve student performance.

formative assessment \ 'for-mə-tiv ə-'ses-ment \ activities used throughout the learning process by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning. Also called **assessment for learning**.

summative assessment \ 'sə-mə-tiv ə-'ses-ment \ measures of student success or proficiency that have been obtained at the end of an instructional unit, by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. Also called **assessment of learning**.

FACTS

ABOUT PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

- All students in **Grade 3** write provincial achievement tests in language arts and mathematics.
- All students in **Grades 6 and 9** write provincial achievement tests in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.
- The tests rely heavily on **multiple-choice** questions and measure a very **limited range** of student learning.
- Test **results are reported** by individual students, schools, school jurisdictions and the province.
- Alberta leads all other Canadian provinces in the **frequency and intensity** of government testing programs.

PROBLEMS

WITH PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

- The tests **measure only a small portion** of what teachers are required to teach and what students are expected to learn.
- External testing, such as standardized achievement tests, **do not improve student learning**.
- Some students on individualized or modified programs are required to write the tests although they **may not have received instruction** in the material.
- Students experience **unnecessary stress** writing these tests.
- Not all children are able to **perform** well on tests, even though they know the material. Students should be able to **demonstrate their understanding** in a way that reflects their understanding.
- Too much classroom time is spent preparing for and writing provincial achievement tests, **taking time away from real learning**.
- Teachers are **pressured** to teach to the tests and the tests are being used to **unfairly label** students, schools and teachers.
- High-stakes tests, such as the provincial achievement tests, serve to **sort and rank** students rather than support student learning.
- The use of test results to rank schools leads to **invalid judgments** about the quality of education in schools.
- The millions of dollars used to develop, mark, report on and respond to the tests is money that would be **better spent on student learning** in classrooms.

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT

- **RELY** on teacher assessments as the best source of information about student learning.
- **DISCONTINUE** the provincial achievement testing program in Grades 3 and 6.
- **IMPLEMENT** a diagnostic assessment program for K-3 students to help identify student strengths and weaknesses.
- **MODIFY** the current provincial program to test only a sample of students in Grade 9.
- **DEVELOP** public assurance models that actually support learning and encourage meaningful improvement.



grade \ 'grād \ level of achievement; a summary statement of student achievement based on demonstrated performance of curriculum standards

evaluation \ i-val-yə-'wā-shən \ judgment of how well a student has done based on a number of assessment indicators; the overall quality, value or worth of a response, product or performance based on curriculum standards

achievement \ ə-'chēv-mənt \ a student's demonstration of knowledge, skills and attitudes relative to grade-level curriculum standards





TEACHERS BELIEVE

IN ASSESSMENT

Assessment and testing are critical pieces of reporting to students, parents and other stakeholders on individual student learning. The Alberta Teachers' Association believes the primary role of assessment and testing is to improve learning. Provincial achievement tests do not improve teaching and learning and may have a negative impact on students and schools.

Assessing Real Learning

- ✓ *observations and notes*
- ✓ *classroom discussions*
- ✓ *portfolios*
- ✓ *checklists*
- ✓ *journals*
- ✓ *open-ended questions*
- ✓ *student demonstrations*
- ✓ *essays*
- ✓ *experiments*
- ✓ *projects*
- ✓ *performance assessments*

- Teachers continually assess student performance. They use a wide variety of methods to assess individual student learning.
- Teachers believe assessment should be used to help make important decisions about future student learning.
- Paper-and-pencil tests cannot begin to capture the richness and excitement of a child's total learning experience.



WHAT YOU CAN DO...



- Learn more about standardized testing and alternatives for assessment.
- Recognize that ranking of students and schools is unfair and harmful.
- Ask your local school or jurisdiction about how the provincial achievement tests are being used.
- Discuss the issue with your friends and family.
- Advocate for alternatives to the provincial achievement tests that focus on student learning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about student achievement, contact:

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Real Learning First



The Alberta Teachers' Association