

backgrounder

How to interpret Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma exam results

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- Last year, our Grade 3 students did not write PATs.
- They are participating in Alberta Education's pilot Student Learning Assessments (SLAs).
- For more information about SLAs, visit <http://education.alberta.ca/department/ipr/curriculum/student-learning-assessments.aspx>

Purpose

The Achievement Testing Program is designed to:

- determine if students are learning what they are expected to learn;
- report to Albertans how well students have achieved provincial standards at given points in their schooling; and
- assist schools, jurisdictions, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning

Improve Student Learning

Careful examination and interpretation of the results can help reveal areas of relative strength and weakness in student achievement. Teachers and administrators can use this information in planning and delivering relevant and effective instruction in relation to learning outcomes in the *Programs of Study*.

Enable Accountability

Alberta Learning and school jurisdiction personnel are responsible for ensuring that high-quality education is provided to all students in the province.

Information about achievement is provided to schools and jurisdictions, parents and the public so that they may know how well students in their schools are meeting local targets and provincial expectations.

Acceptable Standard & Standard of Excellence

The Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence for diploma exams have fixed standards at 50 and 80 per cent respectively.

The standards for PATs are established by working groups of teachers based on their experience and understanding of what the characteristics of students are near the boundaries of those standards. Typically, these scores are near 50 and 80 per cent, but they aren't required to be. Once the teachers set these standards, PATs are equated each year to these standards to ensure that differences in test difficulty are accounted for.

Interpreting Results

Achievement tests assess only part of what is to be learned. In addition, many factors contribute to student achievement. Personnel at the school authority and school levels are in the best position to appropriately interpret, use, and communicate school authority and school results in the local context.

Excerpted from: Alberta Education

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