

## FAQ – STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

### **What are Student Learning Assessments and how are they different from Provincial Achievement Tests?**

The new Student Learning Assessments will maintain a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, but will also include interactive approaches to help educators and parents understand how well students can apply what they have learned and demonstrate competencies such as creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving. The Provincial Achievement Tests assess student learning relative to the expected outcomes of the provincial Programs of Study. Student Learning Assessments will be administered as a series of computer-based tests at the start of the school year, unlike the Provincial Achievement Test, which is a single test at the end of the school year.

### **What is the difference between assessing students at the end of the school year and the beginning of the school year?**

*Inspiring Education*, a provincewide consultation on the future direction of education in Alberta, envisions an education system that is more responsive to the learning needs of individual students. An assessment at the start of the school year provides students, parents and teachers with the data source, time and information to plan student programming and support more personalized student learning for the rest of the school year.

### **Why are literacy and numeracy important to assess and how does that align with the program of studies?**

Literacy and numeracy are foundational to all learning. Initially, the new provincial literacy and numeracy assessments will reflect the current provincial Programs of Study. All provincial Programs of Study will be revised through Alberta Education's Curriculum Redesign process. As new Programs of Study are implemented that align with the vision of *Inspiring Education*, the new provincial assessments will reflect those new Programs of Study.

### **Will the new assessments be multiple-choice tests?**

The PATs use multiple-choice, numerical-response and written-response questions to determine if students can understand, apply and analyze what they've learned in the classroom. The new assessments may use these question types, but new developmentally appropriate question types are being researched.

### **One of the issues with provincial assessment is student stress. How will this issue be addressed?**

As part of the change, the new assessments will be taken as a series of manageable components rather than the single PAT and will be administered within a flexible time period. If a particular day is not a good day for a student to write one of the components, then it can be written on a different day. It is essential to have an accurate and realistic understanding of a student's capabilities. Therefore, the focus of the new assessments is to plan student programming and support improved student learning, rather than just grading students.

### **Are there plans for assessing students at grades other than Grades 3, 6 and 9?**

Having provincial standards is a good thing. That does not mean that every assessment is a provincial test. Building assessment capacity in classrooms is important and it may prove to be beneficial to pursue

collaborations with teachers to build other assessments of literacy, numeracy and cross-curricular competencies to support learning.

**Will Student Learning Assessments cost any more than the current PAT program?**

The goal is to develop the new provincial assessments with current funding. The new assessments will likely cost less in the future because there will be a digital version, reducing the need for printing and shipping.

**How will public accountability and assurance be possible in the new model?**

It is important to note that accountability is about measuring and assurance is about measuring and putting that information to use. That is, assurance is the larger goal with an emphasis on growth. While the new assessments will continue to provide accountability information, a significant change will be with respect to the information for parents.

Parents will have information at the start of the school year about their child's strengths and areas needing improvement . This should lead to richer conversations with their child about what their child is doing at school and with the teacher as parent, student and teacher collectively plan instruction.

From the school, system and provincial perspective, the student data would be grouped and reported for the school to know where their students are relative to all students in the province and provincial expectations. School boards and authorities would continue to receive information for planning purposes. Alberta Education will continue to compare results from one year to the next to determine if the education system is improving.

**Will it still be possible to rank schools?**

Schools are organizations that are too complex to be ranked solely on the basis of test results. A better measure is the [Accountability Pillar](#) currently produced annually by Alberta Education.

**Can the Student Learning Assessment results be used to evaluate teachers?**

No. Teaching is too complex a job to evaluate using a single measure. It is better to evaluate teachers consistent with the current policy on Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy.

**The success of this assessment model depends on getting information back to the classroom as quickly as possible. How soon will students, parents and teachers see results?**

The results of the online assessments will be available digitally, so student results should be available to teachers quite quickly. Alberta Education will aggregate school, school authorities and provincial data to provide reports on board and individual school reports once all students have completed the assessments.

**Will students receive marks on the assessments? In what form?**

The feedback that students and parents receive will be more than just a numeric score and the standard (Acceptable Standard, Standard of Excellence, Below Acceptable Standard) achieved, which is the case with the current PATs. While the final form of the information will be determined by research and consultation with stakeholders, it will be far richer than what is currently available. The goal of the feedback will be to support the teacher and parents in making decisions about a student's learning needs.

**What about schools that do not have digital capacity? What about students who prefer a paper copy of the test?**

Those schools that require the tests in a print (hard copy) format can request them. Alberta Education will provide a scoring guide so teachers can do the initial marking and use the results immediately. While most students are comfortable taking such tests on a computer, paper copies can also be made available.

**Have any classroom teachers been consulted about the new assessments?**

Groups of teachers have been working with Alberta Education staff over the past two months to begin the process of looking at the current provincial Programs of Study through the lenses of literacy and numeracy. This has been done in both English and French and the work continues.