

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), October 2002

Excerpts from the Report of Provincial Results, April 2003, pages 3-6

In 1999, the Ministry of Education established that successful completion of the OSSLT would become one of the 32 requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The OSSLT is designed to assess the reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9 as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.

In October 2000, a province-wide trial administration was undertaken. The test was not a graduation requirement for this first group of students. The first full administration of the OSSLT was completed in February 2002. The second full administration was completed in October 2002. The OSSLT was administered over two blocks of time, two-and-a-half hours each (including breaks and instructions), one on the morning of October 23 and one on the morning of October 24, 2003. Provisions for accommodations for students are described in EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions*.

The test consists of two integrated components:

- A reading component
- A writing component

In the reading component, students were asked to read a total of 12 short selections, divided into three different text types:

- Information (e.g., explanation, opinion)
- Graphic (e.g., graph, schedule, instructions)
- Narrative (e.g., story, dialogue)

There were three types of questions in the reading component:

- Multiple-choice (40 questions)
- Short-answers (35 questions)
- Questions requiring an explanation (25 questions)

In the writing component, students were asked to complete four writing tasks:

- A summary
- A series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- A news report
- An information paragraph

Setting the Standard

The standards created for the OSSLT are descriptions of student performance that constitute minimum acceptable levels of achievement. For further details, see the Standard-Setting Process on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com).

The following descriptions provide an overview of how student performance is evaluated.

Reading

Passed

The student reads with reasonable accuracy and proficiency. He or she

- demonstrates an understanding of directly stated information.
- usually connects relevant ideas and information to understand the meaning.
- has moderate success in integrating personal knowledge and experience to extend meaning.

Did not Pass

The student reads with limited accuracy and proficiency. He or she

- demonstrates a limited understanding of directly stated information.
- rarely connects relevant ideas and information to understand the meaning.
- has difficulty integrating personal knowledge and experience to extend meaning.

Writing

Passed

The student communicates in writing. He or she

- demonstrates the ability to develop, organize and connect main ideas, with some supporting information.
- writes in a variety of forms, such as summary, opinion piece, news report and information paragraph.
- generally uses appropriate words and sentence structure.
- generally does not make errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation that impede meaning.

Did not Pass

The student has difficulty communicating in writing. He or she

- demonstrates limited skill in developing, organizing and connecting main ideas with supporting information.
- writes in a limited variety of forms and finds it difficult to complete writing a summary, opinion piece, news report or information paragraph.
- uses inappropriate or incorrect words and sentence structure.
- makes errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation that impede meaning.