

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

COMPULSORY EXAMINATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

End of Elementary Cycle Three

514-600

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Québec 

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INTRODUCTION

This document conveys information concerning the end of Cycle Three English Language Arts compulsory examination scheduled for April 2006. The primary aim is to provide, in advance, sufficient information about the examination.

The document contains essential information regarding the nature, scheduling and scoring of the examination and should be photocopied and distributed without delay to all Cycle Three English Language Arts teachers and consultants, as well as personnel responsible for examination scheduling.

Designed around a learning and evaluation situation (LES), the 2006 assessment offers core activities that target key language abilities. It is useful to recall at this time that features incorporated into this examination have been determined through direct and ongoing consultation with English Language Arts teachers and consultants throughout the province. Written commentaries that were received following the April 2005 examination have also been given consideration.

Please be advised that during the summer of 2006 there will be a provincial study of end of Cycle Three student performances in Language Arts, using work obtained from the April 2006 compulsory examination. In particular, this study will focus on the work of students who participated in the Cycle One study, *Choosing a Pet*. The purpose of this study is not to compare schools or students, but rather to examine the efficacy of the program with regards to the outcome expectations of the Québec Education Program (QEP). The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) will select students who participated in the Cycle One study, along with their classmates. The complete, scored work of these students will be submitted for the study. The initial scoring of the exam is the responsibility of schools and school boards. Further instructions will be sent by the Direction de la sanction des études.

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1. Overview of the Assessment

In cooperation with teachers and consultants in the province, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport designs quality instruments for language assessment. These instruments provide insights into assessment approaches that are of proven validity and offer opportunities for staff development in scoring student work according to specified criteria. The goal is to provide descriptive evidence of students' performance at the end of Cycle Three in English schools in Québec. This professional information is to be used in conjunction with students' year-long performances.

2. General Nature of the Assessment

The 2006 learning and evaluation situation (LES) offers a number of core activities that target key language abilities. For students with special needs, all activities can be modified and incorporated into the students' existing evaluation procedures, as described in her/his current and updated Individual Education Plan (IEP). Modifications must follow those that are already in place and that are applied for instruction during the current school year.

The activities are designed in such a way that they yield information on the following:

- **Reading / viewing and listening to literary, popular and information-based texts, followed by response to literature**
- **Writing self-expressive, narrative or information-based texts for a specific purpose and audience**
- **Using language conventions**
- **Using language to communicate and learn**
- **Using cross-curricular competencies**

The LES reflects practices consistent with the following documents: *The Québec Education Program*; *Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool and Elementary Levels*; *Evaluation Framework*; and *Competency Levels by Cycle, Elementary School*. As well, the LES offers guidance to teachers who seek to inform themselves about the effectiveness of their classroom practices. All activities are authentic in that they give students the opportunity to purposefully use language in real situations.

3. Learning Principles Incorporated into the Learning and Evaluation Situation

These principles include the following:

- Time for students to work through a task in more than one session
- Integrated use of all the language processes (listening, responding, communicating)
- Student interaction to explore ideas and to seek feedback

4. Evaluation Principles Incorporated into the Learning and Evaluation Situation

These principles include:

- Providing students with precise information about what is expected of them
- Defining precisely what is valued or expected of the students in their work (performance criteria)
- Providing calibrated descriptive ranges of performance
- Providing students with scoring criteria in advance, along with examples of student work (exemplars for practice in applying the criteria)
- Ensuring that what is defined is measurable, and that what is measurable is consistent with curriculum
- Using multiple examples of student work when evaluating performance
- Establishing an evaluation centre where teachers examine and score student work by applying the performance criteria following procedures that ensure reliability of the scores. **Sufficient time should be allocated for evaluating students' work.**

To allow teachers to help students understand the performance criteria, a document containing annotated exemplars gathered from the 2005 English Language Arts examination will be distributed via the Internet. Included in the document are the June 2005 rubrics designed for evaluating student performances, along with the revised rubrics for the April 2006 examination. It is foreseen that the exemplars will aid teachers, as well as students, in becoming familiar with the criteria for assessing their work. **As the performance criteria are elaborated in professional language for teachers, teachers will find that working with their students to examine the exemplars provides an ideal opportunity to help the students restate the criteria in language more familiar to them.**

5. Assessment Materials

The assessment includes the following materials that will be provided by the MELs:

- *Resource Booklets*
- *Student Booklets*
- *Teacher Guide*
- Bibliography and other resources, such as Web sites and/or Web quest, and/or videos and/or CDs

6. The Components of the Assessment

6.1 Overview

The LES will focus on the following language abilities: strategic reading and response to literature; writing for a particular purpose and audience; use of language conventions; use of cross-curricular competencies; and use of language to communicate and learn. Four-point rubrics will be provided for scoring the tasks.

6.2 Content

The LES will centre on an essential question that addresses an environmental issue relating to the balance of nature. It will call for students to exercise critical judgment by comparing and contrasting two texts by means of a graphic organizer, and to use information obtained from tables, maps and timelines and from different texts. Students will write to convince a selected audience of a point of view.

6.3 Strategic Reading and Response to Literature

Reading performance will be assessed through strategic reading and response to literature, as well as by other tasks requiring comprehension of texts. The strategic reading tasks will call for students to compare and contrast two similar texts, and to synthesize the ideas and issues presented in the texts. After more than one reading of the text(s) selected for response to literature along with discussion in both large and small groups, students will write their thoughts about and reactions to the issues and themes elaborated in the text(s). Performance criteria for both strategic reading and response to literature will describe the levels of competency that the student attains.

6.4 Writing for Purpose and Audience

Based on reading and research provided with the learning and evaluation situation, students will select a text type with which to convince a selected audience. Students must be given time during the examination to draft and revise their writing. Performance criteria for writing will describe the level of competency that the student attains, and will include criteria for the evaluation of use of conventions.

6.5 Use of Language to Communicate and to Learn

Following the reading/viewing of texts, the students will be asked to make use of their understanding by means of oral language tasks. A checklist or rubric will serve for a peer- and self-evaluation of performance.

6.6 Use of Cross-Curricular Competencies

The use of cross-curricular competencies will be integrated into the tasks. A rubric will serve for a global judgment of student performance.

7. Administering the Learning and Evaluation Situation

Schools are responsible for administering the LES, following the guidelines stated in the *Teacher's Guide*. Please note that students read the assigned texts independently, unless otherwise indicated in the *Teacher's Guide*. Also, unless otherwise indicated, all tasks are to be completed on school premises, preferably in the normal classroom setting.

In the case of combined classes, that is, classes made up of Cycle Three students from both Year 1 and Year 2 (Grades 5 and 6), teachers may want to have all their students undertake the LES. In January 2006, the Direction de la sanction des études will send to school boards and independent schools a form to complete so that they may order the required copies of the examination.

This LES is officially scheduled to be administered between April 24 and May 5, 2006, either in the morning or afternoon. Materials will be sent out to schools by the second week of April to allow teachers to become familiar with the texts and procedures. The reading tasks may take place on April 19, 20 and 21 and will serve as a preparation for the oral language and writing tasks officially scheduled to begin on April 24.

Sustained time on tasks is required to allow students to engage in activities that call for critical thinking and problem solving, components characteristics of competency-based learning. Generally, all the tasks, critical reading and response to literature included, should take between 10 to 15 hours in total. As students require sustained time to contextualize and to become familiar with the tasks and to undertake both group and independent activities, the required time to complete some individual tasks may take up to two hours. Suggested time will be indicated in the *Teacher's Guide*, but some classes may require more or less time to complete some tasks. Adjustments may be made according to the differing needs of groups; however, sufficient time must be allowed for students to sustain and complete tasks as described in the *Teacher's Guide*. As some tasks, such as composing and revising a narrative text, may take more than one hour to complete, schools are asked to adjust schedules accordingly.

8. Scoring the Assessment and Follow-Up Study

For June 2006, evaluation of student work is done locally in a marking centre, using the scoring criteria found in the *Teacher's Guide*. Anchor papers (representative samplings) of student work in each mark range will be selected and agreed upon by teachers. These, in turn, will serve as benchmarks for the subsequent marking of student work. These anchor papers should be drawn directly from the students' own work.

Approximately three days are required to complete the scoring:

- After students have finished the assessment, teachers should meet to establish anchor papers.
- These anchor papers serve as standards of performance.
- Sufficient time should be provided for teachers to complete the evaluation of student work in a centre organized for this purpose to ensure reliability of the scoring.
- School Boards are responsible for providing time for teachers to complete the marking.

For the provincial study of students' work at the end of Cycle Three, the MELS, following standard statistical research procedures, will call for the work of those students who participated in the study, *Choosing a Pet*, along with the work of their classmates. School boards will forward the complete, scored work of these selected students to the Ministère by June 30, 2006. Teachers are asked to include their reflections on the administration of the exam, as indicated in the *Teacher's Guide*. For further information, please contact:

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