

A Parent's Guide to EQAO Tests

Ontario's Province-Wide Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division (Grades 1–3) and Junior Division (Grades 4–6)



The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics at key points in their elementary-school education.

Students are tested twice:

- at the end of Grade 3, to assess what they've learned throughout the **Primary Division** (Grades 1–3) and
- at the end of Grade 6, to assess what they've learned throughout the **Junior Division** (Grades 4–6).

Why does Ontario conduct province-wide tests of reading, writing and mathematics?

In 1995, Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning recommended such tests for Ontario students. The Commission made this recommendation after consulting with parents, educators, students and others who wanted greater accountability and assurances of quality in the publicly funded education system.

In the Commission's words,

It seems obvious to us that the public school system is responsible to the public, and owes it to the public to demonstrate how well it's doing with our children. It seems equally obvious that in learning, as in most other endeavours, your family is helpless to assist you to improve yourself unless you and they know the



criteria for success and how close you come to meeting them.

Finally, what holds for the individual holds for the system: its programs too must be assessed to determine if they're working properly.

So we take a stand on behalf of close monitoring of every child's progress right from the earliest years, and of the system itself at every level, in order that both can learn to be even better.

The Ontario government established EQAO in response to the Commission's recommendations.

When does the testing occur?

The testing takes place during a two-week period in late May and early June. Each school determines the exact dates during that period on which students will write the test.

The test is administered by your child's regular teacher in his or her own classroom.

Does my child have to take the EQAO test?

Yes. Ontario's *Education Quality and Accountability Act* states that all students in publicly funded schools must participate in these tests. Students don't need to study for the test—we just ask them to demonstrate what they already know.

How is the EQAO test different from the tests my child already does in class?

Classroom tests and EQAO tests have different goals and provide different kinds of information about student learning.

Classroom tests

- provide the richest and most comprehensive measure of your child's educational progress;
- measure how well students have learned specific information about topics and themes that have been taught in the classroom;

- provide quick results on the basis of which teachers can adjust or modify their approach to teaching and
- may have a subjective component, based on the teacher's knowledge of your child.

EQAO assessments

- are given at the end of key stages in a child's education;
- are administered, scored and reported on in a consistent and objective manner;
- test students on the same skills, using the same questions used for every other student in the province and
- allow student achievement to be assessed in relation to a provincial standard.



Are EQAO tests based on the material taught in the classroom?

Yes. EQAO tests are based on *The Ontario Curriculum*, which details the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop in each subject at each grade level.

Are other Canadian provinces doing this kind of testing?

Yes, other provinces conduct similar large-scale testing. The practice is common in many other countries as well.



How can I support my child in writing the test?

The best way to support your child in writing the test is by supporting his or her success at school throughout the year.

What do EQAO results tell me about my child?

EQAO test results provide a snapshot of your child's achievement in relation to the provincial standard. Students meeting or exceeding the standard (Levels 3 and 4) have demonstrated most or all of the required reading, writing and mathematics knowledge and skills expected at this stage in their education.

However, no single test can offer a complete or definitive picture of what your child has learned. In the end, no one better understands the true measure of your child's abilities and knowledge—or is in a better position to assess them—than his or her classroom teacher. When used together, the results of EQAO and classroom tests provide a more complete picture of your child's knowledge.

How do I make the best use of the results?

The best thing to do with your child's EQAO results is to discuss them with his or her teacher. Together you can review how the EQAO results compare with those from classroom and other evaluations. You can also discuss the broader issue of your child's overall progress.

Here are a few specific questions you may wish to ask your child's teacher at the next parent/teacher interview:

- How does my child's performance on the EQAO test compare with what you observe in the classroom?
- How can I offer additional support to my child at home?



Where can I get more information?

More Questions and Answers have been developed specifically for parents and can be found in 21 different languages, along with other useful information, at www.eqao.com.

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