

## Student Learning Assessments Update

In May 2013, Education Minister Jeff Johnson announced that Alberta would be giving teachers more tools to help students succeed by introducing assessments that will replace the existing Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs).

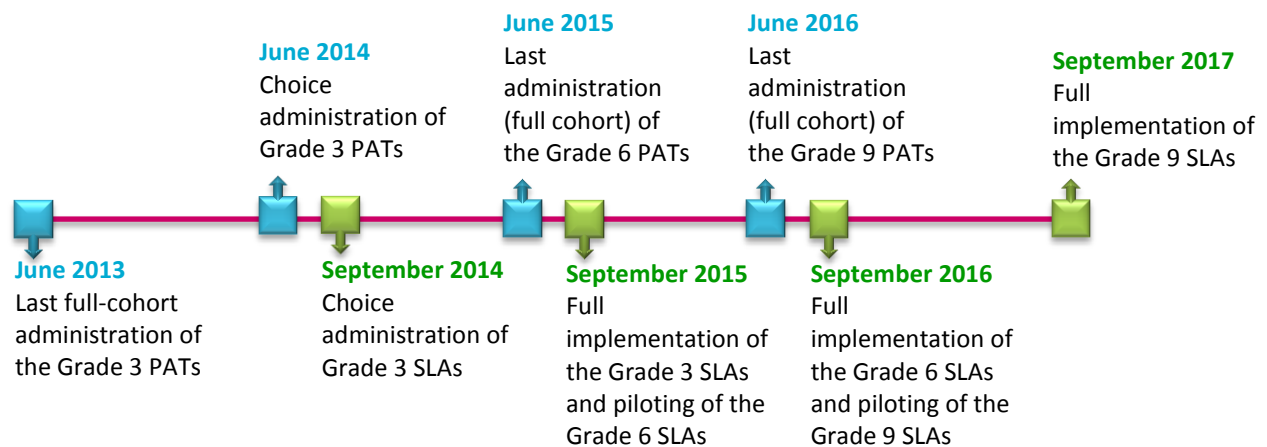
The new Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) contribute to realizing the vision of *Inspiring Education* by better enabling parents and teachers to be aware of a child's strengths or areas needing improvement. The SLAs are essentially "readiness" assessments that can be used to determine the programming needs for students for the school year, and support more personalized learning. The SLAs are being developed by Alberta Education staff and classroom teachers, and will be administered at the start of Grades 3, 6 and 9.

Alberta Education will continue to work with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), Alberta School Councils Association (ASCA), Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA), College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), as well as the Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC) to develop the SLAs.

### Timeline for Implementation of the Student Learning Assessments

Grade 3 students will be the first to write the new assessments, with pilots starting in September 2014. Full implementation for Grade 3 is expected by September 2015. Pilots for Grades 6 and 9 are scheduled to begin in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

School authorities have a choice, school-by-school, whether to administer the Grade 3 PATs in June 2014, the Grade 3 SLAs in September 2014, or both. Alberta Education will be contacting school authorities in the fall of 2013 to confirm their participation in the Grade 3 PATs and/or SLAs. The ministry will request that school authorities make this decision before December 2013.



## Development of the SLAs

A group of key stakeholders met with Alberta Education to help create the purpose statements for the SLAs. These purpose statements will help inform and rest within an over-arching provincial assessment policy, under consideration for development by Alberta Education.

### *Purpose Statements*

Assessment is a process, and the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. To facilitate this, assessment information can be used by:

- a student to be informed about, to reflect upon, and to initiate activities to enhance his or her learning;
- parents to have meaningful conversations with their child and their child's teacher(s); and
- a teacher to assist in meeting the learning needs of a student.

Assessment information is also available to enhance instruction for students. To facilitate this, assessment information can be used by:

- a teacher to be informed about, to reflect upon, and to initiate activities to enhance his or her instruction;
- a principal to strategically support instructional practices and address the organizational needs within the school;
- a school council to give advice about the learning opportunities, resources, and services provided by the school;
- a superintendent to allocate resources appropriately and advocate for effective instructional practices;
- trustees to create or amend authority policies and to guide their advocacy work; and
- Alberta Education to be informed about the implementation and delivery of curriculum.

Assessment information also assures Albertans that the education system meets the needs of students and achieves the outcomes of the *Ministerial Order on Student Learning*.

Provincial assessment programs, including SLAs, are sources of information that must be interpreted, used, and communicated within the context of regular and continuous assessment by classroom teachers.

## Teacher Involvement in Developing Student Learning Assessments

Each September, Alberta Education contacts school authorities to request nominations of teachers to participate in provincial test development working groups. The involvement of Alberta classroom teachers in blueprinting, item development, field testing, test validation, French translation validation, standards setting, and results interpreting has been a cornerstone of the success of Alberta's provincial assessment programs for more than 30 years.

In the 2013/14 school year, school authorities will be asked to nominate teachers to participate in the development of the Grades 3 and 6 SLAs, which will require teachers with extensive knowledge of the Grades 2 and 5 programs of study. Alberta Education looks forward to working with teachers to ensure that provincial assessments, and the new SLAs, continue to be high quality assessments that are relevant to students, and that provide valid and reliable information to students, parents, teachers and administrators, school authority leaders, and the public.

## SLA Administration and Results

### Administration

The SLAs are being designed to be administered digitally. A window of approximately 10 days, near the start of the school year, will provide schools with the opportunity to decide when it will be best for students to complete the assessments. It is crucial to remember that since the assessments are being administered at the beginning of those grades, the outcomes that will be assessed come from the previous years' programs of studies (i.e. grades 2, 5, and 8).

### Results

Results of the SLAs will be available within 24 hours for teachers, within one month for schools and school authorities, and annually for the province. SLA results will reflect the literacy and numeracy categories (Awareness, Knowledge and Understanding, and Strategies). Alberta Education plans to provide an assessment framework that matches outcomes from the provincial Programs of Study with the Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks developed as part of Curriculum Redesign. This assessment framework will both guide the development of the assessments and allow teachers to interpret assessment results.

## For Further Information

If you have questions or require further information, please contact Ken Marcellus, Director of the Achievement Testing Program, at [Ken.Marcellus@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Ken.Marcellus@gov.ab.ca) or 780-427-0010 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000).