



Ensuring Quality Assessments: BUILDING ON STRENGTHS; REFINING THE PROGRAM

Background

Since it was established in 1996, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) has been designing, conducting and reporting on curriculum-based assessments for students in publicly funded Ontario schools. Based on the vision of the Royal Commission on Learning, EQAO's province-wide assessments provide a useful snapshot of how our children understand the curriculum – enabling us to measure progress over time and serving as a solid foundation on which to develop strategies to support student success. The annual reports also focus attention on standards, helping to achieve the goal of ensuring that every student has a good outcome from their public education.

EQAO has completed a two-year comprehensive review of all aspects of its assessment program. This included studying the processes and procedures used by noteworthy testing organizations and jurisdictions worldwide; consulting with stakeholders throughout Ontario's public education system; a review by international experts led by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto; analyzing and synthesizing the input; and developing recommendations for improvement. EQAO is now ready to implement refinements to enhance the assessment program, based on the information and insights gathered through the review.

ENHANCEMENTS TO THE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

EQAO is implementing refinements to the assessments of Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10 students. The enhancements will provide clearer, more timely data to parents, schools and school boards and will result in streamlined processes so that the assessments are less burdensome on children and are easier for schools to administer. The following are highlights of the changes to be implemented for the 2004–2005 school year.

Key Enhancements for Students and Parents	Key Enhancements for Educators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent by students on assessments will be reduced. For Grade 3 and 6 students, the assessment will be reduced to 6 hours; for Grade 9 students, the time will be reduced to two hours; for Grade 10 students in 2005, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) will be reduced to 2 ½ hours on a single day. • The Grade 3 and 6 assessments will take place later in the school year, so that more of the curriculum can be taught before the test period. • In addition to reporting student proficiency at levels 1 through 4, results will include more information about where students are <i>within</i> each level (e.g., whether a student in Level 2 is closer to Level 1 or Level 3). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involvement in reviewing assessment content and scoring procedures will be extended. • Reporting will be improved and more timely. • Ready-to-use reports will be provided to help teachers prepare for the new school year. • Enhanced measurement precision will enable better year-to-year comparisons. • Credit tracking for the OSSLT will be simplified with a single literacy score. • EQAO will involve independent experts on a continuous basis, including a psychometric expert panel to ensure quality and reliability.

A "WORLD CLASS" PROGRAM

The external review concluded that EQAO has "created world class educational assessment programs." Building on this strong foundation, EQAO is dedicated to continuing to work with all partners in the education community — parents, teachers, school boards, the government and the public — to provide accurate, timely and useful data, as a cornerstone for raising student achievement across Ontario.

"Learning from data is central to our overarching responsibility as educators – being accountable for the success of each and every student."

Marguerite Jackson, CEO, Education Quality and Accountability Office