Questions and Answers
Adjusting EQAO’s Reporting Denominator

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As part of its ongoing modernization, EQAO is seeking opportunities for improvement in all aspects of its work, including its reporting practices. One such opportunity is adjusting the denominator used in EQAO reporting.

Currently, EQAO reports using two different denominators: “All Students” and “Fully Participating Students.” “All Students” includes every student enrolled in the grade in which the assessment occurs (i.e., Grades 3, 6, 9 or 10). “Fully Participating Students” includes students who completed the assessment and does not include those who were absent or exempted (or, in the case of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test [OSSLT], deferred).

While the “All Students” denominator contributes to accountability in Ontario’s publicly funded education system, it also creates a challenge in measurement, as it includes those enrolled in an assessment grade who may not have had sufficient previous experience in Ontario’s school system. For example, students who have entered Grades 3, 6 and 10 from another Canadian jurisdiction, or from another country, may not have benefited from accumulated educational experience in Ontario’s publicly funded schools. The denominator also includes students whose program is based on alternative learning expectations not derived from the provincial curriculum (Growing Success, 2010).

1. Why does EQAO need to adjust its reporting denominator?
Currently, EQAO includes in its denominator
▪ students who have just arrived in Ontario and
▪ students who are in Ontario’s school system but who access alternative learning expectations not derived from the provincial curriculum (Growing Success, 2010).

Including these students is a practice that creates questions about the clarity of EQAO’s reporting denominator. Large-scale assessments measure achievement in relation to curriculum expectations, so it’s important that the denominator reflect students who are accessing the curriculum and who have done so for a sufficient period.

By adjusting the denominator used in EQAO reports on student achievement, EQAO will make results more clearly reflective of the learning of curriculum expectations in schools and districts. This practice will enhance the precision of measurements, adhere more closely to standards of fairness in testing and maintain public confidence in EQAO data.
2. What are the changes to EQAO’s reporting denominator?
By better aligning with standards of measurement and fairness in testing, EQAO’s reports will enhance accountability and clarity when communicating achievement results.

Primary- and Junior-Division Assessments of Reading, Writing and Math
The denominator will reflect students’ reading, writing and math skills that they are expected to have learned cumulatively in the primary division (i.e., from Grades 1 to 3) and junior division (i.e., from Grades 4 to 6), in accordance with curriculum expectations. The EQAO reporting denominator will include

- students accessing *The Ontario Curriculum* and
- students enrolled in a publicly funded school in Ontario for any part of the two preceding school years:
  - Grades 1 and 2 for the primary-division assessment (administered in Grade 3) and
  - Grades 4 and 5 for the junior-division assessment (administered in Grade 6).

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)
Proposed changes to the reporting denominator for the OSSLT are like those being made to the primary and junior assessments. The EQAO reporting denominator would contain

- students accessing *The Ontario Curriculum* who are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma and
- students enrolled in a publicly funded school in Ontario for any part of the two preceding school years (i.e., Grades 8 and 9); otherwise, their participation can be deferred and they will not be part of the denominator.

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics
No changes to the reporting denominator are suggested for the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics. Of the EQAO assessments, only the Grade 9 assessment is focused on curriculum within a single year (and so results may be included as part of the student’s final grade). Students who are unable to access the Grade 9 mathematics curriculum through academic or applied study do not participate in the assessment.

3. When will these changes take effect?
These changes will be implemented as of the 2019–2020 school year. To ensure transparency, EQAO’s public reports will note the change to the denominator and indicate possible variance associated with the change. In addition, to ensure the continued comparability of results from year to year, EQAO will provide reports to schools and boards that outline results that account for the variance related to the shift in practice.

4. What sort of variance can we expect to see in results due to this change?
Simulations indicate that marginal changes will be observed in provincial and board reporting (i.e., typically 1%). Risks with respect to the misinterpretation of data will be mitigated through bridge reporting, where EQAO provides an explanation of changes to results that may be related to the denominator.
5. Are these changes aimed at improving assessment scores?
No. Large-scale assessments measure achievement in relation to curriculum expectations, so it’s important that the denominator reflect students who are accessing the curriculum and who have done so over a sufficient period. EQAO is adjusting the denominator used in its reports on student achievement in Ontario’s education system to enhance the precision of measurements, adhere to standards of fairness in testing and maintain public confidence in its data. Our aim is to improve clarity in our reporting and to better contribute to accountability.

6. Will the proposed changes exclude students from participating in the assessments?
All students are welcome to participate in EQAO assessments. Students who are not included in the reporting denominator will continue to receive an Individual Student Report to help track their progress.

7. Is there a financial cost associated with these proposed changes?
No. These recommendations seek to improve EQAO’s standards for measurement and fairness in testing through changes to practice rather than through additional financial investments from Ontarians.

8. Who is EQAO consulting regarding the proposed changes?
EQAO consulted widely with members of the education community to ensure a broad consensus on this change and develop clear and common criteria that reflect all of Ontario’s regions. As part of its consultation, EQAO connected with, among others

- stakeholder organizations represented on the EQAO Advisory Committee;
- stakeholder organizations in Ontario’s special-education community;
- school districts, including their Special Advisory Education Committees and superintendents responsible for English language learners; and
- school principals.

We believe the changes align with the feedback we’ve received, and that the new reporting denominator will provide clear and common criteria that reflect all of Ontario’s regions. These adjustments are meant to be supportive of fair measurement standards and seek to strengthen clarity and accountability in EQAO reports.