

Fall 2014

## Background

The Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) is an innovative, digitally based assessment tool the province is providing to enable both parents and teachers to identify student strengths and areas needing improvement. Over the next few years, they will replace the Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs).

The SLAs will support student learning and higher student achievement while more effectively assessing literacy, numeracy, and competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, and the ability to apply knowledge to different scenarios. Alberta Education, in partnership with teachers, is developing the new SLAs. They are designed to be administered at the start of Grades 3, 6 and 9. They are available in English, French (Immersion), and French (Francophone).

## Structure of the Grade Three Student Learning Assessments (SLA 3)

Components of the SLA 3 have been determined by Alberta Education in partnership with the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA), Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA), Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), and Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC).

The four components of the SLA 3 are the following:

- > A digitally scored literacy component
- > A literacy performance-task component
- > A digitally scored numeracy component
- > A numeracy performance-task component.

The SLA 3 will reference the current provincial programs of study until the implementation of new programs of study developed through the Curriculum Redesign Initiative.

## SLA 3 Pilot Administration

Schools administered a pilot SLA 3 during a 4-week timeframe from September 29 to October 24, 2014. Operational questions in the pilot and all future SLAs will be released after each administration.

The process of piloting the SLA 3 consists of more than just administering the digital questions and performance tasks to students; it is also a pilot of the delivery, scoring and reporting systems as well as other related operations. Given that virtually all aspects of the SLA are new, the pilot for the SLA 3 will be two years to build upon learnings and implement changes. SLA 6 and SLA 9 will be one year pilots.

## Reporting Results of Student Learning Assessments

The SLA 3 assesses and reports on the three draft literacy and numeracy components (awareness, knowledge and understanding, and strategies) in the context of six current programs of study (end of Grade 2/beginning of Grade 3-Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Wellness, Fine Arts).

For the SLA 3 pilot held in the Fall of 2014, Alberta Education will provide student, school and authority detailed reports, as it has in the past with Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). These reports will provide valuable information to improve learning, enhance instruction and help students succeed. However, reporting at the provincial level to the general public will not occur immediately.

After the assessments were completed, teachers had preliminary results within 24 hours. A detailed report on each student will be provided on a targeted date of November 26, 2014. The results from the Student Learning Assessments can be used to improve student learning. Teachers can use these results to guide their teaching throughout the year and inform students and parents about progress and learning. In addition, teachers can use the results to select appropriate curricula to meet the individual needs of each student. Principals can use the results to support teachers and instructional practices. In this pilot year, parents will receive a print report that summarizes the information in the teacher's digital report. To learn more about a child's SLA results, parents may arrange a time with his or her teacher to discuss further.

A plan is underway to gather feedback from teacher, administrator, and community focus groups early in 2015. Specific dates will be communicated on the Alberta Education website and/or via the various Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC) websites. The information from surveys and the focus groups will be analyzed and used to assist in revising and improving the SLA for the fall 2015 administration.

An online survey located on the SLA website will be available for teachers, administrators and parents to complete. They will be asked to provide specific responses to questions about the delivery, format and content of the SLA reports. They will also have the opportunity to submit their written comments.

Assessment Sector staff will provide implementation support at the upcoming Curriculum Coordinators meetings (see below). The meetings will focus on how to best use the SLA detailed results reports for the benefit of improving student learning, and informing instructional practices as well as obtaining feedback about the set-up, administration and marking of the SLA.

<b>New Curriculum Coordinator Meeting Dates</b>	
Zone 1 – Peace River	Tuesday, December 2
Zone 2 – St. Paul	Tuesday, November 18
Zone 3 – Edmonton	Thursday, December 4
Zone 4 – Red Deer	Monday, December 8
Zone 5 – Calgary	Tuesday, November 25
Zone 6 – Medicine Hat	Wednesday, December 10
Treaty 7 – Tsuu T'ina	Wednesday, November 26

## Field Testing

Field testing is an important component in the development process as test questions are administered to determine their difficulty level and their appropriateness for use in the SLAs. As well, teachers are able to provide comments about potential questions, thereby contributing to the development of fair, valid and reliable assessments.

Field testing of SLA 3 Literacy and Numeracy components occurred between April 22 and May 30, 2014. Over 38,000 digitally scored and performance task field tests in English and French were scheduled for administration during this time.

During the administration of the field tests, student and teacher feedback as well as statistical data were collected and analyzed. This information was used to inform the further design and development of the pilot SLA 3. Students' responses from the performance tasks were collected and used to create assessment guides and to provide exemplars. Teachers use these documents when they assess their own students' performance tasks this fall.

Questions that students can use to gain familiarity with the new question types and practice the various digital interactivities are located on the [Alberta Education](#) website. The practice questions are available in English and French. There are 15 Literacy practice questions and 10 Numeracy practice questions. The practice questions have been accessed over 42,000 times since they were posted last spring.

The next field testing period of the performance-tasks of the SLA 3 Literacy and Numeracy components is tentatively planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of January 2015, while the next field testing period for the digitally scored components is planned for May 2015.

## Implementation Support for Teachers – Assessment Capacity

In September 2014, in cooperation with the ARPDC, implementation support sessions were held throughout the province providing teachers with information allowing them to be better prepared to administer the SLAs. A plan is under development to provide teachers with further implementation support in the 2014/2015 school year. The plan will include input from various stakeholder groups. Support for implementation will be delivered through the ARPDC and AAC.

## For Further Information

More details about the pilot SLA 3 are posted in the [Grade 3 Literacy and Numeracy Information Bulletins](#). Further information on SLAs including the general information bulletin, feedback, purposes, administration and implementation support for teachers can be found by visiting the [Alberta Education](#) website or by contacting Sean Wells, Director, Achievement Testing & Student Learning Assessments, at [sean.wells@gov.ab.ca](mailto:sean.wells@gov.ab.ca) or 780-427-0010 (toll-free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000).