

Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing

Parent Guide

GRADE

3

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Questions Frequently Asked About the Achievement Testing Program

Each year, children in Grade 3 write provincial achievement tests in language arts and mathematics. Children in grades 6 and 9 also write achievement tests. In learning about and being advocates for their children as they prepare to write achievement tests, parents often ask the following questions about the Achievement Testing Program.

What is the purpose of the achievement tests?

The purpose of the achievement tests is to determine how well students are learning what they are expected to learn, to inform Albertans about students' achievement relative to provincial standards, and to assist schools, school authorities, and the province in monitoring and improving student learning.

Who is expected to write the tests?

All students registered in grades 3, 6, and 9 or those in their 3rd, 6th, or 9th year of schooling are expected to write the tests for their grades.

What tests are administered and when?

Achievement tests are administered to students registered in Grade 3 as follows:

Subject	Duration	Month
English Language Arts	Part A: Writing 70 min Part B: Reading 60 min	May June
French Language Arts (Immersion and Francophone Students)	Part A: Writing 70 min Part B: Reading 45 min	May June
Mathematics/ Mathématiques	Part A: Timed Number Facts 6 min Part B: Multiple Choice 60 min	May June

What do the achievement tests assess?

Alberta's achievement tests are aligned with the provincial curriculum and with authorized learning and teaching resources. No single test can assess everything. The achievement tests address only those learning outcomes that can be readily assessed by a paper-and-pencil test. The clearest picture of students' growth and development is gained when a wide variety of assessment information is considered. The achievement tests provide part of the picture. In addition, classroom teachers use many different assessment strategies throughout the school year to gain information about what students are learning.

How are achievement tests developed?

Classroom teachers from across the province are involved at every stage of the test development and implementation process, including:

- writing, revising, and reviewing questions,
- administering field tests,
- validating test forms,
- validating French translations,
- validating scoring guides,
- confirming standards,
- administering the tests, and
- marking students' written responses.

What are test accommodations?

Alberta Education provides alternate test formats and/or administration conditions for students with special test-writing needs in order to allow these students to do their best. Test accommodations may include Braille or large print formats, sign language, use of a reader or scribe, additional writing time, CD format, and taped responses. With superintendent approval, students who regularly use aids of this type in the classroom to support their learning may make use of these accommodations when writing one or more of their achievement tests.

How can parents help their children prepare for the tests?

It is important that children feel relaxed and comfortable when they write any test, including achievement tests. Children's feelings about a test are very much influenced by what adults close to them say about those tests. Parents can be of most help to their children by encouraging them to relax and do their best, just as they would when writing any test.

How can teachers prepare their students for writing the tests?

Alberta Education discourages excessive test rehearsal and coaching. Achievement tests are like any other test students would normally write. The best preparation for students to write the provincial achievement tests is effective instruction based on the full range of learning outcomes in the Alberta curriculum.

How are the achievement tests marked?

All achievement tests, except the language arts writing tests, are machine scored. Written-response sections of the language arts tests are marked centrally, in July, by classroom teachers who have been nominated by their superintendents. These teachers are trained by and work under the supervision of Alberta Education staff.

Alberta Education also encourages teachers to mark achievement tests locally using the answer keys, scoring guides, and exemplars that are provided to them each year. Locally awarded marks on the language arts written response test that are submitted to Alberta Education will be used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In the case of a discrepancy between the two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that the paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported. Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once.

Teachers are given answer keys for each multiple-choice achievement test, and they are expected to mark the grades 6 and 9 tests and report the *preliminary* results to parents in June. This initiative responds to the report developed by Alberta's Commission on Learning that encouraged more communication with parents about the importance of Provincial Achievement Tests and classroom assessments in their children's schooling.

Although no single test can provide a comprehensive picture of a student's achievement, when used in conjunction with more information gained from various classroom assessments, preliminary results can assist parents in more timely and better understanding of their child's achievement.

How should achievement test results be communicated and used?

Each school and school authority receives a detailed report of its results. A school also receives electronically, through the secure extranet site, two copies of a student's Individual Student Profile (ISP). In late September one copy of the ISP is to be placed in the student's permanent file and the other copy is to be forwarded to the student's parents or guardians (see samples on pages 5 and 6).

School staff, in consultation with their school council, should look at the school report to see what patterns and trends are evident in the results and to determine how the school's programs might be improved. The principal, teachers, parents, and community can look at these results in relation to past results, along with school and district assessments and other information about students and programs. They can use this information to provide the best possible learning opportunities for their students.

Similarly, it is helpful if the school board and the jurisdiction look at the school authority report to see how district-wide programs can be improved for students. It is also important for Alberta Education to examine the provincial results to see if changes are needed in provincial programs or policies.

Used in these ways, the test results support continuous improvement in program planning and in teaching. This, in turn, helps to ensure that as many students as possible achieve provincial standards.

How should school councils use achievement test results?

In collaboration with the school staff, a school council should review the achievement test results. Questions such as the following may serve as a starting point:

- What are the strengths of our school?
- What are the areas requiring growth?
- What factors could be contributing to our school's performance?
- What trends in achievement test results can we identify for our school over the past several years?
- What are our local achievement targets for this year?
- What plans can we develop to address the areas requiring growth and to help students to do their best?



Should schools be ranked according to their results on provincial achievement tests?

Alberta Education has sent an information video, *PAT Answers for Parents*, and support materials, to each school. This video is meant to be used with parents and school councils.

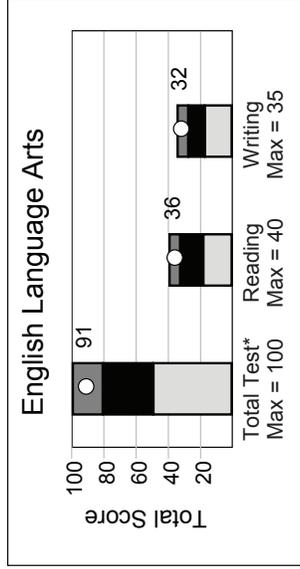
Alberta Education **does not support** comparisons of schools or authorities based on achievement test scores. Rather, in evaluating a school, people should consider a variety of factors that are relevant to that school. The department emphasizes the importance of provincial standards, local targets, and past performance as the basis for examining the test results and planning instructional programs.

Student Name:
 Alberta Student Number: 123456789
 School of Writing: New Century School
 School Authority: New Century School

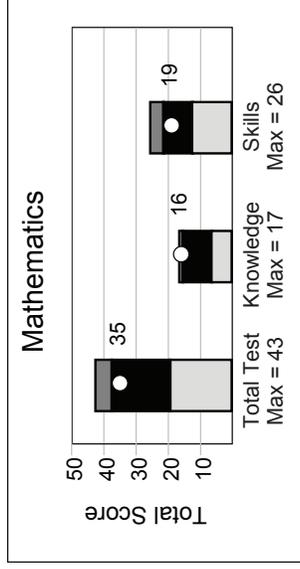
Grade 3 Achievement Test - June 2008 Individual Student Profile Parent Copy



Graph Legend	
	Standard of Excellence
	Acceptable Standard
	Below Acceptable Standard
	Student Score



*Reading and Writing are weighted equally in the calculation of the total score.



Explanatory Notes

The point on each bar graph indicates the score obtained by the student on the total test and on each of the two components of the test.

The shaded regions indicate the range of scores at the Standard of Excellence (dark grey region), the Acceptable Standard (black region), and below the acceptable standard (light grey region).

Student Name:
 Alberta Student Number: 123456789
 School of Writing: New Century School
 School Authority: New Century School

Grade 3 Achievement Tests – June 2008
Individual Student Profile
Parent Copy



Subject	Component	Student's Results		Range of Scores Within Each Standard ¹	
		Score	Standard Achieved	Acceptable Standard	Standard of Excellence
English Language Arts	Total Test ²	68/100	Acceptable	50–80	81–100
	Reading	26/40	Acceptable	19–32	33–40
	Writing	25/35	Acceptable	18–27	28–35
Mathematics	Total Test	32/43	Acceptable	20–37	38–43
	Knowledge	13/17	Acceptable	7–15	16–17
	Skills	19/26	Acceptable	13–21	22–26

The table above provides the student's scores for each subject and for the components of that subject. Also included is the range of scores that define each standard.

¹These standards reflect provincial expectations.

²Reading and Writing reporting categories are weighted equally in the calculation of the total score for English Language Arts and French Language Arts.

Alberta Education is committed to accommodating the needs of all Alberta students in order to provide them with fair and equitable access to educational opportunities, including the writing of Achievement Tests. Accommodations that may be approved by the school superintendent are listed in the General Information Bulletin.

Additional information regarding the results of your school and school authority, as well as provincial results, are available on our website at <http://www.education.alberta.ca>.

For further information of Achievement Test results, contact Jo-Anne Hug, Director – Achievement Testing Program (e-mail at: Jo-Anne.Hug@gov.ab.ca) or Nicole Lamarre, Director – French Assessment Unit (e-mail at: Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca), Learner Assessment or call 780-427-0010 or toll free at 310-0000.

Test Description and Sample Questions

The Grade 3 achievement tests are designed to reflect the nature and aim of, and to assess the achievements of, learning outcomes that are prescribed in provincial programs of study. More information about these provincial programs of study is available in the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* (2008–09), which can be accessed at: www.education.alberta.ca. Excerpts from the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* (2008–09), related to English language arts and mathematics are presented later in this document.

Descriptions of the Grade 3 achievement tests and sample questions have been included to give you a first-hand look at what provincial achievement tests are all about. We have reduced the print size and changed the layout of the questions to fit the limited space available in this guide.

English Language Arts

Test Description

Part A: Writing consists of one writing assignment developed to be completed in 70 minutes. For the first 10 of the 70 minutes, students may discuss the picture prompt with classmates in groups of two to four or may think alone about the prompt. The picture is given to stimulate and direct the student's writing.

Students will engage in this discussion without teacher participation. During this discussion time, students may write their ideas on the *Planning* pages provided. For the next 60 minutes, students are expected to finish planning, to write, and to revise their stories. Children may be given a short break during the test, at a time deemed suitable by the classroom teacher. Students may take an additional 30 minutes to complete the test.

Part B: Reading consists of 40 multiple-choice questions. The test has several reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media with corresponding multiple-choice questions. Students record their answers to all questions directly in their test booklets. The test is developed to be completed in 60 minutes; however, students may have an additional 30 minutes if they need this time. Students are not allowed to use a dictionary, a thesaurus, or other reference material when writing Part B: Reading.

For more information, view the *Grade 3 English Language Arts Subject Bulletin* at www.education.alberta.ca.

Sample Questions

Part A: Writing

Look carefully at the picture. What do you think is about to happen?
Write a story about what you think happens.



From *The Crooked Apple Tree* / 1 902283 59 7, by Eric Houghton;
illustrated by Caroline Gold. Illustrations copyright ©1999 by Caroline Gold.
Reproduced by permission of Barefoot Books www.barefootbooks.com.

Note: Picture prompts on students' tests are printed in colour. Examples of actual students' writing using this picture prompt can be located at education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/achievement/examples_stand.aspx.

Sample Questions

Part B: Reading

I. Read the following selection and answer questions 1 to 3.

from **Mill Creek Kids**

- Katelyn wanted to hang pictures on the wall. Her mom said they couldn't put nails in because they were renting this house. Tape, her mom added, might ruin the paint.
- 5 Katelyn noticed a hook in one corner of the ceiling. Hooks must be different from nails. It gave her an idea.
- 10 She dug in a drawer for the ball of yarn they'd bought when she was going to learn to knit. Katelyn had picked the yarn because it was bright and colourful. It started with a strong yellow and then turned into orange, red, brown, red, orange and back to yellow.
- 15 Katelyn climbed on her bed and tied one end of the yarn to the curtain rod. She walked across the room and wound it around the bar in her closet. She pulled it tight. She threaded it through the hook
- 20 in the ceiling and around the knobs on her dresser. Back and forth a couple times between the curtain and the closet and she had her web ready.
- 25 Katelyn took a little hanger from the closet and hung it from one strand of the yarn. She taped her latest horse picture to it. There, decoration without nails. A few more hangers, a few more pictures. Katelyn was so busy she didn't hear her mother's footsteps.
- 30 The door opened suddenly and knocked several of the hangers to the floor.
- 35 "Oh my . . . look at this mess. What have you done? You were supposed to be cleaning up and look at this!"
- Katelyn's mom grabbed at the yarn and pulled.

40 “Oh, no, don’t do that.” Katelyn’s warning was too late. The curtain rod came loose and tumbled to the floor. Her mother’s face turned pink and her eyes bulged out a little. Katelyn laughed.

Colleen Heffernan

Heffernan, Colleen. *Mill Creek Kids*. Edmonton: Hodgepog Books, 1997. Adapted and reproduced with permission from Colleen Heffernan.

1. The word “wound” (line 17) means

- pulled
- looped
- stacked
- tightened

2. Why did Katelyn tape pictures onto hangers?

- To decorate her room
- To organize her room
- To create a yarn maze
- To pick clothes up off the floor

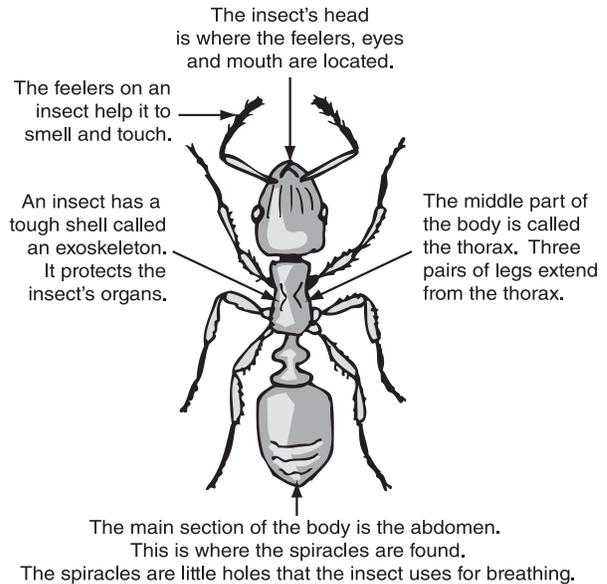
3. What happened after Katelyn warned her mom not to pull the yarn?

- The closet door opened.
- Katelyn’s mom laughed.
- The curtain rod came loose.
- Katelyn tumbled to the floor.

II. Read the following information article and answer questions 4 to 6.

What Is an Insect?

Insects come in many sizes from very big to very small. Some insects are born with wings. Some people think that all insects are “bugs,” but actually, bugs are only one type of insect. An insect’s body has three main parts—a head, a thorax, and an abdomen.



4. Spiracles allow insects to

- eat
- breathe
- feel holes
- protect themselves

5. The body part that provides the most protection for an insect’s organs is the

- head
- thorax
- abdomen
- exoskeleton

6. To find more information about insects, the BEST book to look in is

- an atlas
- a dictionary
- a thesaurus
- an encyclopedia

Mathematics

Test Description

The Grade 3 Mathematics Achievement Test is composed of two parts.

The *Timed Number Facts Test* has three subtests—35 addition facts, 35 subtraction facts, and 25 multiplication facts. Each subtest is designed to be completed in two minutes. A break is provided between subtests. Students are not allowed to use manipulatives or calculators when answering the Part A questions.

The *Multiple-Choice Test* has 40 multiple-choice questions, divided into two sections. Each section is designed to be completed in 30 minutes. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided for students to complete the test. Students record their answers to all questions directly in their test booklets. Test items are created from student outcomes contained within each of the following four strands of the Grade 3 Mathematics Program of Studies: Number, Patterns and Relations, Shape and Space, and Statistics and Probability. Students may use manipulative materials when completing the Multiple-Choice Test. Those students for whom the four-function calculator is a familiar classroom tool **are encouraged, but not required**, to use a calculator.

For more information, view the *Grade 3 Mathematics Subject Bulletin* at www.education.alberta.ca.

Sample Questions

Part A: Timed Number Facts

ADDITION

$\begin{array}{r} 7 \\ + 4 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$7 + 7 =$	$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 8 \\ \hline \end{array}$
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SUBTRACTION

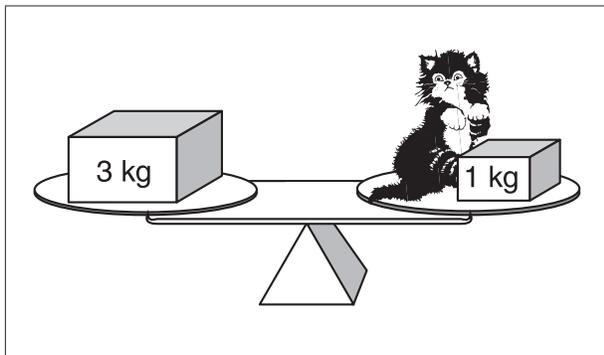
$\begin{array}{r} 14 \\ - 8 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$7 - 2 =$	$\begin{array}{r} 9 \\ - 0 \\ \hline \end{array}$
--	-----------	---

MULTIPLICATION

$\begin{array}{r} 7 \\ \times 7 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$5 \times 2 =$	$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ \times 3 \\ \hline \end{array}$
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Part B: Multiple Choice

Use this diagram to answer question 1.



1. This cat weighs

- 1 kg
- 2 kg
- 3 kg
- 4 kg

Use this calendar to answer question 2.

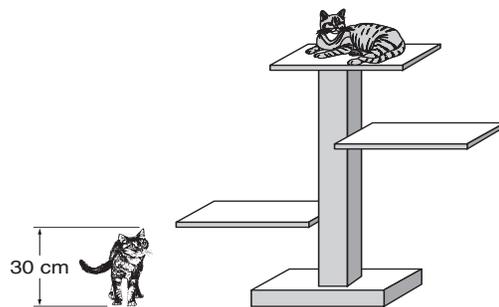
June						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

2. The store has 100 dog biscuits in a bag. Beginning on June 5th, a clerk feeds 2 biscuits each day to one of the dogs.

On which day will the bag be half empty?

- June 12
- June 15
- June 26
- June 29

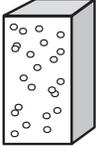
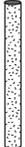
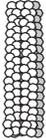
3. A cat rests on the top of a climbing pole.



About how high off the floor is the cat on the top of the climbing pole?

- 30 cm
- 60 cm
- 90 cm
- 120 cm

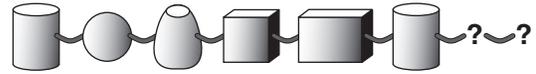
4. Jordan and Ally see different kinds of bird food.

Bird Food	Cost
 <p>Crunchy Corn</p>	\$ 5.99
 <p>Seed Treat</p>	\$ 3.99
 <p>Fruit Stick</p>	\$ 3.59
 <p>Honey Bar</p>	\$ 1.49

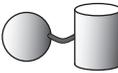
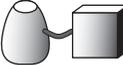
Which of the following kinds of bird food could a person buy with \$10.00?

- 2 Crunchy Corns
- 2 Fruit Sticks and 1 Honey Bar
- 1 Crunchy Corn and 2 Seed Treats
- 1 Seed Treat, 1 Fruit Stick, and 2 Honey Bars

5. The store sells strings of beads to hang in bird cages.



Which of the following two beads will continue the pattern above?

- 
- 
- 
- 

6. There are 10 , 2 , and 1  in a tank. The clerk puts a fish net into the fish tank to catch a fish.

What is the chance of the clerk catching

a  first?

- Impossible
- Unlikely
- Certain
- Likely

Answers to Sample Questions

English Language Arts

1. looped
2. To decorate her room
3. The curtain rod came loose.
4. breathe
5. exoskeleton
6. an encyclopedia

Mathematics

Part A: Timed Number Facts

ADDITION

$\begin{array}{r} 7 \\ + 4 \\ \hline 11 \end{array}$	$7 + 7 = 14$	$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 8 \\ \hline 10 \end{array}$
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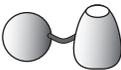
SUBTRACTION

$\begin{array}{r} 14 \\ - 8 \\ \hline 6 \end{array}$	$7 - 2 = 5$	$\begin{array}{r} 9 \\ - 0 \\ \hline 9 \end{array}$
--	-------------	---

MULTIPLICATION

$\begin{array}{r} 7 \\ \times 7 \\ \hline 49 \end{array}$	$5 \times 2 = 10$	$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ \times 3 \\ \hline 12 \end{array}$
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Part B: Multiple Choice

1. 2 kg
2. June 29
3. 90 cm
4. 2 Fruit Sticks and 1 Honey Bar
5. 
6. Likely

Excerpts from the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents, Grade 3*

The following excerpts from the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* (2008–09) provide a brief description and short list of what students should know and be able to do in English language arts and mathematics by the end of Grade 3.

English Language Arts

English Language Arts

There are two basic aims of English language arts. One aim is to encourage in students an understanding and appreciation of the significance and artistry of literature. A second aim is to enable each student to understand and appreciate language and to use it confidently and competently for a variety of purposes, with a variety of audiences, and in a variety of situations for communication, personal satisfaction, and learning.

From Kindergarten to Grade 12, students are developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes in six language arts: Listening and Speaking; Reading and Writing; Viewing and Representing. Students learn to compose, comprehend, and respond to oral, print, and other media texts. They experience a variety of texts from many cultural traditions.

The following learning outcomes are selected from the Grade 3 English Language Arts Program of Studies.

Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences

- explore ideas and feelings by asking questions, talking to others, and referring to oral, print, and other media texts
- discuss areas of personal accomplishment as readers, writers, and illustrators
- ask for the ideas and observations of others to explore and clarify personal understanding
- experiment with arranging and recording ideas and information in a variety of ways

Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print, and other media texts

- share ideas developed through interests, experiences, and discussion that are related to new ideas and information
- apply a variety of strategies, such as setting a purpose, confirming predictions, making inferences, and drawing conclusions
- apply phonic rules and generalizations competently and confidently to read unfamiliar words in context
- summarize the main idea of individual oral, print, and other media texts
- describe the main characters in terms of who they are, their actions in the story, and their relations with other characters
- add sufficient detail to oral, print, and other media texts to tell about setting and character and to sustain plot

Manage ideas and information

- identify facts and opinions, main ideas, and details in oral, print, and other media texts
- ask topic-appropriate questions to identify information needs
- locate answers to questions and extract appropriate and significant information from oral, print, and other media texts
- record facts and ideas using a variety of strategies; list titles and authors of sources
- use titles, headings, and visuals to add interest and highlight important points of presentation
- assess the research process, using pre-established criteria

Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication

- combine and rearrange existing information to accommodate new ideas and information
- print legibly, and begin to learn proper alignment, shape, and slant of cursive writing
- understand and use vocabulary associated with keyboarding and word processing
- use adjectives and adverbs to add interest and detail to own writing
- identify frequently misspelled words, and develop strategies for learning to spell them correctly in own writing
- present ideas and information on a topic, using a pre-established plan
- speak or present oral readings with fluency, rhythm, pace, and appropriate intonation to emphasize key ideas
- rephrase, restate, and explain the meaning of oral and visual presentations

Respect, support, and collaborate with others

- identify and discuss similar ideas or topics within stories from oral, print, and other media texts from various communities
- demonstrate respect for the ideas, abilities, and language use of others
- work co-operatively with others in small groups on structured tasks
- contribute ideas and information on topics to develop a common knowledge base in the group

Mathematics

Mathematics

The aim of the mathematics program is to prepare students to:

- use mathematics confidently to solve problems
- communicate and reason mathematically
- appreciate and value mathematics
- commit themselves to lifelong learning
- become mathematically literate adults, using mathematics to contribute to society

Students are expected to learn how to:

- communicate mathematically
- connect mathematical ideas to everyday experiences and to other subject areas
- use estimation and mental mathematics where appropriate
- apply new mathematical knowledge to problem solving
- reason and justify their thinking
- use appropriate technologies as a tool to solve problems
- use visualization to assist in problem solving, processing information, and making connections

The following learning outcomes are selected from the Grade 3 Mathematics Program of Studies.

Number

- develop a number sense for whole numbers 0 to 1 000, and explore fractions (fifths and tenths)
- apply an arithmetic operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division) on whole numbers, and illustrate its use in creating and solving problems
- use and justify an appropriate calculation strategy or technology to solve problems

Patterns and Relations

- investigate, establish, and communicate rules for numerical and non numerical patterns, including those found in the home, and use these rules to make predictions

Shape and Space

- estimate, measure, and compare, using whole numbers and standard and non standard units of measure
- describe, classify, construct, and relate 3 D objects and 2-D shapes
- use numbers and direction words to describe the relative positions of objects in one dimension, using everyday contexts

Statistics and Probability

- collect first- and second-hand data, display the results in more than one way, and interpret the data to make predictions
- use simple probability experiments, designed by others, to explain outcomes

Contacts

If you have additional questions or comments about achievement testing, please speak with your child's teacher or school principal, or contact:

Deanna Wiens, Examination Manager Grade 3
Achievement Testing Program
Learner Assessment
Alberta Education (780) 427-0010

To be connected toll-free in Alberta, dial 780-310-0000 and then enter 780-427-0010.

View a copy of the *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* at www.education.alberta.ca.