



Planning and Preparation Guide

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

This guide contains information and examples to help you prepare your students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

Please visit our Web site, www.eqao.com, to access other valuable support documents, including the following:

- a sample test, with examples of the *Question* and *Answer* booklets;
- previously administered tests, with Student Answer Keys and scoring rubrics, and
- the OSSLT *Framework*.

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Introduction

What is the OSSLT?

The OSSLT is a provincial test of literacy (reading and writing) skills students have acquired by Grade 10. It is based on the literacy skills expected in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subject areas up to the end of Grade 9.

Administration Date	March 27, 2019
Test Materials	four test booklets: two <i>Question Booklets</i> and two corresponding <i>Answer Booklets</i> (print version)
Duration	2.5 hours of testing time in total
Results	an Individual Student Report indicating whether the student was successful or unsuccessful

Reading

- Types of reading selections:**
- **information paragraph** (225 to 250 words)
 - **news report** (225 to 250 words)
 - **dialogue** (225 to 250 words)
 - **real-life narrative** (550 to 600 words)
 - **graphic text** (fewer than 150 words)

- Types of questions:**
- **multiple-choice**
 - **open-response** (six lines each)

Writing

- Types of writing tasks and questions:**
- **two long-writing tasks**
 - news report (one page)
 - series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (two pages)
 - **two short-writing tasks** (six lines each)
 - **multiple-choice questions**
 - developing a main idea with supporting details
 - organization of ideas
 - language conventions

Reading

For the OSSLT, reading is defined as the process through which the reader makes meaning of a variety of written texts as reflected in the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9. The OSSLT's informational, narrative and graphic reading selections focus on three reading skills:

- understanding explicitly (directly) stated ideas and information;
 - understanding implicitly (indirectly) stated ideas and information and
 - connecting the information and ideas in a reading selection with your knowledge and personal experience.
-

Reading selections

- **information paragraph:** presents ideas and information on a topic (Example 1)
- **news report:** presents information in the form of a news story (Example 2)
- **dialogue:** presents a conversation between two or more people (Example 3)
- **real-life narrative:** presents an account of a significant time in an individual's life (Example 4)
- **graphic text:** presents ideas and information with the help of graphic features, such as diagrams, photographs, drawings, sketches, patterns, timetables, maps, charts or tables (Example 5)

Types of questions

- **multiple-choice**

Each reading text is followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. Students select the best or most correct answer from a list of four options.

Note: In this guide, correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk(*).

- **written answers**

The information paragraph, news report and dialogue are followed by one or two open-response questions. Students construct a response based on the reading selection. The length of student responses should be approximately six lines.

Note: In this guide, rubrics are not available. However, Item-Specific Rubrics and Sample Student Responses with Annotations from previously administered tests are available on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Example 1

Information Paragraph

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

Ice sculpting has been called a “sport”—part sport, part art. Like athletes, ice sculptors vie for medals at international competitions. Ice carving has been a Cultural Olympiad event at the Olympic and Paralympic Arts Festival since the 1988 Calgary Winter Games. The tools and the ice are heavy, so sculptors need endurance and strength. “It’s physically demanding working non-stop under a time constraint,” says Dan Rebholtz, who has been carving for 22 years. He is a veteran of 100 competitions, a three-time world champion and a certified judge with the National Ice Carving Association. Most North American ice carvers have art training. Their tools include chainsaws, carving chisels, electrical sanders and torches, but most important, an imagination. “Our favourite word is ‘wow,’” says Rebholtz. It’s the word most people say when they see sculptures such as *Surfacing Kingfisher* by the team of Junichi Nakamura (Japan) and Suguru Kanbayashi (Canada). Although ice sculptures are beautiful and their creation time-consuming, carvers must accept the potential for tragedy and the certainty of impermanence for their masterpieces. Melting can be a threat, but so too is crashing. Nakamura’s team, which included Rebholtz, worked almost 20 hours a day for six days on *The Birth of the Bluebird*, a gigantic sculpture of a reclining woman, her arm reaching up to a bird. Just before the judging, it toppled, when its last supporting pillar was cut—a spectacle viewed over 10 000 times on YouTube. Sport? Art? With its challenge, skill, beauty and risk, ice carving is both.



Adapted from “So Beautiful, It Can’t Last. Art in Ice Is About Tons of Snow, Heavy Chain Saws and Fame Melting in the Spotlight. In 2010, It’s Going Olympic” by Kathy Eccles, July 3, 2008. © Canadian Tourism Commission. Reprinted with permission.
© Photo: Alaska Photo Graphics.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Information Paragraph (cont'd)

Note: In this guide, correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk.

Provide your answers in the Answer Booklet.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** In what way is competitive ice sculpting different from an Olympic sporting event?
- A The winners receive medals.
 - B The judges rate a created object. *
 - C The competition requires strength.
 - D Each team includes representatives of only one country.
- 2** What does Rebholtz's quotation in lines 4 and 5 contribute to the selection?
- F an expert opinion *
 - G a specific example
 - H a contrasting opinion
 - J a link between two topics
- 3** Why do *Surfacing Kingfisher* and *The Birth of the Bluebird* appear in italics?
- A to highlight their success
 - B to signify their importance
 - C to show that they are artworks *
 - D to indicate they are winning entries
- 4** What purpose does the phrase "but most important" serve in line 9?
- F to highlight an item in a list *
 - G to exclude an item from a list
 - H to emphasize balance in a list
 - J to establish time order in a list
- 5** Which event occurred first with respect to *The Birth of the Bluebird* sculpture?
- A It was judged.
 - B Its last pillar was cut. *
 - C It crashed to the ground.
 - D Its collapse was shown on YouTube.
- 6** What is the best meaning for "spectacle" as used in line 17?
- F artwork
 - G celebration
 - H competition
 - J phenomenon *

Open-Response Question

- 7** State the main idea of this selection and provide one specific detail from the selection that supports it.

Example 2

News Report

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

This High School Starts at 10 a.m.

In September 2009, a Toronto high school started classes an hour later than usual as part of a project to determine if extra sleep improves student attendance and grades.

Research shows teens’ brains are wired to go to bed late and get up late. At puberty, the chemical that induces sleep is secreted around 11 p.m. and shuts off around 8 a.m. Studies have shown that about three-quarters of teens don’t get their necessary 8.5–9 hours of sleep a night.

The school found that punctuality, attendance, grades and credits earned were the worst in first-period classes, which started at 8:50 a.m. Teachers said many students came to class too tired to learn.

Some schools that have experimented with a later schedule report less student depression, fewer dropouts, better test scores and higher grades.

The principal has heard positive reviews from staff and students and said enrolment is up because of the new hours. He knows critics will say the new timetable coddles lazy teens and doesn’t reflect the real world, but he points out that not everyone starts work at 9 a.m. “There’s a biological need for it,” he says.

The time change has had some disadvantages. With the lunch period now an hour later, students get hungry.

One student likes the change but is no longer able to pick up a younger sibling from school. “It’s less convenient,” she says.

However, most agree with 16-year-old Tiffany. “I like it—I feel more rested.”



Adapted from the article “This high school starts at 10 a.m.” by Kristin Rushowy, published in the *Toronto Star*, September 14, 2009. Reprinted with permission—Torstar Syndication Services.

Examples of Selections and Questions

News Report (cont'd)

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** What does the principal mean by “it” in paragraph 5?
- A getting up later *
 - B going to sleep earlier
 - C eating more nutritiously
 - D eating earlier in the day
- 2** Which word is closest in meaning to “coddles” as used in paragraph 5?
- F ignores
 - G interests
 - H pampers *
 - J punishes
- 3** What has been one result of the timetable change at this Toronto high school?
- A higher grades
 - B more credits earned
 - C increased enrolment *
 - D improved test scores
- 4** Which paragraphs present the problem and its solution?
- F paragraphs 1 and 2
 - G paragraphs 3 and 4 *
 - H paragraphs 4 and 5
 - J paragraphs 6 and 7
- 5** Based on the selection, which of the following most likely had the greatest influence on the principal’s decision to change the start time?
- A requests from school staff
 - B a desire to please students
 - C research about brain chemistry *
 - D a need to prepare teens for the real world

Open-Response Question

- 6** What does the schedule change show is a priority for the staff at this school? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Example 3

Dialogue

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.



- In the kitchen, Hong was poring over the *North Bay Nugget*. 1
- Biyu squinted at the headline. “Use It or Lose It”? What 2
does that mean?”
- “According to studies,” her grandfather explained, “all older 3
people experience a decline in brain function, but of the
people tested, 80 percent saw improvements with daily
cognitive exercises. I should take the studies’ advice.”
- “What kind of advice?” inquired Biyu. 4
- “The researchers recommended thinking tasks—I should do 5
a Sudoku puzzle every day,” Hong chuckled. “But I’m not
sure I have the patience or the math skills!”
- Biyu scanned the article’s highlights in the sidebar. “Seniors who speak at least two 6
languages performed 40 percent better on memory tests.’ You could brush up on your
Cantonese!”
- He nodded. “I’ve been considering joining the Chinese Seniors’ Centre again.” 7
- “You could walk there.” She pointed and read: “Half of all socially active seniors 8
experience mental health benefits.’ Just getting to that centre would also allow you
to engage in some exercise.”
- ***
- “Thanks for walking with me, Biyu. Even though it’s frigid, this will promote my health, 9
but when it is snowing ...” continued Hong.
- “I know the perfect solution for a snow day: stay home and do brain-training games on 10
your tablet.”
- “Well, it doesn’t take me 15 minutes to locate hockey statistics on the Internet anymore,” 11
replied Hong.
- Smiling, Biyu replied. “Didn’t that article say that learning something new is crucial— 12
‘38 percent of seniors improved their scores after practising a new skill?’ It’s a twofer.”
- “Twofer?” asked Hong, puzzled. 13
- “Two-for-one. You learn to play the games—a new skill—and then you train your mind 14
through daily exercise!”

Written for EQAO.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Dialogue (cont'd)

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** From where are Biyu and Hong getting their information?
- A the tablet
 - B the Internet
 - C the newspaper *
 - D the Seniors' Centre
- 2** What is the meaning of “cognitive” as used in paragraph 3?
- F mental *
 - G physical
 - H repetitive
 - J communal
- 3** What does the break between paragraphs 8 and 9 indicate?
- A a change in mood
 - B a change in setting *
 - C a change in characters
 - D a change in point of view
- 4** According to the selection, which example would best support the headline “Use It or Lose It,” found in paragraph 2?
- F Cold weather promotes health.
 - G Sudoku puzzles require patience.
 - H Learning a second language improves memory. *
 - J Using the Internet to find statistics improves brain function.
- 5** What is the purpose of the single quotation marks in paragraph 12?
- A to show emphasis
 - B to enclose a headline
 - C to indicate a specialized meaning
 - D to identify words taken from elsewhere *

Open-Response Questions

- 6** Explain how Biyu is a supportive granddaughter. Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.
- 7** How is Hong a role model for other seniors? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.

Example 4

Real-Life Narrative

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

K'naan Goes Global



Canada had already shown its love for him—he had won a Juno and been nominated for the Polaris Music Prize, and the nation’s critics had praised both of his albums. But in March 2010, as the buzz around the release of his charity single grew, Toronto rapper K’naan was about to be heard around the world. This *Dusty Foot Philosopher* (that’s the title of his Juno-winning 2006 album) piqued interest with his incredible back story. 1

K’naan’s name means “traveller” in Somali, and his music has helped him live up to it. K’naan was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. His birth name was Keinan Warsame. His family fled the Somali civil war in 1991. He moved to New York before he settled with relatives in Rexdale, Ontario. 2

Music is part of his family’s story. His aunt, Magool, was a well-known singer in Somalia, and he’s the grandson of famed Somali poet Haji Mohamed. K’naan has continued that tradition, but put his own spin on it. The 31-year-old father of two has created a mix of rap, hip hop, spoken word and rock that transcends the world music category. 3

K’naan had a feeling from the start that his song “Wavin’ Flag” was special. “I wrote the first melody and hook and recorded it maybe two or three years ago. Then I didn’t play it for anyone or release it,” he says. “Then I performed it for two years, and finally I recorded it the way I wanted to record it. It’s a fragile thing to record a song that you feel great about, because you know what it is in your head, and you don’t want to ruin it.” “Wavin’ Flag” became a standout on the album *Troubadour*, released in February 2009. 4

Later, during the 2010 Olympics, more than 50 Canadian artists gathered in Vancouver and re-recorded the anthem as a charity single, with proceeds going to relief efforts in Haiti after its devastating earthquake. “I guess we’re all trying to somehow make sense of this world and the way it is, and why things happen to places and not other places. I think in those times when we are questioning those things, we want to rid ourselves of the sadness, we want to do something. I wanted to do my part.” Later, the song was remixed and selected as the official song of soccer’s 2010 World Cup in South Africa. 5

Examples of Selections and Questions

Real-Life Narrative (cont'd)

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

While K'naan was pleased about the choice of his song for both Haiti and the World Cup, it raised a question: Did he fear becoming a one-hit wonder? "I guess I would be...If I really didn't feel like I made good songs to listen to. If I didn't have 'Take a Minute,' or 'Fatima' or other songs that span years and years of my life...But I think when people hear 'Wavin' Flag,' people are intelligent enough to know, if someone writes a song like that, there might be something more," he says. 6

K'naan's "strong past" and affable demeanour have contributed to his success, muses Tony "Master T" Young, a long-time hip-hop booster and former MuchMusic VJ. 7
Another advantage is that K'naan's music and his vision aren't constrained by borders: "He's being positive and being global," says Young.

Indeed, the Canadian K'naan is a citizen of the world, with a song for the world. 8



Adapted from the article "Soft-spoken Somali Canadian, Knaan, about to go global" by Raju Mudhar, published in the *Toronto Star*, March 16, 2010. Reprinted with permission—Torstar Syndication Services. Photos: © Christian Lapid/The Canadian Press and Pawell Dwulit/The Canadian Press.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Real-Life Narrative (cont'd)

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** Which of the following is K'naan's birthplace?
- A Haiti
 - B Canada
 - C Somalia *
 - D South Africa
- 2** Which word is closest in meaning to "piqued" as used in paragraph 1?
- F selected
 - G demanded
 - H stimulated *
 - J discouraged
- 3** What is the function of the dash in paragraph 1?
- A to show emphasis
 - B to combine two ideas
 - C to indicate a change of topic
 - D to link an idea and an example *
- 4** Why was the song "Wavin' Flag" first recorded?
- F to celebrate the World Cup
 - G to aid in Haitian disaster relief
 - H to be part of an Olympic ceremony
 - J to be included on the album *Troubadour* *
- 5** How is the information in paragraphs 4 and 5 organized?
- A according to time *
 - B problem and solution
 - C by geographical region
 - D from most to least important
- 6** What do K'naan's words in paragraph 6 show about him?
- F He is curious.
 - G He is confident. *
 - H He is concerned.
 - J He is courageous.
- 7** How has K'naan "lived up to" his name?
- A His family is artistic.
 - B His songs are popular worldwide.
 - C He has won international awards.
 - D He has performed in many places. *
- 8** What event happened first?
- F K'naan won a Juno. *
 - G *Troubadour* was released.
 - H Musicians raised money for Haitian relief.
 - J "Wavin' Flag" became the World Cup song.
- 9** Which paragraph shows K'naan acting as a global citizen?
- A 1
 - B 4
 - C 5 *
 - D 6

Example 5

Graphic Text

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

The Global Seed Vault

Deep inside a mountain on a remote island between Norway and the North Pole is a treasure trove of seeds. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault keeps seeds safe. It preserves rare species that are becoming extinct due to climate change and human interference, and offers “insurance” in the case of a catastrophic, agriculture-destroying global event. For the vault’s sixth birthday in 2014, a shipment of seeds came from more than 100 different countries. The shipment included varieties of Japanese barley, Brazil’s “common bean,” a red okra from the U.S.A., and nearly 200 types of wild potato.

Capacity: 4 500 000 different seed varieties
Currently houses: 820 619

Entrance: Only visible part of the facility.

Keeping seeds for centuries
 The seeds are packaged in special four-ply packets, which are heat-sealed to exclude moisture. The packets are placed into plastic tote containers on metal racks. The low temperature and limited access to oxygen ensures slow aging.
 Seeds are kept at **-18°C.**

Storage chambers: Three underground chambers for seeds; each one with the capacity to store 1.5 million different samples for centuries.

Storing seeds is free. Users can access their own seeds, but not anyone else's (much like safety deposit boxes at a bank).

Why Svalbard?

- It's cold. It takes less energy to keep the seeds at -18°C .
- It's politically stable and remote.
- It's under international treaty; military activity is forbidden.

The Norwegian government funded the construction. Primary funding comes from such organizations as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and various governments worldwide.

Total floor area = just under 1000 m²

93 m access tunnel

75 m

Offices

Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Svalbard
 Barents Sea
 1000 km
 NORWAY
 EUROPE

Adapted from “The Doomsday Vault” by Megan Dinner/QMI Agency. Reprinted with permission.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Example 5

Graphic Text (cont'd)

Provide your answers in the Answer Booklet.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** Which graphic feature highlights the fact that the facility is built into the side of a mountain?
- A the map
 - B the black arrows
 - C the photograph of the entrance *
 - D the illustration of the storage chambers
- 2** Which option is closest in meaning to “capacity” as used in the selection?
- F varieties
 - G accessibility
 - H storage space *
 - J underground chambers
- 3** Which helps preserve the seeds?
- A heat
 - B cold *
 - C oxygen
 - D moisture
- 4** Which of the following measurements indicates the depth of the facility?
- F 75 m *
 - G 93 m
 - H 1000 m²
 - J 1000 km
- 5** Which section organizes information according to a process?
- A the inset map
 - B “Why Svalbard?”
 - C the introductory text
 - D “Keeping seeds for centuries” *
- 6** What aspect of the selection supports the meaning of “remote” as used in the introductory text?
- F the map of Europe *
 - G the photographs of the vault
 - H the illustration of the storage chambers
 - J the information under “Keeping seeds for centuries”

Writing

For the OSSLT, writing is defined as a constructive process of communicating in the forms in which students are expected to write according to the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.

Through a combination of short- and long-writing tasks, the OSSLT focuses on three writing skills:

- developing a main idea with specific supporting details;
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner and
- applying conventions (syntax, spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication.

The lined space provided for written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Types of questions

There are three types of writing questions on the OSSLT: long-writing tasks, short-writing tasks and multiple-choice questions.

A. Long-writing tasks

There are two long-writing tasks: a news report and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.

1. News report

- Students are required to write a news report based on the picture and headline provided. Students must find a link between the headline and the photograph that could be used as an event for a report that would appear in a newspaper. Students are given one lined page for their written work.
- A news report usually answers the questions who, what, where, when, why and how.

Note: Students should not write an advertisement, a television or radio report, a dialogue or a report about an event that will take place in the future. They should write about an event that has occurred in the past in order to inform readers about the event.

Students must make sure that

- the response is related to the picture and headline;
- the response contains sufficient and specific information and facts related to the event;
- the response is coherent and organized;
- the response is written in the third person with a reportorial tone and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

Write your answer in the *Answer Booklet*.

School team qualifies for finals



1 Task:

Write a **news report** based on the headline and picture above.

- You will have to make up the facts and information to answer some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- You must relate your news report to **both** the headline **and** the picture.

Purpose and Audience:

to report on an event for the readers of a newspaper

Length:

The lined space provided in the *Answer Booklet* for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Writing

2. A series of paragraphs expressing an opinion

- The topic will be current and familiar to teenagers.
- The student must write a minimum of, but is not limited to, three paragraphs, which include an introduction, development (may include more than one paragraph) and a conclusion. Students are given two lined pages for their written work.
- The student must express an opinion and support it with details. The opinion must be stated clearly at the beginning or end of the response.
- The student must adequately support the opinion with reasons, examples or facts.

Students must make sure that

- the opinion is clearly stated;
- they have provided enough specific detail to support it;
- the response is coherent and organized and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

Writing a Series of Paragraphs

1 Task:

Write a **minimum of three paragraphs** expressing an **opinion** on the topic below. Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.).

Audience:

an adult who is interested in your opinion

Length:

The lined space provided in the *Answer Booklet* for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Topic:

Is it important for teenagers to pay attention to world news?

Writing

B. Short-writing tasks

These tasks will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills using their knowledge and personal experience. Responses must be written in complete sentences. Students are given six lines for their written response.

Example

Short Writing Task

- 6** What was your favourite game as a child? Use specific details to explain why it was your favourite.

ROUGH NOTES

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.

Writing

C. Multiple-choice questions (writing)

The multiple-choice questions for writing deal with the three writing skills.

Example

1 Choose the sentence that does **not** belong in the paragraph.

(1) Wayne Gretzky's early career foretells what an amazing hockey player he was to become. **(2)** At ten, while playing in a league with boys four years older, he scored 378 goals in 85 games. **(3)** That was 238 more goals than the boy who came second. **(4)** At 18, Gretzky scored 46 goals as an Edmonton Oiler and won the National Hockey League Rookie of the Year award. **(5)** The Wayne Gretzky Foundation Golf Classic raises over \$120 000 a year for youth in sports.

- A Sentence 2
- B Sentence 3
- C Sentence 4
- D Sentence 5*

2 Which is the best way to combine all the information in the following sentences?

Anna's assignment is due tomorrow.

She has to work tonight.

She is feeling rushed.

- F Anna's assignment is due tomorrow because she is rushing to work tonight.
- G Anna is feeling rushed because she has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow. *
- H Since Anna's assignment is due tomorrow and she has to work tonight and she is feeling rushed.
- J Although Anna has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow because she is feeling rushed.

Writing

Example (cont'd)

3 Choose the sentence that uses capitalization correctly.

- A** My friend from manitoba, whose name is ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- B** My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- C** My friend from manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*.
- D** My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*. *

Teachers' Frequently Asked Questions

How does the OSSLT benefit teachers?

The OSSLT gives teachers valuable information about strengths and areas for improvement in their students' learning. In addition, many teachers and principals across Ontario are actively involved in test development and scoring. These experiences provide excellent professional development in curriculum and assessment and give teachers and principals opportunities to share assessment strategies and practices with colleagues.

What is the OSSLT based on?

The OSSLT is based on the expectations for literacy (reading and writing) across all subjects in *The Ontario Curriculum* up to the end of Grade 9. For more information, please refer to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test *Framework*, posted on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.

How does EQAO report results from the OSSLT?

EQAO reports on student achievement at the individual, school, board and provincial levels. Students who participate in the OSSLT will receive an Individual Student Report that indicates whether they have successfully completed the OSSLT.

Schools and boards will also receive a report that provides aggregated achievement results, aggregated contextual data about students' literacy preferences and practices and provincial results.

How do boards and schools use the OSSLT results?

Boards use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of the provincial results, and schools use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of both provincial and board data. School boards and schools can use this approach to determine relative strengths and areas for improvement in their students' achievement and to address board- and school-level remediation efforts.

Who is required to write the OSSLT?

Students who began Grade 9 during the 2000–2001 school year and those who began it thereafter are required to write the OSSLT, according to *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* (2016). These students (and any others who are placed in one of these cohorts) are required to complete the test or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) successfully in order to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Students generally participate in the test when they are in Grade 10. Students who do not participate in the OSSLT in the year following the year in which they entered Grade 9 require either a deferral or an exemption.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT. A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year of registration in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program to obtain an OSSD.

Which students can be deferred and exempted?

If a student is working toward an OSSD but either has not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English advanced enough to complete the OSSLT successfully or is unable to write the test because of illness, injury or other extenuating circumstances, the principal may grant a deferral for the current year in accordance with the EQAO deferral policy. The student will need to complete the OSSLT or the OSSLC successfully in order to earn an OSSD.

Students who have an Individual Education Plan that indicates that they are not working toward an OSSD may be exempted from writing the OSSLT. Exemptions must be documented according to EQAO's administration guide.

Is it possible for a school to modify the dates for administering the OSSLT?

No. To protect the security of test materials and to ensure the validity and reliability of the results, all students across the province must write the OSSLT at the same time. This policy applies to schools in the publicly funded system and to independent schools, including First Nations schools. Teachers and principals who are responsible for administering the OSSLT must follow this policy.

Why can't staff photocopy test materials? Wouldn't it be helpful for teachers to read the test so they can better support and prepare students?

The OSSLT is a secure test and confidentiality must be ensured. Field-test items are embedded in the OSSLT to be tested for future use. Teachers are encouraged to use the materials on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com, to support and prepare students.

Why are there field-test items on the OSSLT, and how do they affect student results?

Field testing ensures the quality of current and future test items and helps to ensure year-to-year comparability. EQAO embeds field-test items in every student's test each year. No student is disadvantaged by the placement of these items in the OSSLT. The scores on the field-test items are not included in the student's result. The time allocated to write the test has been calculated to include field-test items.

Students' Frequently Asked Questions

Who has to take the OSSLT?

If you entered Grade 9 in September 2000 or later and are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, you must write the OSSLT to graduate. This applies to all students in publicly funded schools and inspected private schools.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT.

A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year of registration in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

How long will it take me to write the test?

The allotted time for each of the two sessions is one hour and 15 minutes. It is very important that you manage your time to complete the entire test.

Is the test difficult?

The OSSLT is designed to reflect the requirements of *The Ontario Curriculum*. The test assesses literacy (reading and writing) skills students are expected to have acquired by the end of Grade 9.

Who marks the OSSLT?

Each test is scored by several qualified individuals who have received special training for this purpose.

Does my name appear anywhere?

Written responses are identified only by a number. Furthermore, the booklets from different schools and different school boards are all mixed up when they are distributed for scoring.

How will I receive my results?

You will receive an Individual Student Report indicating whether or not you have successfully completed the OSSLT.

What happens if I do not pass the OSSLT?

You can take the test again the following year or you can talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher about taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) instead of retaking the test.

What is the OSSLC?

The OSSLC is another way of meeting the literacy graduation requirement.

Principals have the discretion to allow a student to enrol in the OSSLC before the second opportunity to take the OSSLT if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the student (Ministry of Education Policy/*Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* [2016]).

Students whose results are withheld are not eligible to enroll in the OSSLC. A withheld result does not count as an attempt.

What happens if I leave questions blank?

You'll get a score of zero for these questions.

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



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