

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

COMPULSORY EXAMINATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

End of Elementary Cycle Three

514-600

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INTRODUCTION

This document conveys information concerning the end of Cycle Three English Language Arts obligatory Learning and Evaluation Situation (LES), scheduled for administration between April and June 2008. The primary aim is to provide, in advance, general information about the assessment tool. It contains important information regarding the nature, scheduling and scoring of the examination.

The 2008 LES offers core activities that target key language competencies. It is useful to recall at this time that features incorporated into this LES have been determined through direct and ongoing consultation with English Language Arts teachers and consultants throughout the province. Feedback that was received following the 2007 Elementary Cycle Three LES has also been given consideration.

Please be advised that during the summer of 2008 there will be a provincial study of end of Cycle Three student performances in Language Arts, using work obtained from the 2008 LES. The purpose of this study is not to compare schools or students, nor to evaluate teachers, but rather to examine the efficacy of the program over time, as both teachers and students become more familiar with the goals for performance in English Language Arts as described in the Québec Education Program (QEP). The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport will randomly select students to participate in this study. The work of these randomly selected students will be scored during the summer marking session; however, the initial scoring of the exam continues to be the responsibility of schools and school boards. Schools will be notified at a later date if they are to forward students' work for the purposes of the study.

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1. Overview of the Learning and Evaluation Situation (LES)

In cooperation with teachers and consultants in the province, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) designs quality instruments in language assessment. These instruments provide insights into assessment approaches that are of proven validity. Furthermore, they provide opportunities for professional development in evaluation strategies by scoring student work according to specified criteria. The goal is to analyze and describe the performance of students in English schools in Québec at the end of Elementary Cycle Three. Teachers may include the evidence from this assessment in conjunction with students' year-long performances to form judgments about the levels of competency attained by the end of the cycle for the end-of-cycle report.

2. General Nature of the LES

The 2008 LES offers a number of core activities that target key language abilities as described in the Québec Education Program (QEP). For students with special needs, all activities can be adapted or modified and incorporated into the students' existing evaluation procedures as described in her/his current and up-dated Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Modifications and/or adaptations must follow those that are already in place and that are applied for instruction during the current school year. If adaptations and /or modifications are made, the term "adapted" or "modified." or both should appear on the covers of the IEP students' *Processfolios*. These booklets will not be part of the provincial study described in the Introduction on p. 1

The activities are designed in such a way that they yield information on the following:

- Reading/viewing and listening to literary, popular and information-based texts, followed by response to literature
- Writing self-expressive, narrative or information-based texts for a specific purpose and audience
- Using language conventions
- Using talk to communicate and to learn
- Using cross-curricular competencies

The LES reflects practices consistent with the following documents: *Québec Education Program*; *Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool and Elementary Levels*; *Evaluation Framework*; and *Competency Levels by Cycle, Elementary School*. As well, the LES offers guidance to teachers who seek to inform themselves about the effectiveness of their classroom practices. All activities are authentic in that they give students opportunity to purposefully use language in real situations.

3. Learning Principles Incorporated Into the LES

These principles include the following:

- Integrated use of all the language processes (listening, responding, communicating)
- Time for students to work through a task in more than one session
- Peer interaction to explore ideas and to seek feedback

4. Evaluation Principles Incorporated Into the LES

These principles include the following:

- Providing students with precise information about what is expected of them
- Defining precisely what is valued or expected of the students in their work (performance criteria)
- Providing calibrated descriptive ranges of performance
- Providing students with scoring criteria in advance, along with examples of student work (exemplars for practice in applying the criteria)*
- Ensuring that what is defined is measurable, and that what is measurable is consistent with curriculum
- Using several examples of the student's work to evaluate performance for the year
- Establishing an evaluation centre where teachers examine and score student work by applying the performance criteria following procedures that ensure reliability of the scores
- Providing sufficient time for evaluating students' work

* To help students understand the performance criteria, teachers will be given a document containing annotated exemplars gathered from the 2007 English Language Arts examination; this document will be available on the MELS Web site.

5. Rubrics

The rubrics will describe five levels of performance in order to facilitate communication with high school teachers about Elementary Cycle Three students' results as these students move to the high school setting, where a five-point scale is used to describe levels of competency.

Whereas the performance criteria are elaborated using professional language intended for teachers, teachers will find that examining the exemplars with their students provides an ideal opportunity for helping students restate the criteria in a language that is more familiar to them.

6. Assessment Materials

The assessment includes the following materials, which will be provided by the MELS:

- A video in DVD format
- Resource package(s) for students
- *Student Booklet(s)*
- *Teacher Guide*
- *Administration Guide*

7. The Components of the Learning and Evaluation Situation

7.1 Overview

The assessment will focus on the following language competencies: strategic reading of visual texts; response to literature; writing for a particular purpose and audience; using language conventions; using language to communicate and to learn; activating cross-curricular competencies. Five-point rubrics will be provided for scoring the tasks.

7.2 Content

As students are exposed to an increasingly wide range of information via visual texts, they need to develop literacy skills to help them critically think about how these texts communicate messages and convey meaning. The 2008 LES will focus on an essential question that will mobilize students' strategies for visual literacy. Students will experience the ways in which visual texts help readers draw on narrative structures to construct meaning.

7.3 Strategic Reading and Response to Literature

Reading performance will be assessed through strategic reading and response to literature, as well as by other tasks requiring comprehension of both written and visual texts. The strategic reading tasks will call for students to compare and contrast two images, and to synthesize the information illustrated in these texts.

After several readings of the selected text(s) followed by discussion in both large and small groups, students will write their thoughts about and reactions to the issues and themes elaborated in the text(s). Performance criteria for both strategic reading and response to literature will describe the levels of competency in reading that the student demonstrates in completing these tasks.

7.4 Writing for Purpose and Audience

Based on a variety of visual texts provided with the LES, students will select an image from which to create a narrative for a selected audience. Students must be given sufficient time during the examination to draft and revise their writing. Performance criteria for writing will describe the level of competency that the student demonstrates through the task(s), and will include criteria for the evaluation of use of language conventions.

7.5 Using Language to Communicate and to Learn

Talk for communication and learning will be embedded throughout the LES. Students will not be required to give an oral presentation; however, they will participate in activities that will require them to brainstorm and discuss issues within small and large group settings. Talk for learning will be emphasized throughout the activities and students will be asked to reflect on their participation in the group activities.

7.6 Using Cross-Curricular Competencies

The use of cross-curricular competencies will be integrated into the tasks. The rubrics provided will incorporate indicators related to the cross-curricular competencies activated by carrying out the tasks.

8. Administering the Learning and Evaluation Situation

Schools are responsible for administering the LES, following the guidelines stated in the *Teacher's Guide*. Please note that students read the assigned texts independently, **unless otherwise indicated** in the *Teacher's Guide*. All tasks are to be completed on school premises, preferably in the normal classroom setting, unless otherwise indicated.

In the case of combined classes, that is, classes made up of Cycle Three students from both Year 1 and Year 2 (Grades 5 and 6), teachers may want to have all their students undertake the LES. In January 2008, the Direction de la sanction des études will request school boards and independent schools to complete a form so that they may order the required number of copies of the LES.

This LES is officially scheduled to be administered between April 14 and June 13, 2008. Generally, all the tasks should take approximately ten hours in total. If necessary, more time may be allocated to revise writing. Teachers will need to designate a block of time during which they will administer the LES in a sustained, continuous procedure.

It should be noted that **sustained time** on tasks is required to allow students to engage in activities that call for critical thinking and problem solving—components characteristic of competency-based learning. As students require sustained time to contextualize and to become familiar with the tasks, as well as to undertake both group and independent activities, some individual tasks may take some students longer to complete than others. Some classes may require more or less time to complete some tasks. Adjustments may be made according to the differing needs of groups; however, sufficient time must be allowed for students to sustain and complete tasks as described in the *Teacher's Guide*. As some tasks may take more than one hour to complete, such as composing and revising a narrative text, schools are asked to adjust schedules accordingly. Materials will be sent out to schools prior to the beginning date in April, to allow teachers to become familiar with the texts and procedures.

9. Scoring the Assessment and Follow-Up Study

Evaluation of student work is done locally in a marking centre, using the scoring criteria (rubrics) found in the *Teacher's Guide*. Teachers work collaboratively to select anchor papers drawn directly from the students' work that are representative samplings of each level of competency. The anchor papers serve as benchmarks for the subsequent marking of student work.

Approximately three days are required to complete the scoring.

Procedures:

- After students have finished the LES, teachers should meet to establish anchor papers.
- These anchor papers serve as standards of performance.
- Sufficient time should be provided for teachers to complete the evaluation of student work in a centre organized for this purpose to ensure reliability of the scoring.
- School boards are responsible for providing time for teachers to complete the marking.

For the provincial study of students' work at end of Elementary Cycle Three, the MELS will follow standard statistical research procedure and call for randomly selected student work. The students' school boards will forward the complete, scored work of the selected students to the Ministère by June 16, 2008. Teachers are asked to include their reflections on the administration of the LES, as indicated in the *Teacher's Guide*. More detailed information pertaining to the provincial study will be available at a later date.

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APPENDIX

READING IMAGES: AN INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL LITERACY

By Melissa Thibault and David Walbert

Images are all around us, and the ability to interpret them meaningfully is a vital skill for students to learn.

"Literacy" usually means the ability to read and write, but it can also refer to the ability to "read" kinds of signs other than words — for example, images or gestures. The proliferation of images in our culture — in newspapers and magazines, in advertising, on television, and on the Web — makes *visual literacy*, the ability to "read" images, a vital skill. But what does it mean to read an image, and how can teachers help students develop the skills to do so thoughtfully?

Visual literacy is the ability to see, to understand, and ultimately to think, create, and communicate graphically. Generally speaking, the visually literate viewer looks at an image carefully, critically, and with an eye for the intentions of the image's creator. Those skills can be applied equally to any type of image: photographs, paintings and drawings, graphic art (including everything from political cartoons to comic books to illustrations in children's books), films, maps, and various kinds of charts and graphs. All convey information and ideas, and visual literacy allows the viewer to gather the information and ideas contained in an image, place them in context, and determine whether they are valid.

Like traditional literacy, visual literacy encompasses more than one level of skill. The first level in reading is simply decoding words and sentences, but reading *comprehension* is equally (if not more) important: teachers work to help students not only to decode words but also to make sense of what they read. That understanding requires broad vocabulary, experience in a particular content area, and critical thought, and teachers have various approaches and strategies to help students build contextual understanding of what they read.

The first level of visual literacy, too, is simple knowledge: basic identification of the subject or elements in a photograph, work of art, or graphic. The skills necessary to identify details of images are included in many disciplines; for example, careful observation is essential to scientific inquiry. But while accurate observation is important, *understanding* what we see and comprehending visual relationships are at least as important. These higher-level visual literacy skills require critical thinking, and they are essential to a student's success in any content area in which information is conveyed through visual formats such as charts and maps. They are also beneficial to students attempting to make sense of the barrage of images they may face in texts and Web resources.

Visual literacy skills are already employed in a variety of disciplines. Observation, as we've noted, is integral to science. Critique, useful in considering what should be included in an essay in Language Arts, is also a part of examining a visual image. Deconstruction, employed in mathematical problem solving, is used with images to crop and evaluate elements and how they relate to the whole. Discerning point of view or bias is important in analyzing advertisements and works of art.

Specific visual formats require specific approaches to visual understanding. The Web site indicated below includes media-specific techniques and resources to help students to use the information contained in various types of images, to analyze that information, and to use those types of images to build their visual communication skills.

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LEARNING TO LOOK AT ART

By Melissa Thibault

Strategies for helping students develop visual literacy in looking at paintings and other forms of visual art.

"We all look at the same things, yet see different things."
— Claude Monet

Everyone has different ideas about art. Some of our ideas are influenced by our own perspectives and experience with artistic creation, while others are shaped by our teachers and parents or our visits to museums. But how much have we thought about those ideas? Have we considered them carefully, or are they mostly unconscious?

Whether they see art at school, in books, on television, in galleries, in public places, or in museums, students need guidance to do more than glance at a work and make quick judgments about it. Learning to look requires the skills and vocabulary to make observations, build understanding, and respond effectively to art.

Appealing to students

No matter your taste, there is something for everyone at the art museum. Many people are intrigued by the colors and perspectives of Claude Monet, Mary Cassat, Edgar Degas, and other Impressionists. Monet's painting entitled *Impression Sunrise* began the Impressionist movement, taking advantage of the popularization of photography to free artists from reproducing reality in their painting. With the camera now doing a job that had previously fallen to painters, Impressionists were able to use light, color and innovative techniques to produce a view of the natural world unique to their own eyes. Their view was not appreciated during their time, but today, visitors flock to see Impressionist exhibits in museums.

If Impressionist paintings don't appeal to them, students may be attracted to the natural grandeur of Ansel Adams or the sense of place evoked in the work of Berenice Abbott. Both photographers used the contrasts in black and white photography to express their vision. Students may also enjoy the humor of Marcel Duchamp, whose unique way of viewing the ordinary, shown in his readymades, provides challenging questions for even the most observant. Unless they have the opportunity to explore, students will have no idea what the range of choices are and what they might find intriguing.

Activities and lessons for learning to look

Before viewing works of art, students need help to focus their observations and prepare to respond thoughtfully. Assigning a formal, written critique of a single work of art will help students to prepare to be thoughtful observers. The formal critique gives students a clear framework for recording their observations. Of course, this kind of critique is not limited to the visual arts; serious examination and judgment are required in the study of literature and in response to performances in Theatre Arts.

Assigning a critique provides an opportunity for students to begin to consider their own reactions to a work; to learn what style, medium, and subject they most enjoy, and to build their own understanding of visual art as a whole. In-depth written description of a work of art quickly makes clear the amount of information we process with our eyes, and it helps students to see *all*

aspects of a work, as well as leading to the analysis, interpretation, and judgment required to fully appreciate the work.

For more information about critiquing art, see "Teaching Students to Critique" by Joyce Payne. This article provides questions from the four major areas of art criticism: *description*, *analysis*, *interpretation*, and *judgment*. In addition, the lesson plan "Art as Inquiry: Art Criticism" is an excellent general lesson plan for critique. A versatile web-based lesson for getting students to think critically about art is "How to Read a Painting" by Will Hanson. This lesson can be used with an online art collection, prints from your school collection or applied to a museum visit.

For elementary students, you may focus their experience by using a *theme* and by emphasizing the five senses as described in the Art Walk from the ArtsConnectEd website. In this activity, students are encouraged to imagine themselves "walking through" the place depicted in a painting, photograph, or sculpture. As the students imagine themselves as integral parts of a work of art, the work is made more relevant to them and they respond more thoughtfully. This approach is similar to the picture walk, a pre-reading technique used to assess prior knowledge and build student interest in the story through observation and prediction. (For an explanation of the picture walk and other visual literacy techniques for reading picture books, see our article on "Reading Picture Books.")

You need not be an art teacher to include the visual arts in your instruction. Multidisciplinary lesson plans that integrate visual arts effectively, such as this wonderful science plan, "Explorations in American Environmental History," from the Library of Congress American Memory Learning Pages, are easy to locate: simply use the "advanced search" page in any lesson plan collection to search for *Art and Science* or *Art and Social Studies*. Teachers not experienced in teaching art may also find guidance in exhibit or media-specific educators' guides, such as the Center for Creative Photography's *Intimate Nature: Ansel Adams and the Close View*, which includes activities like "Suggestions for Discussing and Interpreting the Photographs" and "Learning to Look."

Finding art

If you're building students' powers of observation and analysis, art museums provide the variety of images and designs you need to reach every student. Ideally, you can take your class to visit an art museum on a field trip. Locate a museum in your area using Discover NC, LEARN North Carolina's growing collection of educational destinations across North Carolina. If a field trip is out of the question, perhaps online web exhibits and museum outreach resources can bring the resources to your students and will accomplish the same goals. Don't forget to include a pre- and post-visit lesson for your students to acquire as much as possible out of their trip.

Students will enjoy learning about art through technology and interactive programs. A good interactive online resource for using art with upper elementary and middle school children to build visual skills is smART Kids, published by the University of Chicago's David & Alfred Smart Museum of Art. (The free Macromedia Flash plugin is required). Guided by four animated young people, students will learn the language of art, experience art in new ways, and unravel clues about the history of select pieces of art. The "Look and Share" section allows us to see art in new ways. Consider texture, scale, shape, line, color and other design elements as you explore a painting, photograph, sculpture or object. Images are high-quality, and in most cases, you can select viewing options such as zoom, rotate, and even crop. Pay particular attention to the photograph section; students are encouraged to consider the decisions made by the photographer including focus, focal point and composition.

For middle and high school, start locating art images to enhance your presentation with the National Gallery of Art Classroom, which provides in-depth looks at specific pieces as well as thematic tours of the National Gallery. Browse the collection of lessons by curriculum area, topic, or artist; or use the search function. The resources are more than simple lesson plans; they are visually rich activities, complete with questions and even interactive elements. For example, since "artists are often particularly keen observers and precise recorders of the physical conditions of the natural world," you can observe places over time and differences in climate using the Art and Ecology unit. Or, consider the composition and symbolic elements of just one work, a painting that captures a moment in time, like Johannes Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*.

For more activities and resources, see our weblibliography of art-related sites and activities.

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