

**Alberta Provincial  
Achievement Testing**

**Assessment  
Highlights  
2013–2014**

**GRADE  
9**

# **Social Studies**

*Alberta*  Government

This document contains assessment highlights from the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test.

Assessment highlights provide information about the overall test, the test blueprints, and student performance on the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test. Also provided is commentary on student performance at the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on selected items from the 2014 achievement test. This information is intended for teachers and is best used in conjunction with the multi-year and detailed school reports that are available to schools via the extranet. **Assessment highlights reports** for all achievement test subjects and grades will be **posted on the Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

Released test items, which contained approximately 25% of the total number of test items from previously secured achievement tests, were mailed to school administrators each fall from 2004 to 2006 and had been made available to teachers in only print form because of copyright limitations. **Every second year**, as of the fall of 2007, **a complete test** for all achievement test subjects and grades (except grades 3, 6, and 9 Français/French Language Arts and Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability courses) will be posted on the Alberta Education website. A test blueprint and an answer key that includes the difficulty, reporting category, and item description for each test item will also be included. These materials, along with the program of studies and subject bulletin, provide information that can be used to inform instructional practice.

For further information, contact Harvey Stables, Grade 9 Humanities Assessment Standards Team Leader, at [Harvey.Stables@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Harvey.Stables@gov.ab.ca); Amy Villneff, Grade 9 Humanities Assessment Standards Examiner, at [Amy.Villneff@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Amy.Villneff@gov.ab.ca); or Sean Wells, Director, Achievement Testing, Student Learning Assessments & Document Production, at [Sean.Wells@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Sean.Wells@gov.ab.ca); or call 780-427-0010. To call toll-free from outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

The Alberta Education Internet address is [education.alberta.ca](http://education.alberta.ca).

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ of Grade 9 Social Studies
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

Copyright 2014, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Assessment Sector, 44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 108 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 5E6, and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Special permission** is granted to **Alberta educators only** to reproduce, for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis, parts of this document that do **not** contain excerpted material.

Excerpted material in this document **shall not** be reproduced without the written permission of the original publisher (see credits, where applicable).

## *Contents*

The 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test .....	1
2014 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement .....	2
Commentary on 2014 Student Achievement .....	3
Achievement Testing Program Support Documents.....	8

# The 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of all students who wrote the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

## How Many Students Wrote the Test?

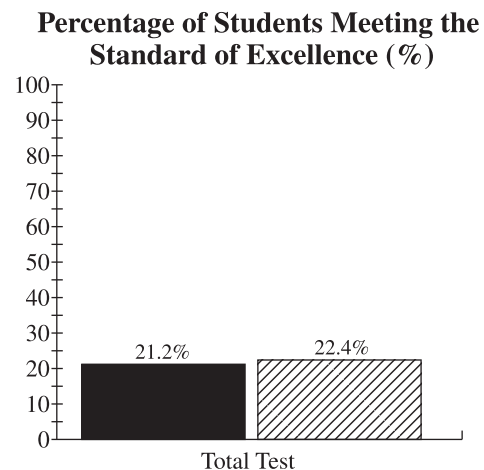
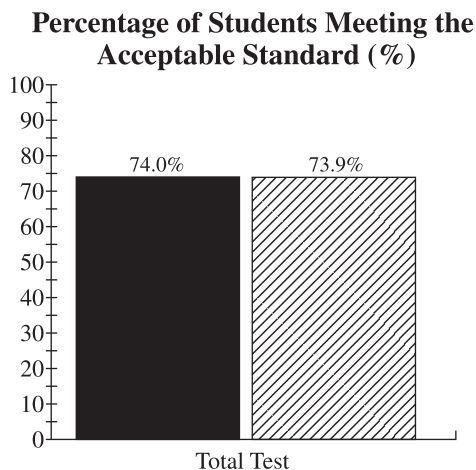
A total of 38 902 students wrote the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test.

## What Was the Test Like?

The 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions based on specific outcomes (SOs) within each of the two general outcomes (GOs) in the *2007 Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies*: GO 9.1 Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights and GO 9.2 Issues for Canadians: Economic Systems in Canada and the United States.

## How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2014 are shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 50, the provincial average on the test was 32.1 (64.2%). The examination statistics that are included in this document represent all writers: both French and English. If you would like to obtain English-only statistics or French-only statistics that apply to your school, please refer to your detailed reports that are available on the extranet. Detailed provincial assessment results are provided in school and jurisdiction reports.



 2013 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2013 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

 2014 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test (based on those who wrote).

# 2014 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2014, 73.9% of all students who wrote the test achieved the acceptable standard on the Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test, and 22.4% of all students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence. Student achievement on the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test averaged 32.1 out of a total score of 50 (64.2%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and test sections (curricular content areas) by which 2014 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities, and it shows the provincial average of student achievement by both raw score and percentage.

Test Section (Curricular Content Area)	Reporting Category		Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)
	Knowledge and Understanding <sup>1</sup>	Skills and Processes <sup>2</sup>	
<b>The Political and Judicial System (9.1.4, 9.1.5)<sup>3</sup></b> Students examine the structure of Canada's federal political system and analyze the role of citizens and organizations in Canada's justice system by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how federal laws are passed</li> <li>• branches of the federal government</li> <li>• selection of MPs and senators</li> <li>• accountability of MPs and senators</li> <li>• the role of federal political parties</li> <li>• the role of media in political issues</li> <li>• lobby groups and government decisions</li> <li>• extent to which political and legislative processes meet the needs of Canadians</li> <li>• participation in Canada's justice system</li> <li>• citizens' legal roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• the Youth Criminal Justice Act</li> </ul>			<b>7.3/11 (66.4%)</b>
<b>Individual and Collective Rights (9.1.6, 9.1.7)<sup>3</sup></b> Students critically assess the impact of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on legislative processes in Canada and how increased demand for recognition of collective rights has impacted legislative processes in Canada by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognition of individual rights</li> <li>• exercising individual rights</li> <li>• conditions in the workplace</li> <li>• rights and responsibilities of citizens</li> <li>• recognition of collective rights</li> <li>• the needs of Francophone minorities</li> <li>• the needs of Francophones in Québec</li> <li>• the rights of official language minorities</li> <li>• the Indian Act</li> <li>• Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8</li> <li>• legislation and Métis cultures and rights</li> </ul>			<b>6.8/11 (61.8%)</b>
<b>Immigration (9.1.8)<sup>3</sup></b> Students critically assess how legislative processes address issues of immigration by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• factors influencing immigration policies</li> <li>• changes to Canadian policies on immigration and refugees</li> <li>• immigration and Aboriginal peoples</li> <li>• provincial immigration policies</li> <li>• immigration policies in Québec</li> <li>• immigration policies and the Charter</li> <li>• how Canada benefits from immigration</li> </ul>			<b>5.2/8 (65.0%)</b>
<b>Economic Decision Making (9.2.4)<sup>3</sup></b> Students analyze principles and practices of market and mixed economies by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• principles of a market economy</li> <li>• government intervention</li> <li>• Canada's mixed economy</li> <li>• consumers in market and mixed economies</li> <li>• consumer individual and collective identity</li> <li>• the economic impact of labour unions</li> <li>• government intervention in the economy</li> <li>• the basic economic question of scarcity</li> </ul>			<b>5.3/8 (66.3%)</b>
<b>Consumerism, Quality of Life, and Political Decision Making (9.2.5, 9.2.6)<sup>3</sup></b> Students critically assess the relationship between consumerism and quality of life in Canada and the United States and the interrelationship between political decisions and economic systems by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators of quality of life</li> <li>• individual consumer behaviour</li> <li>• how marketing affects consumerism</li> <li>• consumerism and quality of life</li> <li>• consumerism as a power of a collective</li> <li>• consumerism and economic growth</li> <li>• values underlying social programs</li> <li>• economic platforms of political parties</li> <li>• political party philosophies and platforms</li> <li>• the underground economy</li> <li>• environmental issues and quality of life</li> </ul>			<b>7.4/12 (61.7%)</b>
<b>Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)</b>	<b>13.3/19 (70.0%)</b>	<b>18.8/31 (60.6%)</b>	<b>Total Test Raw Score = 50</b>

<sup>1</sup>**Knowledge and Understanding**—includes the breadth and depth of information, concepts, evidence, ideas, and opinions fundamental to decision making as identified in the *Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007)*.

<sup>2</sup>**Skills and Processes**—includes the application of critical and creative thinking, historical thinking, geographic thinking, decision making, problem solving, and media literacy to relevant situations as identified in the *Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007)*.

<sup>3</sup>Bolded numbers in parentheses cross-reference specific outcomes in the *Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007)*.

## Commentary on 2014 Student Achievement

The following is a discussion of student achievement on the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test. Sample questions are provided to highlight levels of achievement of students who met the acceptable standard, students who met the standard of excellence, and students who did not meet the acceptable standard. For each question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk.

Together, the first three blueprint categories encompass outcomes contained in General Outcome 9.1 Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights, wherein students are expected to analyze Canada’s political and legislative processes and their impact on issues pertaining to governance, rights, citizenship, and identity. In the **Political and Judicial System** blueprint category (composed of 11 questions), students were expected to examine the structure of Canada’s federal political system (Specific Outcome 9.1.4) and analyze the role that citizens and organizations play in Canada’s justice system (Specific Outcome 9.1.5) by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues pertaining to:

- How do lobby groups impact government decision making? (SO 9.1.4)
- How are laws passed in the federal political system? (SO 9.1.4)
- How do citizens and organizations participate in Canada’s justice system (i.e., jury duty, knowing the law, advocacy, John Howard Society, Elizabeth Fry Society)? (SO 9.1.5)
- What are citizens’ legal roles and their responsibilities? (SO 9.1.5)

Students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the role played by lobby groups in Canada’s federal political system, the process by which laws are created in Canada, and the purpose of advocacy groups in Canada’s justice system. Students who met the standard of excellence additionally demonstrated strengths in recognizing issues arising from the extent to which lobbyists may influence democratic decision making in Canada, assessing arguments underlying differing viewpoints on the efficacy of Canada’s legislative processes, and evaluating the merits of legislation related to the granting of pardons for criminal convictions. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were generally able to recognize key institutions in Canada’s federal political system. However, many of these students struggled with questions pertaining to some of the complexities inherent in the enactment of legislation in Canada’s Parliament and demonstrated a limited awareness of societal concerns related to the sealing of an individual’s criminal record.

Some of the aforementioned differences in student performance are evident in the following analysis of questions taken from the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test.

In question 7 (blueprinted as a **Skills and Processes** question), students were required to determine the inference a critic of a viewpoint presented could make from a cartoon regarding the role of senators in Canada’s political system (SO 9.S.1).

7. A critic of the parliamentary system that is described in Source II could infer from the cartoon in Source III that senators may
- A. prevent bills from receiving royal assent
  - B. create bills to be approved by members of Parliament
  - C. dismiss bills without the consent of the governing party
  - \*D. support bills without being informed of the content of the legislation

The correct answer (option **D**) was chosen by 49.7% of all students who wrote the test. These students were able to determine—from a speaker’s comments in one source that cite beneficial aspects of Canada’s legislative processes—how a critic of the speaker’s viewpoint could infer from a cartoon in another source—in which a senator is telling another senator “No senator, we don’t vote on the bill until it’s written”—that senators may not emulate the sentiments of the speaker with regard to fulfilling “the responsibility to give thoughtful consideration to the legislation before they approve it.” Option **A** (selected by 24.4% of all students) references the fact that a bill that is voted down by the Senate cannot receive royal assent, a fact that supports the stance of a critic of the speaker’s viewpoint. However, this answer is based on the incorrect conclusion that the senator depicted in the cartoon has decided to vote against a bill before it has been drafted. Option **B** (selected by 13.3% of all students) documents the possibility that senators may initiate and vote on bills that are then sent to the House of Commons for approval, but this

observation is both contrary to what a critic of the speaker’s viewpoint would contend and tangentially related to details in the cartoon. Option **C** (selected by 12.5% of all students) plausibly posits that senators may vote against a bill that is supported by the party in power in the House of Commons. While this prospect is consistent with what a critic of the speaker’s viewpoint might argue, this answer is based on the flawed understanding that the senator depicted in the cartoon opposes the content of a bill that has yet to be created. Overall, the correct answer for this question was selected by 48.5% of those students who achieved the acceptable standard, 78.4% of those students who met the standard of excellence, and 27.4% of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard.

In the section of the 2014 achievement test blueprinted for curricular content pertaining to **Individual and Collective Rights** (composed of 11 questions), students were required to assess, critically, the impact of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on legislative processes in Canada (Specific Outcome 9.1.6) and assess, critically, how the increased demand for recognition of collective rights has impacted legislative processes in Canada (Specific Outcome 9.1.7) by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding:

- In what ways has the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms fostered recognition of individual rights in Canada? (SO 9.1.6)
- How does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms support individuals in exercising their rights? (SO 9.1.6)
- In what ways has the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms fostered recognition of collective rights in Canada? (SO 9.1.7)
- To what extent should federal and provincial governments support and promote the rights of official-language minorities in Canada? (SO 9.1.7)
- How does the Indian Act recognize the status and identity of Aboriginal peoples? (SO 9.1.7)

Students who met the acceptable standard were able to recognize how the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the rights of individuals, how provincial legislation in Québec guarantees access to minority-language education, and how the Indian Act acknowledges the collective rights of Aboriginal peoples. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally able to appreciate the societal implications of the government’s promotion of the rights of individuals, assess the extent to which minority-language educational rights have been guaranteed to official-language communities in Québec, and acknowledge the values underlying disparate viewpoints and perspectives regarding the negotiation with government of terms of the Indian Act for First Nations peoples. For students who did not meet the acceptable standard, questions that required forming generalizations regarding both the rights and responsibilities of Canadians, making connections among historical events related to official-language rights in Canada, or synthesizing information related to the inherent rights of First Nations peoples frequently proved challenging.

In question 18 (blueprinted as a **Skills and Processes** question), students were required to form a generalization regarding the issue pertaining to recognition of official-language rights in Québec that is raised in two sources (SO 9.S.4).

- 18.** Both sources **most directly** examine the extent to which the Québec government
- \***A.** protects the rights of members of Canada’s official-language communities
  - B.** acknowledges the cultural diversity of immigrants to Canada
  - C.** encourages students to learn more than one language
  - D.** promotes enrolment in privately funded schools

Of all students who wrote the test, 67.1% chose the keyed response (option **A**). These students were able to conclude (from information in one source documenting the enactment of three laws that have regulated access to English-language schools in Québec and four viewpoints in another source regarding access to English-language education in Québec) that the issue most directly examined pertains to the extent to which the rights of official-language communities are protected by the Québec government as required by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Option **B** (selected by 11.7% of all students) incorrectly suggests that the issue at hand pertains to the Québec government’s acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of immigrants to Canada, a conclusion that reflects an inaccurate understanding of the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that are related to the recognition of collective rights.

Option **C** (selected by 15.8% of all students) erroneously suggests that the issue at hand is most directly related to the extent to which the Québec government encourages students to learn more than one language, a conclusion based on an inference that is loosely connected to the information in either source. Option **D** (selected by 5.3% of all students) presents the misinterpretation that the discussion of access to publicly funded schooling for official-language minorities in Québec addresses the extent to which enrolment in privately funded schools is promoted by the Québec government. Of those students who met the acceptable standard, 69.1% answered this question correctly. Of those students who met the standard of excellence, 89.1% chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard, 44.4% selected the correct response.

In the **Immigration** blueprint category (composed of 8 questions), students were expected to assess, critically, how legislative processes attempt to address emerging issues of immigration (Specific Outcome 9.1.8) by exploring and reflecting on the questions and issues related to:

- What factors influence immigration policies in Canada (i.e., economic, political, health, security)? (SO 9.1.8)
- How are changes to Canadian policies on immigration and refugees a reflection of world issues? (SO 9.1.8)
- What is the relationship between immigration policies in Canada and the rights guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? (SO 9.1.8)
- What impact does increasing immigration have on Aboriginal peoples and communities? (SO 9.1.8)
- To what extent does Canada benefit from immigration? (SO 9.1.8)

Those students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to identify factors related to Canada’s policies on immigration and refugees and recognize that immigrants play a role in Canada’s economy. Students achieving the standard of excellence could also assess concerns related to the need to ensure that all immigration applicants are treated equitably and appreciate the growing importance of Aboriginal peoples and immigrants in providing labour to meet the demand for workers to fill job vacancies. Students who did not meet the acceptable standard sometimes had difficulty analyzing issues arising from the application of Canada’s policies on immigration and refugees as well as acknowledging conflicting viewpoints regarding the benefits of immigration to Canada.

In question 27 (blueprinted as a **Knowledge and Understanding** question), students were required to recognize the immigration category to which information in a chart applies (SO 9.1.8).

27. The point system (Source I) applies to which of the following immigration categories?
- \*A. Skilled workers and business people
  - B. People accepted for humanitarian or compassionate reasons
  - C. People who are escaping persecution, torture, or cruel and unusual punishment
  - D. Spouses, partners, children, parents, and grandparents of people living in Canada

Of all students who wrote the test, 82.6% were able to recall—from their knowledge related to “**Factors in the Point System Used by the Federal Government to Select Individuals Who Want to Immigrate to Canada**” identified in Source I—that the point system applies only to “economic-class immigrants,” the immigration category that includes skilled workers and business people, and chose the keyed response (option **A**). Option **B** (selected by 5.6% of all students) identifies individuals who are accepted for humanitarian or compassionate reasons and classified as “other” under Canada’s immigration laws, an immigration category to which the point system does not apply. Option **C** (selected by 4.5% of all students) identifies individuals who are escaping persecution, torture, or cruel and unusual punishment and classified as “refugees” under Canada’s immigration laws, an immigration category to which the point system does not apply. Option **D** (selected by 7.2% of all students) identifies individuals who are spouses, partners, children, parents, and grandparents of people living in Canada and classified as “family-class immigrants” under Canada’s immigration laws, an immigration category to which the point system does not apply. Of those students who met the acceptable standard, 88.6% answered this question correctly. Of those students who met the standard of excellence, 97.9% chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard, 57.7% selected the correct response.

The final two blueprint categories encompass outcomes within General Outcome 9.2 Issues for Canadians: Economic Systems in Canada and the United States, in which students are required to



demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how economic decision making in Canada and the United States impacts quality of life, citizenship, and identity. With regard to curricular content in the blueprint category related to **Economic Decision Making** (composed of 8 questions), students were required to compare and contrast the principles and practices of market and mixed economies (Specific Outcome 9.2.4) by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues pertaining to:

- What are the principles of a market economy? (SO 9.2.4)
- Why do governments intervene in a market economy? (SO 9.2.4)
- Why is Canada viewed as having a mixed economy? (SO 9.2.4)
- What is the role of the consumer in market and mixed economies? (SO 9.2.4)
- To what extent do consumer actions reflect individual and collective identity? (SO 9.2.4)
- What are some similarities and differences in the way governments in Canada and the United States intervene in the market economies? (SO 9.2.4)

Students who met the acceptable standard were able to recognize key differences in the roles played by consumers in market and mixed economies and were able to identify in general terms how government intervention impacts each economic system. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally able to form generalizations regarding the societal implications of decisions made by businesses in market and mixed economies and explore the values underlying conflicting viewpoints on how to achieve the public good. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were often challenged by questions that required consideration of the advantages and disadvantages for consumers and businesses of government intervention in market and mixed economies or synthesis of information in multiple sources to determine the central economic issue raised.

In question 37 (blueprinted as a **Skills and Processes** question), students were required to determine what is suggested in an article taken from a website with regard to government intervention in the economy (SO 9.S.1).

37. Information in Source III suggests that the automobile industry
- A. shares responsibility for the economic downturn in Canada
  - B. requires increased regulations from the Canadian government
  - C. needs less financial assistance than other industries in Canada
  - \*D. provides economic benefits to Canadians that outweigh the costs to government

Of all students who wrote the test, 48.0% were able to determine—from the statements in Source III made by “the president of the Canadian Auto Workers union” in support of “loan packages announced by the governments of Canada and the United States” intended to stimulate recovery in the automobile industry—that the costs to government of providing commercial loans to automakers are outweighed by “the jobs, the exports, [and] the taxes that are generated by this industry” and chose the keyed response (option **D**). Option **A** (selected by 23.4% of all students) presents the idea that the automobile industry bears some responsibility for the global economic downturn that initiated an economic recession in both Canada and the United States, an inference based on speculation that is unsupported by the union president’s comments cited in the source. Option **B** (selected by 14.9% of all students) suggests that the union president’s comments indicate a desire for increased government regulation of the automobile industry, a conclusion that could be based on the flawed assumption that the union president is arguing that the loan packages would entail a higher level of regulatory monitoring by government. Option **C** (selected by 13.7% of all students) suggests that the union president is contending that the automobile industry requires less financial assistance from government than other industries in Canada, but such a contention is unrelated to the comments contained in the source. Of those students who met the acceptable standard, 44.5% answered this question correctly. Of those students who met the standard of excellence, 82.1% chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard, 25.6% selected the correct response.

In the blueprint category that encompasses questions that involve **Consumerism, Quality of Life, and Political Decision Making** (composed of 12 questions), students were expected to assess, critically, the relationship between consumerism and quality of life in Canada and the United States (Specific Outcome 9.2.5) and assess, critically, the interrelationship between political decisions and economic systems (Specific Outcome 9.2.6) by exploring and reflecting on questions and issues regarding:

- How does marketing impact consumerism? (SO 9.2.5)
- How does consumerism provide opportunities for and limitations on impacting quality of life? (SO 9.2.5)
- What societal values underlie social programs in Canada and the United States? (SO 9.2.5)
- How does the underground economy impact the federal and provincial tax base and social programs (i.e., tax evasion, the black market)? (SO 9.2.6)

Students achieving the acceptable standard were able to apply their knowledge of the purposes of Canada's Employment Insurance program, recall the impact of marketing on consumer behaviour, and acknowledge the impact of the underground economy on government revenue used to provide social programs. Students who achieved the standard of excellence could also appreciate the difficulty of sustaining Canada's Employment Insurance program in light of the high demand for the economic supports it provides to Canadian workers, were able to weigh problems associated with the actions of manufacturers who seek to increase sales by convincing consumers to buy products, and could assess the advantageous and disadvantageous effects of the underground economy on consumers, workers, and employers. Those students who did not meet the acceptable standard often had difficulty interpreting the meaning of details in cartoons related to the economic impact of Canada's Employment Insurance program and the basis for economic choices made by consumers, as well as with recognizing the far-reaching effects of the underground economy on not only the lives of workers and employers but also consumers and members of society as a whole.

Question 47 (blueprinted as a **Knowledge and Understanding** question) required that students know what characterizes economic interactions in the underground economy (SO 9.2.6).

47. In Source I, the question mark in the list of definitions would be **most appropriately** replaced by which of the following phrases?
- A. Buying goods that are made from non-renewable or scarce resources
  - B. Economic activities that are wasteful or hazardous to the environment
  - C. Trade agreements that are ignored or violated by foreign governments
  - \*D. Purchasing goods that are prohibited or unavailable through legal channels

The correct answer (**D**) was selected by 80.7% of all students who wrote the test. These students were able to recall from their study of the underground economy that the term "black market" listed in Source I applies to economic interactions in which goods and services are acquired in an illegal manner. Option **A**, selected by 6.1% of all students, presents the misunderstanding that the black market necessarily entails the consumption of goods that require the exploitation of resources that are either non-renewable or limited in supply. Option **B**, selected by 4.2% of all students, incorrectly suggests that the black market is characterized by economic interactions that generate excessive waste or pose environmental hazards. Option **C**, selected by 8.9% of all students, presents the flawed conceptualization that the black market involves the violation of international trade agreements by the governments of foreign countries. Many students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to choose the correct answer, with 88.2% choosing the keyed response. The majority of students who achieved the standard of excellence (97.6%) chose the correct answer, while 51.4% of students who did not meet the acceptable standard correctly answered the question.

Overall, student achievement on the 2014 Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test was strong. Most students (73.9%) were able to achieve the acceptable standard and 22.4% of all students achieved the standard of excellence. Of all students who wrote the test, 26.1% did not achieve the acceptable standard.

# *Achievement Testing Program Support Documents*

The Alberta Education website contains several documents that provide valuable information about various aspects of the achievement testing program. To access these documents, go to the Alberta Education website at [education.alberta.ca](http://education.alberta.ca). From the home page, follow the path *Teachers > Provincial Testing > Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT)*, and then click on one of the specific links to access the following documents.

## **Achievement Testing Program General Information Bulletin**

The [\*General Information Bulletin\*](#) is a compilation of several documents produced by Alberta Education and is intended to provide superintendents, principals, and teachers with easy access to information about all aspects of the achievement testing program. Sections in the bulletin contain information pertaining to schedules and significant dates; security and test rules; test administration directives, guidelines, and procedures; calculator and computer policies; test accommodations; test marking and results; field testing; resources and web documents; forms and samples; and Assessment Sector contacts.

## **Subject Bulletins**

At the beginning of each school year, subject bulletins are posted on the Alberta Education website for all achievement test subjects for grades 6 and 9. Each bulletin provides descriptions of assessment standards, test design and blueprinting, and scoring guides (where applicable) as well as suggestions for preparing students to write the tests and information about how teachers can participate in test development activities.

## **Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing**

For achievement tests in grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts, writing samples have been designed to be used by teachers and students to enhance students' writing and to assess this writing relative to the standards inherent in the scoring guides for the achievement tests. The exemplars documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales that relate student work to the scoring categories and scoring criteria.

## **Previous Achievement Tests and Answer Keys**

All January achievement tests (parts A and B) for Grade 9 semestered students are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education. All May/June achievement tests are secured except Part A of grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts. Unused or extra copies of only these Part A tests may be kept at the school after administration. Teachers may also use the released items and/or tests that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

## **Parent Guides**

Each school year, versions of the [\*Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing Parent Guide\*](#) for grades 6 and 9 are posted on the Alberta Education website. Each guide presents answers to frequently asked questions about the achievement testing program as well as descriptions of and sample questions for each achievement test subject.

## **Involvement of Teachers**

Teachers of grades 6 and 9 are encouraged to take part in activities related to the achievement testing program. These activities include item development, test validation, field testing, and marking. In addition, arrangements can be made through the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia for teacher in-service workshops on topics such as Interpreting Achievement Test Results to Improve Student Learning.