



CHAPTER 3: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CRT

Annually, Grade 3, 6 and 9 students complete the English Language Arts (ELA) CRT. The information obtained provides a snapshot of how well students are performing in this area.

In Grades 3 and 6, the CRT assesses student performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking. To assess reading comprehension, students read a passage and answer questions to show their level of understanding. Listening skills are assessed in a similar fashion but students listen to a recording and then answer questions. In the writing and speaking components, students are given a topic and asked to both write about it and develop a short presentation discussing it. Grade 9 students are assessed in two areas of English language arts – reading and writing.

Primary Level (Grade 3)

By the end of Grade 3, students are expected to have developed the foundational skills needed for language arts. They should be able to demonstrate a basic proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing. In general, students should be able to:

- Describe, share, and discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences, and consider other people's ideas;
- Choose reading material appropriate to their interests and learning needs; and,
- Experiment with a range of pre-writing, drafting, editing, proofreading and presentation strategies.

The CRT is administered to assess the degree primary students are able to demonstrate their ability in these tasks. To meet this goal, constructed response and multiple choice questions are used to assess the following strands of the ELA curriculum.

- Listening,
- Reading and viewing, and
- Writing and other ways of representing.

Constructed response questions require students to write a response or answer in the space provided in the CRT booklet. For the multiple choice section, students are provided with a question and a list of possible answers. From this, they try and choose the correct one.

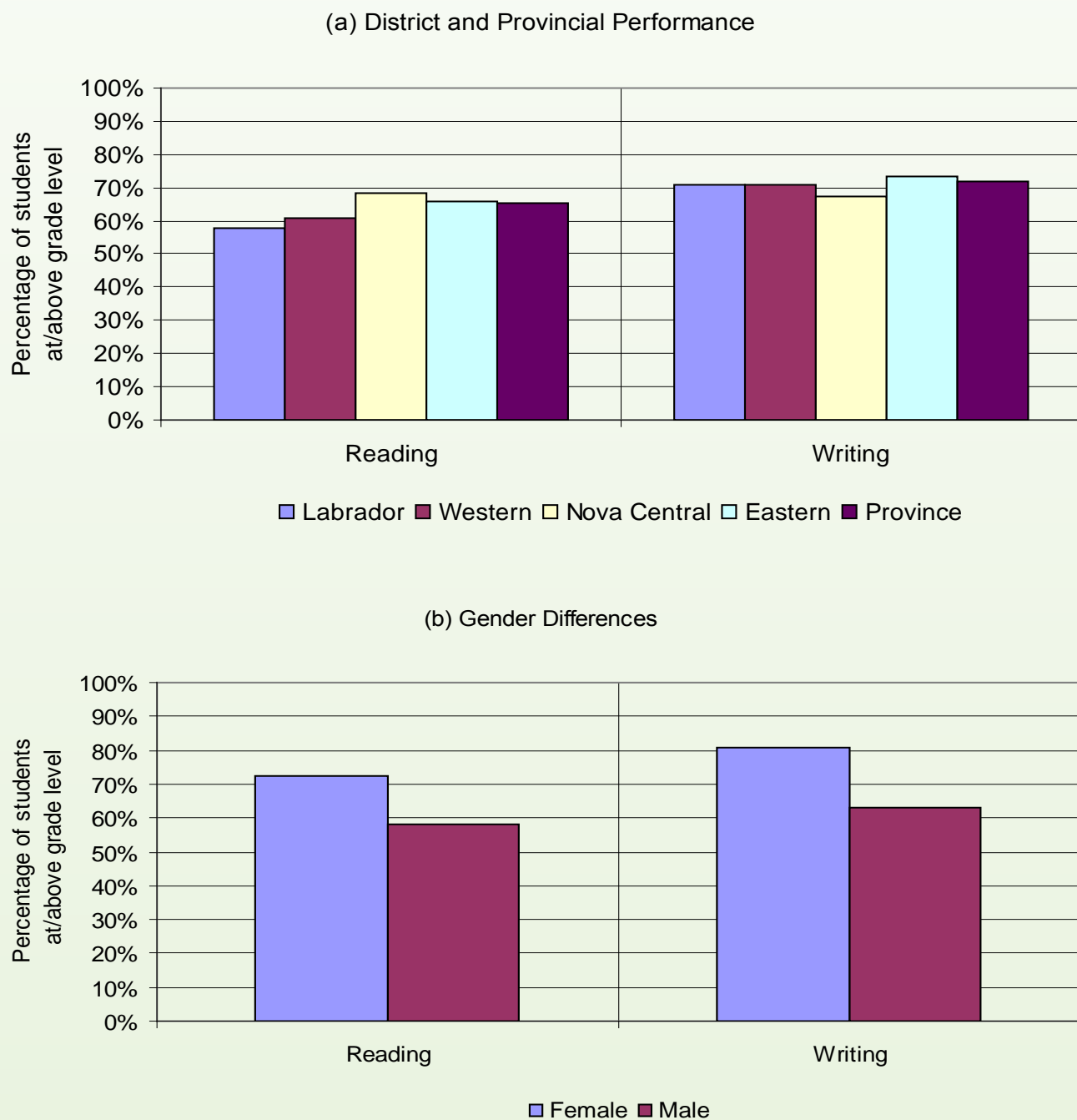
The constructed response section (2010/11)

Provincially, the majority of students were assessed at or above grade level (i.e., level 3 or above) on both the reading and writing components. Approximately two thirds of Grade 3 students were able to demonstrate at least an appropriate understanding of the content area assessed in each of the language learning strands (i.e., reading and writing).

At the district level, students in the Nova Central and Eastern School Districts performed at or above the provincial level while the other two districts were below on the reading component. The percentage of students at or above grade level ranged from a low of 57.6% in the Labrador School District to a high of 68.3% in Nova Central. On the writing component, the percentage of students at or above grade level was fairly consistent with 5.9 percentage points separating the highest and lowest percentages (see figure 3.1a).

Along gender lines, females demonstrated a greater proficiency in both the reading and writing components as compared to males (see figure 3.1b). The percentage of females at or above grade level was either 14.1 or 17.8 percentage points higher than the percentage of males.

Figure 3.1: Proficiency level - Primary ELA CRT (2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.1)



The multiple choice section (2010/11)

Reading and listening skills were assessed in the multiple choice section. Provincially, the majority of students answered these questions correctly. The average score on the listening component was higher than the reading component (87.9% and 79.7% respectively).

The average score in each district mirrored the provincial average on both the reading and listening components. It was fairly consistent across the four districts with approximately five percentage points separating the highest and lowest scores (see figure 3.2a). There was virtually no gender difference present on the multiple choice questions (see figure 3.2b).

Figure 3.2: Average score - Primary ELA CRT (2010/11)



Provincial trends – Primary level ELA (2006/07-2010/11)

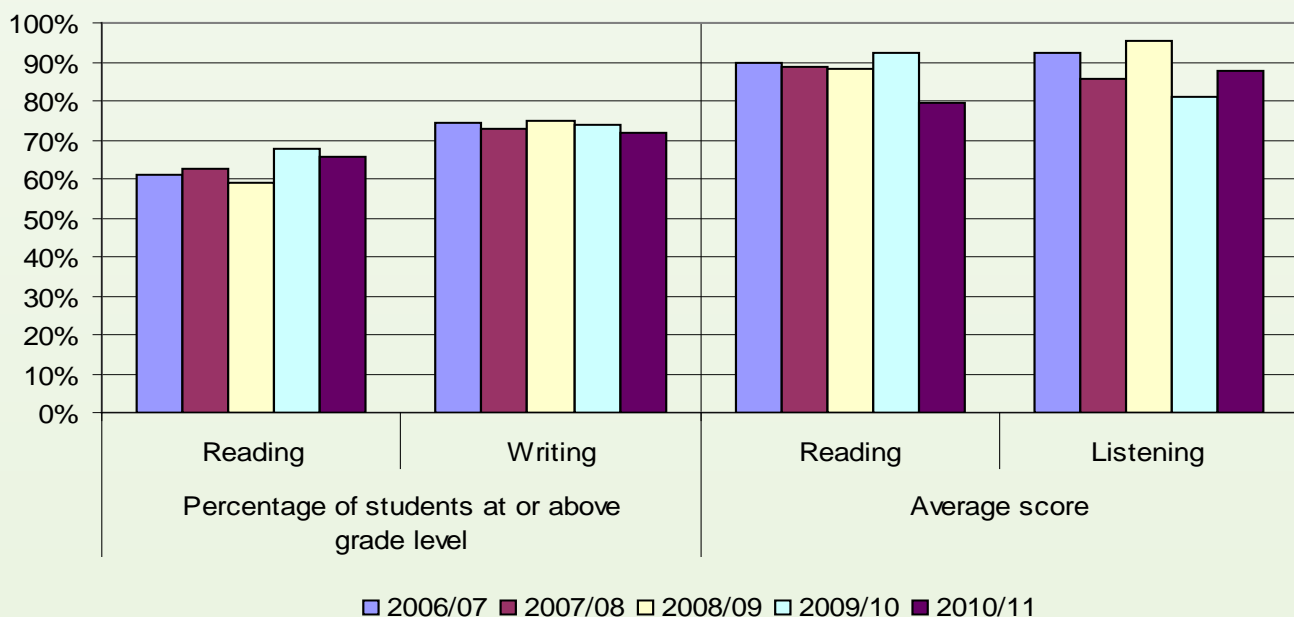
Figure 3.3 reports student performance over the previous five years for both the constructed response (i.e., the percentage of students at or above grade level) and multiple choice (i.e., average score) sections.

Based on the figure, several observations can be made:

- Students consistently demonstrated a higher level of writing proficiency as compared to reading.
- The percentage of students at or above grade level remained fairly stable during this time.
- The average score on the reading and listening components was more varied during this five year period.
- On the reading component, the average score ranged from 88.3% in 2006/07 to 92.1% in 2009/10. The 2010/11 average score decreased by 12.4 percentage points from 2009/10.
- The listening component had a high degree of variability present with 14.5 percentage points separating the highest (95.4% in 2008/09) and lowest (80.9% in 2009/10) average scores. The average score in 2010/11 increased by 7.0 percentage points from the previous year.



Figure 3.3: Provincial trends – Primary ELA CRT (2006/07-2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.3)



Elementary Level (Grade 6)

As students progress through the elementary years, they continue to build upon and expand the foundational language skills learned during the primary years. By the end of Grade 6, students are expected to be able to:

- Contribute thoughts, ideas, and questions to the group discussion and have the ability to support their opinions with evidence;
- Independently choose books and reading material appropriate to their range of interests and learning needs;
- Develop effective pieces of writing by using a range of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and presentation strategies; and,
- Use technology with increasing proficiency to create, revise, edit and publish texts.



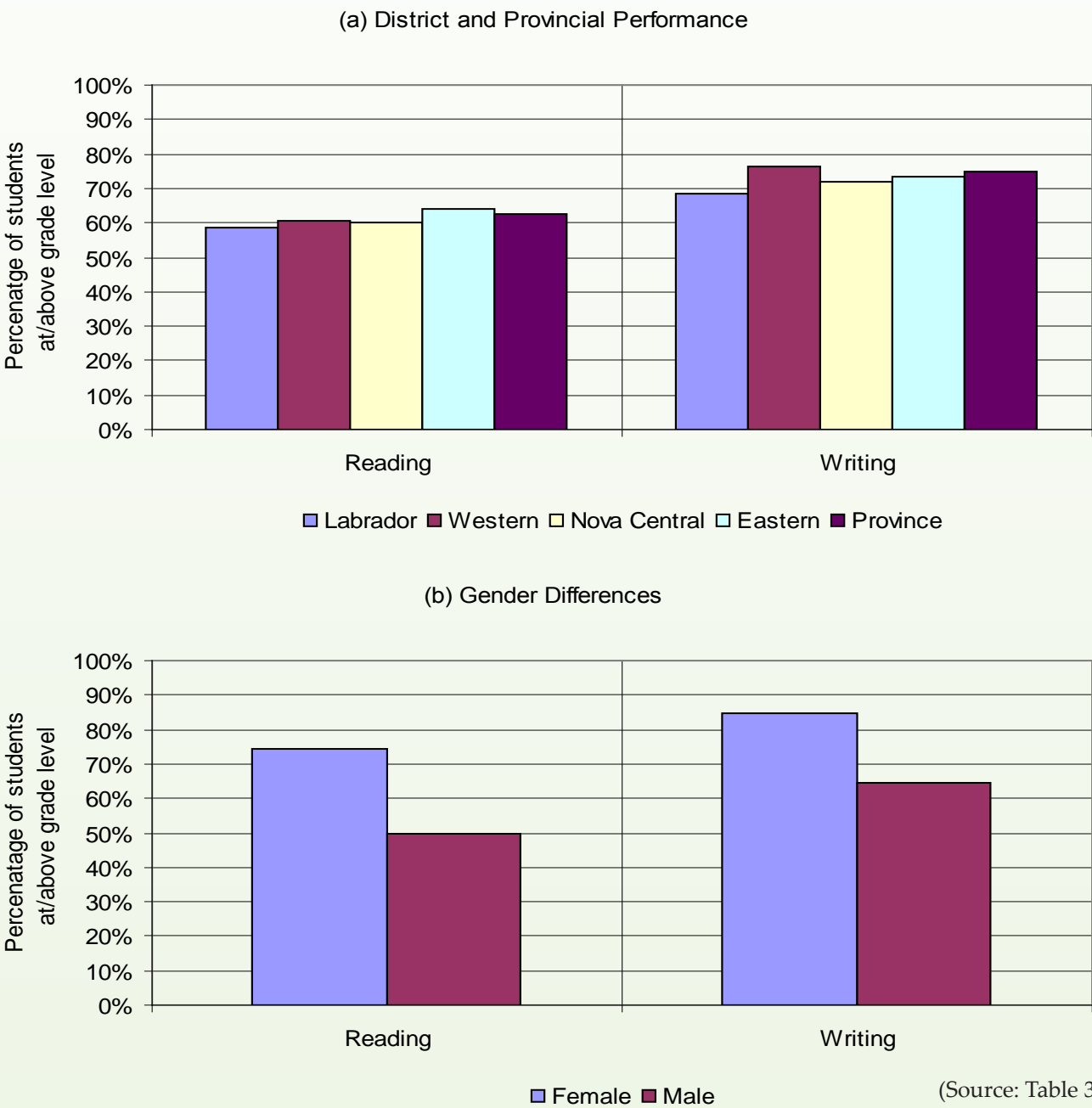
The constructed response section (2010/11)

Provincially, students experienced more success on the writing component as compared to reading. The percentage of students at or above grade level was 74.7% on writing compared to 62.5% in reading. This is a difference of 12.2 percentage points.

The percentage of students at or above grade level was similar across the four districts for both the reading and writing components with one exception. The percentage of students in the Western School District at or above grade level on the writing component was between 3.0 and 8.1 percentage points higher than the other districts (see figure 3.4a).

Along gender lines, a higher percentage of girls than boys was assessed at or above grade level on both the reading and writing components. As shown in figure 3.4b, this gender gap was at least 20.0 percentage points.

Figure 3.4: Proficiency level - Elementary ELA CRT (2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.4)





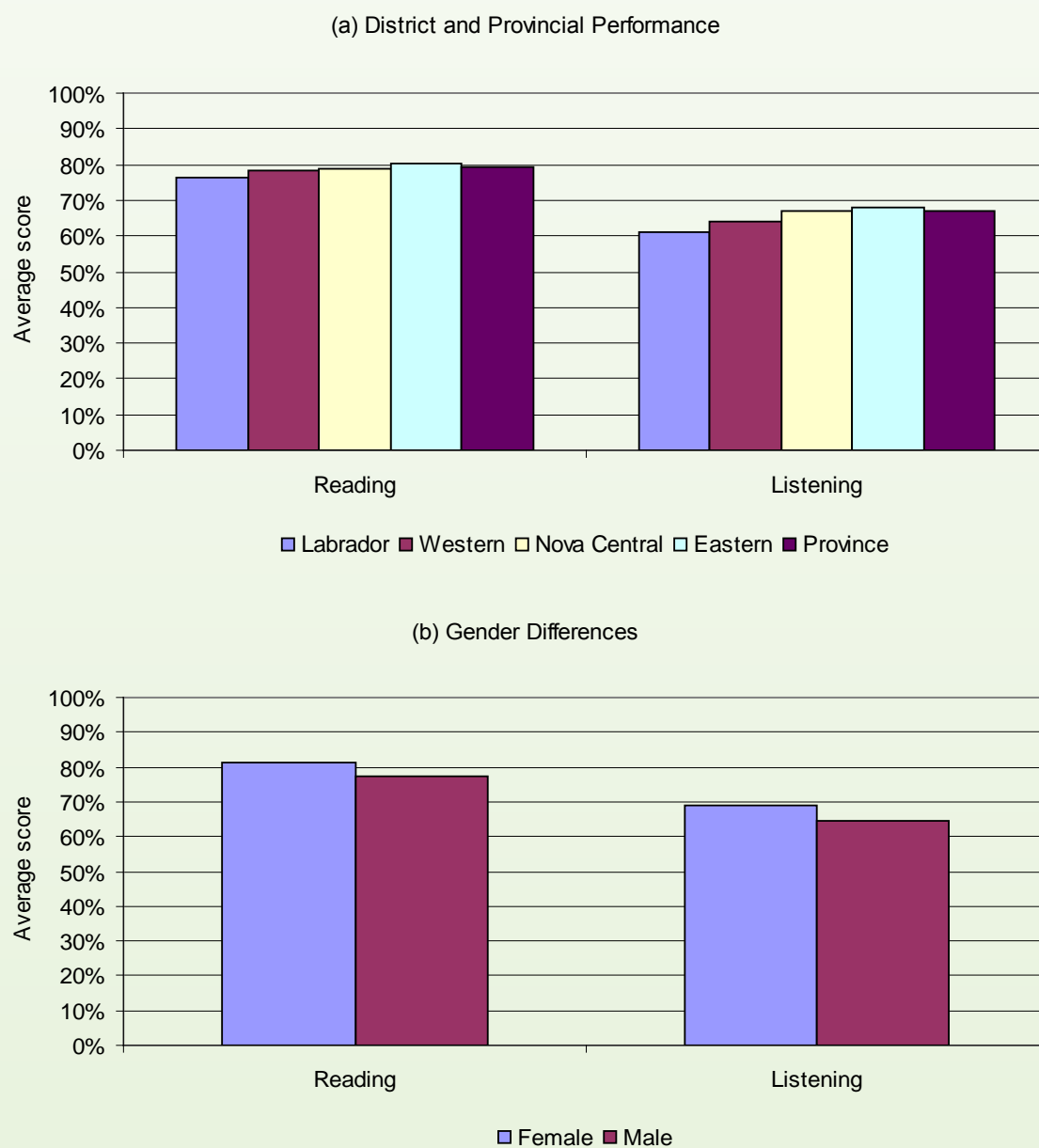
The multiple choice section (2010/11)

The multiple choice section assessed student ability in reading and listening. Overall, students performed better on the reading component, with an average score of 79.5%, as compared to 67.0% on the listening component.

The average score on the reading component was fairly consistent across the four districts with approximately 3.8 percentage points separating the highest and lowest score. On the listening component, the average score were slightly more varied with 6.9 percentage points separating the highest and lowest average score (see figure 3.5a).

Girls performed slightly better than boys in the multiple choice section. However, this gender gap was not as considerable as was seen in the constructed response section. The average score achieved by girls was approximately four percentage points higher than boys on the reading and listening components (see figure 3.5b).

Figure 3.5: Average score - Elementary ELA CRT (2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.5)

Provincial trends – Elementary level ELA (2006/07-2010/11)

Student performance over the past five years has been quite varied in the constructed response section. As shown in figure 3.6, the percentage of students at or above grade level has fluctuated from year to year.

In both the reading and writing components:

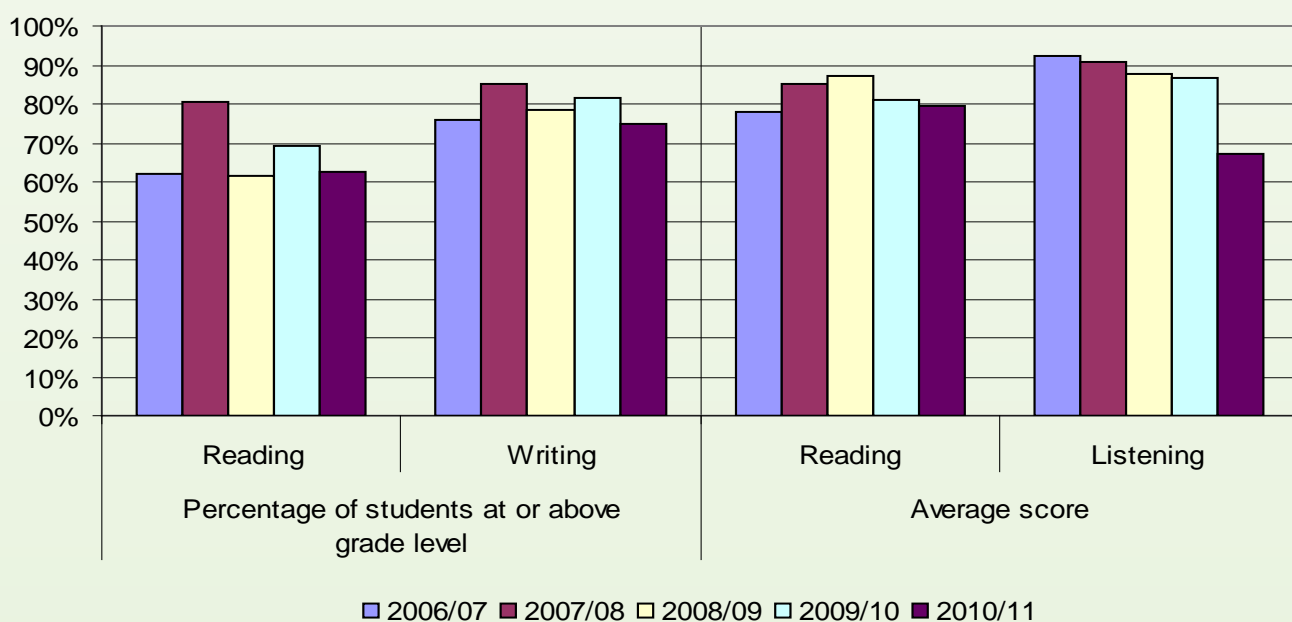
- The percentage of students at or above grade level peaked in 2007/08, and
- Student performance in 2010/11 was 6.7 percentage points lower than the previous year (i.e., 2009/10) on both components.

On the multiple choice section:

- The average score in reading increased from 2006/07 to 2008/09 before declining over the next two years
- The average listening score steadily declined from its peak of 92.3% in 2006/07. The largest decline occurred between 2009/10 and 2010/11 when the average score dropped by 19.7 percentage points.



Figure 3.6: Provincial trends – Elementary ELA CRT (2006/07-2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.6)



Intermediate Level (Grade 9)

During the intermediate years, students continue to build upon and broaden their language arts skills. By this stage, students are expected to have developed a good understanding of the skills needed for effective communication in both the written word and verbally. By the end of Grade 9, students are expected to be able to:

- Examine other peoples' ideas and actively take part in small and large group discussions and debate;
- Demonstrate active listening and respect for the needs, rights, and feelings of others. In other words, students must be able to go beyond simply listening to the words that are being said, to actually hearing and understanding the message being presented;
- Critically evaluate and question information;
- Adapt their writing style to meet the needs of specific audiences; and,
- Integrate information gathered from several sources to create and communicate meaning.



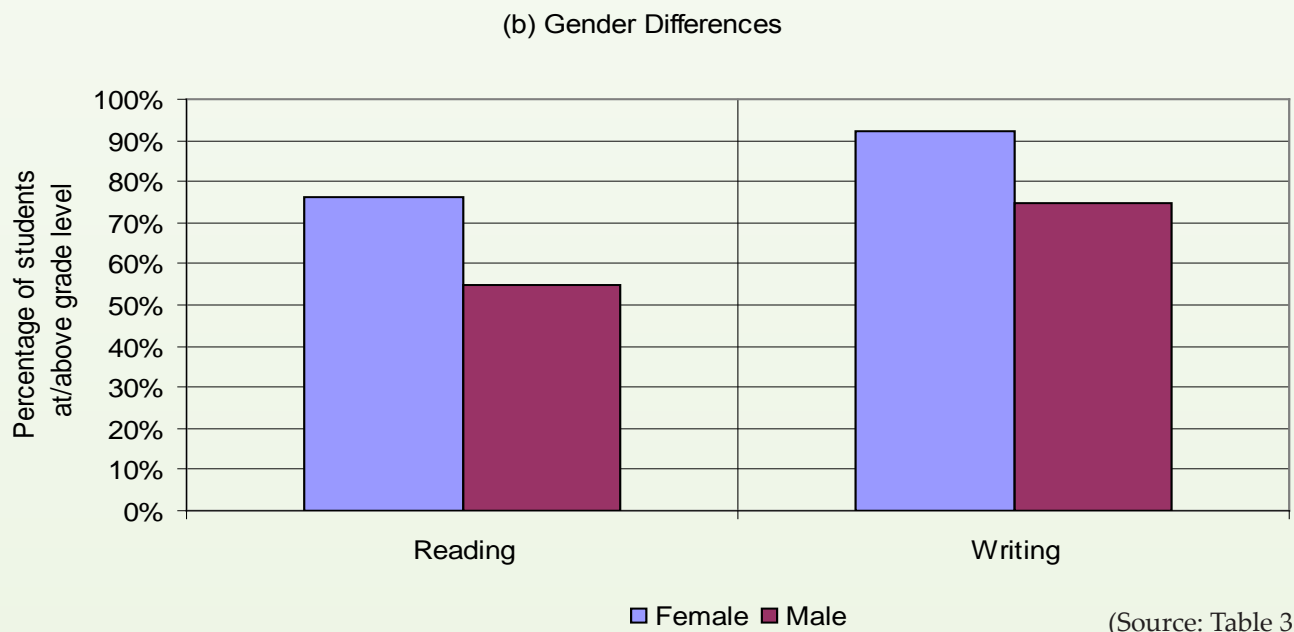
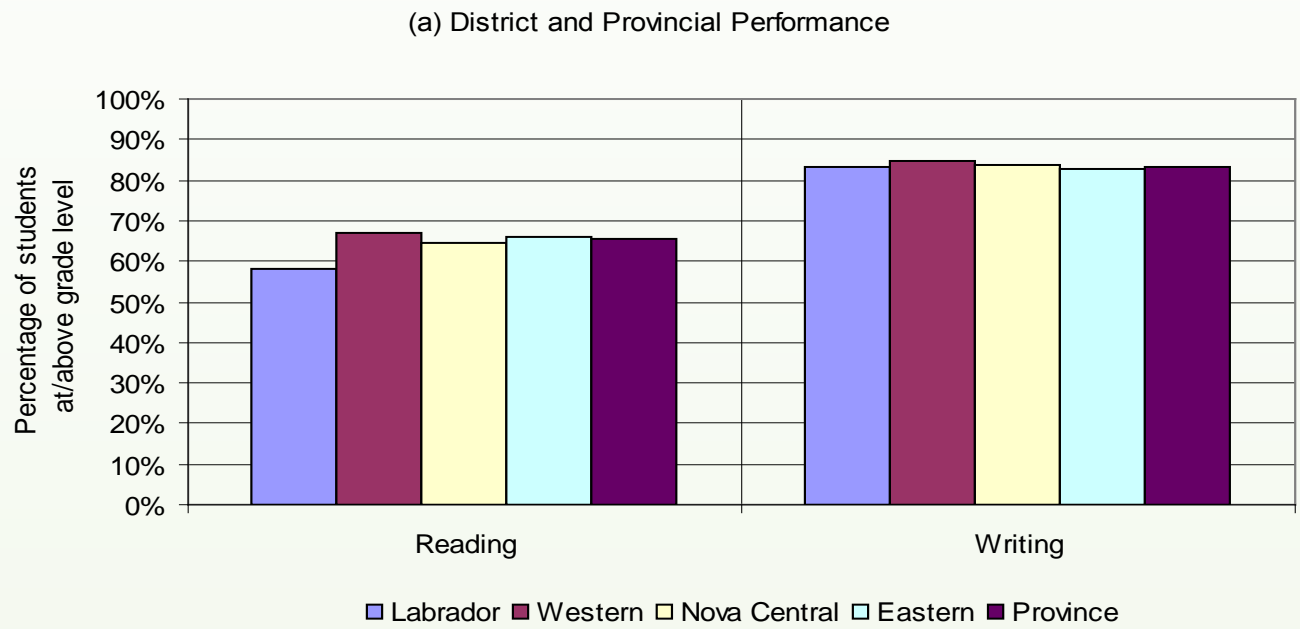
The constructed response section (2010/11)

Provincially, students performed better on the writing component than the reading component. The percentage of students assessed at or above grade level was 83.3% for writing and 65.5% for reading.

Overall, there was little difference in the percentage of students at or above grade level among the districts. The only exception was in the Labrador School District on the reading component where the percentage of students at or above grade level was approximately 8.0 percentage points lower than the other three districts (see figure 3.7a).

As in previous grades, girls once again had the advantage over boys (see figure 3.7b), The largest difference occurred on the reading component where the percentage of girls at or above grade level was 21.2 percentage points higher than boys (76.0% and 54.8% respectively).

Figure 3.7: Proficiency level - Intermediate ELA CRT (2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.7)

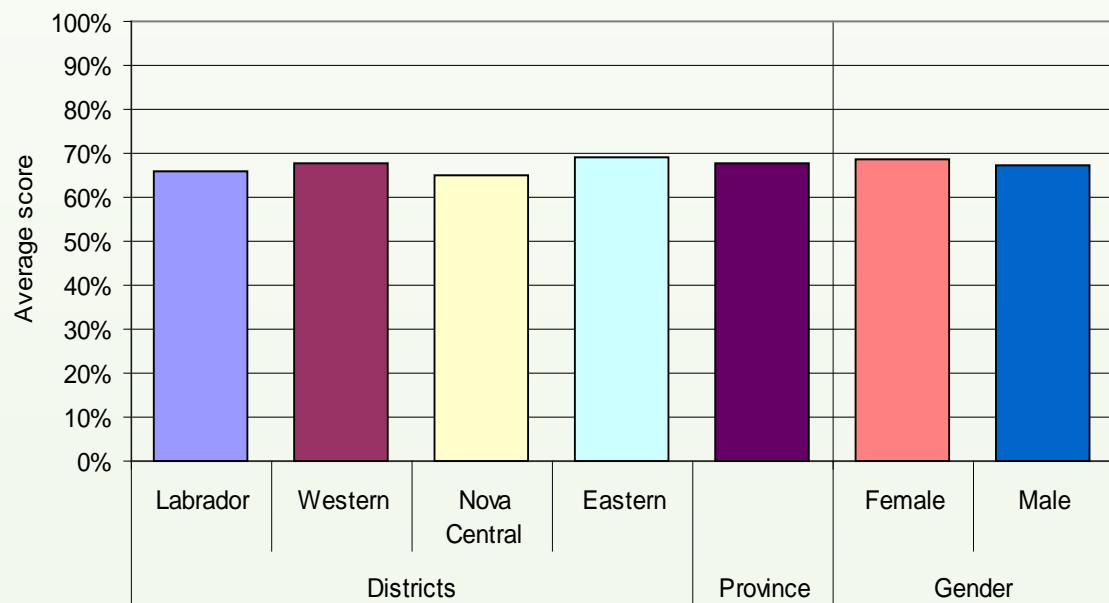




The multiple choice section (2010/11)

The multiple choice section assessed informational and poetic reading. These two scores were combined to give an overall reading score. Provincially, the combined average reading score was 67.9%. As shown in figure 3.8, there was little difference in the average reading score across the four districts and between females and males.

Figure 3.8: Average score - Intermediate ELA CRT (2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.8)

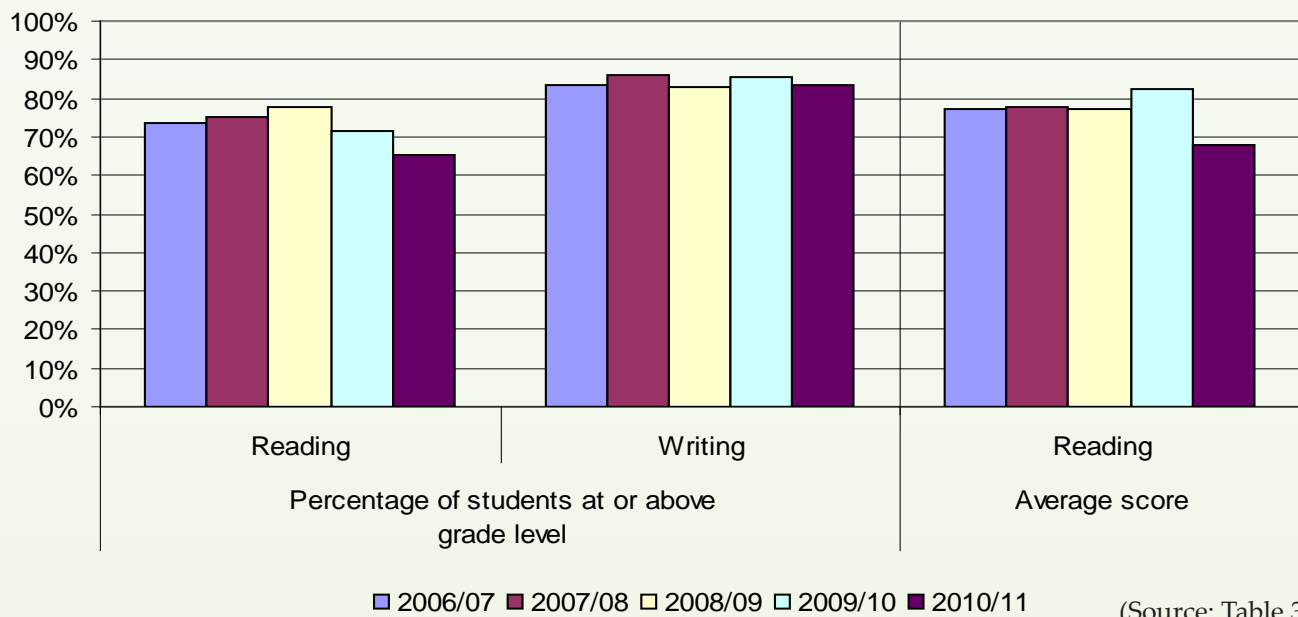


Provincial trends – Intermediate level (2006/07-2010/11)

Figure 3.9 presents student performance over the past five years on both the constructed response and multiple choice sections. Based on the figure, it appears:

- The percentage of students at or above grade level on the reading component has gradually declined since peaking in 2008/09.
- Proficiency levels on the writing component have remained stable with approximately 84.0% of students assessed at or above grade level.
- The reading average score was stable at approximately 77.0% between 2006/07 and 2008/09 before rising slightly in 2009/10. On the 2010/11 assessment, the average score dropped by 14.3 percentage points from the previous year.

Figure 3.9: Provincial trends - Intermediate ELA CRT (2006/07-2010/11)



(Source: Table 3.9)

