

Chapter 12: The English Language Arts (ELA) Assessment

In Grades 3 and 6, the CRT assessed student performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking. To assess reading comprehension, students read a passage and answered questions to demonstrate their level of understanding. Listening skills were assessed in a similar fashion but students listened to a recording and then answered questions. In both the writing and speaking components, students were given a topic and asked to both write about it and develop a short presentation discussing it. Grade 9 students were 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.

Student performance in 2006/07 and 2007/08:

A provincial perspective

Provincially, the majority of students performed at level 3 or above. These students demonstrated at least an appropriate understanding of the content area assessed in each of the language learning strands (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking). Overall, little variation existed in student performance between 2006/07 and 2007/08 in three of the four areas assessed (see *figure 12.1*). The exception was in the listening subtest where the percentage of students at or above level 3 increased by 6.2 percentage points. This increase was primarily a result of the increase in the percentage of students assessed at level 3.

In the multiple choice sections, assessing reading and listening skills, student performance declined. The average scores in the 2007/08 assessment were 1.1 and 6.6 percentage points lower in the reading and listening sections respectively compared to the previous year (see *figure 12.2*).

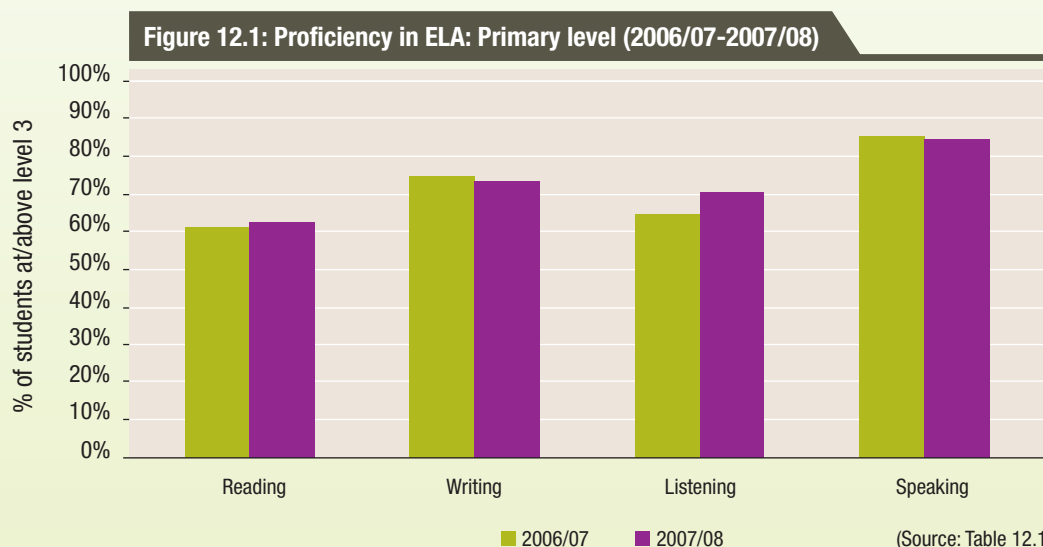
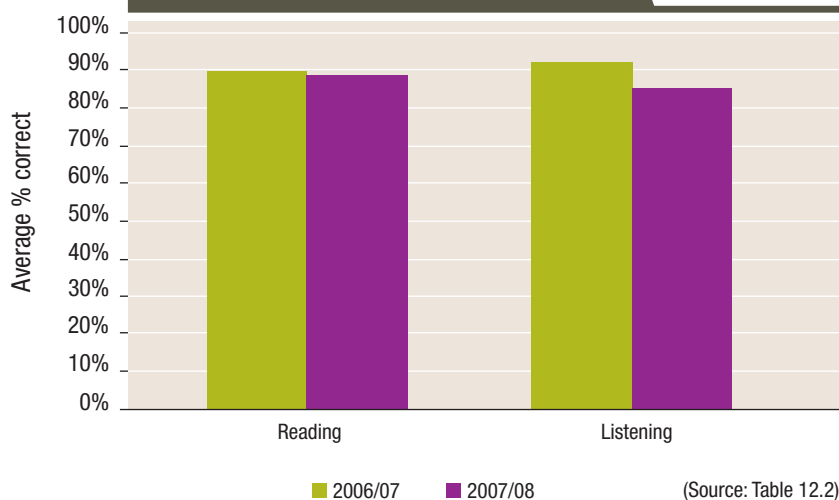




Figure 12.2: Performance on multiple choice questions: Primary level (2006/07-2007/08)

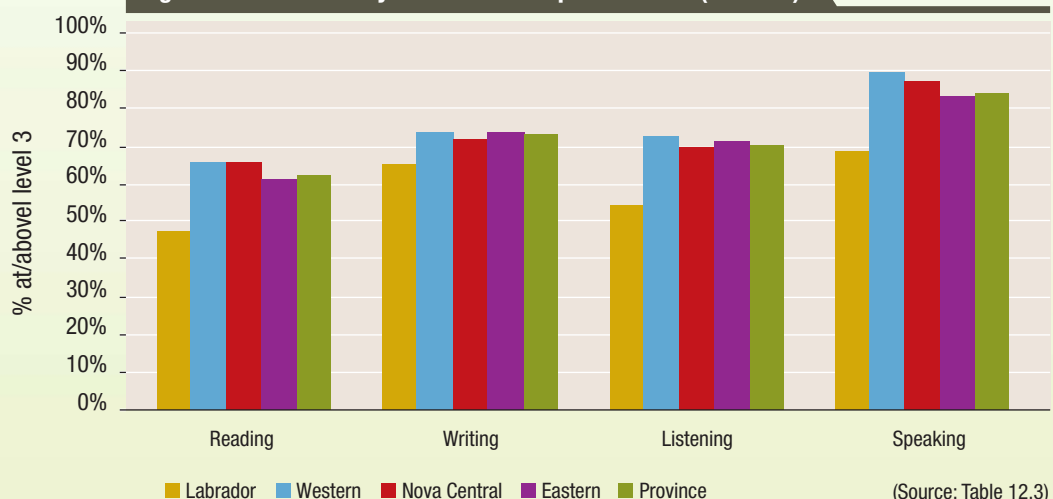


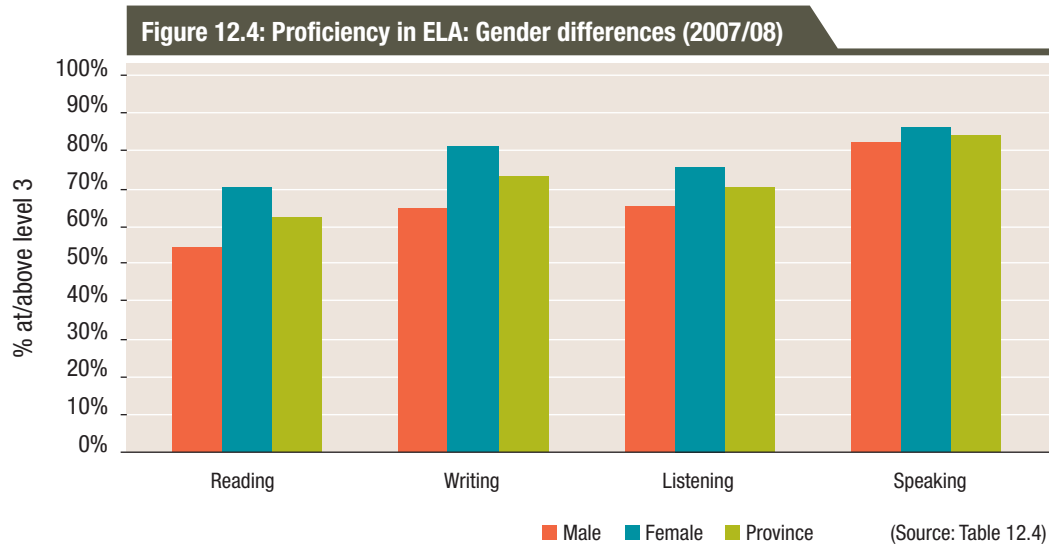
The 2007/08 ELA assessment: District results and gender differences

The percentage of students at or above level 3 was similar to the provincial percentage in three of the four districts. However, student performance in the Labrador district was below the provincial level in each of the four areas. The Western district achieved the greatest success with the percentage of students at or above level 3 equal to or slightly higher than the other districts and the province in each of the areas assessed (see *figure 12.3*).

Girls performed better than boys in the English language arts assessment with higher percentages achieving a rating of level 3 or above. This gender gap was most evident in the reading and listening sections where the percentage of girls was approximately 16 percentage points higher. This gap was not as evident in the speaking section where only four percentage points separated girls and boys (see *figure 12.4*).

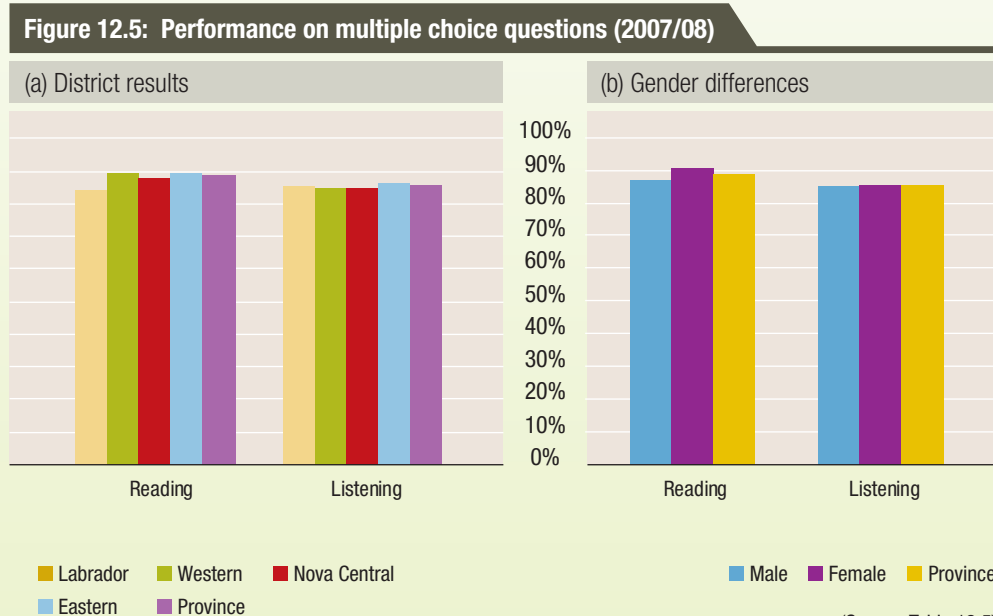
Figure 12.3: Proficiency in ELA: District performance (2007/08)





Multiple choice questions

Students performed well on both the reading and listening multiple choice questions, answering on average 85% correctly. Performance in the multiple choice section was somewhat consistent among the districts and between boys and girls. At the district level, the exception lies in the Labrador district where the average scores in the reading questions was slightly lower compared to the other districts and the province. Girls performed slightly better than boys on the reading multiple choice questions but remained virtually the same on the listening questions (see *figure 12.5*).





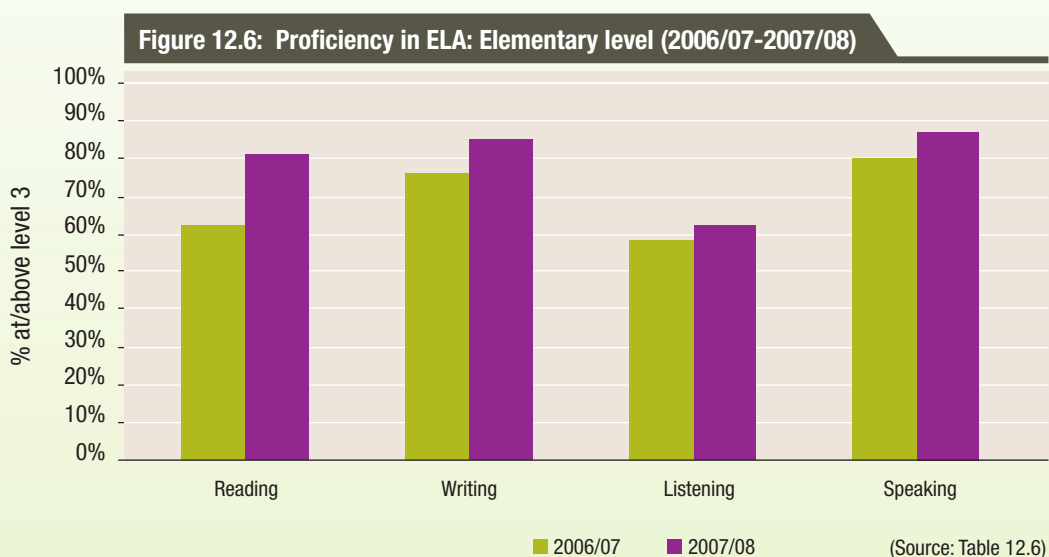
Elementary level (Grade 6)

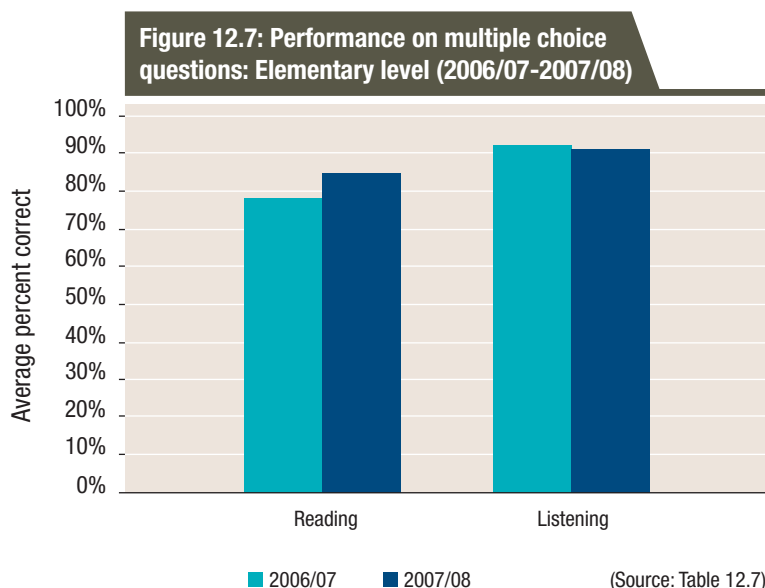
The elementary years are a time to build on and expand the foundational language skills learned during the primary years. By the end of Grade 6, students are expected to be able to:

- 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.

Student performance in 2006/07 and 2007/08: A provincial perspective

An improvement occurred in the language arts skills of elementary students from the 2006/07 assessment (see *figure 12.6*). The largest gain occurred in the reading subtest where the percentage of students at or above level 3 increased by 18.5 percentage points. This increase can be partially attributed to the increase in the percentage of students at level 3. In the other three subtests, increases in the percentage of students at or above level three were between four and nine percentage points. There were two areas assessed with multiple choice questions - reading and listening. Student performance improved (by 6.9 percentage points) on the reading section but declined slightly (by 1.3 percentage points) on the listening section from the previous year (see *figure 12.7*).





**The 2007/08 ELA assessment:
District results and gender differences**

Focusing on the four districts, the percentage of students at or above level 3 in the Nova Central district was below the provincial percentage in each of the four areas. It was only students in the Eastern district where the percentages were slightly higher than the provincial percentage in each of the areas assessed (see *figure 12.8*).

Along gender lines, higher percentages of girls were assessed at or above level 3 than boys. The gender gap ranged between approximately 12 and 14 percentage points

in the reading, writing and speaking subtests. The largest gender difference is found in the listening subtest where the percentage of girls at or above level three was 18.5 percentage points higher than the boys (see *figure 12.9*).

Multiple choice questions

There were two areas assessed in the multiple choice section - reading and listening. Little variation existed in the average scores among the districts and between genders. In both cases, students, on average, answered over 85% of the questions correctly. Along gender lines, girls recorded a slightly higher average score in both the reading and listening sections (see *figure 12.10*).

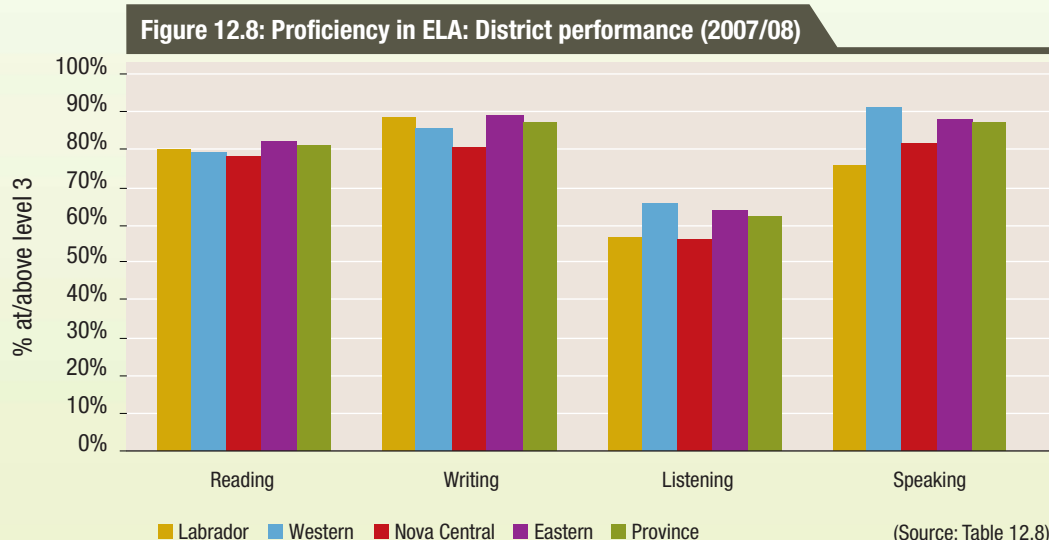




Figure 12.9: Proficiency in ELA: Gender differences (2007/08)

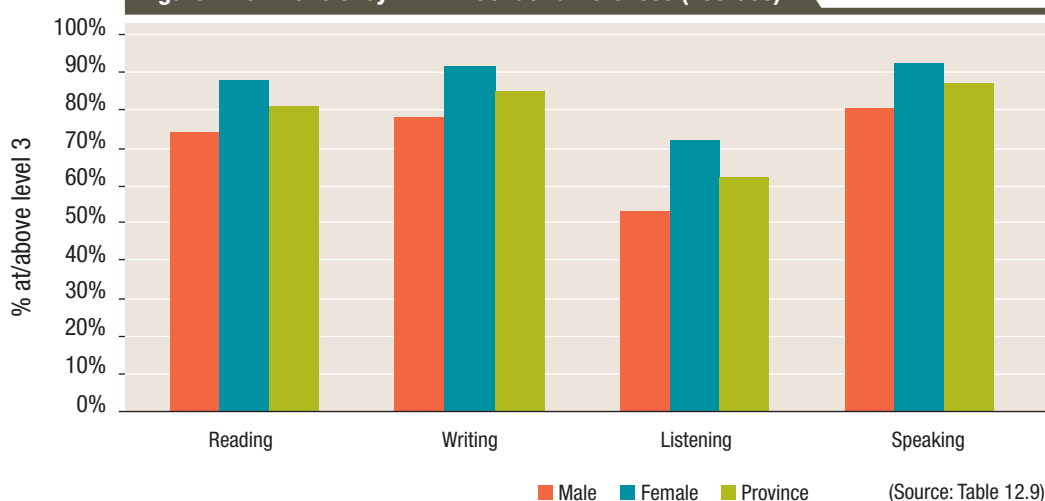
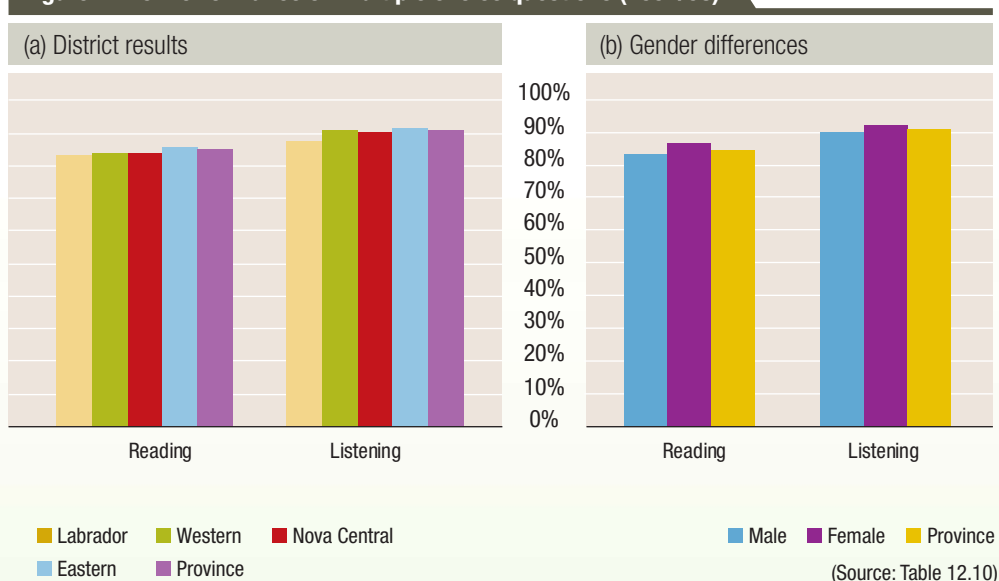


Figure 12.10: Performance on multiple choice questions (2007/08)



Intermediate students (Grade 9)

Students continue to build upon and deepen their skills in language arts as they progress through the intermediate grades (i.e., Grades 7 to 9). 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. At 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.

Student performance in 2006/07 and 2007/08: A provincial perspective

Provincially, the percentage of students at or above level 3 increased slightly in both reading and writing from the previous year (by 1.9 and 2.7 percentage points respectively, see *figure 12.11*). The largest gain was seen in the percentage of students assessed at level 3 where an increase of 2.6 and 4.9 percentage points occurred in the reading and writing sections respectively.

Students completed multiple choice questions in two aspects of reading - informational and poetic reading. There was only a small change in scores between the two years with a slight improvement (3.6 percentage points) in informational reading and a slight decline (2.2 percentage points) in poetic reading (see *figure 12.12*).

Results of the 2007/08 assessment

Intermediate students achieved the most success in the writing section where over 86% of the students were assessed at level 3 or above. This was approximately 11 percentage points higher than seen in the reading section, where 75.0% of students were assessed at or above level 3. On the multiple choice questions, students on average answered approximately 78% of the questions correctly in the informational and poetic reading sections.

District performance and gender differences

Student performance across the districts was somewhat varied, with the percentage of students at or above level 3 in the Labrador and Nova Central districts below the provincial percentage in both areas.

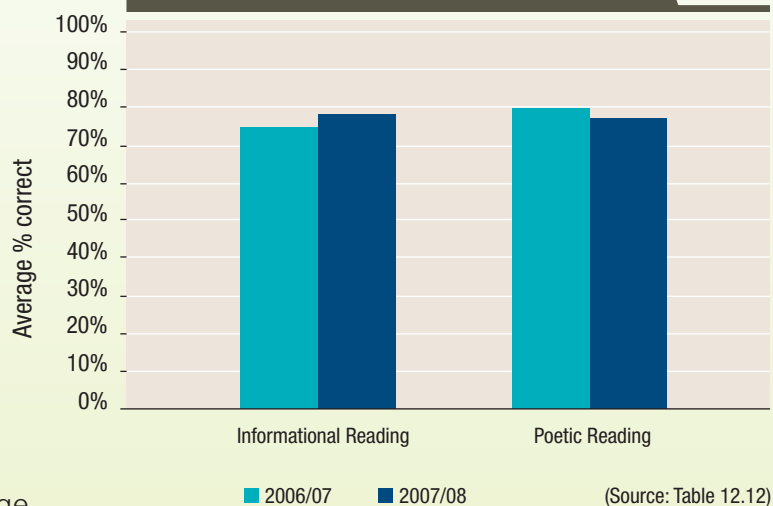
The percentage of students in the Eastern district was slightly above the provincial level in both the reading and writing sections (see *figure 12.13a*).

Girls outperformed boys with higher percentages assessed at or above level 3. This gap ranged from 14.3 to 16.3 percentage points in the reading and writing subtests respectively (see *figure 12.13b*).

**Figure 12.11: Proficiency in ELA:
Intermediate level (2006/07-2007/08)**



**Figure 12.12: Performance on multiple choice
questions: Intermediate level (2006/07-2007/08)**





Multiple choice questions

There was little variation in the performance of students across the districts in both the informational and poetic reading multiple choice questions. In both areas, average scores ranged between 74.1% and 79.8% (see *figure 12.14a*). Along

gender lines, the average scores for girls were virtually the same in the informational reading section but slightly higher (3.1 percentage points) than boys in the poetic reading section (see *figure 12.14b*).

Figure 12.13: Proficiency in ELA: District performance and gender differences (2007/08)

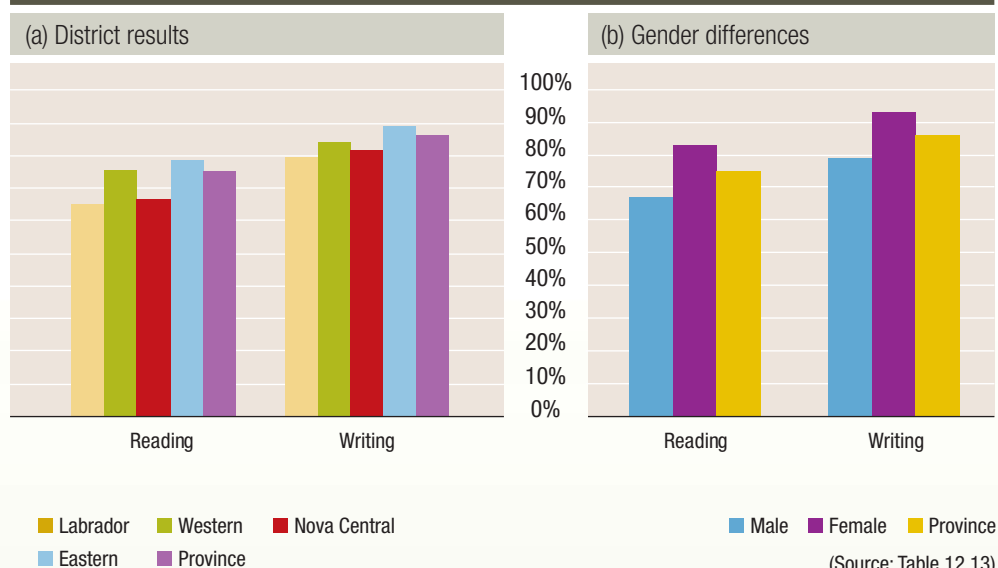


Figure 12.14: Performance on multiple choice questions: District performance and gender differences (2007/08)

