

# Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

## Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Student Performance on the OSSLT

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test is administered to all students in the province in March of their Grade 10 school year. Successful completion of the test is a graduation requirement. The test is composed of reading selections with multiple-choice and open-response items, writing prompts with multiple choice writing items. The test is administered in one day in two 75-minute blocks. Accommodations can be provided to students with Individual Education Plans and special provisions are available to students new to English.

After on a review of students' work on the test, literacy experts from across the province identified characteristics of successful or unsuccessful students' work on the test. The characteristics were categorized into headings that defined what each characteristic meant in relation to the test.

The chart below outlines their conclusions.

This information may assist educators

- to help unsuccessful students understand what “getting better” at literacy looks like;
- to identify evidence that would help a student move from one category to another, and
- to discuss areas for student improvement with parents.

## Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Student Performance

### Unsuccessful

The unsuccessful student's work is characterized by:

#### **Simplicity**

In ideas and sparse supporting details; in understanding and use of forms (e.g., personal essay, graphs and charts); and in vocabulary use

#### **Repetition**

The small set of ideas selected from texts or chosen for writing are used repeatedly; narrow range of skill sets for choice of vocabulary and sentence structure; syntax is often drawn from oral language

#### **Concreteness**

Focus on specifics of tasks; straight-forward purposes in reading or writing; heavy reliance on personal experience for evidence

### Successful

The successful student's work is characterized by:

#### **Complexity**

Big ideas, details selected to support generalizations; broad vocabulary; connects purposes, audience, and form

#### **Variety**

Range of literacy and fluency skills; navigates and adopts different types of expression; produces own ideas; syntax is that of written language where appropriate; flexibility of expression

#### **Abstraction**

Uses symbols and visualization in understanding and expression; transfers skills and prior knowledge to new situations