MANITOBA'S SENIOR 4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROVINCIAL EXAM:

ITS EFFECTS ON SENIOR 4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS' COURSE CONTENT, INSTRUCTIONAL AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

by

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Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts Provincial Exam: Its Effects on Senior 4 English Language Arts Teachers' Course Content, Instructional and Assessment Practices

BY

Jacqueline A. Busby

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

of

Master of Education

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1. Introduction

1.0 Statement of the Inquiry

The primary purpose of this inquiry was to determine if the series of Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams, written between January 1996 and May 1998, have affected the instructional and assessment practices of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers and, if there has been an influence, the extent of it. During the literature search and survey analysis stages of this project it became increasingly clear that changes in teaching practices have occurred but, while it may have been the catalyst, the provincial exam may not be responsible entirely for all of the instructional and assessment changes teachers made. The reasons for these may be attributed as well to other coexistent events during this same time period. The back-to-basics attitudes of society generally that emerged in the 1990s engendered the standards-and-accountability movement throughout Canada. An unprecedented common curriculum agreement between four western Canadian provinces and northern territories, the Western Canadian Protocol Agreement was established during this time period, and educational policy changes were instituted within Manitoba along with the introduction of a Senior 4 provincial exam. All exerted an effect.

However, in order to gauge the extent of the changes in teaching practices that actually occurred after 1995, Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers were surveyed only on their perceptions of the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on their teaching practices because the exam is a common, universal experience for all Manitoba Senior 4 teachers and undoubtedly one that has a significant impact on each one professionally. Teachers were surveyed on their course content, their selection of texts, their instructional strategies, and their class work assessment and evaluation practices *as a result of* the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams. In a

comments-section at the end of the survey some respondents expressed their perceptions of the effects on them of the other concurrent events on their practices.

1.1 Background of the Inquiry

This decade has been an interesting time for English Language Arts teachers in Manitoba. For the first time in the professional lives of many, their field has received considerable public attention. Manitoba Education and Training's decision to introduce a seven and one-half hour Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam in January of 1996 initiated this public interest, and each year since then new government policies regarding the restructuring of education, and English Language Arts particularly, have sustained it.

Since 1996 the relative value, purpose, and cost of provincial exams have been the focus of ongoing, critical and vociferous debates among those directly affected, and among citizens in general who are aware of the importance and impact of these exams (Martin, 1997; Mauder, 1998; Poll results, 1998; Public school education in turmoil, 1996; Reconciling the beliefs for public schools, 1996; Schnitzer, 1996). Educators themselves, however, have reached an implicit understanding that, for now and for the foreseeable future, a provincial certification exam in English Language Arts at the Senior 4 level is incontestable (Poll results, 1998). Because literacy skills are fundamentally important in every course in school, language literacy is universally recognized to be a primary component in the restructuring of education not only in Manitoba but throughout all educational jurisdictions in North America (Fagan & Spurrell,1995; Rothman, 1995).

The range of reactions by English Language Arts educators to the re-institution of province-wide exams at the Senior 4 level within Manitoba can be understood well only with an awareness of the socio-political environment of the 1990s. This knowledge is essential in order to understand Senior 4 teachers' individual and collective responses to

change (Public school education in turmoil, 1996; Reconciling the beliefs for public schools, 1996; Public schools left to wither, 1996; History rewrites itself, 1996; Public school rally draws thousands, 1996; The curriculum headache, 1997). (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

In 1995 Lenora Perry Fagan and Dana Spurrell published *Evaluating Achievement of Senior High School Students in Canada: A Study of Policies and Practices of Ministries and School Boards in Canada.* In this document the authors characterize the educational climate in Canada in the 1990s in this way:

> Never in Canada's history has there been such an overriding concern with educational standards and academic achievement. The public is demanding that students leave school with a solid foundation in communication skills, mathematics, science, technology, and global understanding. The widely held belief that education is the key to a viable economy and global competitiveness has placed the system under great public scrutiny. National assessment and accountability efforts, designed to promote learning and measure the effectiveness of this country's education systems, are thriving. Most provinces have introduced graduation certification examinations, as well as a variety of other province-wide assessment programs (p. 1).

In 1968 Manitoba's Department of Education terminated competency exams. For twenty eight years students in Manitoba were not required to write exams at the end of the twelfth grade of schooling. During this time Manitoba's Department of Education and Training conducted some program assessments of literacy at various grade levels and it had access to school evaluations of students' language performances, but it had no standard, uniform, curriculum congruent assessment of the literacy competency of high school graduates throughout the province. Student evaluation was determined entirely by individual teachers, schools or school divisions. Throughout Canada in the early 1990s public accountability for education became an important issue for parents (DeMont, 1993) and particularly for the business and political sectors of Canadian society (Conference Board of Canada, 1992; Economic Council of Canada, 1992). In 1990 Manitoba Education and Training instituted a provincial exam policy (Manitoba. Department of

Education and Training. June 1990) which would measure learning achievement at Grade 3, 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4.

Teachers did not welcome Manitoba Education and Training's exam policy. The Manitoba Teachers' Society was predictably dubious and anxious (The curriculum headache, 1997; History rewrites itself, 1996; Poll results, 1998; Public school education in turmoil, 1996; Reconciling the beliefs for public schools, 1996). English Language Arts teachers generally, feeling threatened, viewed exams as unnecessary, perilously dogmatic, and possibly even a misleading indicator of the actual state of literacy in the province (Martin, 1997; Poll results, 1998; Reconciling the beliefs for public schools; Schnitzer, 1996).

The anxieties of teachers in Manitoba or in any other province, however, were far outweighed by the concerns of Canadian society generally, by those who welcomed the idea of an accountable education system and particularly by those aware of futuristic societal and workforce trends who had a vested interest in how potential employees were educated in public schools. On January 11, 1993 *Maclean's* featured an issue on these concerns titled, *Special Report: What's Wrong At School? Why Many Parents give Failing Grades to Their Children's Teachers.* It makes clear that at that time many Canadians recognized that in a pluralistic society that is entering into a new era characterized by manifest and unprecedented societal, technological, scientific, and workforce changes, there is an indisputable need for new benchmarks in education. In fact, throughout the 1990s, educators and community leaders across North America, not just in Canada, were involved in serious discussions about the urgent need for solid educational standards that emphasize numeracy, literacy and communication skills required by the future world of work (Allentuck, 1990; Barton, 1990; *Beyond High School*, 1990; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1993; Conference Board of Canada,

1992; Corson, 1991; Daggett, 1991; Economic Council of Canada, 1992; Government of Canada, 1992; Lichfield, 1991; Simon, 1991; Wirth, 1991).

In recognition of these conspicuous public concerns the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education was created in December 1993 (Manitoba Education and Training, June 1995). It recognized the critical importance of language literacy by stating in the preface to *The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 12: Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education* that

> Changes in society and technology have affected and will continue to affect the ways in which students use language to think, to communicate, and to learn. Students must be prepared to meet new literacy demands in Canada and the international community. The ability to use language effectively enhances students' opportunities to experience personal satisfaction and to become responsible, contributing citizens and lifelong learners (*The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts: Kindergarten to Grade 12* , 1998, p. vii).

Of course, the most reliable means for ensuring literacy acquisition is to mandate a provincial curriculum-congruent exam at the end of grade 12, or Senior 4 in Manitoba.

1.1.0 The Standards and Accountability Movement

A 1987 Southam literacy study (Downey, 1991) reported the following disturbing findings. At the end of the 1980s, the United States of America ranked as one of the weakest countries educationally in the developed world. This same study classified Canadian students as *marginally weaker* in language skills. It stated that at least five million Canadians, "including 17% of high school graduates" (Downey, 1991, p. 12 - 13) could not read or write well enough to meet basic literacy requirements.

In 1993 Canada's pre-eminent and most widely read newsmagazine, *Maclean's*, published its alarming special report on the state of education in Canada. It was a clear and unapologetic attack on public education in Canada. Readers were told that:

> [c]ritics of contemporary teaching methods point to mediocre showings by Canadian students in international rankings. In one instance, in 1990 - 1991 ... [e]ven though Canada spends a greater percentage of its gross domestic product on education than most countries, it finished ninth ... behind such countries as the Soviet Union and Switzerland, as well as South Korea and Taiwan.
>
> The results of domestic studies are equally unimpressive. A 1989 Statistics Canada survey concluded that 29 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 16 and 24 lacked the basic skills necessary to read a newspaper. And according to a report last May by the Economic Council of Canada, more that one million functionally illiterate young people will emerge from the nation's schools during the next 10 years (Fennell, p. 30).

Also referring to the1989 Statistics Canada survey, Downey (1991) stated that it found "only 62% of adult Canadians [had] sufficient reading ability to manage everyday life and continue learning," while a further 22% were low-level literates who could handle only simple reading in familiar contexts (p. 12 - 13). A major problem identified by Downey was that "[a]lmost unique among countries, Canada has no national academic standard" (1991, p. 8).

In 1991 Nelson Canada, a Toronto-based textbook publisher, which periodically tests English language skills of students in English-Language schools, found that "[c]ompared with test scores in 1966, scores in 1991 had dropped in all areas tested by the following percentages: Vocabulary - 2%, Mathematics - 6%, Reading Comprehension -9%, Writing Skills -11% " (Fennel, p. 31). The perception of failing school systems was additionally reinforced by a May 1992 report from the Conference Board of Canada that stated:

> Canadians are increasingly aware that education because of its impact on our social well-being and economic prosperity, is one of the most significant public issues facing Canadians. Problems facing the education system threaten to reduce the national standard of living, heighten demands on social safety nets, and increase the economic burden on individual and Corporate taxpayers. One of the most important of these problems is a high school dropout rate that stands at 34 percent - meaning that one in three Canadian high school students fails to graduate (p. 1).

In the early 1990s journalistic representations of public education in Canada as not just inadequate but seriously deficient, were pervasive and prolific. Because of the negative perceptions the mass media generated, it is understandable that provincial governments came to the conclusion that educational reform and accountability were two of the most important issues for Canadians in the 1990s. Thus, standards became the axiom of educational reformers.

Furthermore, throughout the 1990s, powerfully persuasive parent back-to-basics action groups emerged across Canada devoted to inquiring into the adequacy of public school systems. They determined to lobby for what they perceived to be a worthy education system for Canadian children and to pressure ministries of education to make necessary curriculum changes (DeMont, 1993).

Provincial governments across Canada chose to be attentive to these widespread concerns. In 1993, on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Frank McKenna, Premier of New Brunswick, stated the problem as bluntly and as directly as it is possible to communicate it: The difference between people in the future will be between "not the have and the have-nots but between the know and the know-nots" (C.B.C. 1/23/93). In Canada, it was perceived then that there were an alarming number of "know-nots". Understandably, in this atmosphere, regional governments across Canada chose to make the reconstruction of public school education one of their most important priorities.

1.1.1 *Renewing education: New directions*

In January 1995 at the exact same time that Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers were preparing their students to write a provincial *exam* based on the 1987 curriculum, Manitoba's Minister of Education, Clayton Manness, presented an educational action plan to Manitobans in a document titled, *Renewing education: New directions. The action plan* (Manitoba Education and Training, January 1995). In it he announced a new

English Language Arts Senior 4 curriculum for implementation in September 2001 which would include widespread changes in the province's education system. The preface of this document contained an open letter to the public. In it Manness stated unequivocally that his government's intention was to establish "strong, specific provincial directions that aim to revitalize and restore confidence within public education" (preface). Later in the document he told Manitobans that provincial *tests* would be instituted that:

> will be fully curriculum congruent, that is, based on curriculum outcomes and standards. When this is the case, 'teaching-to-the-test' will mean 'teaching-to-the-curriculum,' a highly desirable goal to attain. Standards testing will help to ensure that uniform, province-wide expectations of what students should know and be able to do are met (Manitoba Education and Training, January1995, p. 42).

Manness hypothesized that province-wide standards testing would gauge education uniformity. By means of provincial tests at Grade 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4, all students passing through the Manitoba publicly-funded educational system would have to demonstrate that they had learned the specific grade-level skills outlined in the mandated curriculum. Theoretically, as standards teaching permeates throughout the schools in the province, all teachers at all grade levels eventually would see the accrued benefits of standards instruction and outcomes-based learning.

Also in 1995, Manitoba Education and Training published *New directions. A foundation for excellence* (June 1995). Both documents outlined an approach to education that clearly implied a desire on the part of the government for a publicly accountable educational system. Standards *tests* would require students to be accountable for their learning. Equally important the test results would require school divisions, school division administrators, school administrators, and classroom teachers to be accountable for the quality of education delivered to students in their schools.

The introduction of *exams* in January 1996, *after* the announcement in 1995 of a new outcomes-based, standards curriculum and curriculum-congruent *test* for 2001,

caused widespread confusion among Senior 4 teachers even though new curriculum documents had not been distributed by Manitoba Education and Training. Many Senior 4 teachers felt the sections in the January 1995 *New directions* government plans for "Educational Standards and Evaluation" referred specifically to the Senior 4 English Language Arts *exam* scheduled for January 1996. They did not. *New directions* contained information applicable only to the prospective 2001 curriculum. The January 1996 exam was based on the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum. As a result of this general confusion about which government documents governed the exam, one of the major criticisms levelled at the January 1996 exam by Senior 4 teachers was that it was not curriculum congruent. Indeed, it was; it was congruent with the reading and writing sections of the *1987 English Language Arts Grades 9 - 12* curriculum.

1.1.2 Reinstatement of Exams

However, because the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum document was not presented to teachers in a form that identified clear, examinable learning outcomes, many teachers felt it was structurally and philosophically incompatible with an exam. Even so, Manitoba Education and Training, through the Assessment and Evaluation Unit, introduced provincial exams at the Senior 4 level. By examining the literacy skills of Senior 4 students beginning in January 1996 Manitoba Education and Training effectively achieved two important purposes. Exam results provided them with a clearer understanding of the reading and writing abilities of Senior 4 students throughout the province at that time, and the exam itself served to focus teachers' attention on teaching literacy while year by year the new outcomes-based standards curriculum would be systematically implemented from K to Senior 4 until the year 2001.

In line with the accountability philosophy of Manitoba Education and Training's *New directions* documents, plans to implement English Language Arts new outcomes-based, standards tests at Grade 3and Grade 6 were well underway by 1997. In

1998 these grade levels were tested and a Senior 1 standards test was piloted. By 2001 Manitoba Education and Training's outcomes-based curriculum will be taught at all grade levels and Senior 4 students will write the first provincial outcomes-based piloted *test*.

1.1.3 The Western Canadian Protocol Agreement

Also by 1995, The Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, instituted in 1993, was in the process of preparing a common curriculum framework for English Language Arts for Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the two northern territories (Manitoba Education and Training, June, 1995). A common curriculum frameworks for Western Canadian educational jurisdictions was deemed necessary by the ministers of education for these five regions because of the importance each placed on four common goals:

- high standards of education,
- common educational goals,
- removing obstacles to the access of educational opportunities for students, including improving the ease of transfer from jurisdiction to jurisdiction,
- optimum use of educational resources

(*The common curriculum framework for English Language Arts, kindergarten to grade 12*, 1998, vii).

Differentiating between documents explaining the purpose and direction of *The common curriculum framework for English Language Arts, kindergarten to grade 12* from the Western Protocol Agreement, Manitoba's *Renewing education: New directions. The action plan* and *New directions: A foundation for excellence*, and exam-related bulletins was problematic for many teachers. Too much was happening too quickly (The curriculum headache, 1997).

1.1.4 Schools-of-Choice Legislation

Furthermore, the Manitoba Government's deficit concerns in the 1990s caused tangible distress in all of Manitoba's educational settings. School Division grants were cut, school budgets were slashed, teaching positions were eliminated, and even Manitoba Education and Training employees were affected by periodic "Filman Fridays", days off without pay (Public school education in turmoil, 1996; Public schools left to wither, 1996; Public school rally draws thousands, 1996; Reconciling the beliefs for public schools, 1996).

On another front, a provincial commission, the School Divisions/Districts Boundary Review Commission, was established to study the feasibility of reducing the number of school divisions within the province primarily for economic purposes. Fewer school divisions, it was generally believed, would mean reduced expenditures for the government and possibly reduced taxes for taxpayers. The Boundary Review Commission report, published on February 3, 1995, contained 43 recommendations for change. Again, like the decision to impose accountability measures on schools and teachers, a decision by the Manitoba Government to cut costs by restructuring the entire public school system at the administration level caused educators to be anxious about possible job losses (Quattrin, 1995; Santin, 1995).

An editorial in the February 4, 1995 issue of the *Winnipeg Free Press* assessed the Boundary Review Commission's report a failure:

> Former Winnipeg Mayor Bill Norrie and his committee of experts tried to design a better set of school divisions for Manitoba and they tried to come up with reasons why new boundaries should be imposed. In their report published by the provincial government yesterday, they failed on both counts ... Mr. Norrie and his committee looked conscientiously for adequate reasons why the government should proceed with its dream of creating new school divisions, but they found none. They found plenty of evidence of the costs and grief and absurdities that will result. The idea of pulling all the school divisions apart and putting them back together again should be scrapped (A fruitless exercise, A6).

Faced with a mixed public response, "leery" educators(Quattrin, 1995, A16), and the *Winnipeg Free Press* editors labelling the commission's work "A fruitless exercise" (1995, A6), the Manitoba Government did not act on the Boundary Review Commission's forty-three recommendations (Quattrin, 1995; Santin & Quattrin, 1995; A fruitless exercise,1995).

Instead, in the fall of 1997, students throughout Manitoba were allowed to attend schools of their choice. The Manitoba Government introduced amendments to *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act* during the fall legislative session of 1996 (Manitoba Education and Training, January 17, 1997). One new section, *School of Choice*, legislated the right to enrol in any school within the home school division or in schools in any other school district. According to this legislation:

> *School of Choice means that a resident pupil may be enrolled in a program offered at any school with their [sic] school division or school district or, subject to certain conditions outlined in the PSA (Provincial Schools Act), may be enrolled in a program offered at a school in another school division or school district.
>
> *As a basis for School of Choice, the PSA now requires that school boards publish or make available information respecting programs offered and enrolment levels, and apply enrolment priorities so that parents can make an informed choice of school for their child. These enrolment priorities are outlined in the PSA in order to set a common standard (Manitoba Education and Training. January 17, 1997).

The opening of school division boundaries caused school administrators and school boards to monitor provincial exam results even more closely because, they reasoned, if their school division or any school within the division gained a reputation for performing poorly on provincial exams this reputation would cause them to lose students. A reduction in student enrolment would translate into smaller government funding grants. Less money would mean school boards would be forced to reduce the number of teaching positions because teachers' salaries are a school board's largest expenditure. Pressure is consequently transferred directly to classroom teachers to ensure respectable, if not

excellent, provincial exam results. The provincial exams, therefore, caused a great deal of anxiety not only for Senior 4 students and their teachers but also for many school boards and school administrators.

1.1.5 1987 English Language Arts Curriculum Congruent Exam

Because the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum document, on which the January, 1996 - June, 2000 exams are based, was not presented originally to teachers with the likely prospect of a provincial exam being developed for it, many Senior 4 teachers in the 1995 - 96 school year viewed the exams as interfering, unfair, and a wilful intrusion into their classroom teaching practices. Many Senior 4 teachers worried that the reading skills and the writing skills that students demonstrated on the provincial exam would be interpreted to mean that certain teachers were or were not teaching the language proficiencies recommended by the 1987 curriculum. Although these concerns were confined to private or professional group gatherings of English teachers, they were frequent, prevalent and pervasive. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

An added anxiety involved the nature of the 1987 curriculum document. Because a large portion of the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum document was devoted to language theory, teachers were bewildered about the nature of an exam that could be developed from it. The curriculum stressed the importance of instructing students in the five language strands: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. Furthermore, the curriculum required that students be assessed on their proficiency in each of these discreet language skills, and that teachers weight the five individual scores for summative evaluation of course work: reading, 25%, writing, 35%, speaking, 20%, and listening, 20% (Manitoba Education and Training. 1991, p. 10 - 12; Manitoba Education and Training. 1995-96, p. 1). What most puzzled teachers was how a provincial exam, worth

30% of a student's final grade mark, could be developed that would be congruent with the weighted assessment requirements.

In September of 1996 speculations and anxieties were appeased, to some extent, by an Information Bulletin distributed to high school principals and teachers by Manitoba Education and Training: Assessment and Evaluation Unit. It specified that only two strands of English Language Arts would be evaluated on the provincial exam. These would be a reading exam worth 40% and a writing exam worth 60% of the student's exam mark (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995-96).

1.16 Summary

Between1995 and 1998 what was confusing to so many Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers, and educators generally throughout the province, were the number of educational changes taking place involving both the 1987 curriculum and the proposed 2001 curriculum, the implied need for a system-wide means for teacher-accountability within the new curriculum documents, and the rapidity with which changes were being implemented (The curriculum headache, 1997). These changes included: the introduction of a Senior 4 English Language Arts exam congruent with part of the 1987 Senior 4 curriculum; the development of a new K - Senior 4 outcomes-based curriculum linked to the Western Canadian Protocol Agreement with an assessment at grade 3 and standards tests at grades 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4; and Bill 47 which opened school division boundaries to allow students to enrol in their schools of choice. Critical press reports, a vociferous back-to-basics parents movement, and a nation-wide standards-and-accountability movement compounded teachers' anxieties.

In Manitoba, moreover, fear that together provincial exams and open boundaries could negatively affect any high school staff in the province troubled teachers. A low school provincial exam score, especially in a high school in Winnipeg where there are

many high schools, could potentially decimate a school's student population, for it is reasonable to assume that parents, able to choose schools for their children, would choose a school that scores well on provincial exams. Government grants are based on student enrolment. Less grant money equals fewer teachers. Therefore, worries about job-security further complicated conditions for teachers.

It was within this tense atmosphere that Senior 4 teachers first experienced the Manitoba Senior 4 exam. The tenor of the times had to have affected their perceptions of it and shaped their attitudes towards it to a significant degree. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

Prior to the introduction of the Senior 4 English Language Arts exam in Manitoba, summative evaluation lay within the jurisdiction of each individual school division in the province. As a result, students throughout Manitoba were evaluated in a wide variety of ways depending on the policy of the school division in which their high school was situated. Some school divisions in densely populated urban school divisions had an exam policy, while others, particularly those in remote rural areas where there might be one, two, or three high schools, miles apart, allowed subject area teachers to establish their own summative evaluation policy procedures. As a result, a Senior 4 literacy standard was difficult if not impossible for postsecondary learning institutions, employers, and parents to determine because of inconsistent, confusing, and disparate methods of summative evaluation.

After the first provincial exam in January 1996, a more consistent, uniform conception of summative evaluation emerged. First, Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers found themselves united in a common goal - to prepare classes of Senior 4 students for a large-scale, high-stakes provincial exam. This in itself was an integrative

experience. Secondly, a large number of Senior 4 teachers volunteered to become involved in the central marking process in Winnipeg. Because this required them to participate in aggregate marker-training sessions and to mark in teams, they had the opportunity to share ideas and perceptions over a period of one to two weeks. While they protested the exam obstreperously, most involved in the marking sessions agreed that the occasion afforded them an invaluable professional development opportunity to learn about and discuss the benefits, purposes, and worth of summative evaluation with Manitoba Education and Training representatives and their teacher-colleagues. Many left these marking sessions with a conditional acceptance of the exam process.

Even though teachers' attitudes towards the Senior 4 English Language Arts exam had to be influenced to some degree by other contingent events in their professional lives, and in spite of the fact that the dispositions of many of Manitoba's English Language Arts teachers were, undeniably cranky, a study concerning teachers' perceptions of how the provincial exam had, or had not, influenced their classroom teaching practices is essential. Not only will such an inquiry provide interesting insights into the responses of professional teachers to mandated change, but it will also provide useful information for exam developers, curriculum planners and curriculum implementers alike regarding which aspects of the exam implementation process worked effectively and which did not.

1.2.0 Significance

All educators need to contemplate to what extent government mandated exit-exams influence the *kind of teaching* and the *nature of the instruction* that occurs in school classrooms. Therefore, the most important and the most critical theoretical question is this: What should drive a curriculum - the mandated curriculum document itself or the exam the students are required to write at the completion of the course?

The people who will decide the answer to this question, ultimately, will be the classroom teachers. So, in order for the mandated curriculum document to be perceived to be the engine of the educational machine, classroom teachers must recognize that the summative exam is wholly curriculum congruent.

What also must be considered is to what extent summative large-scale provincial exams influence the nature of the *formative* assessment that classroom teachers conduct within their own courses for their own students. Do teachers assess students using a variety of means so that students' learning achievements are assessed and evaluated in diverse ways for different communicative purposes? Or, are the teacher-designed assessments and evaluation methods modelled predominantly on the provincial exam rubrics? If the latter is true, then is on-going assessment unfair to students by being too narrowly focused on a limited kind of communication competency? Exam developers need to know the answers to these questions. Without a clear understanding of the impact of large-scale, high-stakes exams on classroom teacher-behaviour, exams that are not completely curriculum congruent may defeat the intent of a government legislated curriculum.

Much of the literature that has been written within this decade on curriculum reflects the belief that:

> about 50% to 60% of [the curriculum] should be required, expected, and accounted for; the rest of it can be driven by the interests of the teachers and the students. Currently, we operate with 100% of the curriculum being driven by teachers or textbook publishers or test makers ... it's an issue of balance and there should be some common expectations (Schullstrom, p. 3).

An educational policy for public accountability, a curriculum that specifies similar instruction at each grade level and common outcomes-expectations of students are the two most dependable means found in the research literature to produce curriculum-congruent teaching. Also common in the research literature and relative to this concept are three critical ideas for test developers to consider:

- First, if provincial large-scale tests are not completely compatible with the "required, expected" curricula, the results cannot feasibly reflect that all of the "common expectations" are being taught consistently throughout the province.
- Second, if tests are not "in balance" with the mandated curriculum they are not logically reliable benchmarks for gauging the effectiveness of the entire curriculum.
- Third, if the test isn't completely curriculum congruent, and teachers are aware of this fact, the problem of the test, itself, becoming the curriculum arises. There is so much importance placed on test results, the test could supersede the curriculum in importance. Moreover, how effective can provincial tests be as a means of inducing teachers to teach what is "required, expected" when all that they must be accountable for is not included in the exam? Teachers narrowing the curricula they teach in order to focus more directly on the literacy competency skills students are required to demonstrate on the exam is cause for considerable concern (Brandt, 1981; Burke, 1992; Earl, 1995; Fagan & Spurrell, 1995; Gipps, 1994; Midwood, 1993; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Rothman, 1995; Salvia & Hughes, 1990).

However, the most interesting question concerning the potential impact of a narrowly-focused, language-competency test may be what is *not* being taught that was previously taught to a significant extent prior to the test? In other words, what components of literacy learning that reflect "the interests of the teachers and the students" (Schullstrom, 1997, p. 3) are our students *not experiencing* as a result of the provincial language-competency exam?

The intent of this study is to determine to what extent the Senior 4 exams written between January 1996 and May 1998 caused Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers in Manitoba to change the kind of teaching and the nature of instruction that they practice in their classrooms, and to determine if Senior 4 teachers have changed their formative assessment practices *as a result of* the provincial exam.

1.2.1 Practical Hypothesis

It was hoped that this study would ascertain if, or how and to what extent, Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers have been professionally affected by the Senior 4 provincial government exam. The specific goal was to acquire an understanding of whether or not teachers' teaching and assessment practices have been affected by the 1996, 1997, and 1998 sets of exams. Further, if teachers' classroom practices have been affected, another intent of this study was to determine the types of changes that teachers perceive they have made in their teaching practises in Senior 4 English Language Arts courses and if these changes are congruent with the balanced program of studies outlined in the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum.

1.2.2 The Research Questions

The survey recipients were asked to answer the survey questions *keeping in mind their teaching practices prior to* the January 1996 exam and comparing these practices to the kinds of teaching they now do *as a result of* the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam. The survey (See Appendix C, Survey Questionnaire) contains four sections each of which focuses on a different aspect of English language arts teaching.

In section *A*, teachers were asked to consider their perceptions of the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on the kind of language teaching they include in their Senior 4 English Language Arts course content, *now*, compared to the language teaching they chose to include in their courses prior to the exam. It is the lengthiest part of the survey including 36 statements. Next to each statement teachers placed check marks under a response that most closely approximated their perception. The response options are *more frequently*, *as frequently*, or *less frequently*.

In section *B*, teachers were asked to consider their choice of Senior 4 texts *as a result of* the Senior 4 provincial exam compared to the texts they used with students *prior*

to the exam. Teachers responded to 16 statements by again checking either *more frequently*, *as frequently*, or *less frequently*.

In section *C*, teachers checked *frequently*, *occasionally*, or *never* to seven statements regarding their use of provincial exams as part of their course work. Obviously, this is the only section of the survey that did not require teachers to reflect on their teaching practices prior to January 1996, but the statements require respondents to simply relate to what extent they include "old" exams as instruction material.

In section *D*, teachers also checked *frequently*, *occasionally*, or *never* to seven statements regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on the assessment methods they have used *since* the introduction of the exam. Again, in this last section of the survey teachers were asked to respond keeping in mind the assessment procedures they practiced prior to the exam.

1.2.3 Scope

The introduction of any large-scale, government-mandated test or exam presumably affects the classroom teaching behaviours of teachers to some extent. Although this study concentrates on English language arts teachers, the conclusions can be generalized to teachers of any subject area confronted with a mandatory, high stakes, large-scale test.

Given that teachers who received and responded to the surveys were working within a stressful educational environment produced by the simultaneous introduction of a number of collateral government initiated policy changes, the research findings are valid for the research purposes. The results could reflect those of any similar survey distributed to any group of teachers faced with preparing students to write large-scale, mandatory completion tests in any subject, for there is rarely a time in the field of education when teachers' practices are not stressful and not under some kind of scrutiny for any number of

purposes, or when teachers are not being challenged to some degree by ideological or curriculum change.

1.4 Key Terms

- **Accountability:** The process by which school boards, schools, and teachers attempt to show that they are fulfilling the provincially required educational goals (Manitoba Education and Training, January, 1995).
- **Analytic Evaluation Scheme:** A scoring procedure used by Senior 4 English Language Arts exam markers to determine a mark for student performances on the writing component of the provincial exam. Students are evaluated on four selected traits with each trait receiving a separate score: content - 30%; organization - 25%; style - 25%; and language mechanics - 20% (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997, p. 10). The four scores are totalled to determine the mark for writing performance. See also Process Writing Exam Rubric.
- **Anchor Papers:** Examples of student writing that demonstrates achievable standards against which other student writing can be compared. In a large-scale exam marking session, organizers usually provide markers with anchor papers for a variety of levels of performance ranging from superior to poor or inadequate. Each major trait is identified according to a competency achievement level with a brief rationale (Manitoba Education and Training, 1998 - 99). Anchor papers are sometimes called exemplars, range-finders, benchmarks, performance standards, or outcomes standards.
- **Argumentative Writing:** this form of writing on the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts exam requires students to argue or write persuasively in favour of a specific point of view on a given subject. It is linked with persuasive writing. According to the *Information Bulletin 1997 - 1998 Senior 4 English Language Arts Examinations*, Argumentative/Persuasive "examples include an editorial,

letter to the editor, an essay, or a speech that takes a position on an issue and argues the case for this point of view" (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997, p. 7).

- **Benchmarks:** See Anchor Papers.
- **Criteria:** Guidelines which markers are required to use to judge student exam responses. The features most favoured in writing or reading performances become rubrics or scoring guides and are used for summative evaluation purposes. Rubrics and scoring guides usually define criteria in an integrated form. (See Appendix E, Analytic Evaluation Scheme.)
- **English Language Arts Provincial Exam:** An exam written by Senior 4 students in Manitoba at the end of each semester or school year from January 1996 until June 1999. Senior 4 students studying Core (40G), Senior 4 Literary Specialization (40S), or Senior 4 Transactional Specialization (40S) are required to write it. Students must demonstrate reading and writing competency. The exam is uniform in format from semester to semester and year to year.
- **Exemplars:** See Anchor Papers.
- **Expository Writing:** Also referred to as explanatory or informative writing, this form requires students to explain a particular point of view on a given topic. The explanation of discourse contexts in the *Information Bulletin 1997 - 1998 Senior 4 English Language Arts Examinations* states "examples include a report, a letter, an article, or a speech that explains an issue or a problem and describes actions to be taken to deal with it" (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997, p. 7).
- **Formative Assessment:** Ongoing assessment that provides the classroom teacher with information to evaluate students' performances. It is also used to provide the students themselves, their parents, and school and school board administrators with an analysis of students' language growth and competency. According to

Gipps it "takes place during the course of teaching and is used essentially to feed back into the teaching/learning process" (1994, p. vii).

- **Holistic Marking**: Also referred to as general impression marking, this is a type of grading which assigns one overall score to a student's language competency performance "rather than a number of ratings on various qualities" (Diederich, 1974, p.100).
- **Large-Scale Test:** Assessment or evaluation for knowledge purposes about the standards of performance of a large group of people with one or more similar characteristics. They are usually standardized (See Standardized achievement test.) to some extent and administered at the same time. Purposes of large-scale assessments / evaluations / tests is to gain understanding about the abilities of a specific group which could include performance competency, program or curriculum suitability, certification, knowledge, or academic strengths.
- **Opportunity to Learn:** The concept that all students should be provided with the necessary "resources and instruction to enable [them] to meet the standards for performance" (Rothman, 1995, 179). In the United States, "[u]nder the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, an independent body will set national standards for students' opportunity to learn" (Rothman, 1995, p. 191). In a Canadian Council of Teachers of English Conference in Montreal in 1985, Alan Purves spoke on the topic of "Opportunity to Learn" and assessments. He referred to it as a "serious issue" saying "If assessment, curriculum, and instruction are divorced, students will not perform well on tests because they have not had the opportunity to learn" (p. 24). He recommended "a stable and sharply defined curriculum ... Assessment, therefore, can be calibrated to the curriculum, and lack of opportunity to learn marks a failure on the part of the teacher" (p. 24).

- **Outcomes-Based Education:** A philosophy of education in which a department of education establishes a set of learning outcomes or goals for student learning achievement or performance at each grade level. Attainment of these learning outcomes is assessed continuously throughout the program of studies and at the end of the program students demonstrate what they know and the skills they have developed through a summative performance-based assessment.
- **Performance-Based Assessment:** Tests or assignments that include a variety of tasks through which students demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in a course of studies. These assessments often take place over a period of time and include planning, decision making, revision and other project organizational and processing skills. The final result is an actual performance that can be written, presented orally, or presented in a combination of both types of communication.
- **Performance Standards:** See Anchor Papers.
- **Personal Essay/Narrative:** Students are required to express personal opinions or points of view on a given subject in the form of a reflective essay that is either argumentative/persuasive or expository/explanatory in form.
- **Persuasive Writing:** See Argumentative Writing.
- **Process Writing:** A method of writing required by the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts exam whereby students produce a piece of writing in stages over a four day period of time for one hour each day. These stages include a group discussion of the subject in which the students focus their discussion on selections of subject-related readings. Next, students individually prepare an outline and a first draft of their essays. They edit their essays during the third class, and write final copies during their fourth class.
- **Process Writing Exam Rubric**: Also called an analytical evaluation scheme, it is a set of criteria which exam markers use to evaluate Senior 4 exam essays. It includes

descriptors for 5 levels of writing performance: superior, proficient, satisfactory, weak, and poor. Markers use separate criteria to evaluate 4 different elements of writing: content, style, organization, and mechanics. (See Appendix E, Analytic Evaluation Scheme.)

- **Reading Proficiency:** On the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts Reading Exam, students are required to read a variety of selections on a given theme and answer approximately twenty questions which are levelled for degrees of reading difficulty. Twenty percent of the reading questions require students to demonstrate, through their answers, that they are able to read at a literal level. Thirty percent of the questions require students to demonstrate they can make inferences from what they read. Fifty percent of the questions require students to demonstrate that they are capable of critical, reflective thought concerning what they read (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997, p. 10).
- **Reliability:** The trustworthiness of test results. Gipps defines it as "the extent to which an assessment would produce the same, or similar, score on two occasions or if given by two assessors. The is the 'accuracy' with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure (1994, vii). Rothman defines it as "[t]he degree to which test results can be trusted. Reliability usually encompasses two elements: stability, or the consistency of administration of tests, and interrater reliability, or the consistency of judgement of student work. Psychometricians employ a number of statistical techniques to measure reliability and indicate the degree to which results can be reported with confidence in their accuracy" (1995, p. 192).
- **Rubric:** A grade-specific predetermined set of criteria for scoring or rating students' performances on reading or writing tasks. Reliable rubrics contain a fixed measurement scale. An example is a 5-point scale with five distinct

descriptions of the characteristics of reading or writing performances. The range of characteristics usually follows the pattern range of poor, limited, satisfactory, proficient, exemplary. Each characteristic is accompanied by a descriptor and sample responses (anchors, exemplars) that illustrate the various levels of performance. (See Appendix E, Analytic Evaluation Scheme.)

- **Senior 4 English Language Arts:** In Manitoba this is the English Language Arts course required for high school graduation. Currently, thirty percent of the summative evaluation for each student is determined by the student's achievement on a provincial exam. A student cannot graduate from a Manitoba high school without an English Language Arts credit in this course.
- **Standard:** Canadian educator, Traub defines a standard as "the amount of knowledge of a course syllabus that must be demonstrated in order to pass the course or earn a particular grade. Often specified as a score or range of scores on a test" (1994, p. 52).
- **Standardized Achievement test:** According to Traub, an achievement test that is given and scored the same way whenever and wherever it is used, so all student scores can be fairly compared" (1994, p. 52).
- **Standards:** A set of uniform procedures or benchmarks, for constructing, administering, and scoring an assessment or test. The purpose of test standards is to assure that all students are assessed under comparable conditions so that interpretation of academic performance is fair and equitable for all test writers. Rothman defines standards as "[b]enchmarks against which students and schools measure their progress. Educators generally discuss three types of standards: content standards, which gauge curriculum and instruction; performance standards, which gauge the level of student achievement; and opportunity-to-learn standards, which gauge the capacity of schools to deliver the type of instruction tests

measure. The idea of measuring student and school performance against standards presents a major departure for American education, which has tended to compare students and schools to one another" (1995, p. 192).

- **Summative Evaluation**: According to Gipps it "takes place at the end of a term or a course and is used to provide information about how much students have learned and how well a course has worked" (1994, p. vii). Senior 4 in English Language Arts includes the students' cumulative course work for 70% and the students' achievement on the provincial exam for 30%. On students' mark transcripts, the provincial exam mark is recorded separately from the summative evaluation mark.
- **Transactional Writing:** Informative, explanatory writing that is clear, succinct, straightforward, and easy for the reader to understand. The definition for transactional writing in the *Information Bulletin 1997 - 1998 Senior 4 English Language Arts Examinations* is that it is "the language of necessity, the language used to get things done. Specific functions of transactional language include: informing, explaining, instructing, persuading, and arguing. Transactional discourse, in short, is practical and utilitarian. It is the language used to *transact* the business of the world" (Manitoba Education and Training, 1997, p. 2). On a writing continuum scale transactional writing would be at the opposite end from poetic writing.
- **Validity:** The degree to which tests measure what they claim to measure.

2. Literature Review

In an effort to understand the influence of the introduction of a large-scale exam on classroom teachers' instruction and assessment practices, a research survey was prepared and distributed to Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers in Manitoba after a series of six provincial exams had been written by Senior 4 students between January 1996 and May 1998. To measure the extent of the instructional and assessment changes Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers actually made *as a result of* the implementation of the exam, teachers were surveyed on their perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on their Senior 4 course content, their selection of reading texts, their instruction strategies, and their class work assessment and evaluation practices.

A literature search on the impact of large-scale assessments on teachers' professional practices revealed that the choices made by the Senior 4 teachers in Manitoba are comparable to the kinds of adjustments in teaching that have occurred elsewhere when large-scale exams or tests have been instituted. Many research studies have been conducted on the resonant effects of large-scale, completion tests on students, teachers, schools, and school districts. However, the majority of these studies have been carried out in the United States or Great Britain. Canadian researchers need to be mindful of the kind of large-scale testing on which many of these studies were based. In the United States, the research studies very often refer to the impact of *standardized* tests, and standardized testing usually means the use of a commercially prepared and published standardized test. Likewise, British studies are interesting but they also must be read thoughtfully keeping in mind that the specific program of studies for which the test instrument was designed may be very different from the program of studies taught in schools in Canada. Even though many of the research conclusions do not apply directly to Canadian testing situations, a

reader cannot help but note that, regardless of where the studies were done, the researchers often arrive at similar conclusions regarding the effects of large-scale tests on teaching practices. Consequently, it is fair to assume that many of the conclusions of these research studies are not only thought provoking, but also universally applicable and therefore certainly worth reviewing.

2.0 The Effects of large-scale Tests on Course Content

There are three principle negative effects on teachers caused by the institution of external tests (Madaus & Airasian, 1977, p. 85 -88). Most teachers feel obligated to spend disproportionate amounts of time "coaching" students for the test. Many feel tremendously pressured to sustain or increase the schools' overall performance on the tests. Additionally, many feel there is a hidden agenda to gauge teacher accountability and as a result teachers tend to give first priority to teaching test-targeted skills that students will be required to demonstrate on large-scale tests;

> Teachers and students adhere to objectives implicit in external exams rather than explicit, curricular objectives. Exams determine the instructional emphasis because they have some import for pupils and teachers...when there is a choice between emphasizing tested or nontested objectives, it is general experience that the objectives actually tested assume primacy (Madaus & Airasion, 1977, p. 83 - 88).

In fact, in 1990 L. A. Shepard, a professor at the University of Colorado's Faculty of Education, confirmed this notion in a study she conducted which involved surveying educators in forty states in the United States of America. She found that teachers spend disproportionate amounts of time teaching test-specific skills and knowledge.

2.0.0 Narrowing the Curriculum

Narrowing the curriculum is a major concern for teachers (Freedman, 1994; Herman & Dorr-Bremme, 1983; Madaus & Airasian, 1977; Purves, 1985; Traub & MacRury, 1991; Rothman, 1995). While they recognize the motivational value that

testing brings to students' attitudes to learning, large-scale tests seriously reduce the amount of time teachers can devote to teaching curriculum that is not included on them (Traub & MacRury, 1991). Teachers find that they have to make difficult and sometimes frustrating choices between focusing on test-required skills and non-test specified curriculum material. The practice of teaching test-required skills at the expense of other content-mandated materials tends not only to narrow the classroom curriculum but also to lead into the problem of mechanizing teaching and learning (Madaus & Airasion, 1977).

Teachers perceive large-scale testing to be confining. Herman and Dorr-Bremme (1983) conducted a survey designed to elicit teacher attitudes to large-scale testing. Teachers stated that they felt that testing is worthwhile for encouraging students to learn testable skills and knowledge but it severely limits the amount of time that they can spend teaching nontestable skills and knowledge. A decade later a British study was conducted of two sets of classrooms. One set of students was to be tested at the end of the term; the other set was not. The resulting research data showed that teachers of the students who were facing term-end tests felt they were restricted in their writing programs and unable to build a coherent curriculum (Freedman, 1994).

Herman and Dorr-Bremme claim, "[t]ests alone have not caused the curriculum to narrow. Rather, the narrowing is a consequence of the importance ascribed by society at large to test scores and an emphasis on basic skills"(1983, p.15). If this is true, then teachers' perceptions, that parents, school administrators, politicians, and the general public think test results are in fact significant, compel them to place primary emphasis on test-required skills and thus to narrow the curriculum chiefly to those skills and types of knowledge required by the test. On the other hand, some educators feel teaching to the test is not necessarily a fault:

> school administrators and teachers have sought to raise test scores through various practices known as 'teaching to the test.' Teaching to the test is often frowned upon in schools, but it is not necessarily a bad thing ... As one official responded, 'In fact, the presence of the test is forcing attention to the essential

skills that had been identified (Rothman, 1995, p. 58).

Those who subscribe to this point of view feel educational systems must have standards of performance. They feel educators need to place common expectations on students, that a certain percentage of the curriculum should be "required, expected and accounted for" (Schullstrom, 1997, p. 3), and that students should be obliged to demonstrate skill and knowledge acquisition.

2.0.1 Accountability

The perception that large-scale tests are established for the purposes of determining teacher accountability is perhaps the most distressing element for teachers concerning the topic of testing (Popham & Rankin, 1981). They feel pressure from administrators, at both the school and the divisional administrative level, to sustain or increase the school's performance on these tests (Shepard, 1990). They often feel that competency tests are not really intended to examine the students, but instead are truly meant to be a devise for measuring teaching performance (Madaus & Airasion, 1977). Perhaps this perception has the most detrimental effect on teachers attitudes towards large-scale testing. The implication that teachers are not teaching all they should is clear in the suggestion that in California "teachers would never implement the ideas in the [California curriculum] frameworks as long as the assessments did not match them" (Rothman, 1995, p. 90). It is this lack of faith in teachers' professionalism that distresses teachers the most particularly when time management is a concern. Inadequate in-servicing on new curricula and a lack of preparation time may be two factors in teachers choosing to narrow curricula (The curriculum headache, March 1997).

A number of studies have found that teachers resent test results being used to measure teacher effectiveness, or to hold them accountable for poor academic performances on large-scale tests, particularly for poor performances due to external factors in students' lives (Traub & MacRury, 1994). However, the most frequently cited

reasons teachers give for choosing to focus more narrowly on test-required skills and knowledge is the argument that particular classes do not have a strong background in basic language skills, especially classes which include large numbers of students from impoverished areas or classes with large numbers of students for whom English is a second language (Birkmire, 1992; Rothman, 1995). Essentially, educators as a whole feel it is unfair to judge teaching or school performance entirely on test performance results, particularly when in fact students' test performances could be low due to un-school-related, external, social factors (Popham & Rankin, 1981).

2.1 The Effects of large-scale Tests on Reading and Writing Instruction

Whenever large-scale testing has been legislated, it has been done as a result of three fundamental beliefs rooted in the society that has required it. These generally are that in order for students to become productive citizens, all must acquire certain basic skills, all need a specific body of knowledge, and all must demonstrate mastery of particular skills in order to function productively in the world of work (Birkmire, 1992). For the most part the body of knowledge and the functional skills are grounded in notions of literacy and numeracy. English Language Arts becomes a core course because of the high degree of reading and writing activities included in its curriculum. Inevitably in an educational climate that supports competency testing, large-scale tests in language arts are the first to be developed.

2.1.0 Reading

Predictably research indicates that reading test results have special significance for teachers. Reading is so basic to learning that poor reading test results are cause for concern for all teachers not just teachers of English language arts. The democratic right for all children to be educated has become synonymous with the right to learn to read. Many believe that the

> 'Right to Read' is more than merely a slogan ... It is, like the right to a livelihood and a guaranteed income, a right that [North] Americans ... have come to regard as universal and inalienable (Mellon, 1975, p. 39).

There are, however, two justifiable criticisms researchers have found that teachers level at reading test designers. One is that reading tests are not always curriculum congruent. They do not adequately test all the types of reading skills required by high school readers. Test designers create reading tasks for literal and inferential comprehension quite well. What is not done well is the creation of reading tasks that require students to interpret texts and demonstrate critical reflective thinking abilities (Rothman, 1995). The Resnicks (1992) claim that reading tests, as they exist now, merely ask student readers to scan text to find the test designers' predetermined answers; they do not ask students to interpret text at a truly critical, reflective level of understanding. Test-scorers are given a prepared answer key to use to score the tests. These "keys" do not always allow for a variety of interpretations of a given text which reader response, a higher-level reading strategy, encourages. The Resnicks believe all curricula should be first and foremost rooted in cognitive development. They argue that higher-level, critical reflective, interpretive reading abilities are what senior level students should be encouraged to demonstrate on senior level reading tests.

The second most common criticism teachers have of reading tests concerns knowledge inequities and the concept of the importance of background knowledge in reading. In order to be able to make inferences and comprehend important, significant passages from texts, and in order to anticipate what to expect next in a text, students have to have some background knowledge to bring to the reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1938 & 1978). In large-scale test situations if students do not have the necessary background knowledge or experience with which to relate to all textual materials on the test, they may be unable to relate meaningfully to the reading passages on the test and are thus disadvantaged. For these reasons some teachers are growing sceptical of reading test

results (Rothman, 1995, p. 67). The test instrument must be fair to all test-writers in order for the test results to be interpreted meaningfully.

If large-scale reading tests only require high school students to interpret reading texts literally and draw text-congruent inferences, obviously these are the reading skills teachers will emphasize in course work to the detriment of higher-order critical responses. Furthermore, senior years reading tests that do not reflect all the reading strategies included in the curricula, especially the more challenging ones, are not curriculum congruent, and test results will not be a reliable measure of students' true reading abilities (Resnick & Resnick, 1993) .

2.1.1 Writing

Large-scale tests have a powerful influence on the kinds of writing teachers emphasize in their courses. On large-scale tests, the writing tasks most often involve utilitarian writing. Students are required to produce writing that is almost exclusively

> expository rather than creative, communicative rather than expressive, extensive rather than reflexive ... British educators might describe the same thing as writing that is transactional and casts the writer in the role of participant in the world's affairs, rather than imaginative writing casting one in the role of spectator or recreative onlooker (Mellon, 1975, p. 15).

While expository writing is a form of writing that is important in any English Language Arts high school course, it usually represents only part of the writing curriculum. Large-scale writing tests that claim to be curriculum congruent, yet do not offer the student writers opportunities to write creatively, are not curriculum congruent if the curriculum recommends creative writing as part of the writing program teachers should teach. This, researchers maintain, is unfair and disadvantages those students whose writing strengths are expressive rather than informative (Boomer (1985); Freedman, (1994); Mellon, (1975); Resnick & Resnick,(1992); Rothman, (1995). As a result

teachers whose students are required to write large-scale writing tests, will be inclined to emphasize transactional writing in their course work rather than creative, poetic writing.

Test writing tasks usually do not generate interest in student writers very often (Boomer, 1985; Freedman, 1994) and this affects scores, particularly in regard to content and style. Teachers know that student test writers have difficulty getting truly involved in the test's writing task and that students produce their best writing only when they are genuinely interested in the subject of their writing task and have broad topic knowledge. Large-scale tests seldom motivate best writing. Freedman (1994) studied students' involvement in writing tasks and school reform through examinations. He found students showed real engagement with their writing tasks only when they were *not* writing for the examiner. Boomer (1985) is extremely critical of evaluating students' writing abilities through the examination process:

> We know that when intention is low and cognitive engagement loose or muddled, syntax, structure, cohesion, and even spelling fall apart. Results from wide scale tests may not therefore reflect actual competence. Thus by entering into a partnership with wide scale testing advocates, English teachers are required to do damage to the composing process, even if they devise tests which allow drafting, re-drafting and polishing time, because the essential factor of intent cannot be satisfactorily negotiated. In such a collusion with testers, we are as a profession holding up a flawed model of the composing process in writing and, by our patent demonstrations, condoning writing instruction with works on a stimulus-response model (p. 63).

2.2 The Effects of Large-Scale Tests on Teaching

In 1981 Salmon-Cox published the results of her study on teachers' attitudes towards testing. She found teachers, for the most part, ignored test results in their program planning. She surveyed 193 teachers on the effects of test scores on teachers' classroom teaching practices and concluded that:

> the lack of importance assigned to tests and test information is crucial to the debate currently surrounding testing. Clearly, if test information is not much

> used, it can be neither harming nor helping in the ways in which its critics and advocates suppose.
>
> Although tests are thought to determine curricula, teachers in the schools we studied rarely used test information to mold their instruction or curricular content (p. 634).

On the other hand, while teaching to the test is generally ridiculed in teaching circles, Shepard reported in a study she published in 1990 that many teachers use previously administered tests to acquaint their students with both the kinds of questions they can expect to have to answer and the format of the test they may be expected to write. Shepard also discovered that teachers spend more time teaching test-taking skills than other skills and knowledge that are specifically required by the curriculum.

2.2.0 Teaching to the Test

Teachers who choose to focus on narrow test-taking skills, rather than the entire curriculum, are denying their students the opportunity to learn the entire curriculum that is required for that course. They may be enabling their students to achieve high test scores but in narrowing their curriculum to test required skills, teachers are restricting learning by allowing the test to take precedence over the curriculum.

Moreover, teachers who teach to the test may be skewing test results. If a disproportionate amount of time is devoted to the skills and knowledge students are required to demonstrate on the test, the results are poor indicators of *complete* curriculum knowledge. A survey conducted in classrooms, where more than 60 per cent of the students were from cultural minorities, found further evidence to deplore teaching to the test:

> about three-fourths of teachers reported teaching test-taking skills and beginning test preparations more than a month before the test. In classes with few minority students, by contrast, about 40 percent of teachers said they employed such practices (Rothman, 1995, p. 60).

According to this study, classes that contain a majority of students who are members of minority cultural groups are more likely to receive less instruction time on non-test targeted curriculum material than those classes containing few minority students. Herman and Golan (1993) found identical results in a study conducted on teachers' practices in classrooms characterized by both economically disadvantaged students and minority students (Rothman, 1995).

2.2.1 Questioning Statistics

Lack of complete congruity between tests and courses cause school administrators and teachers to be sceptical about the implications of test data results (Purves, 1985). Many feel tests, as they exist now, are inappropriate instruments for holding schools or teachers accountable for student performances (Boomer, 1985; Traub & MacRury). Schools that place heavy emphasis on improving test scores compel their teachers to confine their teaching to the test specified skills. Their students may perform extremely well. On the other hand, in schools where administrators trust the teaching competency of their staffs and allow them to make choices about the focus for their courses, teachers may utilize an effective, creative, varied repertoire or range of teaching strategies that are completely appropriate within the entire context of the existing curriculum. Their students may perform only moderately well on the test but these students will have had a breadth of learning experiences. Purves claims assessments and competency tests are directly in conflict with curriculums that are "open, expressive, student-centered"(1985, p. 24).

If test scores improve because teachers have emphasized test preparation at the expense of other parts of the curriculum, what does the score improvement really indicate? What it communicates is that students are learning the tested parts of the curriculum; it says nothing about their understanding of the untested parts. Neither does it say anything meaningful about how effectively the entire curriculum is taught. Therefore, to draw

conclusions about what students know and how well teachers teach based on the results of tests that don't completely match the curriculum is simply wrong.

The Resnicks address this issue in *Assessing the Thinking Curriculum*. They write:

> Assessments must be designed so that when teachers do the natural - that is, prepare their students to perform well - they will exercise the kinds of abilities and develop the kinds of skills and knowledge that are the real goals of education reform. This principle assumes that what is in the assessment will be practised in the classroom, in a form close to the assessment form. For any proposed assessment exercise, it directs us to pose one central question: 'Is this what we want students to be doing with their instructional time?' (1992, p.59).

Since there is a wealth of research that shows that there is a direct link between test-required skills and knowledge and classroom teaching practices, it is only reasonable, therefore, to conclude that those who are involved in shaping curricula, and those who design curriculum-congruent large-scale completion tests need to work collaboratively to devise a type of test that is indeed entirely curriculum congruent, a test that requires students to demonstrate the complete range of skills and the breadth of knowledge included in their course curriculum. Only with such collaboration will test results be reliable indicators of both teacher accountability and curriculum effectiveness.

2.2.2 Curriculum Omissions

When competency tests do not include all learning outcomes included in a curriculum, what is not tested may be omitted from the course. Teachers may elect to teach test-like reading and writing tasks, and more concrete problem-solving tasks. Reflective reader response theory has been appearing in school curriculums since the 1970s but is difficult to score on large-scale tests. While teachers are encouraged to incorporate Louise Rosenblatt's theory of reader response into their literature reading programs (Hayhoe, 1985), tests rarely afford students the opportunity to demonstrate many of the whole range of types of reader responses students are encouraged to write in class. That is, tests never genuinely recognize:

> the nature of response as process and tolerate the personal, the exploratory, the unresolved [nature of the act of reading literature] in terms of a unique event - that test and that person at that time making that dynamic relationship, whatever form it may take (Hayhoe, 1985, p. 32).

Based on research findings that indicate a strong relationship between course work and the content of exit tests, if students are not allowed to interpret literature personally on tests, this type of reading-writing activity risks being reduced or omitted from the learning activities teachers elect to use in their courses (Madaus & Airasion, 1977; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Traub & MacRury, 1991).

2.2.3 Assessment

A very positive feature of the reintroduction of large-scale testing for teachers is the mandatory in-service training on test scoring required for marking the tests (Rothman, 1995). Teachers who are involved in large central marking sessions, claim to come away from them with a clearer understanding of how to differentiate between learning assessments and completion tests. They also better understanding how the completion tests that their students are required to write are scored, and they have an increased sense of confidence in their own ability to assess students' course work.

When the markers all teach within the same jurisdiction, departments of education have an excellent opportunity to institute valuable professional development training for now there is "a general trend in both classroom and large-scale assessment to integrate curriculum, instruction and evaluation" (Fagan and Spurrell, 1995, p. 10). By receiving marking training on examples of specific grade-level papers, teachers learn the characteristics of high-quality, superior student work for that grade versus proficient, satisfactory, poor or weak efforts. Furthermore, this training in identifying ability-levels of student writing improves the accuracy and quality of assessment that occurs in schools on a day-to-day basis. With this knowledge teachers are better able to assess their students

for task-appropriate reading and writing efforts, and they are more likely to be marking more congruently with other teachers within the same jurisdiction (Matheson, 1985). In fact, researchers find fault with test designers who do not involve teachers in establishing evaluation criteria for large-scale tests. Because evaluation is such an integral part of teaching, teachers transfer what they learn about evaluation to their course work assessment practices (Rothman, 1995). The benefit is that once teachers assess course work in a similar manner to the way students' work is evaluated on the exit tests the public will have more overall confidence in the entire education system.

On the other hand, Boomer (1985) believes the good produced by marker-training sessions is deceptive. He states that:

> arguments are being advanced that training English teachers to be markers of writing produced under large-scale testing conditions is having [positive effects] in terms of teachers understanding of their own and others' criteria for assessing writing and [is raising] awareness of implications for writing instruction to overcome perceived flaws. Wherever English teachers gather to look at children's writing and have the chance to talk about it, there will be a desirable raising of awareness and a better understanding of certain issues in writing, but I suggest that the testing context can skew attention towards flaws (both in the text and in the imagined teaching behind it) rather than growth points. This can lead too easily to a deficiency model of the writer and the writer's teachers (p. 63).

2.4 Problems and Solutions

It is senseless to ignore large-scale tests or rage against them. At this point in time, in Canada, governments appear to consider them valuable for accountability purposes, beneficial for program assessment, and politically appropriate (Fagan & Spurrell, 1995). Between 1977 and 1994 the number of provinces and territories with provincial tests increased from three to nine. By 1995 all provinces and one territory had mandated testing. It is very likely that completion tests will evolve in the education systems in each Canadian province in the near future (Fagan & Spurrell, 1995, p. 51).

Even so, many researchers ponder whether the reasons are in the best interest of the education system as a whole, and in the best interest of students in particular.

2.4.0 Perceived Problems

Traditionally, large-scale testing has been thought to produce negative effects on teachers' morale, sense of professional competence, and feelings of self-worth. Many teachers report feeling that they no longer have professional autonomy; they feel distanced from participating in powerfully important curriculum change; they perceive that critical curriculum decision-making authority has been concentrated in the domain of a tiny elite (Boomer, 1985; Dixon, 1985; Traub & MacRury, 1983).

One particular feature of large-scale testing that researchers perceive to be problematic for teachers is the way in which school scores are publicly released by departments of education. Assessment researchers warn of the importance of providing the public with test-result statistics that are objective, comprehensive and clearly interpreted; "[f]actual results of any broadly based assessment should be accompanied by a full-scale professional interpretation, for numerical data by itself is meaningless" (Mellon, 1975, p. 4) and open to misinterpretation. In the mid-eighties British Colombia admitted that the publication of test results, district by district, was a "gross misuse of assessment results" (Matheson, 1985, p. 27), that resulted in the public classifying schools as 'good' or 'bad' based on the publication of school performance results.

The issue of fairness makes both researchers and teachers wary of large-scale completion tests. One reason is that these tests accentuate knowledge inequities among writers that are not always the learners' fault if students have not had an opportunity to learn the curriculum content due to ineffective instruction. Another reason is that tests widen the gap between information-advantaged and information-disadvantaged students among whom are recent immigrant students, cultural minority students, or students that

experience learning difficulties or social-emotional problems that have caused poor attendance problems. These students may simply have not had proficient or sufficient academic instruction (Purves, 1985; Rothman, 1995).

Another problem closely related to both of the previous problems is, again, the validity of the test instrument. An incomplete curriculum-test match jeopardizes validity particularly if the test is intended to measure competency in a course. It is also another way of disadvantaging students if their teachers chose to emphasize parts of the curriculum that are not represented on the test (Hayhoe, 1985; Purves, 1985; Rothman, 1995). In assessment, validity is one of the most important elements to consider because it is "concerned with the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from assessment results" (Gronlund, 1998).

One of the most troublesome issues associated with large-scale tests concerns the scoring of them and involves marker subjectivity and interrater reliability (Diederich, 1974; Resnick & Resnick, 1993). An independent study done on rater-consistency in Vermont's assessment program, found that "the agreement among raters on students' scores was low" (Rothman, 1995, p. 158) in evaluating writing. Conducted by the RAND Institute for Education and Training, the research identified three specific reasons for inconsistencies among markers: different interpretations of scoring rubrics, inadequate marker-training and insufficient anchor-papers or exemplars (Rothman, 1995, p. 159) . Canadian researchers Traub and MacRury (1991) claim that the "lack of a fixed and absolute scale for measuring achievement ... is the Achilles heel of any study of marking standards" (p. 30). They claim that the kinds of marking tasks that lend themselves to marker-subjectivity (personal preferences in style, degrees of persuasiveness, originality, clarity, topic-relevance, knowledge of language mechanics and other writing elements) particularly account for low percentages of interrater reliability.

Finally there are the practical concerns regarding cost and feasibility. The cost of testing in California was so prohibitive the department of education

> contracted with four of the commercial test publishers – CTB Macmillan / McGraw-Hill, the publisher of the California Test of Basic Skills; Riverside Publishing Company, the publisher of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; the Psychological Corporation, the publisher of the Metropolitan Achievement test; and the Educational Testing Service, the administrator of the Scholastic Aptitude Test – to help develop and operate the program. The department sought out the firms because the task of building the system was far beyond the capabilities of a small state government office. The companies, with vast experience in building tests, could lend their expertise to help California do it right (Rothman, 1995, p.149-150).

Many teachers feel that there are too many problems attached to large-scale tests, that they are not reliable indicators of student learning, competent teaching, or curriculum effectiveness, and that the large amounts of effort and money that governments devote to test development and evaluation would be more wisely spent on teacher professional development (Boomer, 1985; Dixon, 1985; Freedman, 1994).

2.4.1 Solutions: Contemporary Thought on Best Practices

Researchers emphasize that there must be a valid use for the information that tests disclose about each student tested, and that the purpose of testing should be clearly understood by both teachers and students. Students and their parents have a right to know for what purpose governments or school districts are gathering competency test information. Whatever the purpose, learning diagnosis, progress reporting, formative evaluation, summative evaluation, achievement reports, or certification, it should be communicated clearly to those to whom it applies (Fagan & Spurrell, 1995).

Some researchers feel the focus of the entire curriculum in senior years education should be on problem-solving and developing complex, refined thinking skills related to real-world issues (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). Students entering high school should have

mastered basic skills and the senior years curriculum should be devoted to maturing the thinking process (Costa, 1992; Ferrara & McTighe, 1992; Haney & Madaus, 1992; Krechevsky, 1992; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Wiggins, 1992). It is thought by many that a traditional test is incapable of allowing students to demonstrate advanced thinking skills sufficiently or effectively.

Authentic assessment, a form of testing that attempts to approximate real-world problems, is being explored. Attempts to use authentic assessment evaluation have involved students in a wide variety of activities that enable them to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in a course in a setting that approximates a real-world situation. Examples of authentic assessment include: portfolio assessments (Gronlund, 1998; Newmann, Secada, Wehlage,1995; Rothman, 1995), portfolio and 'best-writing pieces' assessments that allow evaluators to have a broad overview of students' writing abilities, and students are allowed to choose certain pieces for close evaluation (Freedman, 1994); performances of understanding such as final exhibitions and presentations (Wiggins, 1992); or a balanced form of evaluation involving traditional testing, portfolio assessment and performances of understanding (Shepard, 1992).

Again and again researchers remind us that the primary reason for evaluating student progress is to measure students' knowledge and skills. The reasons for evaluation should not be political. Evaluation should be for program development purposes, for progress report purposes, and for certification purposes. For educators to gain a clear understanding of what students know and the skills they have acquired, test instruments must be fair, they must be valid, and they must be scored reliably (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997; Gronlund, 1998; Marzano, Pickering, McTighe,1993; Newmann, Secada, Wehlage, 1995; Rothman, 1995; Shepard, 1992).

Researchers identify the same problems with large-scale testing over and over again. The fact that most researchers agree on the solutions to these problems but the

problems can't seem to be resolved attests to the complexity of them. The following is a brief summary of the eight most persistent issues related to large-scale testing and the solutions researchers most often advocate for them.

Problem	Solution
1. Test development & scoring:	Teachers must be involved in every aspect of test development and test scoring (Diederich, 1974; Dixon, 1985; Resnick & Resnick, 1993).
2. Release of test scores:	Test scores that are released to the public must be objective, comprehensive, and clearly interpreted (Matheson, 1985; Mellon, 1975).
3. Student knowledge inequities:	Tests must be designed to minimize background knowledge inequities among student writers as much as it is fair and reasonable to do so (Purves, 1985; Rothman, 1995).
4. Curriculum-test congruity:	The test must be curriculum congruent (Gronlund, 1998; Madaus & Airasian, 1977; Salvia & Hughes, 1990; Shepard, 1990).
5. Interrater reliability:	Markers must be thoroughly trained to reduce the inclination towards marker subjectivity. The scoring rubric must be understandable and easily task-applicable. Marker training must include anchor papers or exemplars (Resnick & Resnick, 1993; Rothman, 1995; Traub & MacRury, 1991)
6. Cost factors:	Tests could be developed that contain challenging multiple choice questions that can be scored by

Problem	Solution
	computer (Gronlund, 1998; Rothman, 1995). Commercial test publishers could be contracted to prepare curriculum congruent tests and score them (Rothman, 1995).
7. Incomplete test instruments:	Traditional tests can be supplemented with portfolios assessments. Portfolios are effective for tracking students' growth both in language skills and in thinking development. Tests can be supplemented with performance tasks that require students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and clarity of communication. Balanced certification tests can include traditional tests combined with portfolio assessments, or with performances of understanding, or with both for a well-balanced view of students' knowledge, skills and language abilities relative to curriculum standards (Burke, 1992; Marzano, Pickering, McTighe, 1993; Newmann, Secada & Wehlage, 1995; Rothman, 1995).
8. Validity	There must be a valid reason for testing. Tests must provide accurate information about students' knowledge and skills. They must also provide information that can be useful for specific purposes such as program certification, program evaluation, or curriculum effectiveness, or student competency. To do all this, therefore, tests must be curriculum-congruent. Today, the definition of validity has been expanded to include the consequences of test results, the usefulness of the data for making inferences about the subject of the test or the test writer. (Gronlund, 1998; Rothman, 1995).

2.5 Recommendations for Further Research

There is very little actual research available on the development process of large-scale tests, on their effectiveness, or on how useful they are in the experiences of Canadian educators. Many summary reports are available but critical literature on the effectiveness or utility of large-scale tests in the Canadian experience is lacking.

Because many of the programs for which new test instruments are needed are themselves in the process of being developed, or are still in the very early stages of implementation, it may be too early to proceed with research studies on the recent work being done on alternative forms of evaluation for new curricula. However, when these new curriculum congruent tests are well developed and become routine testing instruments, research on their effectiveness will provide truly valuable information on both the capability of testing for gauging students' language growth, and for informing program developers about the efficacy of a particular curriculum for that purpose.

Test designers need research data on the specific kinds of tasks that allow students to demonstrate best what they know and the skills they have acquired as a result of studying a particular program of studies. Furthermore, they need to know a great deal more about the consensus opinion of teachers on acceptable ranges of grade-level learning expectations in order to develop reliable and valid test instruments and scoring rubrics. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted on tracking learning growth for the purpose of establishing test development criteria that can be perceived by teachers and parents to be challenging, but learner-friendly, and at the same time curriculum compatible.

A more comprehensive, in-depth study of the impact of large-scale tests on teachers' instruction and assessment practices is needed. A study that includes actual interviews with classroom teachers would reveal to what extent these tests affect teachers professionally, to what degree they are useful for effecting curricular change, and to what

extent they influence instruction uniformity within the province. In conjunction with this concept, there is unquestionably a need for research into best methods to improve marker-congruity and interrater reliability. Unless this specific problem is resolved the validity of large-scale test results will continue to be suspect.

Research into how large-scale test scores are used by teachers, individual schools, school districts, or governments is certainly needed. This information would reveal if large-scale testing is, indeed, useful, cost-effective, and necessary. If the test results or statistical data generated by testing are not being used for valid, practical purposes, such as assessing program effectiveness, critics have every right to question the purpose of large-scale testing as a necessary means for evaluating students' learning relative to the cost.

3. Design, Methodology, and Procedures

It is generally assumed that large-scale exams influence change in teachers' professional practices. To test this assumption and to understand precisely how the series of Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams, written between January 1996 and May 1998, affected the instructional practices of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers and their subsequent methods of assessment, a survey was sent to the principals of each high school in the province to be distributed to each Senior 4 English Language Arts teacher. In order to measure the extent of the changes Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers were surveyed on their perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on their course content, on their choice of reading texts for Senior 4 students, on their instruction strategies, and on their class work assessment and evaluation practices *as a result of* the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam.

The survey responses initiated an investigation into additional factors that affected curricular change as well. It became increasingly clear that the introduction of the Senior 4 provincial exam could not be credited, alone, with the number of changes in teaching practices that have occurred in Senior 4 classrooms in Canada. These could be attributed to other concurrent socio-political factors as well. The standards-and-accountability movement throughout Canada in the 1990s, the legislation of new educational policies by the Manitoba government, the creation of the Western Canadian Protocol Agreement, as well as the introduction of a Senior 4 provincial certification exam, together, influenced the instruction and assessment changes that evolved in Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers' professional practices. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments).

3.0 Justification

June 1998 was an opportune time to gauge teachers' perceptions of how the Senior 4 provincial exams were affecting their professional practices. In January of 1996, Manitoba Education and Training administered its first compulsory Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam since certificate exams had been eliminated in the late 1960s. By May of 1998, six of these compulsory exams had been written by all Senior 4 English Language Arts students throughout the province, and teachers would have had the experience of preparing at least six classes of students to write an exam worth 30% of their final marks. The exam was still "new" enough that teachers had not become complacent with it. Moreover, by that time school results were public knowledge, were being compared, and school division boundaries were opened to non-resident students.

While the most important focus of this study was to survey Senior 4 teachers' perceptions of the extent to which a high-stakes, certification exam can influence change in their classroom teaching and evaluation practices, the questions clearly evoked information on other interesting dimensions as well. Teachers' written comments at the end of the survey provide insight into the most common changes that are occurring in classrooms in Manitoba, and they provide a sense of how extensive those changes are. They also provide a glimpse into the human component of the experience. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

3.1 Subjects of the Study

Although it would have been most desirable to send individual surveys to every Senior 4 teacher teaching in Manitoba in the spring of 1998, the rules of ethics concerning research methodology at the University of Manitoba would not allow that. To recruit as many Senior 4 teachers as possible, yet at the same time protect the anonymity of teacher respondents, instead, packages of surveys were sent to principals of each of the 226 high

schools that teach Senior 4 English Language Arts. The principals were asked to distribute copies of the survey to each of their Senior 4 English teachers.

Accompanying the package of surveys was a letter to each principal identifying the researcher and the purpose of the survey. (See Appendix A.) The surveys were mailed on June 19, 1998. By this time high schools would have received the exam results from the May writing of the Senior 4 English Language Arts exams. It was felt the recent experience of the May examination would be fresh in teachers' memories.

Accompanying the package of surveys was a letter to the Senior 4 teachers, which explained the purpose and intent of the survey. (See Appendix B.) This letter also requested that only those teachers who had taught Senior 4 English Language Arts prior to January 1996 complete the survey. In order to perceive change teachers would have to have had experience teaching the Senior 4 course *before* the provincial exam was implemented. Either full or part time teachers who were teaching Senior 4 English Language Arts in Manitoba *prior to, and since*, September of 1995 were eligible. What was most important was their pre-exam and post-exam teaching experience.

3.2 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Every effort was made to ensure that the surveys reached all Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers. Because it was anticipated that many teachers would feel uncomfortable responding to a survey about a government exam if their identities were known, both the principals and participants were guaranteed that teachers' rights to confidentiality and anonymity would be honoured when data results were reported. They were also assured that at the completion of the study, all completed surveys pertaining to it would be destroyed. In the packages of surveys sent to principals throughout Manitoba, stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher were included.

If every Senior 4 English Language Arts teacher received a copy of the survey with an accompanying stamped envelope for its return, according to Manitoba Education

and Training's' Information Management Branch, 327 teachers would have received them. However, because of the experience restrictions not all were eligible to respond. One hundred and seventeen surveys were returned to the researcher completed.

3.3 Instrumentation

To focus the study, a working bibliography of literature on large-scale testing and testing practices in Canada, Great Britain and the United States of America was compiled and reviewed. As well, documents specifically pertaining to the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts exam were collected and reviewed. The questions for the survey (Appendix C) were developed from the Information Bulletins sent to Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers each fall by Manitoba Education and Training prior to the January writing of the Senior 4 exam. Survey questions were particularly developed from the sections labelled "Types of Comprehension Examined", "Senior 4 - English Language Arts Specifications" and "Analytical Evaluation Scheme".

3.3.0 Item Development

At the beginning of the survey the purpose was once again stated, and teacher respondents were asked to compare the Senior 4 English Language Arts curriculum they taught prior to the January 1996 exam to the curriculum they were teaching at the time they were responding to the survey. Teachers were informed that the survey questions were grouped under four main headings: course content, course readings, teaching methodology, and class work assessment and evaluation procedures. After the title of each section, a prompt was included to remind the respondents of the subject of the survey, and to keep the purpose of the survey in mind while they were considering their answers. The prompts read: *As a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam.* Following the prompt there were a series of questions related to each of the 4 main headings.

Section **A** on "course content" included 36 questions (two # 33s) and teachers could respond by placing a check mark under one of the following column headings: *more frequently*, *as frequently*, or *less frequently*. Section **B** on "readings" contained 16 questions and Section **C** on "teaching strategies" contained seven. Again, teachers could respond by placing a check mark under one of the column headings: *more frequently*, *as* frequently, or *less frequently*.

The last section, **D**, on "perceptions of the exams' effects on teachers' teaching strategies", required teachers to consider seven direction strategies *used* on the provincial exam, and reflect on whether they, *as a result of the implementation of the ... exam*, use them in their class work. Teachers could indicate by checking under one of the column headings: *frequently*, *occasionally*, or *never*.

At the end of the survey, a space was provided for teachers to write comments. Completion of this part of the survey was entirely optional.

3.4 Data Collection

Those who chose to involve themselves in the study filled out the surveys anonymously and returned them to me in a postage pre-paid envelope. It is estimated that it would have taken respondents about 20 - 25 minutes to complete the survey portion of this project. Many teachers spent a longer amount of time making comments, some of which are quite detailed. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

Two school divisions, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and Seven Oaks School Division No. 10 could not allow the surveys to be distributed by their principals in June 1998. Unknown to the researcher, both school divisions do not allow surveys or studies of either their students or staff until School Board level administrative officers approve them.

In the case of Seven Oaks, the surveys had to be reviewed and approved by the Seven Oaks Board of Trustees. Approval from the Board was received in early

September. The surveys were distributed to the teachers in Seven Oaks School Division in early September and they were asked to respond by September 30, 1998. These surveys were identical to those distributed in June except for the due date.

Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has an Ethics Approval Committee that must approve all studies and surveys conducted within its schools. This Committee met for the first time in the 1998 -1999 school year late in October and also approved this study. Surveys were given to Senior 4 teachers by their principals in early November with the request to respond by November 30, 1998. Again, the surveys were identical to those sent to teachers in June except for the due date.

3.5 Procedures: Analysis of Data

Two branches of Manitoba Education and Training, Professional Certification and Information Management, provided the statistics on the number of high schools in the province (226), the number of Senior 4 English Language Arts classes (503), and the total number of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers in the 1997 - 1998 school year (327).

A database was set up so that a frequency analysis could be conducted on the surveys, and trends in the data could be identified. As the surveys were returned, responses were entered into a computer database. Statistical data were computer-generated in December 1998.

In all, thirty-six per cent of the surveys were completed and returned, one hundred and seventeen responses in total. One specific requirement of the survey would restrict the number of respondents. The only teachers who could make a comparative judgement about the effects of the provincial exam on their teaching practices were those who taught *Senior 4* English Language Arts prior to the exam. This restriction eliminated those teachers who were new to the teaching profession from 1996 to 1998, and those who had taught but not taught Senior 4 English Language Arts prior to 1996. Several surveys were returned uncompleted with a note to the effect that the teacher was new to the

profession. Another factor that could have affected the number of surveys completed was that the survey was completed throughout the province in June of 1998, in Seven Oaks in September, and in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in November. This means that only teachers who taught Senior 4 in 1998 would have received the surveys. Teachers who may have taught Senior 4 English Language Arts from September 1997 until January 1998, then retired at the end of semester I would not have received the survey. Neither would June 1998 retirees from Seven Oaks School Division or Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

3.6 Need For A Phenomenological Study

Evaluating high school teachers' responses objectively often is difficult. A range of attitudes and feelings arose from the pages of the surveys in the form of margin-notes and doodles. These unsolicited but intriguing "representative" responses ranged from droll, pencilled-in commentaries in huge, FAT letters (WASTE OF TIME!); to tiny, snippety, critical remarks (always in VERY PRIM HANDWRITING) followed by one to three exclamation marks (always ascending in height) " TOO EXPENSIVE ! ! ! ", to wisecracks in creative penmanship (WHAT'S A POETRY CANON GOT TO DO WITH IT ?); to *weary laments* in red ink; and several abrupt, straight-lettered "No Comments." Several contain no written words only mammoth, indignant checkmarks ALL in the middle column:

"AS FREQUENTLY AS BEFORE"

X

Reading the surveys is a fascinating study in how tone can be communicated simply with a series of check marks or Xs.

It is abundantly clear from the surveys, particularly in the comment section at the end, that teachers are interested in sharing more of their thoughts about their professional

practices than just placing checkmarks on a survey. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.) The range of perceptive remarks suggests that an inquiry into how teachers respond ideologically to a change in educational policy, and how they perceive it to affect them both professionally and personally, would yield valuable practical knowledge for those responsible for effecting change.

A survey about the influences of an exam on teaching practices can provide insight into the extent of the influence of "high stakes" tests on curriculum change but it cannot capture a true sense of the complex, experiential, personal element that is an intrinsic and important part of understanding what it is like to be a teacher at a time when society is demanding change. Neither can it capture what it is like to "live through" requisite change and survive in the profession. For this, a study is needed which is based on personal interviews with teachers about their perceptions of professional reformation on *them*.

4. Descriptive Statistics and Comments

To ascertain how the series of Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams, written between January 1996 and May 1998, have affected the instruction practices of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers and their subsequent methods of assessment, all of Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers were surveyed between June and November of 1998. In the process of this inquiry evidence emerged to suggest that the introduction of the Senior 4 provincial exam, along with the 1990s' back-to-basics, standards-and-accountability movement, the Western Canadian Protocol Agreement, and provincial educational policy changes induced Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers to revise many of their professional instruction and assessment practices. In order to measure the changes and the extent of the changes, however, Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers were surveyed only on their perceptions of the effects of the series of Senior 4 provincial exams on their teaching practices because these were a known common experience for all of the teachers.

Four areas that were specifically targeted were course content, choice of reading texts for Senior 4 students, instruction strategies, and class work assessment and evaluation practices. Respondents were asked to consider the changes they may have made in their methods of instruction and assessment only *as a result of* the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam. The survey questions were developed directly from the exam *Information Bulletin* that is provided to Manitoba's Senior 4 teachers by Manitoba Education and Training's Assessment and Evaluation Unit in the fall of every school year. Particular importance was given to the sections: "Types of Comprehension Examined", "Senior 4 - English Language Arts Examination Specifications", and the "Analytical Evaluation Schema". All of the survey questions relate to information available to Senior 4 teachers prior to every provincial exam.

4.0 Survey Results

The survey contains 66 questions linked to the exam, 36 on course content, 16 on reading texts, seven on instruction strategies, and seven on teachers' actual use of the provincial exams written prior to May 1998 as teaching documents. (See Appendix C, Survey Questionnaire.) One hundred and seventeen teachers responded to the survey. All surveys were completed and 77 respondents chose to supply a written comment at the end of the survey. (See Appendix D, Survey Comments.)

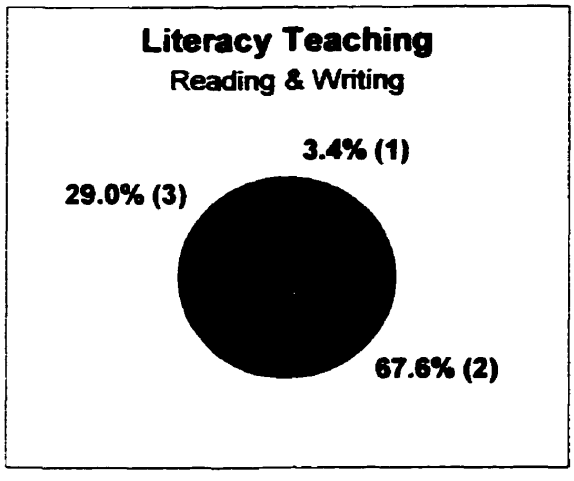
4.0.0 Part A: Perceptions of the effects of the provincial exam on course content

The first section of the survey requested that teachers consider their perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam, since its introduction in January 1996, on the content of their Senior 4 first credit courses. (See Appendix C, Survey Questionnaire.) The 1987 English Language Arts curriculum required a weighted balance of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills to be taught. In the 1991 *English Language Arts Senior Years (9 - 12) Curriculum Support Series* (12), teachers were advised to weight listening activities at 20 %, speaking activities at 20 %, reading at 25 % and writing at 35 % of students' final grades.

Questions 33 and 34 refer to the Senior 4 English Language Arts reading and writing course components as literacy and the listening and speaking components as oracy. Survey results are graphically represented in Figures 1 and 2. While 67.5% of the respondents perceive that they are teaching literacy to the same extent that they did prior to the January 1996 exam, only 53.8% of Manitoba's Senior 4 teachers perceive they are teaching oracy to the same extent. What is most intriguing is that the percentage of teachers who perceive they are teaching literacy more (29 %) correlates almost exactly with the number who feel they are teaching oracy less (29.9 %). The logical inference is that to devote more time to teaching reading and writing skills, 29 percent of Manitoba's

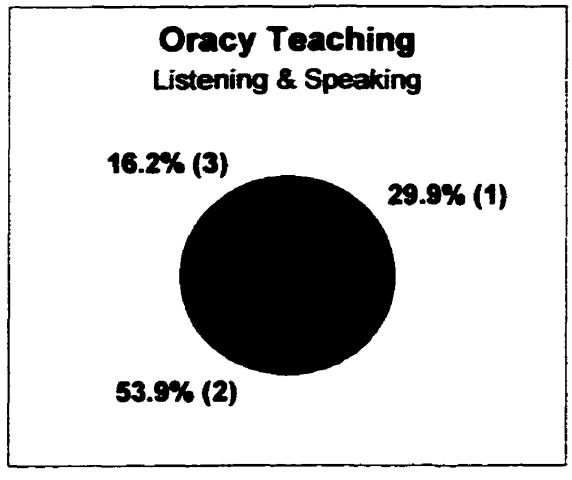
Senior 4 teachers are reducing the amount of time they spend with students on developing oracy skills.

Figure 1



Frequency: less 3.4% same 67.5% more 29%

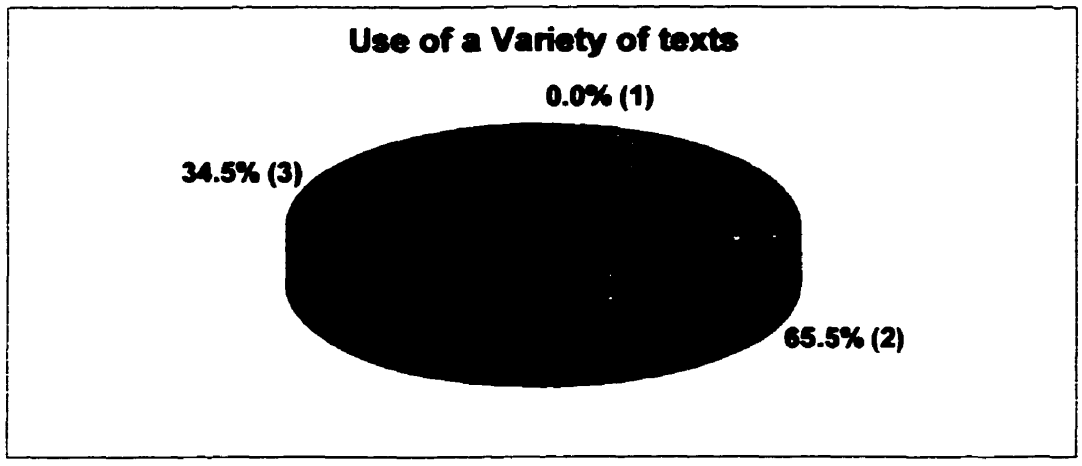
Figure 2



Frequency: less 29.9% same 53.8% more 16.2%

In Part A of the survey the first four questions concern the teaching of reading. The Senior 4 reading exam includes questions devised at three levels of cognitive difficulty - literal comprehension, inferential reading skills, and reading for critical reflective thinking. (See Appendix C, Survey Questionnaire.) To prepare students for the exam, Figure 3 shows that no survey respondents perceive they use fewer types of reading texts than they did prior to the exam, while 65.5% feel they use the same variety of texts. Over one third of Senior 4 teachers, (34.5%), however, have been influenced by the provincial exam to use a greater variety of reading texts.

Figure 3

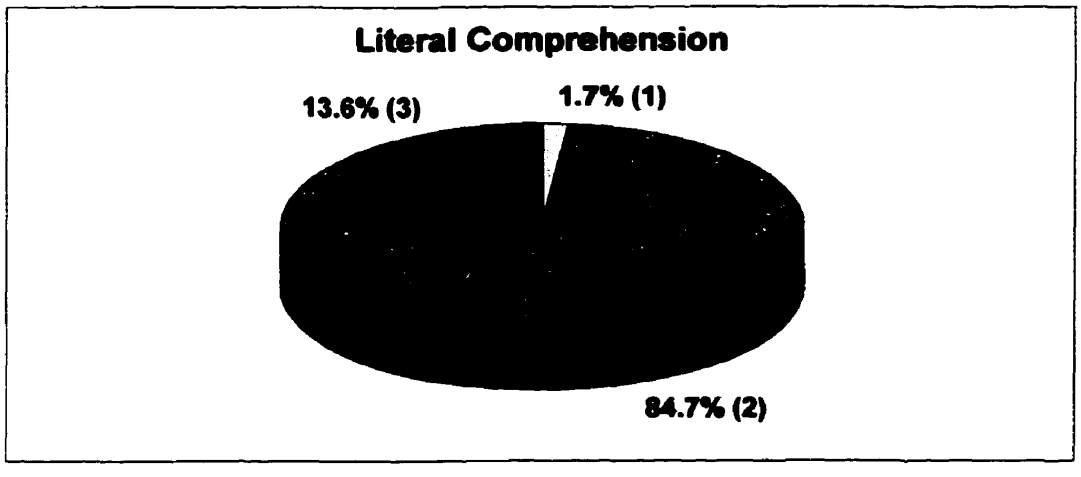


Frequency: (1) 0% less than before (2) 65.5% as much as before (3) 34.5% more than before

---

Figure 4 represents the perceptions of the survey respondents regarding their teaching of reading for literal comprehension. A large majority of Senior 4 teachers (84.7 %) indicate that they feel they teach literal comprehension reading skills to the same extent now as they did prior to the exam. Few (1.7%) claim to be teaching it less, and 13.6% perceive they are teaching it to a greater extent.

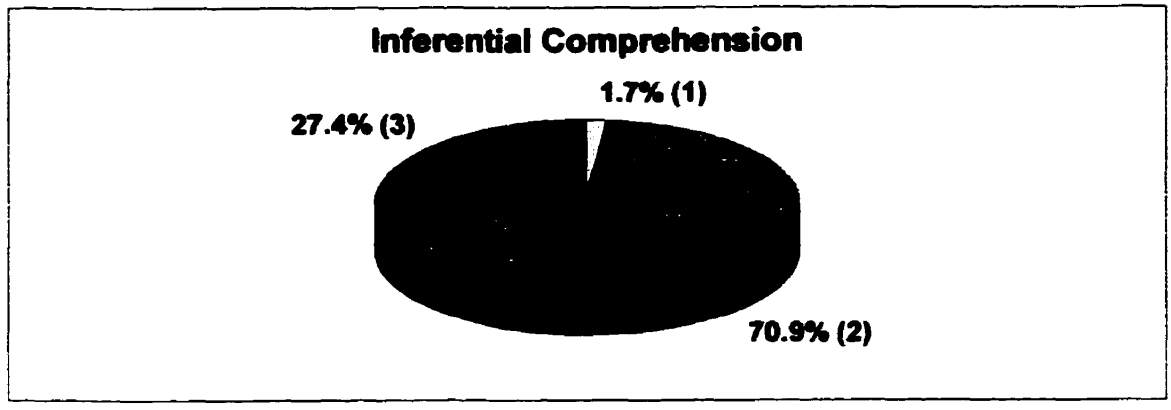
Figure 4



Frequency: (1) 1.7% less than before (2) 84.7% as much as before (3) 13.6% more than before

Few teachers claim to be teaching inferential reading skills less often (1.7%). Figure 5 represents teachers' perceptions that they are teaching reading for inference-making to the same extent (70.9%) or with greater frequency (27.4%).

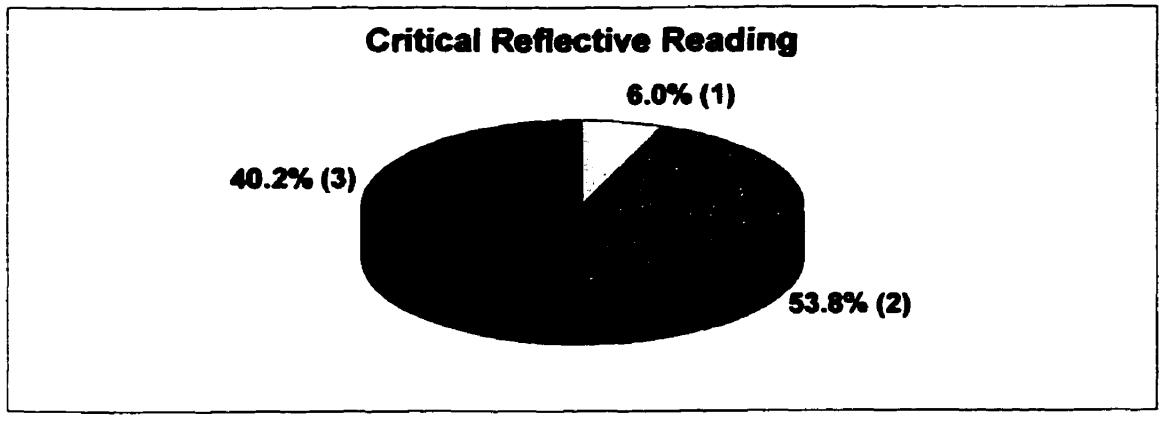
Figure 5



Frequency: (1) 1.7% less before (2) 70.9% as much as before (3) 27.4% more than before

As Figure 6 indicates, teachers perceive that teaching critical reflective reading has been influenced the most by the institution of the Senior 4 provincial exam. While 6% of the respondents say they perceive themselves to be teaching critical reflective reading less frequently, and 54 % say they are teaching it to the same extent, a sizeable percentage (40%) of teachers perceive that they teach critical reading for reflective thought more.

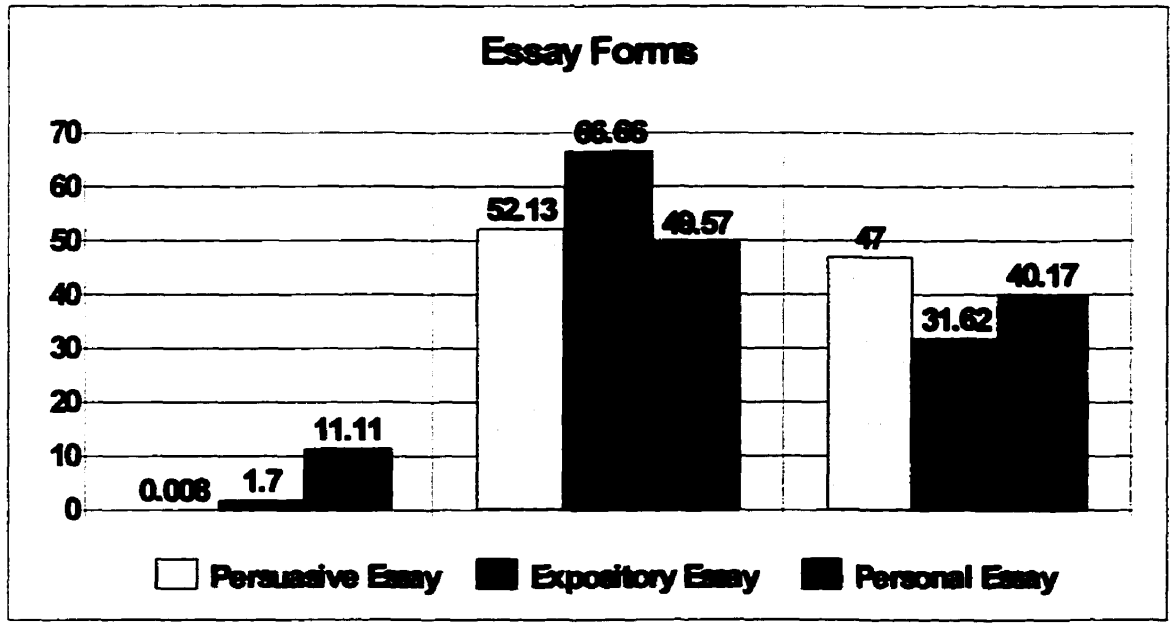
Figure 6



Frequency: (1) 6% less than before (2) 53.8% as much as before (3) 40.2% more than before

The remainder of Part A of the survey contains questions on teachers' writing programs. Five questions concerned teaching the three writing forms that had actually appeared on the six provincial exams written between January 1996 and May, 1998. (See Appendix C: 5, 9, 10, 11, 35.) Students have been directed to write either a persuasive argument essay, an expository essay or a personal essay. Figure 7 represents the survey respondents perceptions of how often they teach these three essay forms as a result of the implementation of the writing process exam. The survey results indicate less than 1% of the respondents report teaching the persuasive argument less, 1.7% claim to be teaching the expository essay less, and 11.15 % say they are teaching personal essay writing skills less than they did before January 1996. Almost one third (31.6%) of the respondents feel they are teaching expository writing more, 40.1 % claim to be teaching persuasive essay writing more, and 47% say they are teaching personal essay writing more. These percentages support the idea that the provincial exam has had a distinct influence on teachers choosing to teach these three essay writing forms more frequently.

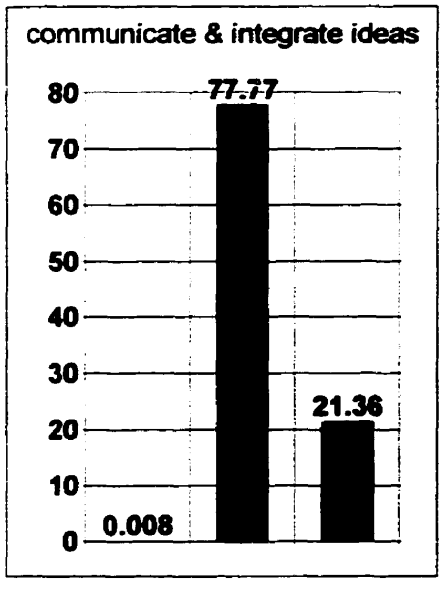
Figure 7



Survey questions 6 - 8 concern teaching students to communicate effectively in written work by integrating ideas and details and avoiding generalizing. (See Appendix C: 6, 7, 8.) Figures 8, 9 , and 10 show that the majority of the respondents feel they are attending to the teaching of these writing elements as frequently now as they did prior to the exam. Fewer than 1% believed they teach the integration of ideas and details less than they did before provincial exams, while 3.4% believe they teach students to avoid generalizing less. However, one-fifth (21.3 %) feel they are teaching students to communicate and integrate ideas more; over one-third (34.1 %) perceive that they are teaching students to include details in their writing more, and 29.05% are addressing the problem of over-generalizing to a greater extent.

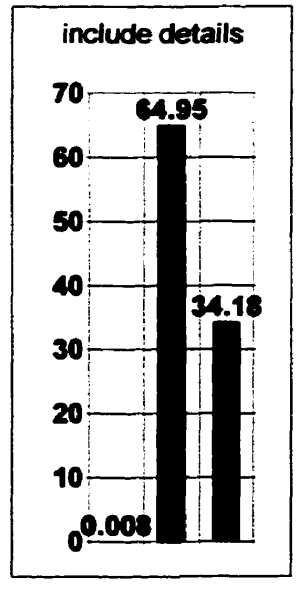
As a result of the provincial exam, teachers teach student writers to:

Figure 8



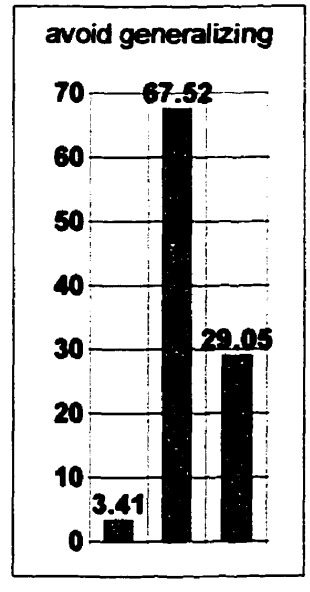
(1)Less: 0% (2) Same: 77.7%
(3) More: 21.36%

Figure 9



(1)Less: 0% (2) Same: 64.95%
(3) More: 34.18%

Figure 10



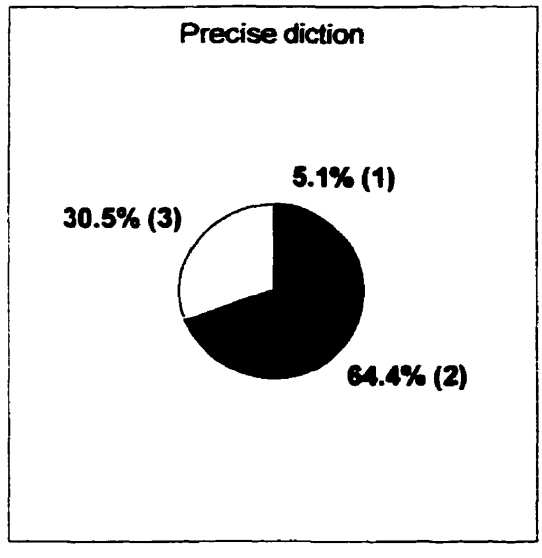
(1) Less: 3.41% (2) Same: 67.52%
(3) More: 29.05%

Note: Left column represents *less* than before, middle column *as much as* before, right column *more* than before

Also in answer to questions 12 and 13, which address the teaching of precise diction and effective syntax, the majority of teachers indicate they feel they had been attending to the instruction of these writing elements successfully in the past. (See Appendix C: 12, 13.) Figure 11 shows that almost two thirds feel confident about how they are teaching the use of diction in writing. Figure 12 shows that more feel confident about how they have been teaching syntax (71.6%). Even so, 24 % - 31 % feel that, since the introduction of the exam, they have been teaching diction and syntax more.

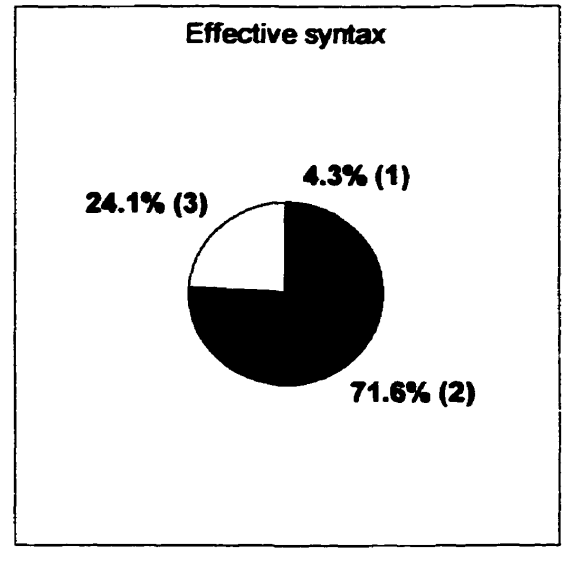
As a result of the provincial exam, teachers teach student writers:

Figure 11



Frequency: (1) 5.1% less (2) 64.4% same (3) 30.5% more

Figure 12

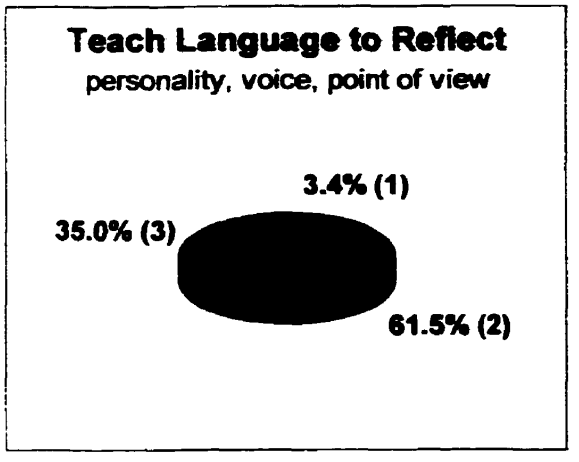


(1) 4.3% less (2) 71.6% same (3) 24.1% more

The provincial exam requires markers to evaluate students' writing for the refined stylistic writing features of crafting language for "voice", "point of view", and "attitude towards the subject". Students are also evaluated on their ability to choose language to demonstrate task ownership and to engage the reader. (See Appendix C: Part A 14,15,16,

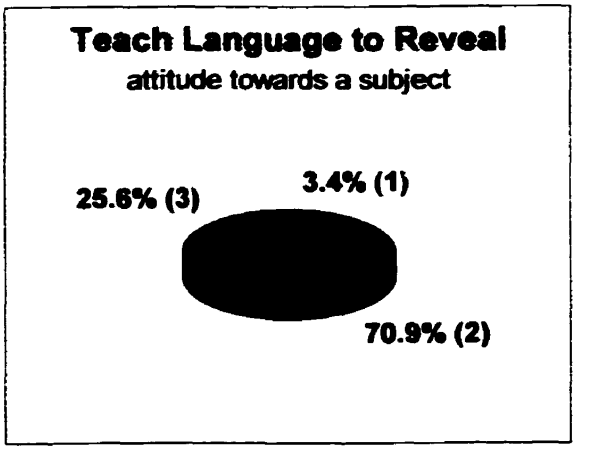
17). Again, as Figures 13 -16 display, the majority of teachers indicate that they feel they were teaching these stylistic writing elements before the provincial exam; only 3.4 % - 4.2 % feel they are addressing them less, but 25.6 % - 35 % stated they are teaching them more since their students began writing provincial exams.

Figure 13



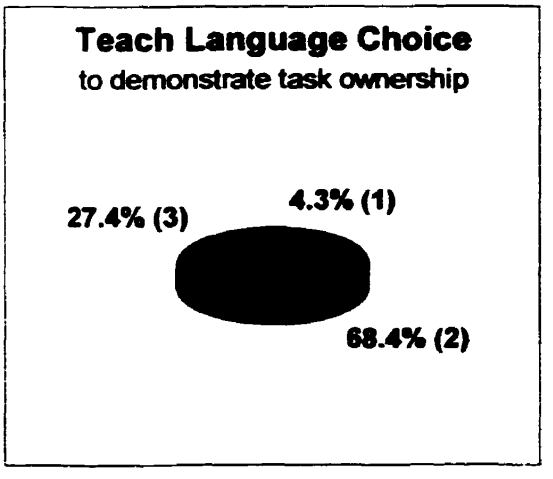
Frequency: (1) 3.4% less (2) 61.5% same (3) 35% more

Figure 14



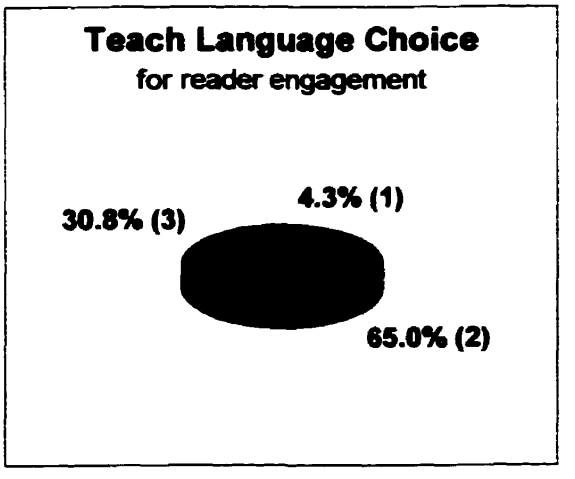
(1) 3.4% less (2) 70.9% same (3) 25.6% more

Figure 15



Frequency: (1) 4.3% less (2) 68.4% same (3)27.4% more

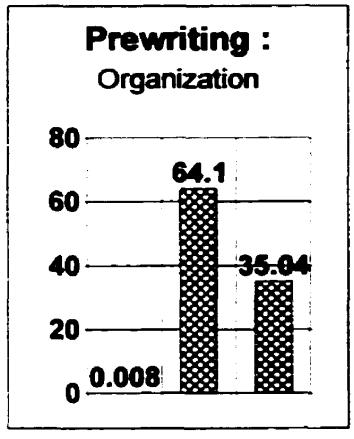
Figure 16



(1) 4.3% less (2) 65% same (3) 30.8% more

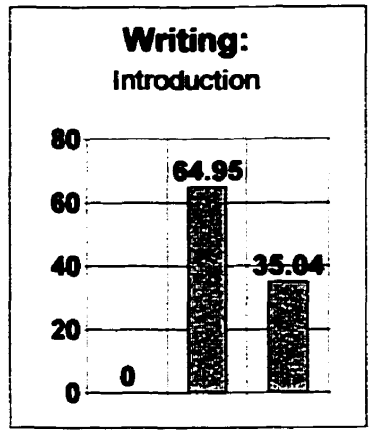
Questions 18 -23 ask teachers to reflect on their teaching of the organizational features of writing. Fewer than 1 % of the respondents indicate that they teach introductions, maintaining focus, sequencing ideas, and conclusions less. (See Figures 17 - 22, and Appendix C: 18-23.) A few, 3.4 %, feel they are teaching transitional writing techniques less. Again, while the majority feel they had been attending to these writing skills prior to the advent of the provincial exam, 24.7 - 35 % feel they are teaching them more since it was introduced.

Figure 17



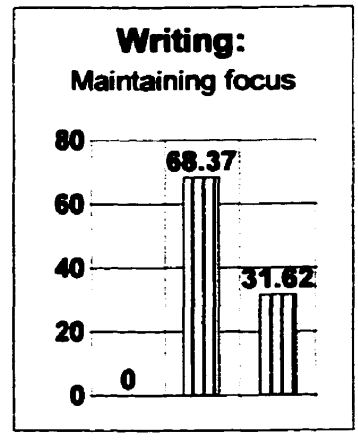
Frequency:
Less:0% Same: 64% More:35%

Figure 18



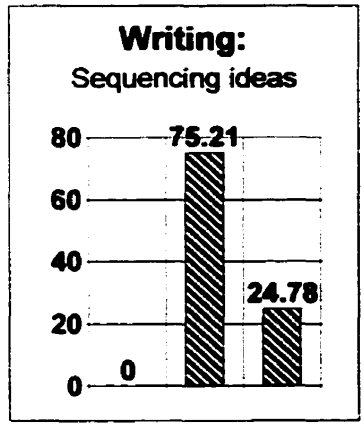
Less:0% Same: 64.95% More:35%

Figure 19



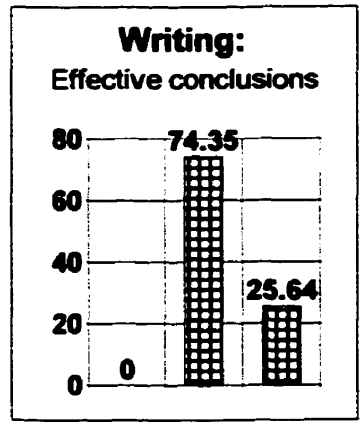
Less: 0% Same:68.4% More:31.6%

Figure 20



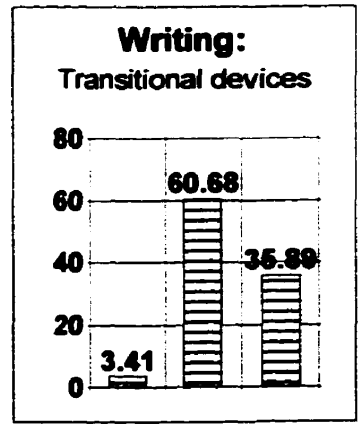
Frequency:
Less:0% Same:75.2% More:24.78%

Figure 21



Less:0% Same:74.4% More:25.6%

Figure 22

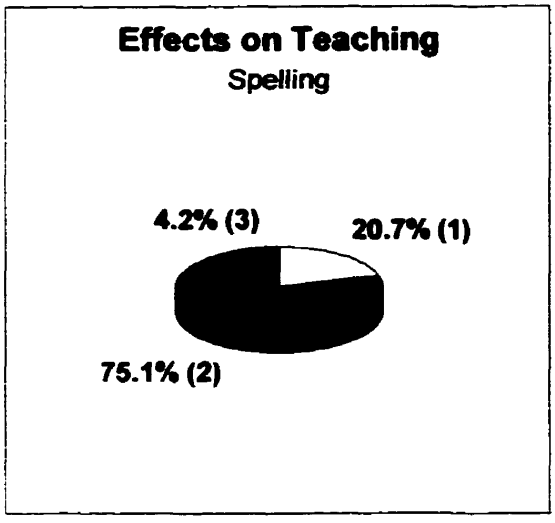


Less:3.4% Same:60.7% More:35..9%

Note: Left column represents *less* than before, middle column *as much as* before, right column *more* than before

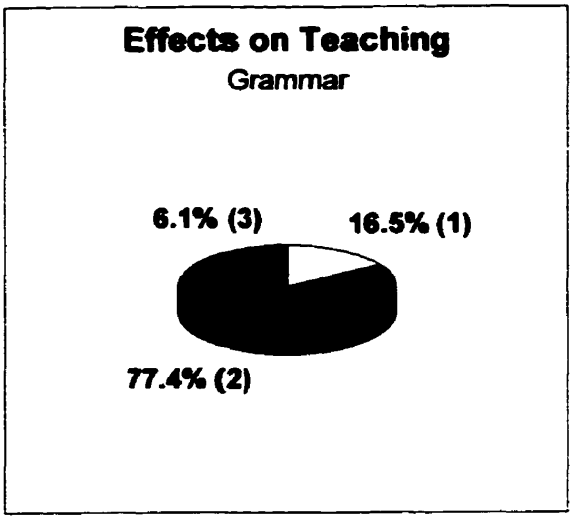
Once more the majority of respondents indicate that they are teaching language mechanics to the same extent that they were prior to 1996. (See Figures 23 - 26 and Appendix C: 24-27.) Few say they are spending more time on them except for 9.4 % who indicate they are teaching sentence construction more.

Figure 23



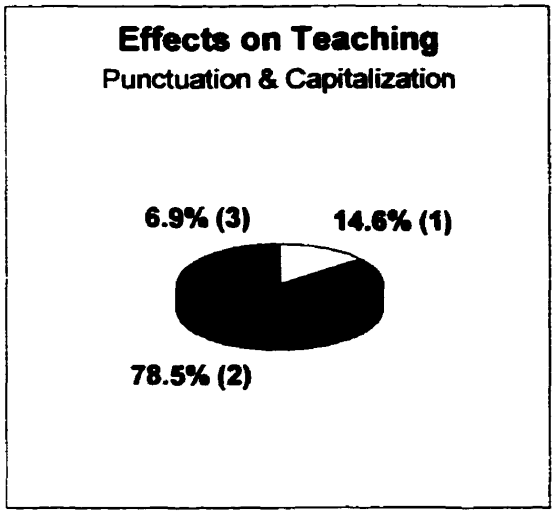
Frequency:
(1) Less: 20.7% (2) Same: 75.1% (3) More: 4.2%

Figure 24



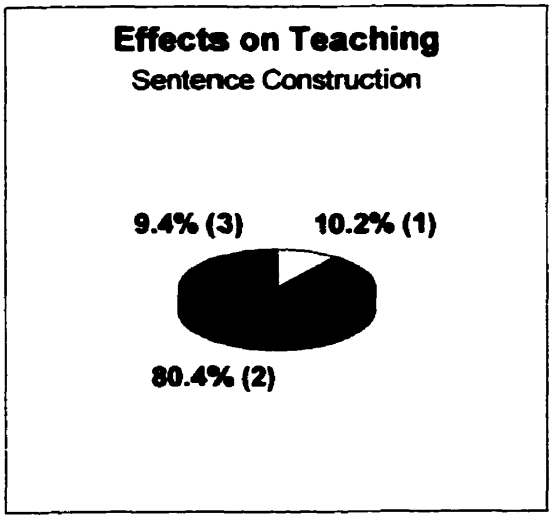
(1) Less: 16.5% (2) Same: 77.4% (3) More: 6.1%

Figure 25



Frequency:
(1) Less: 14.6% (2) Same: 78.5% (3) More: 6.9%

Figure 26

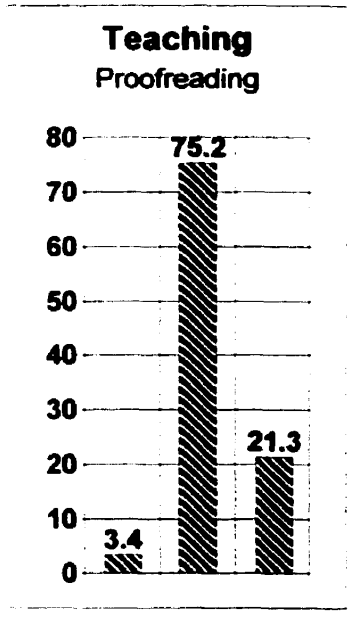


(1) Less: 10.2% (2) Same: 80.4% (3) More: 9.4%

Many respondents indicate they are spending much more time teaching the revision stages in process writing. The data results are quite varied. (See Figures 27 - 29 and Appendix C: 28, 29, 30.) According to those teachers who perceive they are teaching these skills as much as they had before the provincial exam, and those that say they are spending more time on them now than before, an interesting result of the exam seems to be that approximately 11% more teachers are emphasizing self-editing skills (65.8 +32.4) over group-editing skills (59.8% + 29%). Moreover, 21.3 % categorized themselves as teaching proofreading more in 1998.

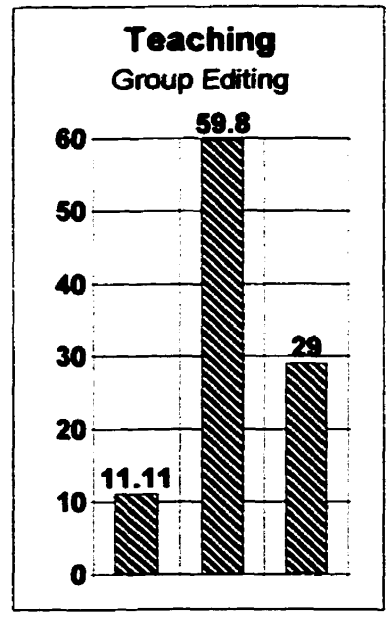
The Influence of the Exam on Teaching Proofreading & Editing

Figure 27



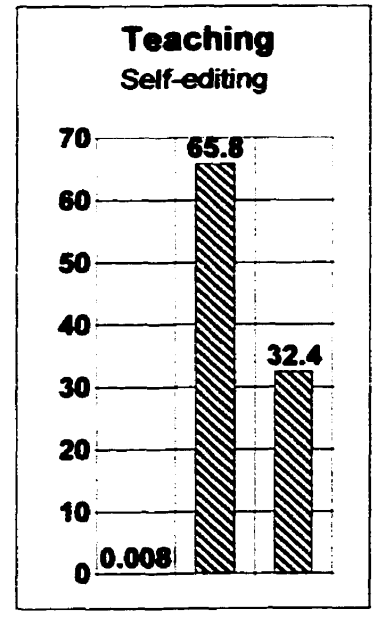
Frequency:
(1) Less: 3.4% (2) Same: 75%
(3) More: 21.3%

Figure 28



(1)Less: 11% (2) Same: 59.8%
(3) More: 29%

Figure 29



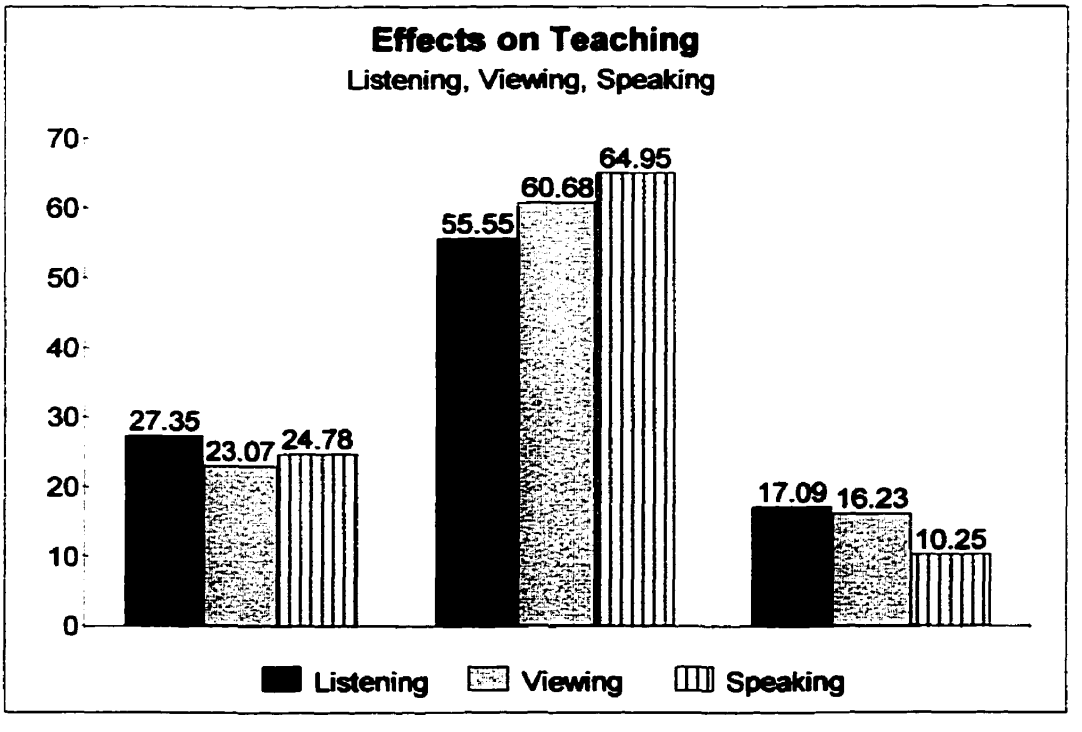
(1) Less: 0% (2) Same: 65.8%
(3) More: 32.4%

Note: Left column represents *less* than before, middle column *as much as* before, right column *more* than before

The 1987 English Language Arts curriculum document requires teachers to teach and evaluate listening and speaking communicative skills. Viewing skills are emphasized to a lesser extent in the curriculum. According to the survey results this is the part of the curriculum that has been affected the most negatively as a result of the introduction of the provincial exam. (See Appendix C: 31, 32, 33.) Figure 30 clearly shows that while approximately two thirds of the teachers are maintaining the frequency with which they teach speaking skills and 60.68% are maintaining the same degree of viewing activities, little more than half perceive they are maintaining the amount of time they spent on listening skill activities. Moreover, the percentages that indicate the teaching of these skills have increased are consistently lower than the percentages that indicate they are taught less frequently.

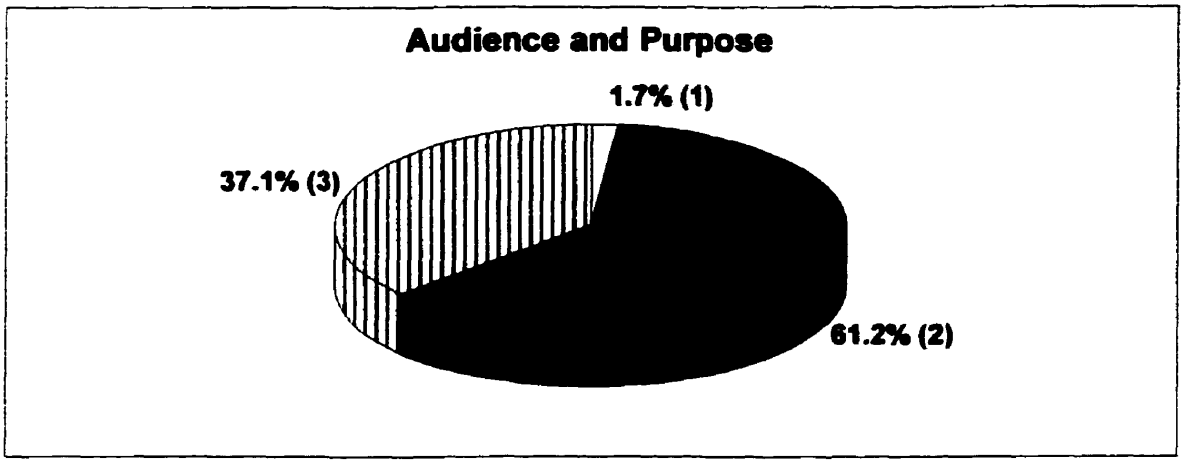
The Effect of the Exam on Teaching Listening, Viewing, Speaking

Figure 30



The last question in Part A asked teachers to consider the emphasis they place on teaching students to write for audience and purpose, an advocated teaching strategy for teaching process writing in the 1987 English Language Arts curriculum. Over 98% of the respondents indicated they are teaching students to write purposefully for audience as part of their writing program either frequently or more than before the exam.

Figure 31



Frequency: (1) *Less* than before (2) *As frequently as* before (3) *More* than before

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4.0.1 Part B: Effects on Senior 4 Readings

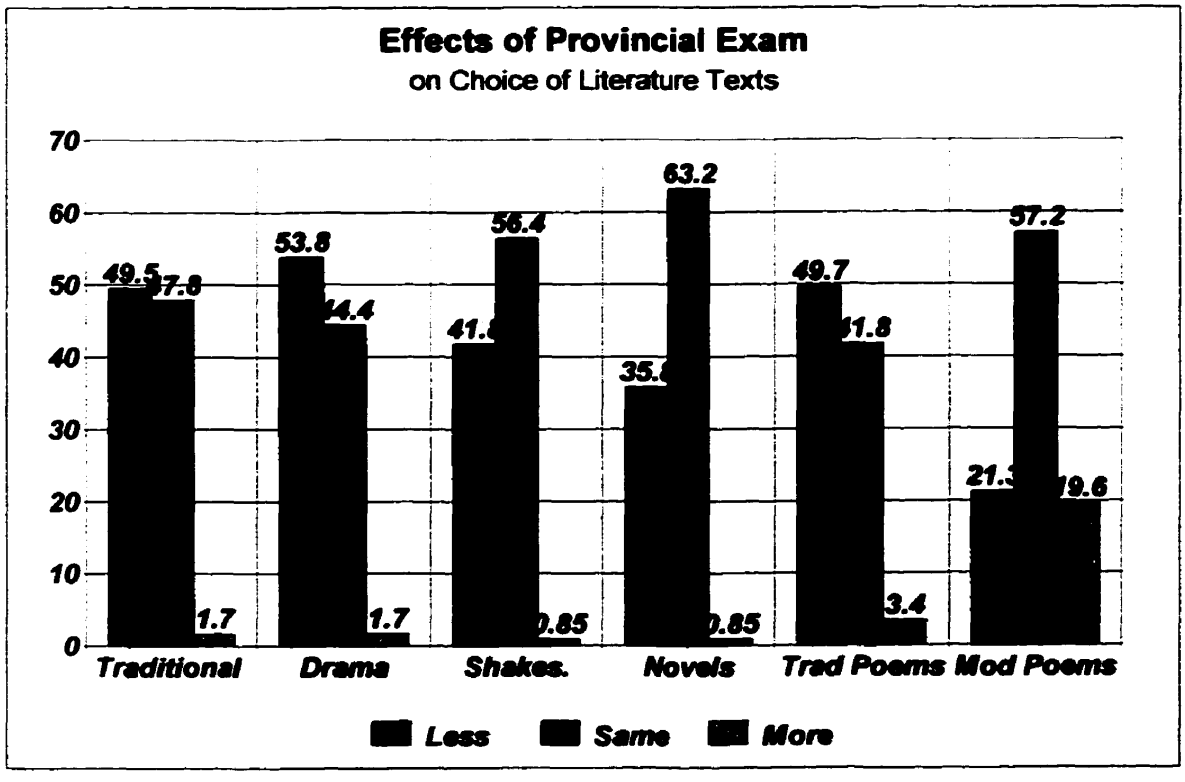
Part B of the survey required teachers to consider the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on their choice of reading texts for Senior 4 classes. Teachers were asked to answer 16 questions. Each of these questions pertained to the type of reading material that has appeared on at least one of the provincial exams written by Senior 4 students between January 1996 and May 1998. The survey results reveal that teachers have been influenced to adjust their reading curriculum as a result of the exam.

This is most apparent in Figure 31 that represents the choice-changes teachers indicate they have made in terms of the literary texts they use. Few teachers perceive themselves to be teaching literature that has traditionally been taught in Senior 4 more: drama, Shakespeare, novels, or canon poetry. Approximately one fifth (19.6%) indicate that they have increased their teaching of modern poetry.

The numbers of teachers who perceive themselves to be maintaining their use of literature is well below the numbers for other parts of the curriculum. Fewer than 50% claim they are teaching literature that has been traditionally recommended reading for high school English language arts courses to the same extent. Fifty six percent say they teach Shakespeare to the same extent, while 63.2% are teaching novels to the same extent.

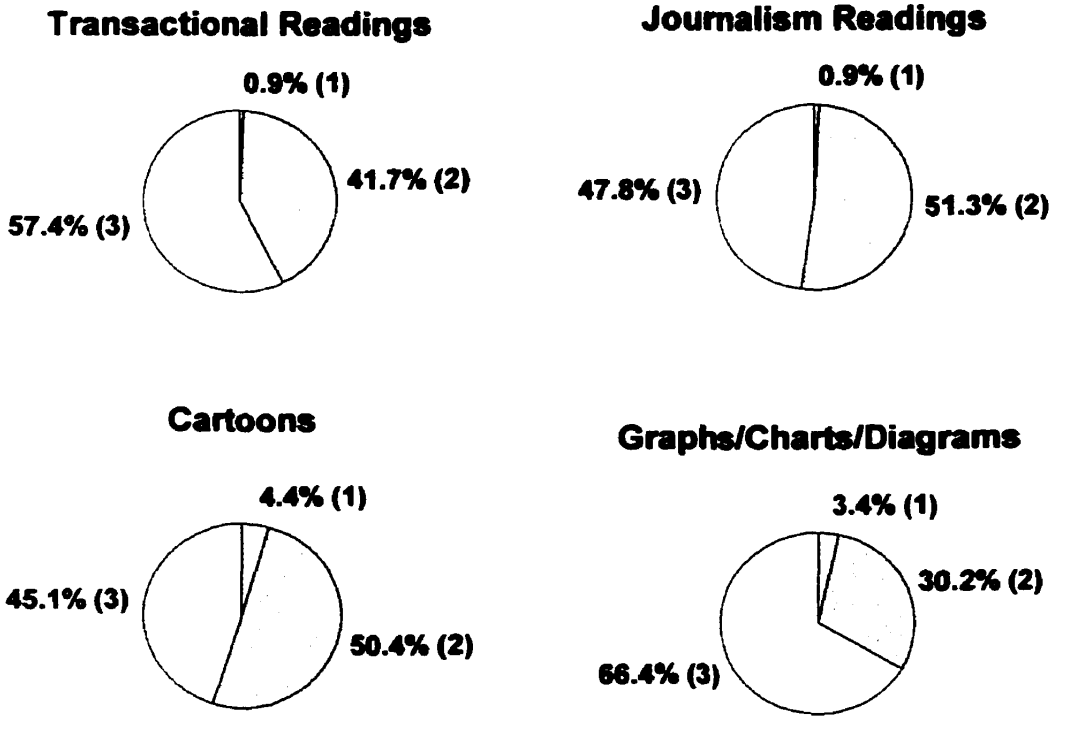
Perhaps the most revealing information pertains to the numbers of Senior 4 teachers who perceive themselves to be teaching literary texts less regularly than they did prior to the exam. Fifty four percent claim to be teaching less drama; 53.8% claim to teach less traditional literature or canon poetry. However, it needs to be noted that a few teachers indicate on their survey response forms that they are unfamiliar with the term "canon poetry". Novels and modern poetry texts are still used by teachers quite often but, even so, 36.8% of the respondents say they are teaching novels less frequently than they did prior to January 1996, and 21.3% state they are teaching modern poetry less often.

Figure 32



It is apparent that the types of readings that teachers have incorporated most into their Senior 4 courses as a result of the Senior 4 provincial exams are the transactional, information-based genre. (See Appendix C, Part B, 7, 8, 9, 10.) Questions 7 - 10 in Part B asked teachers to rate how frequently they choose to use transactional texts in their Senior 4 courses *as a result of* the provincial exam. From 43.5 % to 65.8 % of the responses to these questions indicated teachers are using transactional texts more frequently. Only .85 % to 4.2 % of the responses to the four questions indicated a less frequent use of these types of texts. Those who perceive that they teach transactional texts as frequently as they did prior to the exam range from 29.9 % to 50.4%. Figure 33 shows the responses to the questions on the use of transactional texts.

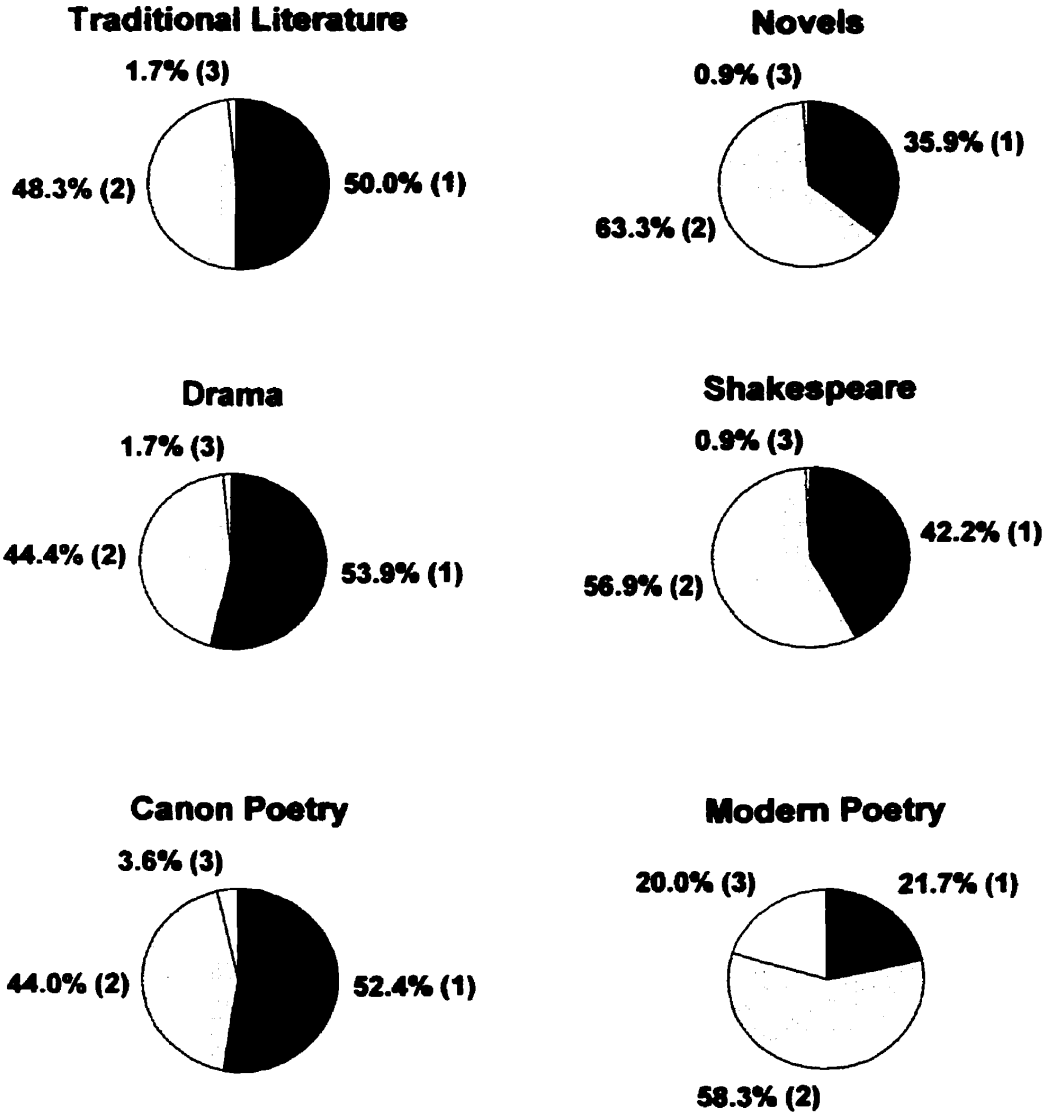
Figure 33



Frequency: (1) taught *less* than before (2) taught *as much as* before (3) taught *more* than before

Questions 1 - 6, Part B, asked teachers to rate how frequently they choose to use six types of literature traditionally on Senior 4 curriculum reading lists as a result of the exam. Figure 34 provides a pie chart display of the frequency rate evidenced by teachers' responses. Note that the term, traditional literature, refers to canon literature traditionally taught in senior high school courses.

Figure 34

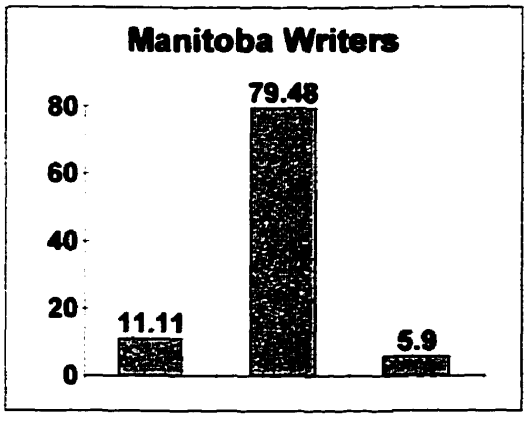


Frequency: (1) taught *less* than before (2) taught *as much as* before (3) taught *more* than before

The inverted relationship between the "less frequently" responses to the questions on the literary texts and the "more frequently" responses to the questions on the transactional reading texts is distinct. A number of reasons for this occurrence can be inferred. One is that prior to the exam the Senior 4 teachers actually were choosing to teach more traditional literary texts than transactional ones in Senior 4 English Language Arts classes. Another is that because the provincial exam specifications clearly state that 50% of the types of texts students are required to read on the provincial exam are transactional and 50% of the texts are literary, teachers could have decided to proportion their reading programs in the same way (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995 - 96).

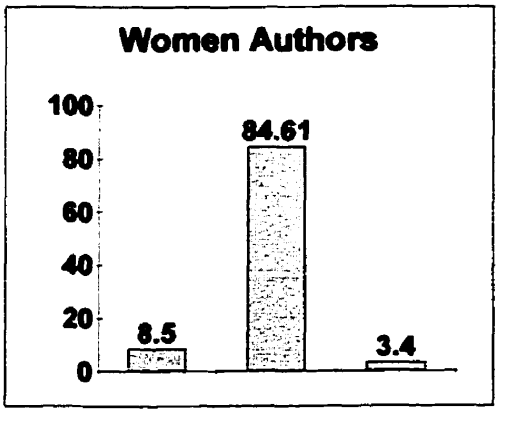
Inclusion of writings by Manitoba writers, women authors, aboriginal and other cultural minority writers have appeared on all the Senior 4 provincial exams. Screens of the exam readings are done to ensure that the sets of exams distributed to Senior 4 students contain representative pieces by each of these groups of writers. In the survey teachers were asked to indicate to what extent they have incorporated readings by these authors into their courses. (See Appendix C: Part B, 11, 12, 13, 14). Most respondents (73.5 % to 84.6 %) indicated that they felt they had been using materials by these writers prior to the exam. Figures 35 - 38 show that from 8.5 % to 14.52 % state they teach material written by these authors less frequently since the introduction of the exam.

Figure 35



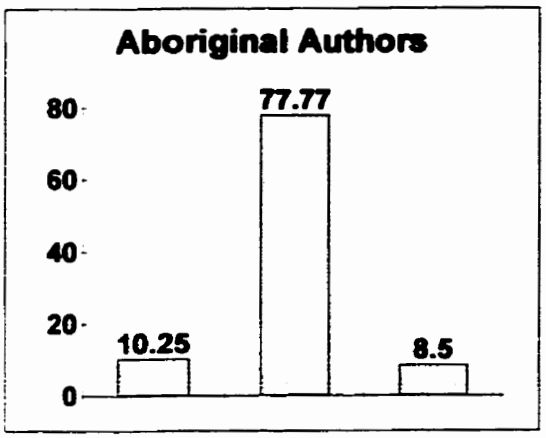
Frequency: Less: 11.11% Same: 79.48% More: 5.9%

Figure 36



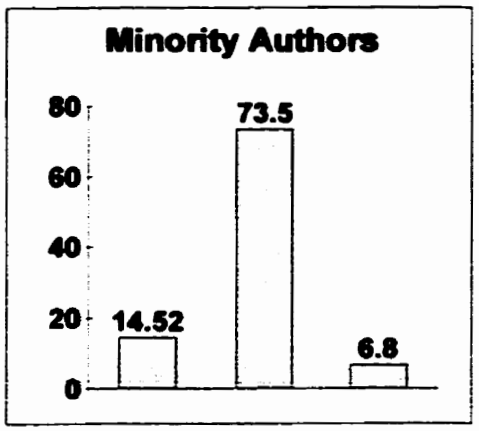
Less: 8.5% Same: 84.6% More: 3.4%

Figure 37



Frequency: Less: 10.25% Same: 77.77% More: 8.5%

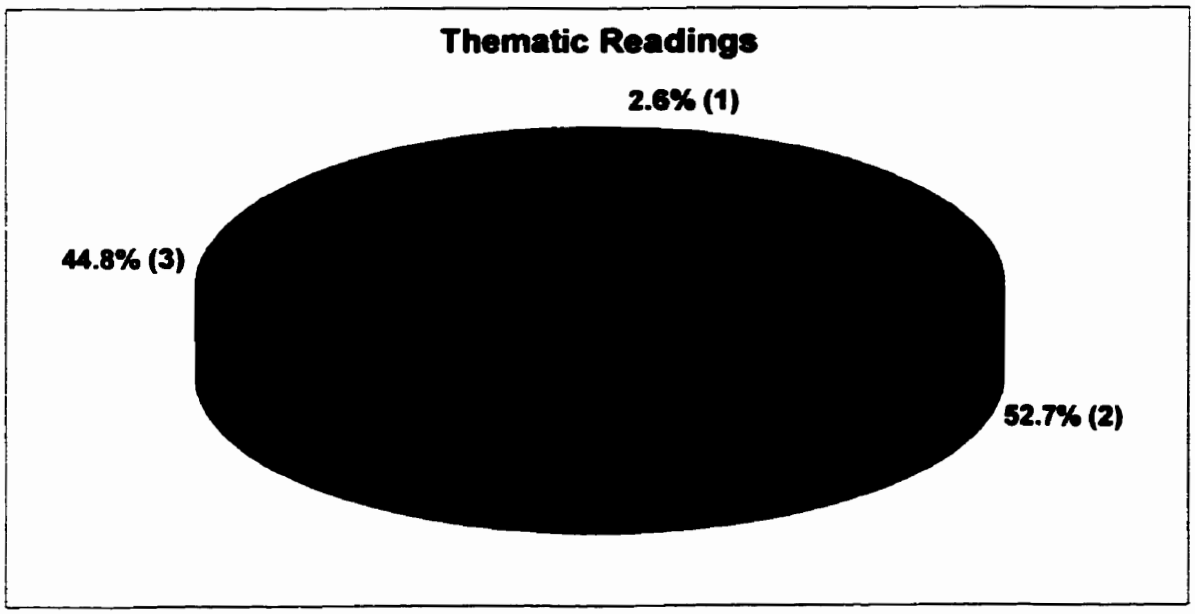
Figure 38



Less: 14.52% Same: 73.5% More: 6.8%

Another indicator of the exam's influence is that now 43.5 % of teachers claim to use thematically related readings. Only 2.5 % perceive that they use thematically related material less. (See Appendix C, Part B, 15.)

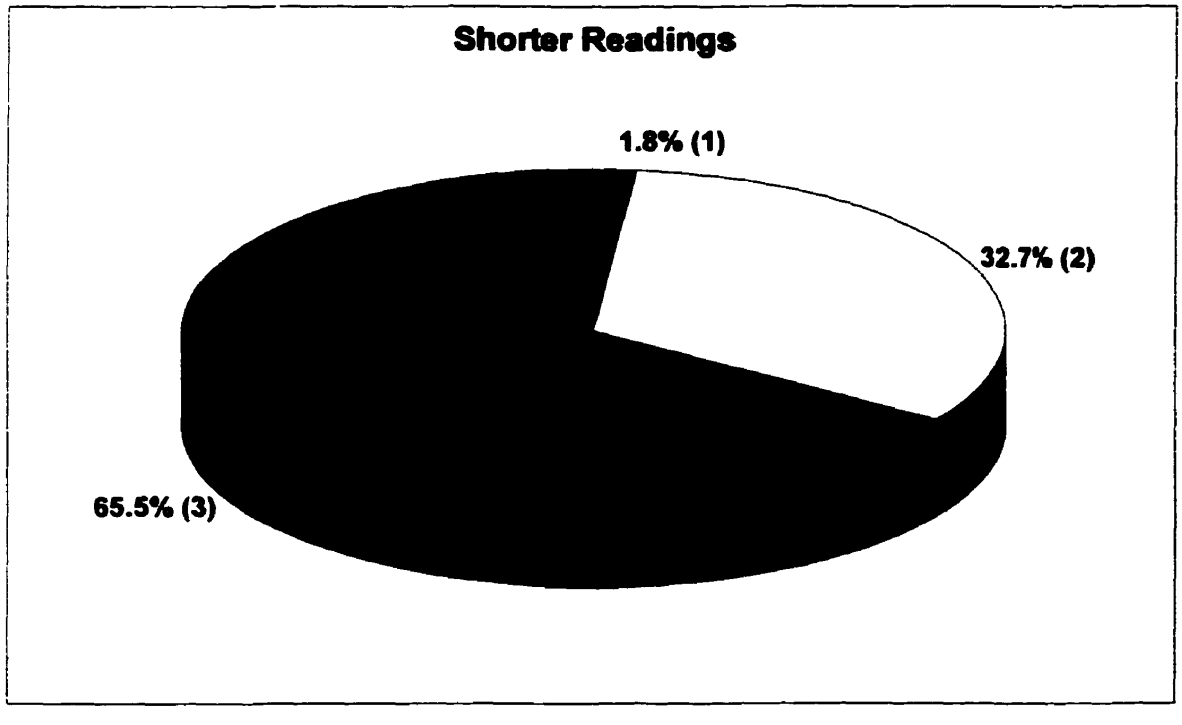
Figure 39



Frequency: Less: 2.6% Same: 52.7% More: 44.8%

Because of time restraints the Manitoba provincial exams contain shorter readings so that students have an opportunity to read a variety of views on a particular theme. As a result, teachers are using thematic readings in their courses and they too appear to be choosing to use shorter reading texts in their classes. According to the survey results 65.5% of respondents perceive that they use shorter reading pieces more in their classes as a result of the exam. Those who say that they used shorter works as frequently prior to the exam numbered 32.7%. Only 1.8 % say that they now use shorter readings less frequently. (See Appendix C: Part B, 16.)

Figure 40



Frequency: Less: 1.8% Same: 32.7% More: 65.5%

The most important finding from Part B of the survey, regarding the types of reading texts teachers are using in Senior 4, concerns literary texts. The use of literature

traditionally used in senior high school English language arts programs, drama, Shakespeare, novels and canon poetry, appears to have been reduced by Manitoba Senior 4 teachers significantly. (See Appendix C: Part B, 1 – 5.) Teachers perceive that they are teaching novels and modern poetry with some of the same degree of frequency that they did prior to the introduction of the Senior 4 exam but traditional literature, as a whole, less. On the other hand, teachers perceive that they are teaching transactional, information-based literature much more frequently than prior to January 1996.

4.0.2 Part C: Effects on Instruction Strategies

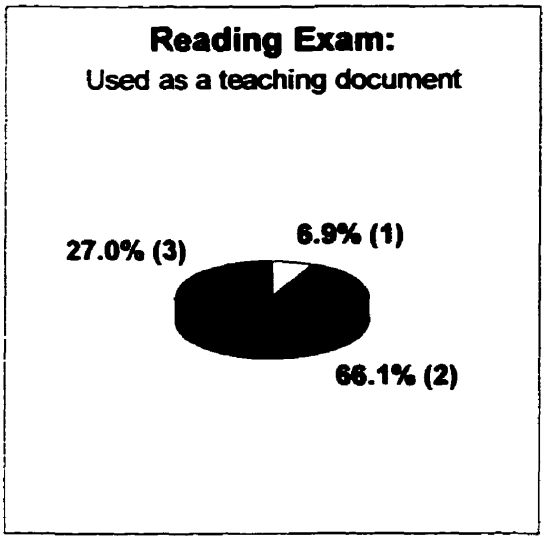
Part C of the survey required teachers to reflect on the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on the instruction strategies they use to prepare students to write the provincial exam. Respondents recorded their perceptions by checking either "Frequently", "Occasionally", or "Never". (See Appendix C: Part C.)

The questions for Part C were designed for two purposes. It was hoped that the questions would provide information that would reveal the extent to which teachers use past exams, or portions of them, as actual teaching documents. It was also hoped that answers would render a sense of the effects of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam on teachers' instruction strategies. Responses provide evidence that past exams are being used as actual teaching documents with varying degrees of frequency.

Figures 41 - 44 represent the extent to which teachers perceive they are using the reading exams for exam preparation. Survey responses shown in Figure 41 provide evidence that 27% of the teachers who completed the survey use past reading exams frequently, while 66 % declare they use them occasionally. Large numbers of teachers report that they use past-exam reading tasks for exam preparation frequently (47.4%) or occasionally (44%). Few, 8.6%, say they do not. An even larger percentage, 48.7%, claim to use past reading exams to teach the three levels of reading comprehension

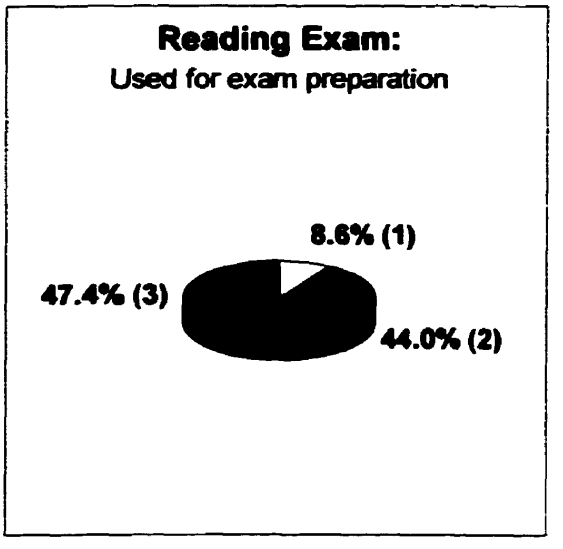
examined, and 41.4% use them occasionally for this purpose. Again, a large percentage, 41.1%, also report having their students work through one complete reading exam while 28.4% say they do this occasionally. Thirty percent never have their students do this.

Figure 41



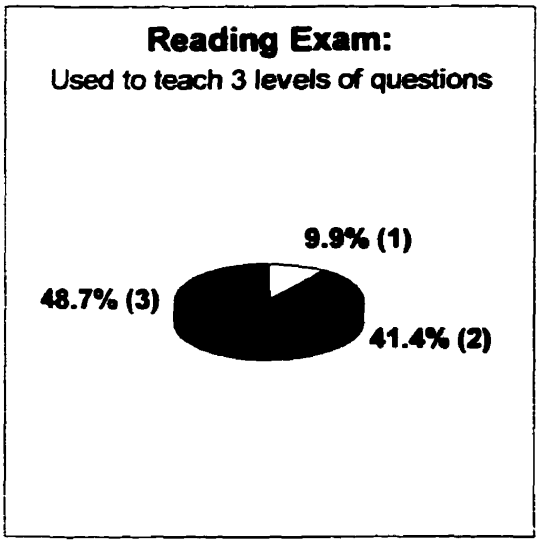
Never: 6.9% Occasionally: 66% Frequently: 27%

Figure 42



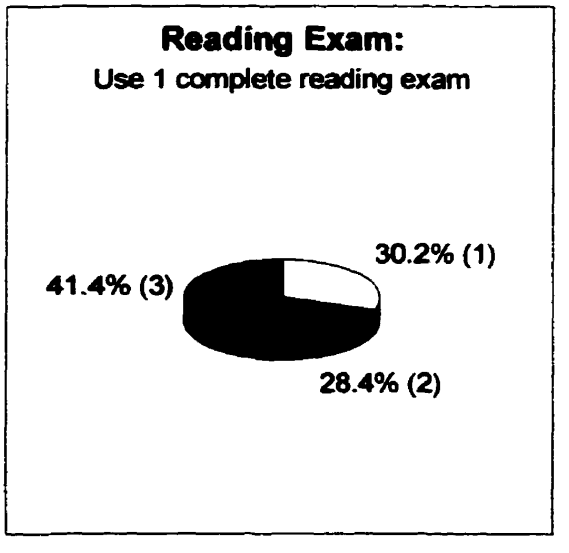
Never: 8.6% Occasionally: 44% Frequently: 47.4%

Figure 43



Never: 9.9% Occasionally: 41.4% Frequently: 48.7%

Figure 44



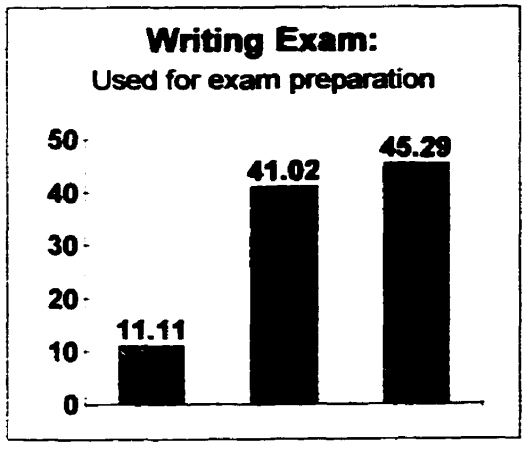
Never: 30.2% Occasionally 28.4% Frequently: 41.4%

It is clear from these responses that Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers do use the reading component of the provincial exam for instruction purposes. The exams are thematically developed so students are learning to read and comprehend a variety of material all related to the same subject. By practising answering questions on previously administered exams students are learning how to demonstrate their abilities to read on the three reading comprehension skill-levels identified in the Manitoba Education and Training's *Policies and procedures for provincial examinations and standards tests.*

Teachers likewise report using the writing component of the provincial exam as exam preparation. As in the case of the use of reading components of past-exams, a large percentage of teachers, 45.29%, indicated that they use the writing tasks of past-exams for exam preparation purposes frequently, while 41.02% use these tasks occasionally. Figure 45 represents teachers' use for this purpose.

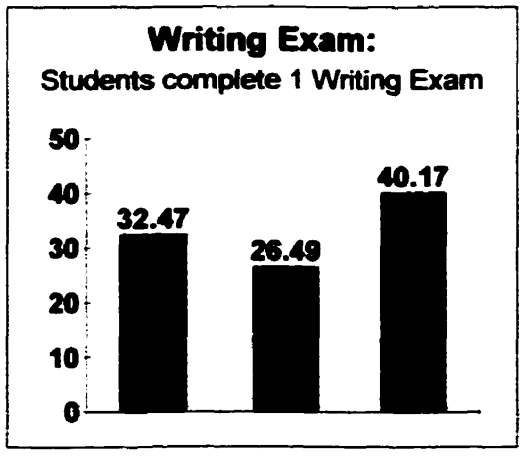
Figure 46 reveals to what extent teachers say they have their students work through one complete writing exam component. Students may use any of the thematic readings in either the reading exam booklet or in the readings booklet specifically prepared for the writing exam task as resource material. The latter requires approximately one hour to read. Students are given one hour to discuss all the readings in small groups. Then, students prepare an essay over three separate sixty minute periods of time within three days. The first period is intended for students to prepare a rough copy of their essay; the second period is intended for editing; and the third is the period in which they prepare a final copy for marking. In all, students require 5 hours to complete the writing task. According to the survey 40.17% of teachers have their students involved in a process writing task from a past-exam frequently, and 26.49% have their students work through one occasionally. However, 32.47% of teachers claim they never have their students do the process writing task associated with a past exam.

Figure 45



Never: 11% Occasionally: 41% Frequently: 45.3%

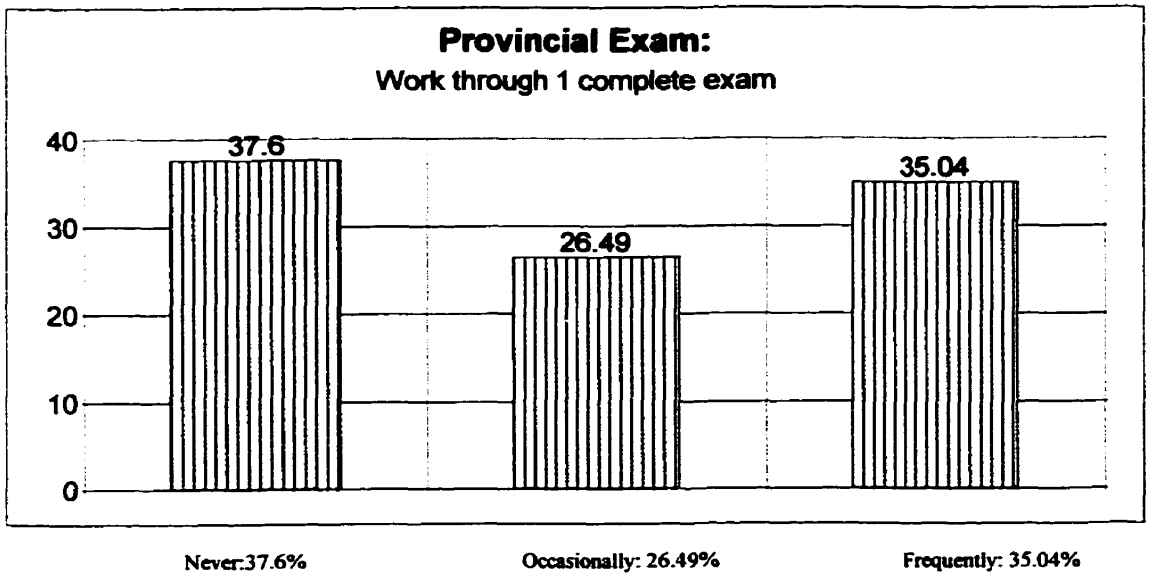
Figure 46



Never: 32.47% Occasionally: 26.49% Frequently: 40.17%

To a lesser extent, teachers are preparing their students for their own exam by having them work through one complete past provincial exam. It needs to be mentioned that this represents a significant amount of teaching time. The reading exam component could take three hours and the writing component five hours of time, eight hours in total. Figure 47 represents the answers teachers submitted on their surveys. While 37.6% claim never to have their students work through one complete exam, 26.49% say they do occasionally, and 35.04% say they do this work with their students *frequently*.

Figure 47



In all, it appears from teachers' responses that the Manitoba English Language Arts provincial exam has become an integral part of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers' classroom teaching documents. Teachers indicate that many of them are using a past-exam, or parts of past exams, in their actual courses of instruction.

4.0.3 Part D: Effects on Class Work Assessment and Evaluation

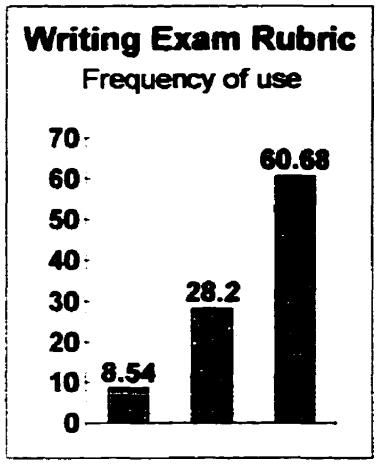
The last part of the survey requested that teachers consider the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on their class work formative assessment and evaluation practices. Respondents recorded their perceptions by checking either "Frequently", "Occasionally", or "Never". (See Appendix C: Part D.) The questions were designed to elicit information about teachers' use of the actual writing process exam rubric for their own writing assignments, their use of rubrics generally for class work evaluation, their use of holistic marking, and the kinds of reading assignments they create themselves for their students.

Teachers indicate that they do use the Process Writing Exam rubric. (See Appendix C: 1.) Figure 48 shows the frequency of its use. Approximately 61% say they use it frequently and 28.2% occasionally.

Almost the same figures emerged in answer to question 2 concerning the use of the exam rubric for teaching students marker-expectations, (see Figure 53); 67.52% say they use it frequently while 28.2% say they used it occasionally. Because of the wording of the two questions, it is unclear whether teachers use the rubric as a marking rubric that they e attach to students' writing assignments, or whether teachers use it as an actual teaching text as well. Only 8.54% state they never use the writing exam rubric and a smaller number, 2.56%, claim never to use it as a means of teaching students marker-expectations.

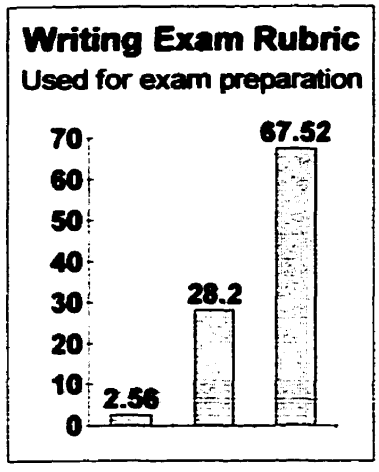
Use of rubrics generally was reported by a total of 94 %. Of the survey respondents, 69.23% use rubrics to evaluate their students' work frequently while 4.78% say they use rubric marking occasionally; 5.12% claim never to use rubrics at all.

Figure 49



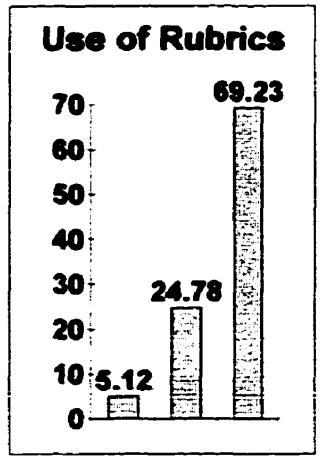
Never: 8.54% Occasionally: 28.2% Frequently: 60.68%

Figure 50



Never: 2.56% Occasionally: 28.2% Frequently: 67.52%

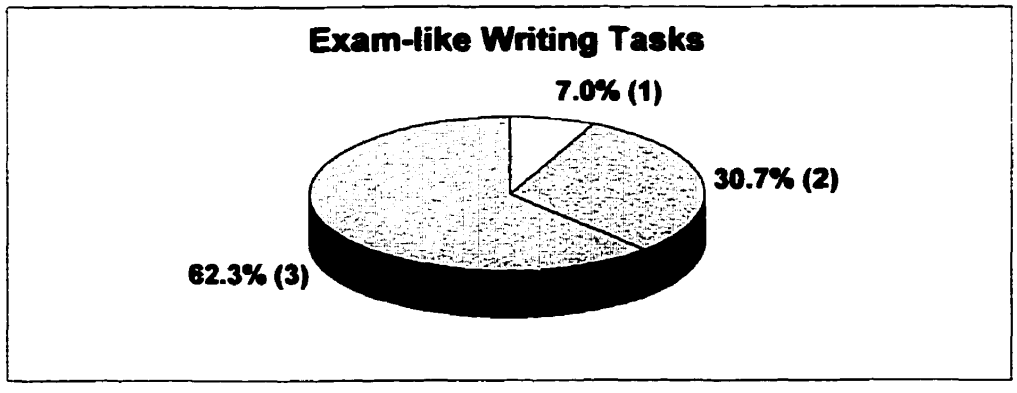
Figure 51



Never: 5.12% Occasionally: 24.78% Frequently: 69.23%

Teachers report that a significant number of them are assigning shorter, more exam-like writing tasks. Figure 52 shows that, while 7% claim never to do this, the majority do to some degree. Survey results reveal that 30.7 % assign exam-like writing tasks frequently and 62.3% say they do so occasionally.

Figure 52

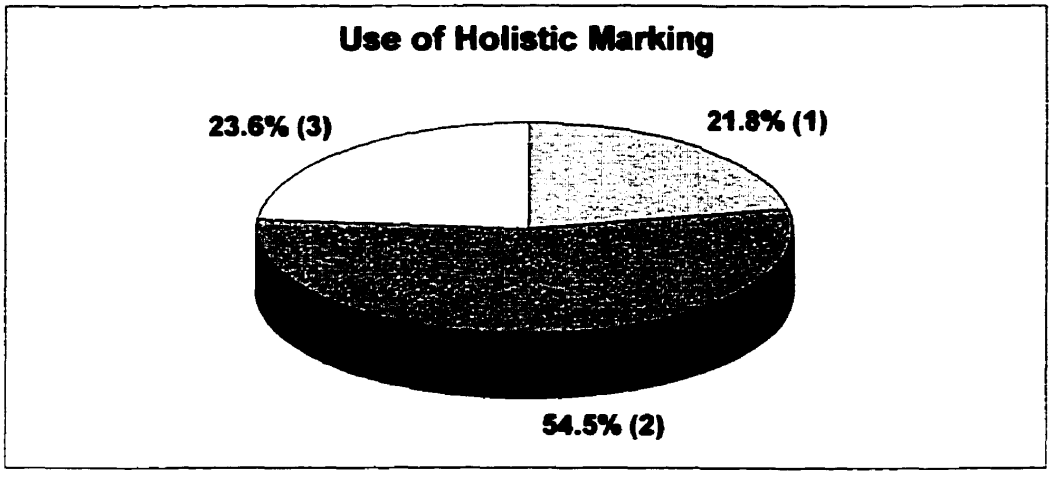


Never: 7% Occasionally: 30.7% Frequently: 62.3%

Figure 53 displays the responses concerning teachers' use of holistic marking or general impression marking. Statistically more than half the respondents, 54.5%, state they use holistic marking occasionally, while over one fifth, 23.6%, use it frequently.

However, another one fifth, 21.8%, claim never to use holistic marking at all. It needs to be mentioned that not all respondents answered this question. Some indicated they did not know the meaning of the word, "holistic".

Figure 53

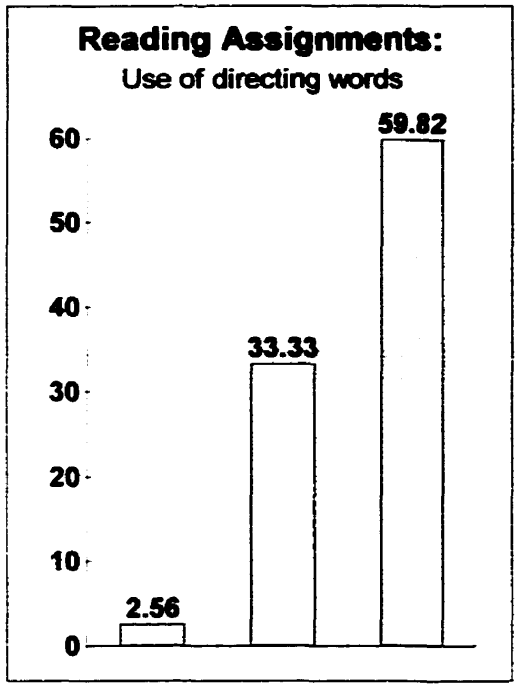


Never: 21.8% Occasionally: 54.5% Frequently: 23.6%

Senior 4 teachers claim to be composing reading assignment questions using directing words in the same manner used on the provincial exam. Use of directing words instead of interrogatives is a questioning format practice that 93.1 % of teachers claim to have adopted to some extent (see Figure 54).

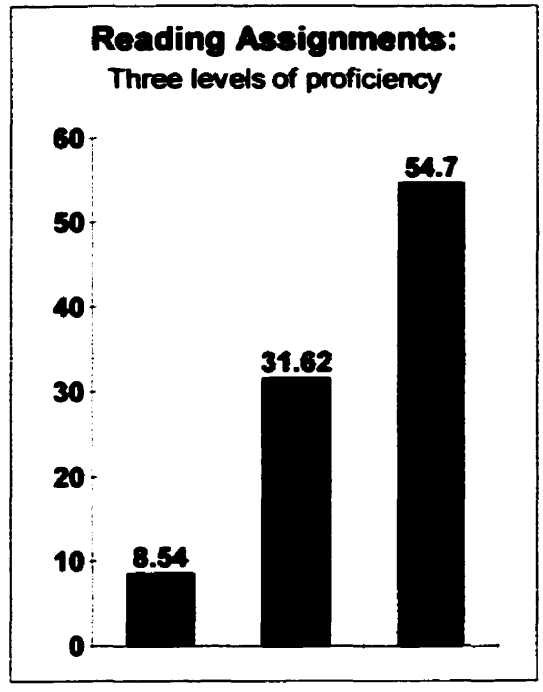
As well, teachers indicate that they are creating their own reading assignments using questions at each of the three levels of reading proficiency measured by the exam: the literal level, the inferential level and the critical reflective level. Figure 55 displays the responses teachers gave to this question. Over 86% in total have adopted this practise, 31.62% occasionally and 54.7% frequently.

Figure 54



Never: 2.56% Occasionally: 33% Frequently: 59.8%

Figure 55



Never: 8.54% Occasionally: 31.6% Frequently: 54.7%

4.1 Answering the Research Questions

This study was undertaken to determine the influence of the introduction of a provincial exam on Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers' teaching practices. The survey portion of the study addressed four potential areas of influence of the exam on teachers' actual classroom teaching practices: course content, texts, instruction strategies and assessment methods *as a result of* the exam. It needs to be understood that Parts A and B of the survey could not contain a response column that allowed teachers to indicate that they do not teach specific skills or activities. Because the Senior 4 curriculum is a legally mandated teaching document, to ask teachers to indicate they are not teaching parts of it is paramount to asking them to declare they are doing something illegal.

Therefore, to interpret the results of this survey meaningfully, it must be understood that if teachers had not been teaching certain skills prior to 1996 the only available response would be for them to check " as frequently as before" in Part A, concerning course content, and in Part B, concerning texts. Teachers did have the option to indicate "Never" in Parts C and D.

Table 1 rank orders the *1987 English Language Arts Curriculum* specific teaching objectives delineated in Parts A and B of the survey which the 117 teachers who responded to this survey indicated they perceive they teach *less frequently* as a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 exam. The left column lists the area of practice. The middle column designates the specific objective, and the right column identifies the percentage of teachers who perceive that they teach the objective less frequently.

Table 1

Part A Specific Objectives Taught *Less* Frequently

#	Area of Practice	Specific Objective	Teach Less Frequently
1	Course Content: Oral Communication	Oracy	29.90%
2	Course Content: Oral Communication	Listening	27.35%
3	Course Content: Oral Communication	Speaking	24.78%
4	Course Content: Language Mechanics	Viewing	23.07%
5	Course Content: Language Mechanics	Spelling	20.70%
6	Course Content: Language Mechanics	Grammar	16.50%
7	Course Content: Language Mechanics	Punctuation & Capitalization	14.60%
8	Course Content: Process Writing	Group Editing	11.11%
9	Course Content: Language Mechanics	Sentence Construction	10.20%

Statistics that represent that more than 2 in 10 teachers perceive they are teaching a skill *more frequently* than they did before January 1996 are considered significant. This means at least 20% of Manitoba's Senior 4 teachers have increased the amount of time they formerly spent on teaching the skill or knowledge. Table 2 rank orders the specific objectives the 117 teacher respondants claim they teach *more frequently* as a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 exam. The left column lists the area of practice. The middle column lists the specific objective, and the right column identifies the percentage.

Table 2

Survey Results: Part A Specific Objectives Taught *More* Frequently

#	Area of Practice	Specific Objective	Teach More Frequently
1	Reading	A variety of text types	65.50%
2	Reading	Critical reflective reading	40.20%
3	Writing	Persuasive argument essay	40.00%
4	Writing	Personal essay	40.00%
5	Writing	Transitional devices	35.89%
6	Writing	Essay organization	35.04%
7	Writing	Essay introductions	35.04%
8	Writing	Style: Personality, voice, point of view	35.00%
9	Writing	Writing with details	34.18%
10	Writing	Self-editing	32.40%
11	Writing	Focus	31.62%
12	Writing	Expository essay	31.60%
13	Writing	Style: Reader engagement	30.80%
14	Writing	Style: Precise diction	30.50%
15	Writing	Avoiding generalizations	29.05%
16	Literacy	Reading & Writing	29.00%
17	Writing	Group Editing	29.00%
18	Reading	Reading for making inferences	27.40%
19	Writing	Using Language to reflect voice	27.40%
20	Writing	Essay conclusions	25.64%
21	Writing	Using language to convey attitude	25.60%
22	Writing	Effective syntax	24.10%
23	Writing	Sequencing ideas / details	21.36%
24	Writing	Communicating & integrating ideas	21.36%
25	Writing:	Proofreading	21.30%

Table 2 priorizes the specific learning objectives that the 117 survey respondents identified as the skills they perceive to be the most important to teach *more frequently* as a result of the implementation of the provincial English Language Arts competency exam. Because the percentages range from 21% to 65.5% this implies that Manitoba's provincial exam is exerting aconsiderable influence over what is being taught in Senior 4 classrooms in terms of course content.

In Part B of the survey, the teachers identified reading texts that they felt need not be taught as frequently and those that they felt a need to teach more frequently as a result of the exam. Table 3 lists those texts teachers indicate they now teach less frequently.

Table 3 **Survey Results: Part B**
Literature taught *less frequently* since January 1996

#	Literature	%Teachers: less frequently
1	Drama	53.80%
2	Novels	53.80%
3	Canon Poetry	47.70%
4	Traditional Literature	49.50%
5	Shakespeare	42.20%
6	Modern Poetry	21.30%

Table 4 lists in priority of importance those texts teachers feel a need to teach more frequently in order to prepare their Senior 4 students for the provincial exam.

Table 4 **Survey Results: Part B**
Part B Literature taught *more frequently* since January 1996

#	Literature	% Teachers: more frequently
1	Graphs/ Charts/ Diagrams	66.40%
2	Shorter Pieces of Literature	65.50%
3	Transactional Readings	57.40%
4	Journalism Articles	47.80%
5	Cartoons	45.10%
6	Thematic Readings	44.80%

These results reflect the findings of Fagan & Spurrell (1995) in their national survey of departments of education and school board representatives, *Evaluating achievement of senior high school students in Canada: A study of Policies and practices of ministries and school boards in Canada.* Their survey respondents indicated "[l]iterature was the area where the greatest number of jurisdictions felt that standards had declined" (p. 30). From the survey responses provided by Manitoba teachers in Part B it appears teachers in Manitoba are teaching literature that has been traditionally part of the Senior 4 curriculum less often.

Moreover, of the survey responses provided for Part C of the survey, it is clearly evident that Senior 4 teachers throughout Manitoba are using past-exams as part of their course work instruction. Teachers who recorded that they frequently use past exams claim to use the reading tasks the most frequently (47%), then the writing tasks (45%), and 35% work through one complete exam with students. Sixty seven per cent of the respondents said they work with their students through one complete Process Writing exam, and 69% said they work through a past-exam reading component. Fewer than 10% reported that they don't teach students the three types of reading comprehension described in the Senior 4 English Language Arts information bulletins as exam preparation instructions. That means over 90% do, either occasionally or frequently. These statistics clearly indicate that the provincial exam is used extensively by Senior 4 teachers.

With respect to class work assessment and evaluation, the exam's influence is very evident as well. Between 67.52% and 60.68% of teachers use the Process Writing Exam rubric frequently while 69% maintain they now use rubrics to evaluate students' work. Large numbers of teachers (59.82%) are composing reading questions using directing words frequently, while 33.33% are doing this occasionally. Over half the survey respondents, 54.7% create reading assignments for their students that include questions on

the three levels of reading proficiency measured by the exam, and 31.62% do this occasionally.

A close reading of the statistics that have been produced by the survey of Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers regarding the influence of the provincial completion exam on their instruction practices appears to support the notion that the exam has had a definite impact on teaching practices. The results from each of the four parts of the survey provide evidence that teachers have taken this exam seriously and have adjusted their Senior 4 programs to emphasize instruction that will support their students' success on the exam. In doing this teachers are also aligning their programs with the reading and writing sections of the 1987 curriculum document.

However, what the survey results also suggest is that the exam may have superceded the curriculum as a teaching guide. The survey statistics reveal that where reading and writing instruction have increased in emphasis there has also been a de-emphasis on the other communicative skills included in the *1987 English Language Arts Curriculum.* The teaching of oracy - listening, viewing and speaking activities - and the teaching of literature traditionally taught in senior years high school courses both seem to have been reduced in many Senior 4 English Language Arts classrooms. So, the provincial exam can be perceived to be doing a lot of good for literacy education in Manitoba's Senior 4 English Language Arts classrooms, which is truly commendable, but at the same time it is also causing the teaching of other parts of the curriculum that are not featured on it to be decreased.

5. Summary, Discussion & Recommendations

5.0 Summary and Discussion

This study developed from an interest in knowing the effects of the introduction of a mandatory provincial competency exam on classroom teachers' teaching and assessment practices. A Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam was reintroduced in Manitoba in January 1996 after it had been removed from practise twenty eight years earlier. From 1969 until June 1996 school boards, schools or classroom teachers throughout the province possessed autonomy with respect to the delivery of English Language Arts curriculum and the design of assessment and evaluation practices. By means of a provincial exam, Manitoba Education and Training sought to assess levels of literacy among Senior 4 students in the province, effect a consistent delivery of curriculum at Senior 4 throughtout the province, and make the evaluation of graduating students more uniform and systematic.

5.0.0 Summary of Study

In order to gain knowledge of any changes in teachers' instruction and assessment practices engendered by the provincial exam, all Senior 4 English Language Arts classroom teachers in Manitoba were surveyed on their perceptions of its effects. The survey contained 66 questions which covered course content, choice of reading texts for Senior 4 students, questions on teacher' use of 'old' exams for instruction purposes, and questions on teachers' use of exam evaluation procedures for their own classroom teaching practices. The purpose was to gauge changes that developed specifically *as a result of* the implementation of the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam.

One hundred and seventeen surveys were completed by Senior 4 teachers. The results were computer data entered and charted. A frequency analysis was completed on the results, and a summary analysis was conducted on the findings.

5.0.1 Summary of Findings

The survey results furnish strong evidence that curriculum changes are occurring as a result of the reinstatement of Senior 4 completion exams in Manitoba. Teachers' completed surveys provide concrete evidence of the precise nature of the curriculum changes that are happening in terms of course content, reading materials, writing programs, teaching strategies and assessment procedures directly related to the exam. As well, the survey results provide insight into which parts of the English Language Arts curriculum are being emphasized in Senior 4 classrooms and which parts are being de-emphasized as a result of the exam.

Assessment Practices

The results of this study reveal that the Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam has influenced teachers' class work assessment practices. A large number of Senior 4 teachers, 61% report that they have adopted the writing component provincial exam rubric for their own essay marking purposes frequently (figure 49), and 28% state they use it occasionally. Even more, 69%, report using rubric-marking frequently for assessment purposes generally (figure 51), as opposed to 24% who claim to use holistic marking frequently (figure 53).

Ninety three percent of the teachers also report using exam-like directing words when they create their own reading assignments, and 87% create reading comprehension questions for their own assignments on the three levels of reading proficiency identified

in Manitoba Education and Training's *Information Bulletin* that is circulated prior to each exam.

Effects on Teaching Practices

The findings of this study completely support the conjecture that large-scale competency tests or exams do generate change. The series of provincial exams written in Manitoba between January 1996 and May 1998 have influenced the nature of the curriculum and the kind of instruction that is occurring in Senior 4 classes in Manitoba high schools, particularly in terms of course content, choices of reading materials, writing programs, approaches to teaching reading and writing skills, and assessment practices.

What the survey respondents disclose provides credibility to the argument that large-scale assessments are an extremely effective way of influencing classroom teaching practices. Teachers, students and society generally view the results of large-scale competency tests, or 'high-stakes' tests, with considerable importance, particularly if they constitute a sizable portion of a final grade in a course of studies or if the test results appear on students' final report cards. As a result, teachers are indirectly encouraged to 'teach to the test'by accentuating the parts of the curriculum that are tested, and are disinclined to emphasize the parts of the curriculum that are not tested. Consequently, there arises the danger of the test displacing the curriculum as a program learning guide if the entire curriculum is not covered by the test.

The findings of this study support the contention that large-scale, mandatory tests are an extremely effective way of influencing teachers to teach the parts of the curriculum that are tested. Survey responses in this study indicate that those aspects of the mandated curriculum that are not included on the exam, most notably oracy, are trivialized to a considerable extent in favour of the parts of the curriculum that are included on the exam.

The reading component of the Senior 4 exam has affected teaching practices considerably. Of the teachers who responded to the survey for this study, 93% report developing their own reading assignments using the kinds of directing words used in the reading component of the provincial exam (figure 54). The three levels of reading competencies identified by Manitoba Education and Training as requisite reading skills for the exam - literal, inferential and critical reflective reading - are reported by 87% - 90% of teachers to be included in their reading instruction classes (figures 43 & 55). As well, 35% of the teachers perceive themselves to be teaching a wider variety of text-types (figure 3), 66% are choosing to use shorter reading texts more frequently (figure 40), and 45% are adopting the practice of using thematically related readings more frequently (figure 39). Additionally, 93% of the teacher respondents state they use the reading component of the provincial exam as a teaching document either occasionally or frequently (figure 41), and 91% report using it for exam preparation purposes either occasionally or frequently (figure 42).

Between 32% and 47% of teachers also report that they are attending more to the teaching of the essay forms that have appeared on the provincial exam. In addition to teaching the actual form, 37% also report teaching students to write for specific audiences and for actual purposes to a greater extent (figure 31). In addition, teachers perceive they are more regularly teaching the content and organizational features and stylistic elements appropriate for each form more attentively, as well as the language mechanics expected of successful writers (figures 8 - 26). Similarly, teachers perceive they are more often emphasizing the importance of the various stages essential in the process of writing well, proofreading and editing (figures 27 - 29). Furthermore, of the survey respondents, 62% claim to be creating exam-like writing tasks for their own assignments (figure 52). As with the reading component of the Senior 4 exam, 40% -

45% of the teachers report using the writing component of the exam frequently for exam preparation purposes (figures 45 & 46).

Table 5 outlines teachers' perceptions of the most common practices that they have increased and decreased in their instruction practices due to the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts exam:

Table 5 **Practices that have increased and decreased as a result of the Senior 4 English Language Arts Provincial Exam**

Practices that have increased:	Practices that have decreased:
Literacy instruction	Listening skills instruction
Essay forms that have been required on the exam	Speaking skills instruction
Stylistic features of writing	Grammar instruction
Organizational features for writing essays	Assigning traditional literature for study
Proofreading, group editing, self-editing	Teaching drama readings
Writing for audience and purpose	Teaching Shakespeare
Assigning shorter, exam-like writing tasks	Teaching canon poetry
Using a variety of text types	
Instruction in reading for making inferences	
Instruction in critical reflective reading skills	
Assigning transactional readings	
Assigning shorter reading selections	
Assigning thematically related readings	
Using "old" exams for exam preparation	
Using rubrics for assessing coursework	
Creating reading assignments using directing words	
Designing reading questions on the 3 exam-levels of reading proficiency	

5.1.1 Suggestions for Further Research

The research literature on large-scale testing is cautious in tone. It is filled with warnings that large-scale testing is fraught with difficulties. There is the problem of the test replacing the curriculum, or a narrowing of the mandated curriculum with whole sections omitted, especially those parts not "testable". Competency testing may be discriminatory, marginalizing students from certain sectors of society or disadvantaging those students who have not had the 'opportunity to learn'. Tests that do not reflect the entire curriculum are controvertible. Moreover, many researchers claim that traditional tests are an inappropriate test instrument for an outcomes-based curriculum, the kind of curriculums that are gaining popularity throughout North America. The most common problem concerns the persistent, and to-date unresolved problem of interrater reliability on large-scale testing.

Throughout this study the need for more research into assessment and evaluation practices became increasingly apparent. Marking is commonly considered by teachers to be tedious, boring, and one of the least enjoyable aspects of teaching. However, assessment and evaluation in the language arts is in particular need of critical reflective thought particularly as communication skills are being recognized more and more as an important area of schooling. There really is very little research literature, particularly Canadian studies, on evaluation in the language arts. From this study, a need for studies to be conducted on the following aspects of assessment became increasingly apparent.

First, the most persistent problem with large-scale testing, and the one most often cited in the research literature concerns interrater reliability. A study of the reliability training sessions conducted by departments of education across Canada could provide valuable information that would help to effect better trained markers, more uniform marking, and thus results. Because so many large-scale English Language Arts testing projects identifies low rates of interrater reliability as a problem, a study of why this

happens could yield some very interesting information not just about teacher-markers but about the tests they are marking as well.

Secondly, there also is a need to know how test results are being used, how they should be used, and how the education system can better use them. Because of the cost factor associated with large-scale assessments, once they have achieved their intended purpose which is quite often to support a certain curriculum or provide evidence of students' learning achievement, they can be justified only if they are recognized to be providing beneficial information that can be used to improve the curricula of the test instrument, and provide society at large with accurate information about what students know and how effectively they can apply that knowledge in real-world situations. If the general public can no longer accept that the information generated by the test is important, useful, significant, valuable and essential, support is lost for large-scale tests. Therefore, there is a real need for a study that explores what is being done with the information generated by testing and how this information should be used to benefit the educational system.

Lastly, a study is needed on alternative forms of testing that are congruent with outcomes-based learning. A standards, outcomes-based curricula requires a very different kind of test instrument than the one analyzed for this study. Much work is being done presently on alternative types of assessments that are "applications of new concepts such as 'constructivism,' authentic assessment,' or 'student-centered learning" (Newman,n Secada, Wehlage, 1995). Burke (1992) describes authentic assessment as a form of assessment that:

> require[s] students to synthesize information, apply what they've learned, and perform or demonstrate their understanding of the material according to specific criteria ... [It] require[s] students to perform tasks or create products to demonstrate their understanding of the process, ... [It] teach[es] students how to 'produce' knowledge not 'reproduce' knowledge. Unfortunately, the tremendous emphasis on standardized testing has clouded our vision of what's really essential for life, and we rely more and more on ... paper-and-pencil tests to measure growth.

> Authentic assessments are real-life tools that reflect skills necessary for learning and for life. Like the Olympic rings, assessment tools must be linked to be effective. Students need to construct learning for themselves, link it to prior knowledge, and bridge it to other subjects and real experiences. They need to be able to see the connections between what they are studying in school and what they are experiencing in life.. (p. 5 - 6)

Perhaps a more appropriate test instrument would be Balanced Certificate Testing (Rothman, 1995). According to this model of testing, validity is tied directly to what the students' know and what they can do with the knowledge they have acquired. In other words, at the end of a program of studies, students are required to demonstrate all that they have learned. A combination of tests is needed to accomplish this. For example, a traditional reading and writing test, marked centrally, could be combined with a portfolio "best pieces" assessment, marked by each student's classroom teacher. In order to test oracy skills, an oral presentation requiring students to demonstrate spoken language skills, also marked by the classroom teacher, could be required. Oracy test specifications and marking rubrics could be designed by the departments of education to ensure, as much as possible, marker-uniformity throughout the province. Research into best-test practices for outcomes-based learning programs is urgently needed as many educational jurisdictions are developing outcomes-based curricula.

'High-stakes" certification tests that constitute a percentage of students' graduation marks tend to be taken very seriously by teachers. Not only do the survey responses collected for this study provide evidence that the Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exam is generating change in Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers' teaching practices, but there is convincing research literature available from other educational jurisdictions involved in large-scale assessments (Gronlund, 1998; Marzano, Pickering, McTighe, 1993; Newmann, Secada & Wehlage, 1995; Resnick & Resnick, 1993; Rothman, 1995; Shepard, 1990) that supports the use of them to effect curricular changes, equal opportunities for students to learn throughout an educational jurisdiction, and assessment uniformity. The findings from this study support this view.

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Appendix A: Letter to Principals

June 19, 1998

Dear Principal,

I am a Senior 4 English Language Arts teacher at Lord Selkirk Regional Secondary School, and a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am investigating teachers' perceptions of the effects of the compulsory Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams on their classroom teaching practices

I am writing to you to ask you to kindly support my research by distributing the surveys I have enclosed with this letter to your Senior 4 teachers who have taught Senior 4 English Language Arts both before January 1996, when the first provincial exam was written, and since then. I need survey respondents who can compare the program of studies they taught before the implementation of the compulsory provincial exam to the one they are teaching now.

I am taking every precaution to guarantee the anonymity of teachers who participate in my survey. I have enclosed a letter for your teachers, which asks them not to identify themselves in any way. The survey requires them to place check marks only under responses that most closely reflect their perceptions of the effects of the exam on their professional practices. I have enclosed a stamped envelope, addressed to me, for them to return their surveys to me anonymously. I assure them that the validity of my survey findings depends not only upon the number of responses I receive but also on responder-anonymity, and I will make every effort I can to insure that there is no means by which their survey responses can be identified as theirs specifically. I will be the only person to read the survey responses. Furthermore, after I have analyzed the data from the surveys, I assure you, I will destroy all of the completed survey forms.

Thank you for your assistance.

On September 15, 1998 I received a letter from Coralie Bryant, Acting Superintendent, stating that the Seven Oaks School Board has approved the distribution of this survey to Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers in the Seven Oaks School Division.

On October 30, 1998 I received a letter from Doug Edmond, Superintendent in charge of research for Winnipeg 1 School Division granting me permission to distribute my survey to Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers in Winnipeg School Division No.1.

Appendix B: Letter to Colleagues

June 19,1998

Dear Colleague,

As you know, in January of 1996, Manitoba Education and Training introduced mandatory exams in English Language Arts at the Senior 4 level. Since then, your students have written six sets of exams. I feel that now is a good time to study the effects that these exams have had on Senior 4 teachers' teaching practices throughout Manitoba.

I am a Senior 4 English Language Arts teacher at Lord Selkirk Regional Secondary School, and a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I will use the information I obtain from this project in my Master's Thesis. I am interested in learning about the curriculum shifts or changes in curriculum emphasis that teachers have made in their Senior 4 Core courses as a result of the provincial exam.

I have attached a survey with this letter and a stamped envelope addressed to me. I expect that it will take you approximately fifteen minutes to complete the survey. It is not necessary for you to respond to all statements in the survey. *However, please do not identify yourself or your school on the survey form or the return envelope.* The validity of my survey findings depends not only upon the number of responses I receive but also on responder-anonymity. Only I will be reading your survey responses and there should be no means by which I can identify the survey responses as yours specifically. After I have analyzed the data from all the responses, I will destroy all of the completed survey forms. I will be reporting my data to my faculty adviser and thesis committee in a group format so that no particular teacher can be identified by anyone in any way.

I hope you will participate in my study, and if you do, I will provide you with a summary of my findings at the end of my study. Should you have any questions about my research, or if you would like to receive a copy of my survey results, you may contact me at the fax number or either of the phone numbers I've listed below. Kindly return your completed survey to me in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours truly

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

RESPONSE REQUIRED BY JUNE 30, 1998

The purpose of this survey is to determine if Senior 4 teachers have made changes in the curriculum they teach in their Senior 4 English Language Arts (ELA) classes as a result of the introduction of a compulsory Senior 4 provincial exam. It is designed to elicit information from Senior 4 ELA teachers regarding their perceptions of the effects of the 1996, 1997 and 1998 Manitoba Senior 4 English Language Arts provincial exams on their classroom teaching practices.

As you consider your answer to each of the statements in this survey, please compare the Senior 4 ELA curriculum you taught prior to the exam to the curriculum you have taught at Senior 4 since the implementation of this exam in January 1996.

The survey questions are arrange under the following headings:

i) course content,

ii) course readings,

iii) teaching methodology,

iv) class work assessment and evaluation procedures.

After each statement, please place a check mark in the response-column that most closely corresponds with your perceptions.

Example:	more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
I teach my students to write expository essays.	___	✓	___

A. **Your perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on your course content**

As a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 ELA provincial exam,

		more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
1.	I teach reading strategies for a variety of different types of reading texts.	___	___	___
2.	I teach reading for literal comprehension.	___	___	___
3.	I teach reading for inferential comprehension.	___	___	___
4.	I teach reading for critical reflective comprehension.	___	___	___
5.	I teach writing strategies for a variety of different writing forms.	___	___	___
6.	I teach ways to communicate and integrate ideas in writing.	___	___	___
7.	I teach how to include details for enhancing and clarifying ideas.	___	___	___
8.	I teach how to avoid generalizing in writing.	___	___	___
9.	I teach how to write persuasive arguments.	___	___	___
10.	I teach writing information-based expository / explanatory essays.	___	___	___
11.	I teach writing personal essays.	___	___	___
12.	I teach the significance of precise diction.	___	___	___
13.	I teach the significance of effective syntax.	___	___	___
14.	I teach how to choose and arrange words effectively to reflect personality, voice, point of view, or to create the voice of a persona.	___	___	___

		more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
15.	I teach how to choose words carefully to reveal attitude towards a subject.	___	___	___
16.	I teach how to choose language for effectively demonstrating engagement with and/or ownership of the task.	___	___	___
17.	I teach how to choose language effectively for establishing and maintaining an engaging relationship with the reader.	___	___	___
18.	I teach prewriting organizational strategies.	___	___	___
19.	I teach creating effective essay introductions.	___	___	___
20.	I teach how to establish and maintain focus.	___	___	___
21.	I teach how to order and arrange ideas, details, and paragraphs effectively.	___	___	___
22.	I teach writing effective conclusions.	___	___	___
23.	I teach effective use of transitional devices.	___	___	___
24.	I teach spelling.	___	___	___
25.	I teach grammar.	___	___	___
26.	I teach punctuation and capitalization.	___	___	___
27.	I teach sentence construction.	___	___	___
28.	I teach proofreading procedures.	___	___	___
29.	I teach group editing procedures.	___	___	___
30.	I teach self-editing procedures.	___	___	___
31.	I teach and evaluate listening skills.	___	___	___
32.	I teach and evaluate viewing skills.	___	___	___
33.	I teach and evaluate speaking skills.	___	___	___

		more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
33.	I teach literacy (reading and writing).	___	___	___
34.	I teach oracy (listening, and speaking).	___	___	___
35.	I teach writing for audience and purpose.	___	___	___

B. The effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on your choice of Senior 4 readings

As a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 ELA provincial exam,

		more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
1.	I teach traditional literature.	___	___	___
2.	I teach drama.	___	___	___
3.	I teach Shakespearean drama.	___	___	___
4.	I teach novels.	___	___	___
5.	I teach canon poetry.	___	___	___
6.	I teach modern poetry.	___	___	___
7.	I teach transactional literature.	___	___	___
8.	I teach journalism readings.	___	___	___
9.	I teach reading cartoons.	___	___	___
10.	I teach representational readings such as graphs, charts, diagrams.	___	___	___
11.	I teach readings by Manitoba authors.	___	___	___
12.	I teach readings by women authors.	___	___	___
13.	I teach readings by Aboriginal authors.	___	___	___

	more frequently	as frequently	less frequently
14. I teach readings by minority authors.	___	___	___
15. I use thematically related readings.	___	___	___
16. I use shorter works.	___	___	___

C. **Your perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on your instruction strategies**

As a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 ELA provincial exam,

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
1. I use the 1996, 1997, 1998 Senior 4 Provincial Reading Exams as teaching document.	___	___	___
2. I teach the three types of reading comprehension described in the Senior 4 ELA Examinations Information Bulletin as exam preparation instructions.	___	___	___
3. I use the reading tasks from the 1996, 1997, 1998 Senior 4 ELA provincial exams to prepare my students for their provincial reading exam.	___	___	___
4. I use writing tasks from the 1996, 1997, 1998 provincial exams to prepare my students for their provincial exam writing task.	___	___	___
5. I have my students work through one complete provincial Reading Exam.	___	___	___
6. I have my students work through one complete provincial Process Writing Exam.	___	___	___
7. I have my students work through one complete provincial Reading and Process Writing Exam.	___	___	___

D. Your perceptions regarding the effects of the Senior 4 provincial exam on your class work assessment and evaluation

As a result of the implementation of the Senior 4 ELA provincial exam,

		Frequently	Occasionally	Never
1.	I use the Process Writing Exam rubric.	___	___	___
2.	I use the Process Writing Exam rubric for teaching students marker expectations.	___	___	___
3.	I assign shorter, more exam-like writing tasks.	___	___	___
4.	I use rubrics to evaluate my students' work.	___	___	___
5.	I use holistic marking.	___	___	___
6.	I compose reading questions using directing words.	___	___	___
7.	I create reading assignments that include questions on the three levels of reading proficiency measured by the exam.	___	___	___

Please use the space below to make any comments you would like to express regarding the effects of the Senior 4 English Language Arts Provincial Exam on your teaching practices.

Appendix D: Survey Comments

Senior 4 English Language Arts teachers wrote the following observations. At the end of the survey, respondents were given the option of writing comments regarding their perceptions of the effects of the provincial exam on their own practices. These are the comments that teachers wrote:

1. Basically - dramatization & longer selections are almost impossible due to time limit & pressure of a final exam. Process writing task is excellent for Senior 4 level. 3 levels of comprehension are good! (6 - 24 - 1)

2. Now I teach almost exclusively to the exam. Before, I taught much more creative writing and we did much more reading of literature. Since the exam, I teach my students reading strategies that I know will help them handle the reading tasks on the exam, and I teach three kinds of essay writing - the three types of essays that have been required on the exams so far.

3. The provincial exam has caused me to focus on the reading / writing outcomes at the expense of listening & speaking outcomes. Because the exam is written so early in January, and because it is so time consuming for a week, I find students are difficult to motivate after the exam has been completed. Thus, the provincial exam virtually reduces my semester teaching time to 4 months (approx. 75 classes)! (6 - 25 - 4)

4. The major impact has been a loss of time for listening / speaking activity. The 30% prov. exam drives the 70% term work. There is an expectation from admin. / parents that students will be "prepared". the class (40G) has become more read/write, more predictable, less inventive / creative for students, and certainly less challenging overall. (6 - 25 - 6)

5. We do not study Shakespeare any more. It takes several weeks to do well and because we are timetabled by semester, we simply do not have time to read the Bard (6 - 25 - 8).

6. I feel the exam sets a basic expectation for student skills which is reasonable and impartial. The fact that an outside standard (the exam / evaluation rubric) exists, assists in shaping student acceptance of standards used in the classroom. It is also useful to have a basic focus for student skills - beyond which teachers can offer enrichment. I support the exam concept and though I do not "teach to the exam" to any degree, our school consistently achieves an average from 10 - 12 % marks (sic) higher than the provincial average. (6 - 25 - 11)

7. I have used this (sic) techniques & variety of forms found on this provincial exam for many years. I taught transactional / technical literary in a 30 / 30 / 40 split as early as 1983; ie I taught English 300 & 200 as trans / tech balanced with literary. (6 - 25 12)

8. I do feel I spend a fair amount of time teaching Snr.4's the expectations and requirements of the exam. I don't feel there is anything wrong with emphasizing expository and argumentative forms of writing, but I worry about using this as a form of evaluation more often than the creative assignments - such as poetry or short story writing, or writing dramatic dialogue.

I don't find the range of assignments I give is as broad as it used to be. My time has been cut into both by preparing for the exam in class time and by the time taken for writing the exam itself.

Overall, though I think students feel more pressure to do well in ELA and therefore take their marks in English (ie. term work) more seriously. I never have enough time to do everything I need to do anymore (sic). What's going to happen once the new curriculum is implemented? If I teach more on viewing and representing, I know I won't have the time to work on novels. (6 - 25 - 13)

9. It reminds me of teaching in the early 70's - when high school students were more challenged. During the 80's things became too lax. Now we're back to accountability and stretching their minds." (6 - 25 15)

10. "This is my first year to teach Sr. 4 ELA in Manitoba.

I would say I spend 1/4 of my class time specifically to prepare students for this exam. (6- 25 - 17)

11. I am <u>not</u> a proponent of the Senior 4 Exam. I believe that weak students do poorly & strong students find it a joke. Math has a 40S & 40G stream - Why lump all students together for L. A.? My students (who have done very well on the exam) are not getting the course I used to have ... While I try to cover same skills as before I am always aware of exam. Much of comprehension on exam is far below whet (sic) students do ... (6 - 25 - 19)

12. I have to speed up considerably to cover the same content (and more, due to exam preparatory exercises) in order to finish the course a month earlier so that students have been exposed to all the writing styles which may be demanded on the exam. Consequently the weaker students tend to fall behind. ESL students suffer the most since there is no longer time in class to give them the special attention they need.

I'd also like to point out that in most cases the school-based marks for students are lower than the provincial exam marks, indicating that school standards are higher than provincial Department of Education standards. The government's position was that standardized tests were necessary to guarantee high across-the-province standards, but I don't believe this view is supported by the evidence. Indeed, just the opposite seems to be true. Therefore, the colossal expenditure on administering these exams seems to be unjustifiable. (6 - 25 - 20)

13. I believe that the exam has had some positive effects on my teaching practices as they relate to those areas which are tested.

However, I do not emphasise (sic) or stress areas the exam excludes - ie. speeches, drama, discussion.

The exam is beneficial in developing and testing specific skills. Is it, however, a test or development of student thinking or original thought? (6 - 25 -21)

14. Different schools organize their English courses differently. I find that the S4 LA Exam has definitely cramped my style. instead of integrating the reading and writing assignments into a program that builds throughout the year, I have had to do quite a bit of compacting of writing and reading practise into the first credit of English which in our school, is taught in the first Semester. Because we have very few students, all students are registered in one class, in the first (40G) credit. This definitely limits the scope of the program. I definitely prefer the old 301 / 300 approach, where practical English can be taught to those who need & want it and where all skills can be integrated into a longer (2 credit) course for those interested in language and literature. The exam takes valuable teaching time - the credit has to be completed in four months for the Jan. Exam - and proves nothing that I don't already know about my students. A 50% Exam will only increase the negatives of the whole process! (6 - 26 -23)

15. hamstring teacher & student (6- 26 - 24)

16. We take it into consideration in the sense of preparing students for what they will have to do on the exam. However, we also tend to see it for what it is - a great leveling process so that the halt and the lame are brought up to the pathetically low standard of the mystical average (witness the delving for so-called "inbedded (sic) meaning", ie decyphering (sic) Cavespeak), while the bright students are often savaged - we mark them punitively and look for mistakes, the opposite of the approach with near-illiterate students. (6 - 26 - 26)

17. I believe I have "taught to the exam" even though I know it is wrong and detrimental to my students in the long run. The emphasis on literature (traditional novel, dramas, etc.) has declined, as has the focus on literary analysis, and the higher level thinking skills, such as evaluation. We do some, but not as much as 5 years ago.
(6- 26 - 27)

18. The exam is a fraud. It examines only a portion of the mandated 1987 curriculum and represents 30% of the student's final mark. It was never intended to examine students' complete communication skills in English Language Arts. It is a political instrument to determine if *literacy* is being taught by ELA teachers in the classrooms.

19. All elements of the senior 4 ELA exam are valid and valuable.

The changes in my teaching practices are a natural result of being more acutely aware of what constitutes "good practice" in the classroom.

But, these "changes" take time. (6 - 26 - 29)

20. Obviously, we as teachers are forced to focus more on reading and writing and less on the other areas of literacy. This is very disappointing.

Also, It (sic) has changed the way we mark as teachers. I now mark according to provincial exam standards. I feel my own standards were better but have been forced to use the provincial standards in order to prepare for & remain consistent with our provincial exams. (6 - 26 - 30)

21. The exam is over-rated & consumes far too much valuable classtime (sic). Entangling students in the web of government bureaucracy for politically expedient reasons should have run its course by now. It is time to once again teach students & stop pandering to politicians. (6 - 26 - 31)

22. When I mark holistically I keep in mind provincial exam marking categories.

Because of exams I am more aware of ELA as a skills subject and I focus more on process than content, although I do expect the class to study certain pieces for exams. I still believe there is merit in studying a piece in depth to model how to do it (process again) (6 - 26- 32)

23. I don't feel my teaching practices have changed significantly. I know I am more precise with the 4 marking areas for my own information as well as that of the students. I do use the results of the exam to help me in focussing my instruction for the following year. (For example, this year an area I will stress more will be organization.) I concentrate more on forms & types of writing than I have in the past. Otherwise, I refer to the exam many times, run a practise at mid term time, and generally get students thinking and preparing. Basically, the exam, although annoying, time consuming, costly and unnecessary, has not really changed my teaching practises. (6 - 26 - 33)

24. Some of the questions are cumbersome to answer as asked. For example, it would probably be most accurate to say that I am much more conscious of dealing with student weaknesses, such as poor conclusions or too much generalizing with insufficient specifics. Now I also refer to the exam during classes not to add pressure or stress, but as a reminder that though I may not be the strictest marker of their work, because of the impending exam, it is imperative that they pay attention to the suggestions I write on their work.

I also insist on a first draft more often. (6 - 26 - 35)

25. I tend to focus my instruction on exam preparation. While, ostensibly, exam results are analyzed as an indicator of student performance, there is also the political aspect of the results, and the agenda that focuses on "schools of choice". The implication for teachers as I see it is clear. Your students must perform! If they don't perform, teachers had better be prepared to explain why not! (6 - 26 - 37)

26. The Se 4 Exam has had little appreciable effect on my teaching practice. (6 - 29 - 39)

27. I am teaching more to "the exam". (6 - 29 - 40)

28. I anticipated making more changes than I actually have made. The exam is always in the back of my mind but I don't think I've made many changes to accommodate it. (6 - 29 - 42)

29. The government must think teachers are really stupid! This exam had nothing to do with determining students' language arts abilities and everything to do with making all Senior 4 ELA teachers teach the same thing the same way and having us evaluate all students' work according to this governments' evaluation criteria. (6 - 29 - 43)

30. The exam focuses my approach to the course on expository writing and literacy. It minimizes oracy and visual literacy. (6 - 29 - 44)

31. I do not "teach to the exam" or the possibilities of what might be on the exam. I have had many of the exam-related strategies and foci in place prior to the provincial exam being implemented. However, because I know some of the expectations of the exam, I do emphasize some of them more, more, in my teaching. Nevertheless, I do not teach to the exam. (6 - 29 - 45)

32. I think the exam is useful for helping teachers focus students' attention on learning specific reading and writing skills. My students take the exam very seriously and are very concerned about how well they succeed. (6 - 29 - 47)

33. It has changed my assessment practices greatly. The viewing / representing components are not dealt with as much as they need to be. The exam, b/c of its limitations to writing and reading (which is also a written component) may, in fact, be limiting implementation of curriculum.(6 - 29 - 48)

34. I am not impressed with the quality of marking I have seen. I have been involved in a number of the central marking sessions. I have seen Manitoba Education and Training representatives go through the motions of training markers to mark congruently but when I do third markings, I am always amazed at the marker-discrepancy I encounter particularly in the areas of content and style. I think the marking scheme is fine. The problem is, I think, that the marking is rushed. Markers know that their work volume is being tracked, and a record of what they do and how congruent their marking is with other markers, is being tabulated. They are so afraid that the number of papers they mark will be low that they sacrifice a careful evaluation of student papers. I feel quality of marking is a big problem with this examination process and I despair that my students' exams are being evaluated in an atmosphere governed by time-constraints rather than in one that encourages thoughtful, considered evaluation. (6 - 29 - 51)

35. After completing this survey, it is even more apparent to me how much my program has changed due to the Provincial exam. Novels and plays are taught less frequently; essays and transactional text is (sic) emphasized more. I do not feel comfortable with this shift; however, with school divisions concerned about students scoring above the

provincial average, the Core program seems geared to preparing the students for the marathon exam. I fear that with the implementation of the new curriculum and the standards exam worth 50 %, the shift away from teaching literature will be complete. It is not pleasing to realize that I am teaching "to the exam", but it seems apparent that I am. (6 - 29 - 52)

36. Although, technically, the course I teach is called Literary Specialization, what I really do is prepare students for the provincial exam. Somehow, this doesn't seem quite honest. (6 - 29 - 53)

37. I haven't changed my teaching that much. I do spend more time trying to make them comfortable about what might be on the exam. The time pressure cuts down the amount of material covered e.g. only one novel rather than 2. (6 - 29 - 57)

38. Negative: Most significant change is in reduction of creative writing & drama experiences that were the highlight of the term for some students & certainly opened eyes to hidden talents of others eg. I seldom find time to include Shakespeare. I no longer run my week long poetry writing workshop or acting workshop.

I feel pressured to spend more time on essay writing, even knowing intellectually that students will become more effective writers thru a variety of writing experiences with a variety of forms.

Positive: I sense many more high school teachers are focusing on developing students' basic reading skills thus finally making the shift from teaching "literature" to teaching communication skills thru literature. (6 - 29 - 59)

39. Each year there is more and more pressure to teach toward the exam. We would be much better to identify specific <u>content</u> that students would be responsible for and base 30% of their grade on that. This type of exam encompasses far too much, and inevitably it all lands on the shoulders of the S4 teacher. It should be a responsibility that is shared from the time the child enters school.(6 - 29 -62)

40. I've been using the rubric for many years now, and have fine-tuned it to decimal points (tenths) for accuracy. As used for the provincial ELA exam, the rubric is biased in favour of the weaker student (based on my experience).

If I were asked, "Do you now teach to the exam?", my response would be <u>No</u>! The end goals have not changed - I want them to learn the "strategies" (as I call them) that would carry them from the 4 to the 5. Does it work? My class median score was 87.5% this year (14 students). Top scores included 99%, 97%, 94.3%, 90.4%. (6 - 30 - 65)

41. The Senior 4 English Language Arts exam has forced me to focus almost entirely on theme work which addresses as many social issues (now and in the future) as possible. We use mostly magazines, newspapers and Reader's Digests as reading materials and discuss and write about all the pros and cons.

Essay writing and all the related skills are very important. However, it is very difficult as students here <u>do not do homework</u> and it is difficult to get assignments completed.

We are luck (sic) to complete one week of poetry and one high level novel.

I find the students' knowledge base about issues related to life "appallingly" lacking.

Many students come in to grade 9 with reading levels between grades 3 and 5. How can we highschool teachers raise reading six or seven grades in four semesters or only two years??

Teachers cannot cure all the ills of society which affect learning. Trying to make teachers "accountable" is not the only answer. (7 - 2 - 66)

42. I feel there are too many external evaluations being done (including the Prov. exam) and these have resulted in a shortened course for my students. I have had to eliminate entire units of work now that these exams are in place.

I strongly feel the En 40G students should not have to write the same exam as the En 40S students - expectations are too high. (7 - 2 - 68)

43. WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY (7 - 2 - 69)

44. It is undeniable that the Provincial exam has shifted emphasis from the study of literature. Considerable time is consumed by preparation for the exam itself.

Every foreseeable negative impact of a provincial exam has come to be.

Schools are compared; teachers are, by implication, judged. Teachers are interviewed by superintendents, and asked to account for their students' results.

What senior administrators do not seem to grasp is that the Provincial L. A. exam is not an evaluation of what has been taught. It is an assessment of general literacy, and, ultimately, an I.Q. test. (7 - 2 - 70)

45. As you can see the Provincial Exam has altered my teaching strategies very little nor does the exam alter our marks appreciably. There is the occasional surprise both on the upper and lower end. (7 - 2 - 71)

46. The only effect the Provincial Exam has had on my instructional methods is that I have extended the use of rubrics. I have always taught critical thinking and analytical skills and have expected my students to present their ideas thoughtfully and clearly in a variety of ways. If students learn to think and express themselves they will do well on the exam. I think teaching, specifically, to this exam would weaken my English program. (7 - 3 - 76)

47. The Provincial Examination and its accompanying rubrics have not affected how I teach, what I teach or how I evaluate.
(7 - 3 - 77)

48. There is so much emphasis put on the provincial exam results that teachers feel pressured by those immediately above them (principal and superintendent, especially the latter) to teach to the exam. I have practically been told to do so and I have been told it is my "fault" if the students do not do well on the provincial exam. This makes the speaking / listening less relevant and only pays lip service to individualized instruction and teaching

to those with other strengths such as in music, speaking, etc. The curriculum has become less relevant because the exams are the "be all" and "end all". (7 - 3- 78)

49. I have taught SR. 4 English for 20+ yrs. The majority of years has been with the old 301 and now with ENG 40G (we stream by my choice!) I have been a marker & group leader every exam! (5 as group leader.) The first was PD, the others have increased my self-esteem as an LA teacher. I recognize the political nature of the exam. I recognize that it is a replacement for effective evaluation of teachers. I wish there were 2 levels (40G & 40S) as in Math. I recognize the cost factor of the English exam and would like that money for use in "real education", but I am not opposed to the exam per se. I am opposed to 50%/50% - unfair! 110hrs = 50% 7hrs = 50%!!! The exam did little to change my classroom teaching. I tightened up on some "directing words" and re-focused on transitions - but the rest has remained as is! (7 - 3 - 79)

50. I compose reading questions using directing words and I create reading assignments that include questions on the three levels or reading proficiency measured by the exam. I do these frequently but not as a result of the provincial exam.

I was a first year teacher when I taught Sr 4 prior to the prov. exam. Some changes are a result of experience and a change to semester system.

However, the major changes resulting from the exam are: a concentration on expository writing at the expense of creative writing. There is almost no time for creative writing in the course now.

: marking with rubrics
: shorter writing assignments more often
: practice exams
: no Shakespearean (sic) drama in Core
: work on developing style
: less time on spelling, grammar
: increase in teaching non-fiction, graphs, etc.
: less time for group-editing so, even though we are testing process writing, we have less time to develop that skill. (7 - 6 - 81)

51. The Prov. Exams did not have a large or even noticable (sic) effect on my CORE curriculum practices as the curriculum clearly outlines all the areas to be covered. If the purpose of the exam is to change teaching practices, then it needs to be re-assessed. I feel in-servicing is a far cheaper and more effective way of accomplishing that task. This questionnare (sic) seems to hint at such a purpose, and I confess that if there is any truth in my guess, I would be extremely disappointed. An examination attempts to measure certain accomplished tasks / skills - it would not accomplish the task of teacher training. (7 - 6 - 84)

52. On the whole, I am convinced that the Prov. Exam will be very beneficial: teachers will inevitably focus more (and more effectively) on writing skills and comprehension. Having been involved in marking these exams, I personally am much better motivated to work on improving my writing program. However, I do not with this process to be to the

detriment of my literature program: this can only lead to a general "dumbing down" of the populace! [Perhaps, however, timetabling and integration of "G" & "S" (not Gilbert & Sullivan) are more significant factors here, than is the Prov. Exam]

This questionnaire has been both inspiring and frustrating. One so often wanted to reply "I haven't yet but intend to", rather than "I am" or "I have ...". The sheer bulk of the objectives outlined in your 65 (count them!) questions was also rather daunting. Literature will certainly be threatened with extinction if we labour to reach all the objectives adumbrated in this document! (7 - 6 - 85)

53. Frankly I feel that my teaching practices were developed in response to the curriculum. The exam appears to be an instrument developed to measure skills that are mandated or encouraged in the curriculum. Therefore I have changed my practices very little though I may have shifted emphasis at all levels to a somewhat more transactional approach. (7 - 6 - 86)

54. I don't feel that it has substantially changed the way I teach. I possibly spend a bit more time focusing on the different types of writing and 2 or 3 classes looking at the format of old exams with my students.

Overall, I do not feel intimidated by the Exam and try to avoid letting it become the major concern of the Sr. 4 class. (7 - 6 - 87)

55. Generally positive! (7 - 7 - 88)

56. It's a focal point for a particular type of skill and thinking and responding. One has to be aware of this, without losing sight of levels of creative and analytical response that may go beyond the parameters of this exam.(7 - 7 - 89)

57. I teach writing skills that will be useful on the exam. ie generally expository skills. I don't necessarily have a problem with this. It focuses the course and gives you and the students an external goal to work towards. The provincial exam is a reality right now - so we need to deal with it. I still teach the same amount of literature that I taught before.

I was puzzled for a while as to why my better students would get such mediocre results on the writing task, but now because I've marked the exams, I can 'coach' them on what 'tricks' to use to make their papers stand out. Cynical? Maybe. It's a game.

My responses indicate that, quantitatively, I haven't changed that much. However, as a teacher, the exam is certainly in the forefront of my mind. Maybe I use it to motivate ('bludgeon') my students into applying themselves. I'm not afraid of the exam. It's more like a game that I want my kids to do well in. Educationally sound? (7 - 7 - 90)

58. My apologies for not getting this in earlier. I'm also a graduate student and building a house ... all in June and July!! Hope it helps you. (7 - 20 - 91)

59. Government propoganda to produce students with reading and writing skills for the workforce. Literature appreciation, I guess, does not encourage the development of the

kinds of critical thinking skills our government wants our young people to have! (8 - 21 - 92)

60. A tremendous waste of time, money and effort on the parts of both government and teachers. (9 - 5 - 93)

61.I find that the exam stifles my ability to teach to my students' individual needs and that the results do not reflect my students' real abilities in almost all cases. To do the exam real justice I could teach nothing else in the semester because the demands of the exams are so precise. (9 - 29 - 94)

62. Please note that while I do some of those things, (7 items in Section D) I do not necessarily do them "as a result of the ... exam."

I teach fewer novels, in part because of the exam but fewer students actually read novels, and that has affected that change as well. I do not focus on teaching students how to answer exam questions - but I have discussed aspects of post-secondary academic expectations & that hasn't changed. I don't feel that the SR 4 exam has, in itself, changed many of my practices. Philosophically, I don't value it as an evaluative tool, but it's not an unreasonable version of provincial exams. (9 - 29 - 95)

63. My teaching practices have been legitomized (sic) by the exam. I always (20 yrs.) felt that our obsession with literature was misguided. I felt that we should be teaching writing skills & reading skills. I never could understand trying to teach Eliot, Hardy etc. (sic) to students whose reading & writing skills were barely functional. I can now teach those skills that are important to students & the exam gives me permission. (10 - 27 - 98)

64. The exam is making us all tense. We feel under extreme pressure & if the students don't do well most of us are beginning to believe that we will ultimately be the ones blamed. The public needs to have at least some rudimentary understanding of Stats & Standard Deviation so that they recognize these variables. Your ?'s provide a good overview of the '87 curriculum so it is valuable !! Thank you. (10 - 27 - 99)

65. It is difficult to ensure the viewing, representing areas (ie) the "soft" stuff is adequately covered in light of the way the kids are examined - basically reading & writing. (10 - 28 - 100)

66. The movement away from the traditional canons is, at best, depressing. Shakespeare dies given the reduction of semester time, and T. S. has become politically incorrect.

The Dept. has created a new evil -- Lit Crit -- what a shame! (11 - 23 - 101)

67. Those who have lobbied for back to basics have definitely won. Basics is all students are getting now.(11 - 23 - 102)

68. I teach in a semestered system. I have my students for 85 - 86 one-hour classes. In that time all I can cover is what they need to know to pass the exam. There is absolutely

no time for literature appreciation, drama, creative writing, or anything else that creative thinkers need in order to grow in their language skills. This is what saddens me the most about where we are doing now. It seems our ELA courses focus more on teaching students to write well and read competently. This is fine for students who are interested in transactional communications. However, for those students who are interested in creative communications, I think our courses must disappoint them massively. (11 - 23 - 103)

69. The reading exam is far from challenging. I think that many of my Senior 2 students and all of my Senior 3 students could pass the Senior 4 reading exams Manitoba Education and Training have presented to us so far. The Level 3, critical reflective questions, in particular are extremely weak examples of that reading skill.(11 - 23 - 104)

70. This is a propoganda instrument for the government agenda to promote a literacy curriculum. (11 - 23 - 105)

71. The exam itself is ok. However, I do not trust the marking process. I have had a student request a reread because she felt she did better on the exam than her first mark reflected. Because of the reread her mark went up by 16%!!! So much for the marker-training that is supposed to ensure marker-congruety! I know that it is feasible that three Senior 4 teachers may have read her paper in the first marking session. How could their marking be so out of sync with the reread markers' marking? This causes me to question seriously the quality of marking that is taking place in these huge central marking sessions.(11 - 23 - 106)

72. My students in my general class and often enough in my specialized class are virtually mute. I spend far too much time trying to enhance their chances on a reading / writing test than I do trying to help them overcome their pronounced inhibitions regarding oral expression. Indeed the prov. test makes a mockery of the professed interest in speaking, listening, viewing and representing. (11 - 24 - 107)

73. It is so inadequate for very bright students that I never change my teaching at all, other than a one-class exam preparation period at the end of the course. (I teach an advanced class.) (11 - 25 - 110)

74. What isn't here - using "university-style" content-based 3-hour exams - which they cannot do; teaching students how to *study* for an English exam, which they now have little reason to do; giving in-class literary essays, which I still continue to do so that students going on to university won't be completely adrift.

For all the questions to do with teaching literature (B1,2,3,4,5,6) I could have answered "less frequently" because exam prep and *exam writing time* takes time away from these activities! (11 - 26 - 111)

75. We have been told to "teach to the exam" and we do, plus so much more. Unfortunately many of these students will never use the skills required in the exam and would benefit more from other skills we can teach. (11 - 26 - 112)

76. Simply put, I use past exams (reading and writing) to show how the exams are constructed and to prepare them for the type of questions they may encounter.

During the semester we focus on reading literature (novels, plays etc.) and I use past exams to expose them to other kinds of writing other than literature and critical essays. (11 - 26 - 113)

77. The exam provides a focus at the end of a semester which hither to was lacking. Perhaps too much emphasis is being placed on the exam and too little on literature. However, I still manage to accomplish most of the things I had as goals prior to the exam (if not all). (11 - 27 - 117).

Appendix E: Analytic Evaluation Scheme

The attached "Analytical Evaluation Schema" will be used in the evaluation of the process writing component of the 1996 English language arts examination.

Four features of writing—Content, Organization, Style and Mechanics—have been identified as basic elements of written composition. Each of these elements will be analyzed and assigned a level of proficiency. The following percentages have been allocated for each element:

Content	**30%**
Organization	**25%**
Style	**25%**
Mechanics	**20%**

A five point schema developed for this project uses the descriptors superior, proficient, satisfactory, limited and poor and each includes a detailed commentary.

Length of Student Response on Writing Tasks

Student writing must be of sufficient length to allow markers to make valid judgements on the four elements of language being evaluated (Content, Organization, Style, Mechanics). Responses should show evidence of sustained effort on the part of the student.

If the paper is judged to be of insufficient length, the student will be awarded a mark of zero on each element of language being evaluated.

Off Topic Responses

Responses showing the inappropriate selection of form and/or audience, lack of evidence that the student has followed directions, or content that has no relation to the question, will result in a mark of zero in the evaluation of Content. These responses may be marked for the remaining three elements of language being evaluated (Organization, Style, Mechanics).

POLICY ON PLAGIARISM

Student writing that contains continuous passages taken directly from the readings booklet without evidence of original student thinking and/or writing will be awarded a mark of zero on each element of language being evaluated.

Content – 30%

The evaluation category *Content* assesses how thoughtfully and effectively, within the form of the assigned writing task, the writer:

- communicates and integrates ideas (information, events, opinions, perspectives, etc.) appropriate to the topic and form of the writing task; and
- includes details (facts, evidence, anecdotes, examples, descriptions, characteristics, etc.) to support, develop, and/or illustrate ideas.

Level 5 — Superior

Ideas are *insightful* and *well-considered*. Details are *significant*, *relevant*, and *precise*, and they enhance ideas, supporting the focus of the writing task.

Level 4 — Proficient

Ideas are *thoughtful* and *clear*. Details are *relevant* and *purposeful*, and they clarify the ideas.

Level 3 — Satisfactory

Ideas are *straightforward* and *clear*. Details are *appropriate* and *relevant*. They are *connected to ideas but* are likely to be *generalized* rather that specific.

Level 2 — Limited

Ideas are *limited* and *overgeneralized* but discernible. Details are few and/or may be *repetitive*. They are *not clearly relevant* and/or are only *superficially related to ideas*.

Level 1 — Poor

Ideas are *elementary* and *may not be clear*. Details are *scant*, *imprecise*, and/or *absent*. They may be *unrelated to ideas*. Unsupported generalities and details do not develop the topic.

Organization - 25%

The evaluation category *Organization* assesses how clearly and effectively, within the context of the writing form, the student writer:

- creates a controlling idea to focus or limit the writing task;
- creates effective openings;
- establishes and maintains focus;
- orders and arranges ideas, details and paragraphs effectively;
- provides appropriate and effective closure; and
- uses transitions.

Level 5 — Superior

The writing demonstrates a *purposeful* and *effective order and arrangement* of ideas and details. The *opening is strong, provides direction and invites further reading. Focus and coherence are maintained*, both overall and within the various parts. *Effective closure reinforces unity.*

Level 4 — Proficient

The writing demonstrates a *purposeful* and *clear order and arrangement* of ideas and details. The *opening is clear* and *directive. Focus and coherence are generally maintained*, both overall and within the various parts. *Closure assists unity.*

Level 3 — Satisfactory

The writing demonstrates *clear* and *mechanical order and arrangements* of ideas and details. The *opening is generally directive. Focus and coherence are present* but may not be maintained consistently. *Closure contributes to unity* to some degree.

Level 2 — Limited

The writing demonstrates *a discernible but weak and/or inconsistent order and arrangement* of ideas and details. The *opening is not particularly directive. Focus and coherence are weak or inconsistent. A focused controlling idea is lacking or is not maintained in the development of the composition.* Although present, *closure is weak or only vaguely related to the opening.*

Level 1 — Poor

The writing demonstrates an *unclear or haphazard order and arrangement* of ideas and details. The *opening*, if present, does little more than *repeat the task. Focus and coherence are generally lacking. Closure is either unconnected to the opening or missing.*

Style - 25%

The evaluation category *Style* considers the language choices (diction and syntax) made by the writer and assesses the appropriateness of these choices to the form of the writing.

Assessment involves determining the degree to which the writer:

- chooses effective vocabulary and arranges words appropriately for the task (purpose) and for the form of the writing;
- uses a variety of techniques to phrase sentences for emphasis and effect;
- chooses and arranges words effectively to reflect his/her personality, voice and point of view, or to create the voice of a persona;
- chooses words carefully to reveal his/her attitude towards the subject;
- demonstrates engagement with and/or ownership of the task (purpose); and
- establishes and maintains an engaging relationship with the reader/audience.

Level 5 — Superior

Language choices contribute to a ***skilful*** composition. Diction is ***precise and specific***. Syntactical structures are ***effective*** and ***sometimes polished***. Stylistic choices contribute to a ***fluent and confident*** composition. Voice is ***clear, consistent and strong***, demonstrating ***strong engagement with task (purpose) and audience.***

Level 4 — Proficient

Language choices contribute to a ***considered*** composition. Diction is ***specific*** and ***effective***. Syntactical structures are ***generally effective***. Stylistic choices contribute to a ***competent*** composition. Voice is ***generally clear and consistent***. There is ***evidence of ownership*** of the task (purpose).

Level 3 — Satisfactory

Language choices contribute to a ***conventional*** composition. Diction is ***adequate*** but may be ***lacking in specificity***. Syntactical structures are generally ***straightforward***, but attempts at more ***complex structures*** may be ***awkward***. Stylistic choices contribute to a ***clear*** composition. Voice is ***present, but may not be fully sustained***. Relationship with the audience is ***established but may be weak or not fully sustained.***

Level 2 — Limited

An inadequate repertoire of language choices contributes to a ***weak*** composition. Diction is ***imprecise*** and/or ***inappropriate***. Syntax is frequently ***awkward*** and/or ***immature***. The writing may be ***vague, redundant,*** and/or ***unclear***. Voice is ***not readily apparent*** or ***not maintained***. A ***weak relationship with the audience*** is established.

Level 1 — Poor

Lack of language choices contributes to a ***poor*** composition. Diction is ***overgeneralized*** and/or ***inaccurate***. Syntax is ***confusing*** and ***uncontrolled***. The writing is ***unclear***. Voice is ***absent***. ***Little or no relationship with the audience*** is established.

Mechanics – 20%

The evaluation category *Mechanics* assesses how clearly and effectively, within the context of the writing situation, the student writer communicates by applying the rules of language for:

- spelling;
- grammar (including subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, correct and consistent verb tenses);
- punctuation and capitalization; and
- sentence construction.

Level 5 — Superior

The *relative absence of error* is impressive. The writing demonstrates *confidence and a strong command and control* of the rules of language. Sentences are *fluent, clear, and precise.*

Level 4 — Proficient

Inadvertent or minor errors do no interfere with communication. The writing demonstrates a *competence and a solid control* of the rules of language. Sentences are *clear and purposeful. Errors do not interfere* with communication.

Level 3 — Satisfactory

Errors do not interfere with communication. The writing demonstrates a *general control* of the rules of language and the communication remains *clear*.

Level 2 — Limited

Errors are distracting and frequent enough to interfere with communication. The writing demonstrates a *limited and/or inconsistent grasp* of the rules of language. The range of sentence construction *problems and errors obscures communication*.

Level 1 — Weak

Errors are frequent and jarring, and they impede communication. The writing demonstrates an *elementary grasp* of the rules of language. *Only a few sentences are clear.*