What is this research about?
The use of standardized external assessments as an indicator of student achievement has long been a controversial issue in most educational circles. This study compared students’ Education and Quality Assessment Office (EQAO) scores and their report card grades to determine whether students receive comparable ratings on the two assessments. Specifically, this study investigated the following research question: *How well aligned are large-scale assessments and report-card grades?*

What did the researchers do?
Data for this quantitative study were collected from 80 elementary and 115 secondary schools, within one school district in Ontario for 2002 and 2003. EQAO scores for May were compared with report-card grades for students in March of the same year. In total, the researchers compared EQAO test scores and report card grades for 14,776 students in grades 3 and 6 for both Math and English, and grade 9 for Math only.

For grade 3 and 6 Math, 6 ratings were compared:
- *number sense,*
- *measurement,*
- *geometry,*
- *patterning and algebra,*
• data management,
• overall score.

For grade 3 and 6 English, global scores for Reading and Writing were compared. In grade 9 Math, global scores for Applied and Academic courses were compared.

In all cases, letter grades on report cards were translated to EQAO levels using the following formula:
A—80-100 % - Level 4.
B—70-79 % - Level 3
C—60-69 % - Level 2
D—50-59 % - Level 1
R– remediation <50% - Level 1 / level 0

Statistical analysis was used to determine if significant differences existed between the two assessment reports for each student.

What did the researchers find?
The findings of this study showed that in 2002, average report card scores for grade 3 were significantly higher than EQAO scores for all areas of math and reading with the exception of writing. For grade 6 data in 2002, report card averages were also significantly higher than EQAO scores in all areas. This trend was repeated in 2003 data.

In grade 9, this pattern was reversed. Analysis of data from both 2002 and 2003 showed that EQAO scores were significantly higher than report card scores. It is noted however, that outcomes represented on report cards are not always assessed by EQAO. For example, speaking skills in grade 3 is not assessed by EQAO.

How can you use this research?
Educational administration and teachers may wish to consider the following recommendations made by the researcher:

• ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about and well trained to use rubrics similar to those used by EQAO markers;

• When compiling student grades for report cards, separate academic grades from behaviour outcomes.
Original Article
To learn more about this research study, we invite you to read the original article:


About the researchers
At the time this research article was published:

**John Ross** was a professor with the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE, University of Toronto. His research interests include student assessment and program evaluation.

**Peter Gray** was a doctoral student at OISE, University of Toronto. His research focus was on school change and student assessment.

Keywords:
Large scale assessment, report cards, EQAO, student achievement, elementary education, secondary education

About this summary
The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE’s clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the ResearchSnapshot series developed by York University and ResearchImpact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

This summary reflects findings from this study only and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.