ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 3

Theory of Action: Academic standards represent a collective commitment around what students should learn each year. The state assessment asks students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding related to these standards using a common measure. The resulting data allows us to see patterns in performance that should guide school and district improvement, helping identify areas of strength and opportunity.

Role of Performance Level Descriptors in Defining Proficiency: Performance level descriptors bridge the state assessment to classroom instruction and the systems of formative assessments that guide local instruction and choices about individual students. *Academic proficiency represents a range of observable student performance characteristics*. There are multiple pathways to proficiency, and students rely upon their strengths differently within that range of performance.

Proficiency and Difficulty: A student's ability to demonstrate proficiency is influenced by the complexity of the texts or stimuli presented, tasks they're asked to complete, and the contexts in which they are engaged. As student performance improves, students are typically able to handle more challenging texts/stimuli, tasks, and contexts, and are able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge more accurately and consistently.

Claim 1: Reading Literary Text[i]   *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	**Analyze** how parts of a story, illustrations, and characters work together to shape meaning. **Use precise evidence** like direct quotes and descriptions, and **infer deeper messages** that connect events, themes, and points of view.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	**Explain** how story elements like characters, structure, and illustrations support meaning. **Use specific details,** such as what a character says or does, to show understanding of messages, character actions, and different points of view.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Describe** story elements and identify messages or lessons with **general details,** like what happens in the beginning or end. **Compare familiar elements,** such as how two characters act, and recognize how parts of a text fit together.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	**Name** characters, events, or ideas using **simple information** like who was in the story or what happened. **Ask or answer questions** like *Who did this* or *What happened next?* and recognize familiar parts of a story like the beginning or the main character.	**LEAST COMPLEX** **Text Complexity**

Claim 2: Reading Informational Text[ii]   *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	**Analyze** how ideas, **text features** (like headings and captions), and **visuals** (like charts or maps) work together to explain a topic. **Draw conclusions** or **make connections** using more than one part of the text, even without being asked.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	**Explain** the main idea, like *how tornadoes form*, and **use details** such as facts or examples to support understanding. **Describe how text features and visuals**, like bold words or diagrams, **help explain the topic**. **Compare ideas** between two texts on the same subject.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Identify** the main idea and use **general details** like pictures or short facts to show understanding. **Recognize basic connections**, such as how one step follows another or what causes something to happen. **Use headings, bold words, or charts** to gather information.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	**Find ideas, facts, or pictures** in simple texts. **Answer questions** like *What is this about?* or *When did it happen?* using clues from titles, bold print, or images.	**LEAST COMPLEX** **Text Complexity**

Test questions can measure a single skill or a set of knowledge and skills. The ELA test differs from other subjects in that it has fewer items overall, but each item assesses multiple skills or knowledge by asking students to demonstrate skills through performance, such as writing a prose-constructed response. Therefore, what differentiates the levels of performance are the degree to and quality with which a student performs.

Claim 3: Reading Vocabulary (In both literary & informational texts)[iii]   *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	**Analyze** the meaning of complex or technical words using multiple strategies. For example, understand that a word like *strolled* means more than just *walked;* it shows a relaxed or gentle pace. **Choose precise vocabulary** to shape meaning and tone across different contexts. For example, knowing that *whispered* can show both quiet volume and a secretive tone adds nuance to the word choice.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑ RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Proficient	**Determine** the meaning of unfamiliar words using **context clues, affixes**, or a **glossary**. **Use academic and domain-specific vocabulary** to support understanding and communication. For example, use words like *predict, describe,* or *observe* when writing about science.	
Approaching Proficient	**Apply** simple strategies, such as using context clues or breaking a word into parts (like *re-* or *-ful*), to figure out what a word means. **Use familiar vocabulary** and begin using topic-specific words, such as *weather* or *character*.	↑↑↑↑ **LEAST COMPLEX**
Below Proficient	**Recognize familiar words** and **guess the meaning** of new ones using pictures or word parts (like *un-* or *-ing*). **Begin to notice topic-specific words**, such as *plant* or *story*, and connect them to known ideas.	**Text Complexity**

Claim 4: Written Expression (Using both literary & informational prompts)[iv] *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	**Write a focused response or story** with a clear beginning, middle, and end. **Use descriptive words or dialogue** to help the reader picture what is happening and support ideas with strong examples. **Organize ideas** clearly so the reader understands the writer's point or story.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑ RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Proficient	**Write with a clear opinion, topic, or story focus. Support ideas** using reasons, facts, or simple details, and **use transitions** like *also* or *because* to connect ideas. **Organize writing** with a beginning, middle, and end.	
Approaching Proficient	**Present a topic or tell a story** with some related details. **Group similar ideas together** and **use basic transitions** like *first* or *next*. **Include a beginning and an ending**, even if one part is short.	↑↑↑↑ **LEAST COMPLEX**
Below Proficient	**State an opinion or tell what happened** using short sentences or lists. **Include a simple beginning or ending**. **Give one reason or detail** but leave out parts that help the reader fully understand.	**Text Complexity**

Claim 5: Knowledge of Written Language and Conventions[v]   *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	**Use grammar, punctuation, and spelling** correctly in different sentence types, like questions and statements (e.g., *What time is lunch?* or *She walked home.*). **Choose words** that make the meaning clearer or more interesting, such as *raced* instead of *went,* or *huge* instead of *big*.
Proficient	**Follow rules** for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in everyday writing. **Use a mix of sentences**, such as *The dog barked.* or *Why is it raining?* and keep the meaning clear.
Approaching Proficient	**Write complete sentences** like *The dog is barking*. **Begin to use capital letters and punctuation** like periods and question marks. **Fix some spelling mistakes** to make writing easier to understand.
Below Proficient	**Write short sentences** like *It is fun.* and **try using punctuation and capital letters**, even if not always correct. **Show awareness** of where sentences begin and end.

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i Includes standards RL 3.1, RL 3.2, RL 3.3, RL 3.5, RL 3.6, RL 3.7, RL 3.9, 3.10
ii Includes standards RI 3.1, RI 3.2, RI 3.3, RI 3.5, RI 3.6, RI 3.7, RI 3.8, RI 3.9, RI 3.10
iii Includes standards RL 3.4, RI 3.4, L 3.4, L 3.5, L 3.6
iv Includes standards W 3.1, W 3.2, W 3.3, W 3.4, W 3.5, W 3.6, W 3.7, W 3.8, W 3.9, W 3.10
v Includes standards L 3.1, L 3.2, L 3.3, L 3.6, W 3.1