ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
GRADE 4

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 <u>range</u> 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 characters, structure, and language choices shape meaning across texts. **Use specific evidence,** such as dialogue, character actions, or repeated phrases, to explore **theme development, character relationships, and tone**.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	**Explain** how characters, actions, and story structure, like the story's problem and solution, support a theme. **Describe how a character changes**, such as becoming more confident or kind, and how that shows the story's message.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Describe** the setting, characters, or events. **Identify a theme**, such as *being a good friend*, and **compare how two characters handle problems**, like asking for help or solving it alone.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	**Identify** who is in the story and what happens in the beginning, middle, and end. **Answer questions** like *What is the problem?* or *How is it solved?* using information from the text or pictures.	**LEAST COMPLEX** **Text Complexity**

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

Above Proficient	**Compare and analyze** how two texts use structure, visuals, or word choice to explain the same idea. **Explain how an author's choices,** such as using a timeline or a separate fact box, help guide the reader's understanding.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	**Explain** the main idea and **describe how text features**, like charts, headings, or diagrams, **support understanding**. **Describe relationships** such as cause and effect or steps in a process and **compare how two texts present information**.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Identify** the main idea and find important details that support it. **Recognize how features like headings, bold words, or captions** help explain a topic. **Describe basic relationships**, like what happened first or why something happened.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	**Find key facts, ideas, or pictures** in clearly organized texts. **Answer questions** like *What is the topic?* or *What did the author say about it?* using text and visuals like titles or labels.	**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** how figurative language and word relationships affect tone and meaning. For example, explain that *a storm brewing* means more than *weather*—it shows something bad might happen. **Use precise and topic-specific vocabulary** in reading and writing to add detail or emotion.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	**Use context clues, affixes, or references** to figure out word meanings. For example, knowing *careless* means *without care* helps explain how someone acts. **Explain word relationships**, like how *tiny* and *enormous* are opposites, and recognize common similes or metaphors.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Apply strategies** like using nearby words, prefixes, or suffixes (e.g., *un-* or *-ly*) to understand new terms. **Begin using academic or topic-specific vocabulary**, such as *evaporation* or *plot*, and notice how words are related.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	**Recognize common words** and **guess new ones** by using pictures or familiar word parts. May connect new words to known ones, like *run* and *runner,* or use visuals to figure out meaning.	**LEAST COMPLEX** **Text Complexity**

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

Above Proficient	**Develop well-organized writing** with clear purpose and strong support. **Use specific and descriptive language**, like *tiptoed* or *stormy sky*, to help the reader picture what is happening. **Use a mix of sentence types**, such as statements, questions, and sentences joined with *and, or, but* to keep the writing interesting. **Include transitions** like *in addition*, *for instance*, or *as a result* to guide the reader.	**MOST COMPLEX** ↑↑↑↑ RI.10/RL.10 – Read and
Proficient	**Write with a clear topic, opinion, or story. Support ideas** using reasons, facts, or descriptive examples, and **use transitions** like *for example* or *in the end* to connect ideas. **Organize writing** with a beginning, middle, and end.	comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	**Present a topic or story** with related details and **group ideas clearly. Use simple transitions** like *then* or *next* to connect parts. **Include a clear beginning and ending** that relate to the main idea.	↑↑↑↑ **LEAST COMPLEX**
Below Proficient	**Write short responses** with a topic or opinion and **some supporting detail**, like a reason or an example. May include a beginning or ending, but the writing may be unclear or incomplete.	**Text Complexity**

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

Above Proficient	**Use grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling** correctly in a variety of sentence types, including complex ones (e.g., *Because it was late, we left quickly.*). **Make choices** that improve how the writing sounds or feels, like using an exclamation point to show excitement or commas to slow a sentence down.
Proficient	**Apply grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling rules** in most writing. **Use different types of sentences**, such as *She raced ahead.* or *Did he finish the race?*, and keep the meaning clear for the reader.
Approaching Proficient	**Write complete sentences** like *The boy ran to school.* **Use capital letters and punctuation marks** like periods or exclamation points. **Fix some mistakes** in spelling or grammar to help the reader understand.
Below Proficient	**Write short sentences** like *I like books.* and **try using capitals and periods**, even if they are not always correct. **Notice when a sentence starts and ends**, even if it's not written perfectly.

[i] Includes standards RL 4.1, RL 4.2, RL 4.3, RL 4.5, RL 4.6, RL 4.7, RL 4.9, 4.10

[ii] Includes standards RI 4.1, RI 4.2, RI 4.3, RI 4.5, RI 4.6, RI 4.7, RI 4.8, RI 4.9, RI 4.10

[iii] Includes standards RL 4.4, RI 4.4, L 4.4, L 4.5, L 4.6

[iv] Includes standards W 4.1, W 4.2, W 4.3, W 4.4, W 4.5, W 4.6, W 4.7, W 4.8, W 4.9, W 4.10

[v] Includes standards L 4.1, L 4.2, L 4.3, L 4.6, W 4.1