

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: Key Ideas and Details¹ *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	Analyze how themes and ideas are revealed through complex relationships and subtle choices. Interpret details like a repeated line like <i>I told myself it didn't matter</i> or a shift in tone to uncover deeper meaning. Explain how those choices develop the theme across the text.	MOST COMPLEX
Proficient	Determine a central theme or idea and analyze how it is developed through events, characters, or dialogue. Support your analysis with key evidence, like how the moment <i>he walked away without answering</i> shows a turning point in the character’s growth. Describe how relationships or events build meaning across the text.	↑↑↑↑ RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	Identify the theme or central idea and summarize how it is shown in key parts of the story. Explain how details like <i>I'm not like them anymore</i> reflect a character’s change. Recognize basic relationships like cause and effect or contrast between characters.	↑↑↑↑ LEAST COMPLEX
Below Proficient	Locate important details, characters, and events. Identify what the text is mostly about and begin to connect ideas, like how the phrase <i>She didn't speak the whole way home</i> shows something about the character’s feelings or situation.	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 2: Craft and Structureⁱⁱ *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	Analyze how the author’s choices, like word choice, tone, structure, or point of view, shape meaning and guide the reader’s understanding. Evaluate the impact of techniques like a non-linear timeline or repeated phrases, such as <i>I never looked back</i> , to show regret or reflection.	MOST COMPLEX
Proficient	Explain how the author’s language, structure, and point of view support the purpose of the text. Analyze choices like describing a setting with words like <i>cracked sidewalks</i> and <i>flickering lights</i> to create a mood, or using a first-person narrator to build trust or show bias.	↑↑↑↑↑
Approaching Proficient	Describe how parts of the text, like paragraph order or key word choices, support the message. Recognize how tone is shaped by language, like using <i>outraged</i> instead of <i>upset</i> , or how a title helps focus the reader on the author’s main idea.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Below Proficient	Identify features of the text, like headings or who is telling the story. Recognize when a word like <i>important</i> or <i>never</i> shows the author’s feelings, but may not explain how these choices affect the meaning.	↑↑↑↑↑
		LEAST COMPLEX Text Complexity

Claim 3: Integration of Knowledge and Ideasⁱⁱⁱ *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	Evaluate how authors build and support claims using reasoning, tone, and structure. Analyze how techniques like sarcasm, selective evidence, or emotional appeals affect the strength of an argument. Explain how two authors take different rhetorical approaches to the same issue, like one relying on logic and the other on personal experience.	MOST COMPLEX
Proficient	Analyze how an author develops a central claim with reasons and evidence. Assess whether the support is convincing, like noting if the text relies too much on opinions or includes credible sources. Compare how two texts handle the same topic, like one using a cause-effect structure and another using problem-solution, or one arguing that <i>school uniforms help students focus</i> while another argues that <i>uniforms take away individuality</i> .	↑↑↑↑↑
Approaching Proficient	Identify the author’s main claim and describe the support, like examples, data, or short stories. Recognize basic flaws in reasoning, such as using a personal story to prove something for everyone, like claiming <i>my brother did better in school after getting a dog, so pets make students smarter</i> . Compare two texts with similar topics to see where they agree or differ.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Below Proficient	Find a claim or opinion in a text and identify a matching sentence or example, like noticing that the claim <i>recycling helps the planet</i> is supported by the sentence <i>communities that recycle reduce waste by 40 percent</i> . May confuse opinion with argument or miss the reason behind a claim. May notice that two texts cover the same topic, but struggle to describe differences in viewpoint or support.	↑↑↑↑↑
		LEAST COMPLEX Text Complexity

Claim 4: Written Expression (Using both literary and informational prompts)^{iv} Student performance indicates the ability to:

Above Proficient	Present a clear thesis with a nuanced perspective. Develop ideas with reasoning that anticipates different viewpoints, like including a counterclaim that <i>some students prefer strict rules</i> but explaining why <i>flexibility helps build independence</i> . Organize writing so ideas build on each other and lead to a conclusion that extends the main point.	MOST COMPLEX ↑↑↑↑↑
Proficient	Present a clear thesis that shows a specific point of view. Support ideas with relevant evidence, like facts, examples, or explanations that relate to the audience’s needs. Use transitions like <i>on the other hand</i> or <i>as a result</i> to connect ideas, and end with a conclusion that ties back to the thesis.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	State a thesis that shows a basic opinion or idea. Include some reasons or examples that go with the topic, though not all may be clearly connected. Use simple transitions like <i>also</i> or <i>then</i> , and include an ending, even if it doesn’t fully match the beginning.	↑↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	Write a short response that shares a main idea or opinion. Include a few supporting ideas, like <i>I think phones should be allowed in school because they help in emergencies</i> , but ideas may be off-topic or out of order. May include a beginning or ending, but one or both may be unclear or missing.	LEAST COMPLEX 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 longer writing. Revise sentences to improve clarity, like changing <i>He went. He left.</i> to <i>He packed up quickly and left without a word</i> . Combine ideas and adjust punctuation, like using commas or dashes, to improve the flow.
Proficient	Use correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure in paragraphs. Mix sentence types, like <i>Even though I was late, I stayed after school</i> , and check for common errors like <i>its</i> versus <i>it’s</i> or missing commas in a list.
Approaching Proficient	Write mostly complete sentences and use punctuation like periods, commas, and apostrophes. For example, write <i>My friend’s bike is new</i> and fix errors like <i>i went to school</i> to <i>I went to school</i> .
Below Proficient	Write short responses using simple sentence forms. May write <i>The dog run fast</i> or forget punctuation like a period at the end. Some sentences may be unclear or missing parts , like <i>Walked to store</i> instead of <i>She walked to the store</i> .

ⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.1-3, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.9, RL.9/10.1-3, RL.9/10.9-10, RI.9/10.1-3, RI. 9/10.9-10, W. 9/10.9, RH. 9/10.1-3, RH. 9/10.9-10, WHST. 9/10.9, RST. 9/10.1-3, RST.9/10.5, RST. 9/10.9

ⁱⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.4-6, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.3-6, RL. 9/10.2-6, RL. 9/10.9-10, RI. 9/10.2-6, RI. 9/10.8-10, W. 9/10.9, L. 9/10.3-6, RH. 9/10.4-6, RH. 9/10.10, WHST. 9/10.9, RST. 9/10.4-6, RST. 9/10.10

ⁱⁱⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.7-10, CCRA.W.9, RL. 9/10.9-10, RI. 9/10.5-9, RI. 9/10.10, W. 9/10.9, RH. 9/10.6-10, WHST. 9/10.9, RST. 9/10.7-10

^{iv} Includes standards *CCRA.W.1-5, *CCRA.R.10 *CCRA.L.1-3 *CCRA.L.6 *W. 9/10.1-5 *W. 9/10.10 *L. 9/10.3-6 *WHST. 9/10.1 *WHST. 9/10.2 *WHST. 9/10.4-5 *WHST. 9/10.10

^v Includes standards CCRA.W.1-5, CCRA.W.10, CCRA.L.1-3, CCRA.L.6, W. 9/10.1-5 W. 9/10.10 L. 9/10.1-5, WHST. 9/10.1-2, WHST. 9/10.4-5, WHST. 9/10.10