

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	Evaluate how complex ideas and claims develop across an informational text. Interpret nuanced or implied meanings, like how the phrase <i>progress requires discomfort</i> signals the author's stance. Analyze how detailed comparisons or shifting points of view reveal deeper themes or arguments across sections of the text.	MOST COMPLEX ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	Analyze how a central idea or claim is developed and supported with evidence. Draw inferences from subtle details, like recognizing that <i>the solution was never meant to last</i> reflects the author's skepticism. Describe how comparisons or cause-effect relationships shape the argument or explanation.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	Identify the central idea or main claim and summarize how it is supported. Explain how details like <i>many experts disagree on the timeline</i> show uncertainty in the argument. Recognize clear relationships like <i>first, then</i> , comparison, or problem-solution.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	Locate important facts, claims, or explanations in the text. Identify what the passage is mostly about and begin to connect details, like noticing that <i>fewer students enrolled after the policy change</i> is a result of an earlier decision.	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 2: Craft and Structureⁱⁱ *Student performance indicates the ability to:*

Above Proficient	Evaluate how the author’s language, structure, and tone work together to shape meaning and purpose. Analyze choices like using <i>if we fail now, we fail forever</i> to create urgency, or structuring an argument to move from facts to emotional appeal. Explain how these elements guide the reader’s interpretation and response.	MOST COMPLEX ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	Analyze how the author’s word choice, point of view, and organization support their message. Interpret language like <i>some critics still cling to outdated views</i> to show bias or tone. Explain how features like headings, repetition, or examples contribute to the text’s clarity or persuasiveness.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	Describe how parts of the text work together, like how a heading introduces a new section or how a phrase like <i>it’s not that simple</i> shows the author’s attitude. Recognize the author’s purpose and begin to explain how it is revealed through structure or language.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	Identify features of the text, like bolded terms or who is speaking. Recognize simple language choices that reflect opinion or tone, like <i>a surprising result</i> or <i>clearly mistaken</i> . Begin to notice how the author’s choices affect the reader’s understanding.	LEAST COMPLEX Text Complexity

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

Above Proficient	Evaluate the effectiveness of how authors build and support their arguments across complex texts. Analyze the use of flawed logic, loaded language, or structural choices, like using <i>if you really cared, you’d agree with me</i> to pressure the reader. Explain how different texts approach the same issue using different types of reasoning or appeal.	MOST COMPLEX ↑↑↑↑
Proficient	Analyze how an author supports a central claim with reasoning and evidence. Examine statements like <i>the study showed a 5 percent drop, but no comparison group was used</i> to question reliability. Compare how two texts build their arguments, like one using national data and another relying on a single personal story.	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	Identify the author’s claim and describe how it is supported, like pointing to a quote from an expert or a comparison between solutions. Recognize when reasoning is clear, and begin to compare two texts that take different approaches to the same issue.	↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	Locate the main claim and identify examples or details that support it, like connecting <i>the program saved money in three districts</i> to the author’s argument. Notice when two texts address the same topic, and begin to describe how their ideas or tone differ.	LEAST COMPLEX Text Complexity

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

Above Proficient	Develop a well-reasoned position, narrative, or explanation that shows depth and nuance. Use language to shape tone and guide the reader, like opening with <i>Let's imagine a future where this policy works</i> to frame a hopeful argument. Organize ideas clearly and purposefully, leading to a conclusion that adds meaning or leaves the reader thinking.	MOST COMPLEX ↑↑↑↑↑
Proficient	Present a clear thesis, claim, or main idea. Support it with relevant evidence and explanations, like including a real-world example of students solving a local problem, such as organizing a food drive to address community hunger. Use transitions to connect ideas and end with a conclusion that reinforces the main idea, like <i>This shows that when students lead, real change can begin in their own neighborhoods</i> .	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently.
Approaching Proficient	State a central idea and support it with some reasons or examples, like <i>an article about teen drivers or a personal story about helping a friend</i> . Use simple transitions like <i>then</i> or <i>also</i> , and include a beginning and an ending, even if some parts are uneven.	↑↑↑↑↑
Below Proficient	Write a short response that shares a topic or opinion. Include a few related ideas, like <i>why school lunches should be free</i> , and begin to group them into a basic structure. Writing may have a beginning or ending, though one or both may be brief or unclear.	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 sentence structure intentionally to shape meaning, rhythm, or emphasis. Revise for clarity and tone, like restructuring <i>The policy failed. People stopped trusting the system</i> into <i>After the policy failed, public trust in the system collapsed</i> . Apply conventions to match the demands of formal, narrative, or persuasive writing.
Proficient	Maintain control of grammar, punctuation, and spelling in multi-paragraph writing. Edit for accuracy in sentence boundaries, verb tense, and pronoun agreement. Use a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences, and punctuation like semicolons or dashes for clarity, as in <i>She had one chance left; she took it</i> . Choose precise words that reflect the formality and focus of the task.
Approaching Proficient	Write mostly complete sentences and use punctuation like commas, apostrophes, or quotation marks in familiar contexts. Use strategies like peer review or rereading for tense shifts or awkward phrasing. Experiment with combining sentences or using introductory phrases, as in <i>After the meeting, the group voted</i> . Begin to use subject-specific words or transition phrases in longer writing.
Below Proficient	Write short responses using simple sentence forms. Use basic punctuation like periods and capital letters in many places, and include common vocabulary to express ideas. Begin to use sentence combinations or new structures, like turning <i>He was late. He ran into</i> into <i>He ran because he was late</i> . Show early signs of editing, like correcting spelling or adding punctuation during rereading.

ⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.1-3, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.9, RL.11/12.1-3, RL.11/12.9-10, RI.11/12.1-3, RI.11/12.9-10, W.11/12.9, RH.11/12.1-3, RH.11/12.9-10, WHST.11/12.9, RST.11/12.1-3, RST.11/12.5, RST.11/12.9

ⁱⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.4-6, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.3-6, RL.11/12.2-6, RL.11/12.11/12, RI.11/12.2-6, RI.11/12.8-10, W.11/12.9, L.11/12.3-6, RH.11/12.4-6, RH.11/12.10, WHST.11/12.9, RST.11/12.4-6, RST.11/12.10

ⁱⁱⁱ Includes standards CCRA.R.7-10, CCRA.W.9, RL.11/12.11/12, RI.11/12.5-9, RI.11/12.10, W.11/12.9, RH.11/12.6-10, WHST.11/12.9, RST.11/12.7-10

^{iv} Includes standards *CCRA.W.1-5, *CCRA.W.10 *CCRA.L.1-3 *CCRA.L.6 *W.11/12.1-5 *W.11/12.10 *L.11/12.3-6 *WHST.11/12.1 *WHST.11/12.2 *WHST.11/12.4-5 *WHST.11/12.10

^v Includes standards CCRA.W.1-5, CCRA.W.10, CCRA.L.1-3, CCRA.L.6, W.11/12.1-5, W.11/12.10, L.11/12.1-5, WHST.11/12.1-2, WHST.11/12.4-5, WHST.11/12.10