

**New York State Testing Program
Next Generation Learning Standards
English Language Arts Test**

Performance Level Descriptions

Grade 3

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New York State Testing Program

Next Generation English Language Arts Test

Performance Level Descriptions

GRADE 3

Performance level descriptions (PLDs) help communicate to students, families, educators, and the public the specific knowledge and skills expected of students when they demonstrate proficiency of a learning standard. The PLDs serve several purposes in classroom instruction and assessment. They are the foundation of rich discussion around what students need to do to perform at higher levels and to explain the progression of learning within a subject area. PLDs are also crucial in explaining student performance on the NYS assessments since they make a connection between the scale score, the performance level, and specific knowledge and skills typically demonstrated at that level.

Policy Definitions of Performance Levels

For each subject area, students perform along a continuum of the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of the Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. There are students who excel in standards, students who are proficient, students who are partially proficient, and students who are below proficient. New York State assessments are designed to classify student performance into one of four levels based on the knowledge and skills the student has demonstrated. These performance levels are defined as:

NYS Level 4

Students performing at this level **excel** in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Learning Standards that are considered **more than sufficient** for the expectations at this grade.

NYS Level 3

Students performing at this level are **proficient** in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Learning Standards that are considered **sufficient** for the expectations at this grade.

NYS Level 2

Students performing at this level are **partially proficient** in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Learning Standards that are considered partial but insufficient for the expectations at this grade. Students performing at Level 2 are considered on track to meet current New York high school graduation requirements but are **not yet proficient** in Learning Standards at this grade.

NYS Level 1

Students performing at this level are **below proficient** in standards for their grade. They may demonstrate **limited** knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Learning Standards that are considered **insufficient** for the expectations at this grade.

How were the PLDs developed?

Following best practice for the development of PLDs, the number of performance levels and their definitions were specified prior to the articulation of the full descriptions. New York State educators certified in the appropriate grade-levels and subject areas convened in separate meetings to develop the initial draft PLDs for Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics, respectively. In developing PLDs, participants considered policy definitions of the performance level and the knowledge and skill expectations for each grade level in the Learning Standards. Once they established the appropriate knowledge and skills from a particular standard for NYS Level 3 (i.e., proficient in standards), panelists worked together to parse the knowledge and skills across the other performance levels in such a way that the progression of the knowledge and skills was clearly seen moving from Level 1 to Level 4. This process was repeated for all of the standards for each grade and subject area.

The draft PLDs were reviewed by the New York State Education Department's (NYSED's) Content Advisory Panels which consist of classroom teachers from elementary, middle and high school, school and district administrators, English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) specialists, and higher education faculty members from across the state. The drafts then went through additional rounds of review and edits from a number of NYS-certified educators, content specialists, and assessment experts under NYSED supervision.

How can the PLDs be used by Educators and in Instruction?

The PLDs should be used as a guidance document to show the overall continuum of learning of the knowledge and skills from the Learning Standards. NYSED encourages the use of the PLDs for a variety of purposes, including differentiating instruction to maximize individual student outcomes, creating formative classroom assessments and rubrics to help identify target performance levels for individual or groups of students, and tracking student growth along the proficiency continuum as described by the PLDs. The knowledge and skills shown in the PLDs describe *typical* performance and progression, however the order in which students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills within and between performance levels may be staggered (i.e. a student who predominantly demonstrates Level 2 knowledge and skills may simultaneously demonstrate certain knowledge and skills indicative of Level 3.).

How are the PLDs used in Assessment?

PLDs are essential in setting performance standards (i.e., "cut scores") for New York State assessments. Standard setting panelists use PLDs to determine the expectations for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to *just barely* attain a Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 on the assessment. These knowledge and skills drive discussions that influence the panelists as they recommend the cut scores on the assessment.

PLDs are also used in question development. Question writers are assigned to write questions that draw on the specific knowledge and skills from a PLD. This ensures that each test has questions that distinguish performance all along the continuum. Teachers can use the PLDs in the same manner when developing both formative and summative classroom assessments. Tasks that require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills from the PLDs can be tied back to the performance level with which the PLD is associated, providing the teacher with feedback about the students' progress as well as a wealth of other skills that the student is likely able to demonstrate (or can aspire to in the case of the next-highest PLD)



Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 3 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

Anchor Standard	Grade Level Standard	Performance Level 4	Performance Level 3	Performance Level 2	Performance Level 1
Students read closely to determine what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (R1)	3R1: Develop and answer questions to locate relevant and specific details in a text to support an answer or inference. (RI&RL)	Develop and answer thought-provoking questions about a text by referring explicitly to relevant and specific details to support answers and make inferences that demonstrate understanding of the text.	Develop and answer questions about a text and support answers or inferences by referring to relevant and specific details.	Develop and answer recall questions about a text, by referring to details.	Inaccurately develop and/or answer questions about a text, without referring to the text.
Students determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R2)	3R2: Determine a theme or central idea and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize portions of a text. (RI&RL)	Determine a theme or central idea and provide an in-depth explanation of how the details support it; make accurate summaries that connect the key details.	Determine a theme or central idea and provide an explanation of how the details support it; make accurate summaries, recounting the key details.	Determine a theme or central idea, providing little or no explanation of how the details support it; make summaries recounting some of the key details, but with irrelevancies.	Determine a theme or central idea which may be inaccurate or lack an explanation of how the details support it; make summaries which may be inaccurate or provide little or no detail.
Students analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (R3)	3R3: In literary texts, describe character traits, motivations, or feelings, drawing on specific details from the text. (RL) In informational texts, describe the relationship among a series of events, ideas, concepts, or steps in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. (RI)	Describe characters in a literary text using a detailed analysis of their character traits, motivations, or feelings based on specific details from the text. In an informational text, describe and analyze the relationship between a series of events, ideas or concepts, or steps, using precise language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.	Describe characters in a literary text using character traits, motivations, or feelings based on specific details from the text. In an informational text, describe accurately the relationship between a series of events, ideas or concepts, or steps, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.	Describe a character's traits, motivations, or feelings in a literary text with limited or irrelevant details from the text. In an informational text describe the relationship between a series of events, ideas or concepts, or steps without using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.	Describe a character vaguely or inaccurately in a literary text using unrelated or no details. In an informational text, describe inaccurately the relationship between a series of events, ideas or concepts, or steps.

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Students interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R4)	3R4: Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, and academic and content-specific words. (RI&RL)	Determine with precision and detail the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text—including academic and content-specific words and/or figurative language.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text—including academic and content-specific words and/or figurative language.	Determine the partial or literal meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, particularly academic and content-specific words and/or figurative language.	Determine the meaning of only simple words and phrases.
Students analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. (R5)	3R5: In literary texts, identify parts of stories, dramas, and poems using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza. (RL) In informational texts, identify and use text features to build comprehension. (RI)	In literary texts, identify parts of stories, dramas, and poems, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza and explain how they relate to the overall structure of the texts. In informational texts, identify and use text features to demonstrate inferential comprehension.	In literary texts, identify parts of stories, dramas, and poems, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza. In informational texts, identify and use text features to build comprehension.	In literary texts, identify parts of stories with inaccurate or inconsistent use of terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza. In informational texts, identify text features with limited comprehension.	Understand that stories have different parts. In informational texts, minimally describe basic text features.
Students assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text, drawing on a wide range of global and diverse texts. (R6)	3R6: Discuss how the reader’s point of view or perspective may differ from that of the author, narrator, or characters in a text. (RI&RL)	Explain clearly and precisely distinctions between one’s own point of view and that of the author, narrator, or those of the characters in a text.	Explain similarities and differences between one’s own point of view and that of the author, narrator, or those of the characters in a text.	Explain one’s own point of view and that of the author, narrator, or those of the characters in a text.	Explain one’s own point of view.
Students integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats. (R7) Note: At Grade 3, the standard only refers to illustrations and text features; the diverse media and formats begin in Grade 4.	3R7: Explain how specific illustrations or text features contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text (e.g., create mood, emphasize character or setting, or determine where, when, why, and how key events occur). (RI&RL)	Provide a detailed and accurate explanation of how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations or text features contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting, or determine where, when, why, and how key events occur).	Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations or text features contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting, or determine where, when, why, and how key events occur).	Explain how aspects of a text’s illustrations or text features relate to the words in a text.	Provide a description of a text’s illustrations or text features without evaluating or conveying the effect on the text.

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 3 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

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Students delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. (R8)	3R8: Explain how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence. (RI&RL)	Provide a detailed explanation of how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Provide an explanation of how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Provide an insufficient explanation of how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Provide an inaccurate or no explanation of how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (L1)	Language Standards 1 and 2 are organized within grade bands. For the Core Conventions Skills and Core	Write and/or speak with few errors in standard English grammar and usage and take risks that enhance comprehension.	Write and/or speak with occasional errors in standard English grammar and usage that do not hinder comprehension.	Write and/or speak with errors in standard English grammar and usage that somewhat hinder comprehension.	Write and/or speak with errors in standard English grammar and usage that hinder comprehension.
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (L2)	Punctuation and Spelling Skills for Grades 3–5, the student is expected to know and be able to use the skills by the end of 5th grade.	Produce writing that enhances comprehension and contains few or no errors in standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	Produce writing with occasional errors in standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling that do not hinder comprehension.	Produce writing with errors in standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling that somewhat hinder comprehension.	Produce writing with errors in standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling that hinder comprehension.
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L3)	3L3: Recognize differences between the conventions of spoken conversational English and academic English; signal this awareness by selecting conversational or academic forms when speaking or writing.	Demonstrate awareness of the differences between the conventions of spoken conversational English and academic English by skillfully and purposefully selecting conversational or academic forms when speaking or writing.	Demonstrate awareness of the differences between the conventions of spoken conversational English and academic English by selecting conversational or academic forms when speaking or writing.	Demonstrate partial awareness of the differences between the conventions of spoken conversational English and academic English; by inconsistently selecting conversational or academic forms when speaking or writing.	Lack recognition between the conventions of spoken conversational English and academic English.
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. (L4)	3L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	Determine or clarify, with precision and detail, the meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a broad range of strategies.	Determine or clarify the meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	Determine or clarify the meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, demonstrating a limited range of strategies.	Offer inaccurate meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

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Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L5)	3L5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.	Identify and insightfully explain word relationships and nuances in word meanings by choosing words precisely and purposefully.	Identify and explain word relationships and nuances in word meanings by choosing words that suit the purpose.	Identify word relationships and nuances in word meanings with partial connection to the purpose.	Identify word relationships and nuances in word meanings inaccurately by choosing words that show very little or no connection to the purpose.
Acquire and accurately use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression. (L6)	3L6: Acquire and accurately use conversational, general academic, and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went out for dessert).	Apply, in a precise and skillful way, conversational, general academic, and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went out for dessert).	Apply, with accuracy, conversational, general academic, and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went out for dessert).	Apply, with partial accuracy, conversational, general academic, and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went out for dessert).	Apply, with little or no accuracy, conversational, general academic, and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships.
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W1)	3W1: Write an argument to support claim(s), using clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Produce insightful arguments to support claim(s), incorporating content-specific vocabulary, and using relevant reasons and evidence organized with linking words and phrases, and providing a conclusion.	Produce logical arguments to support claim(s), incorporating content-specific vocabulary, and using reasons and evidence organized with linking words and phrases.	Produce an argument with unclear or inaccurate claim(s), using reasons and evidence with partial use of content-specific vocabulary, and insufficiently using relevant reasons, evidence, or linking words and phrases.	Produce an argument without a claim; reasons and evidence may lack clarity and coherence.

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Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (W2)	3W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to explore a topic and convey ideas and information relevant to the subject.	Produce insightful informative/explanatory texts to explore topics and convey ideas and information, skillfully incorporating content-specific vocabulary and relevant reasons and evidence skillfully organized with linking words and phrases; provide a conclusion.	Produce informative/explanatory texts to explore topics and convey ideas and information, incorporating content-specific vocabulary and relevant reasons and evidence organized with linking words and phrases; provide a conclusion.	Produce informative/explanatory texts that address a topic, making partial use of ideas and information, and by partially incorporating content-specific vocabulary and relevant reasons and evidence partially organized with linking words and phrases; provide a conclusion.	Produce informative/explanatory texts that address a topic inaccurately or with no clarity and coherence.
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (W3)	3W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Write engaging narratives to fully develop real or imagined experiences, using effective technique and descriptive details, clearly and effectively establishing a situation and narrator, and using description to develop narrators and characters and temporal words to signal event order; provide a conclusion.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences, using effective technique and descriptive details, establishing a situation and narrator, and using description to develop narrators and characters and temporal words to signal event order; provide a conclusion.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences, with partial use of details to describe and establish the situation and narrator, and the partial use of temporal words to signal event order, with or without a conclusion.	Produce narratives that lack development of experiences or events.
Develop personal, cultural, textual, and thematic connections within and across genres through written responses to texts and personal experiences. (W4)	3W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).	Create a response with insightful and nuanced connections to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).	Create a response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).	Create a minimal response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience that may not fully address the task (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).	Create a response that is incoherent or does not relate to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W5)	[NA at grade 3]	[NA at grade 3]	[NA at grade 3]	[NA at grade 3]	[NA at grade 3]