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

Performance Level Descriptions

Grade 4

October 2020

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Next Generation English Language Arts Test

Performance Level Descriptions

GRADE 4

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
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Anchor Standard	Grade Level	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)	4R1: Locate and refer to relevant details and evidence when explaining what a text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences. (RI&RL)	Generate insightful inferences that are supported by sufficient, relevant details and evidence in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly/implicitly.	Generate logical inferences that are supported by sufficient, relevant details and evidence in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly/implicitly.	Generate inferences that are supported by insufficient or irrelevant details and evidence in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly/implicitly.	Generate illogical or inaccurate inferences that lack relevant details and evidence when explaining what the text says explicitly/implicitly.
Students determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R2)	4R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize a text. (RI&RL)	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and insightfully explain how it is supported by key details; provide an elaborate summary of the text.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; provide an accurate summary of the text.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text that is supported by insufficient or irrelevant details/evidence; provide a limited summary of the text.	Determine a theme or central idea which may be inaccurate or lack an explanation of how the details support it; make a summary which may be inaccurate or provides little or no detail.

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Students analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (R3)	4R3: In literary texts, describe a character, setting, or event, drawing on specific details in the text. (RL)	Describe a character, setting, or event in a literary text, insightfully drawing on sufficient, relevant details from the text to address the subtlety and complexity of the character, setting, or event.	Describe a character, setting, or event in a literary text, drawing on sufficient, relevant details from the text.	Describe a character, setting, or event in a literary text, drawing on insufficient or irrelevant details from the text.	Inaccurately describe a character, setting, or event in a literary text.
	In informational texts, explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts, including what happened and why, based on specific evidence from the text. (RI)	In an informational text, explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts including subtle connections between what happened and why, using sufficient, accurate details from the text.	In an informational text, explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts, including what happened and why, using sufficient, accurate details from the text.	In an informational text, explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts including what happened and why, using insufficient or inaccurate details from the text.	In an informational text, minimally explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts using limited or inaccurate details from the text.
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)	4R4: Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, academic and content-specific words. (RI&RL)	Determine with precision and insight the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, academic and content-specific words, or phrases in a text.	Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, academic and content-specific words, or phrases in a text.	Determine with inconsistency, the literal meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, academic and content-specific words or phrases in a text.	Determine the meaning of only simple words, phrases, figurative language, academic and content-specific words, or phrases in a text.

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 4 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

Anchor Standard	Grade Level	Performance Level 4	Performance Level 3	Performance Level 2	Performance Level 1
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)	4R5: In literary texts, identify and analyze structural elements, using terms such as verse, rhythm, meter, characters, settings, dialogue, and stage directions. (RL)	In literary texts, Identify and analyze structural elements of literary texts and provide insightful, detailed explanation as to how they relate to each other and the entire text using specific terminology.	In literary texts, Identify and analyze structural elements of literary texts as they relate to each other and the whole text using specific terminology.	In literary texts, Identify structural elements with little or no analysis.	In literary texts, inaccurately Identify structural elements.
	In informational texts, identify the overall structure using terms such as sequence, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution. (RI)	In informational texts, identify and analyze structure(s) of informational texts and provide insightful descriptions using such terms as sequence, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution.	In informational texts, identify and analyze structure(s) of informational texts using such terms as sequence, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution as they relate to the whole text.	In informational texts, identify the structure(s) with minimal or inaccurate analysis.	In informational texts, inaccurately identify structure(s).
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)	4R6: In literary texts, compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations. (RL)	In literary texts, identify and analyze the point of view by insightfully comparing and contrasting the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.	In literary texts, compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.	In literary texts, minimally compare and contrast first- and third-person point of view.	In literary texts, inaccurately compare and contrast first- and third-person point of view.
	In informational texts, compare and contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event or topic. (RI)	In informational texts, insightfully compare and contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event or topic and explain how it shapes the content or style of a text.	In informational texts, compare and contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event or topic.	In informational texts, minimally compare and contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event or topic.	In informational texts, inaccurately compare and/or contrast a primary and secondary source on the same event.

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Students integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats. (R7)	4R7: Identify information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or illustrations) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text. (RI&RL)	Identify and insightfully explain how information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively contributes to an understanding of a literary or informational text.	Identify and sufficiently explain how information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively contributes to an understanding of a literary or informational text.	Identify and insufficiently explain how information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively contributes to an understanding of a literary or informational text.	Identify inaccurately or provide no explanation of how information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively contributes to an understanding of the literary or informational text in which it appears.
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)	4R8: Explain how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence. (RI&RL)	Provide a detailed and nuanced explanation of how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Identify claims in a text and explain how they are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Identify a claim in a text and insufficiently explain how claims in a text are supported by relevant reasons and evidence.	Inaccurately identify a claim in a text and/or insufficiently explain 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 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 Grade 5.	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)		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.

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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)	4L3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	Communicate using sophisticated language and conventions appropriate to the situation or task.	Communicate accurately using precise language appropriate to the situation or task.	Communicate using language that is not consistently precise or appropriate for the situation or task.	Communicate using inaccurate or inappropriate language for the situation or task.
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)	4L4: 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.	Demonstrate an inability to clarify the meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L5)	4L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Identify and insightfully explain the meaning of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words precisely and purposefully.	Identify and explain the meaning of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words that suit the purpose.	Identify figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings with partial connection to the purpose.	Identify figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings inaccurately by choosing words that show very little or no connection to the purpose.

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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)	4L6: Acquire and accurately use general academic and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).	Apply, in a precise and skillful way, general academic and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being, and that are essential to a particular topic.	Apply, with accuracy, general academic and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being, and that are basic to a particular topic.	Apply, with partial accuracy, general academic and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being, and that are basic to a particular topic.	Apply, with little or no accuracy, general academic and content-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being and that are basic to a particular topic.
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W1)	4W1: Write an argument to support claims, using clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Write an argument to support elaborately developed claims using well-developed reasons and precise evidence, logically organized facts and details, precise language and content-specific vocabulary, transitional words and phrases, and a conclusion statement or section.	Write an argument to support claims using clear reasons and relevant evidence, logically organized facts and details, precise language and content-specific vocabulary, transitional words and phrases, and a conclusion statement or section.	Write an argument to support claims using reasons and relevant evidence that makes partial use of organized facts and details, precise language and content-specific vocabulary, transitional words and phrases, and a conclusion statement or section.	Write an argument that insufficiently supports claims and makes little use of reasons and relevant evidence, organized facts and details, precise language and content-specific vocabulary, transitional words and phrases, or a conclusion statement.

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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)	4W2: Write informative/ explanatory texts to explore a topic and convey ideas and information relevant to the subject.	Write precise and insightful informative/explanatory texts that introduce and explore a topic and convey ideas with logically organized information, sophisticated and content-specific vocabulary, purposeful and varied transitions to connect ideas, and a concluding statement or section that relates to the argument, while maintaining sophisticated style and tone.	Write informative/ explanatory texts that introduce and explore a topic and convey ideas with organized information, precise and content-specific vocabulary, appropriate transitions to connect ideas, and a concluding statement related to the argument, while maintaining an appropriate style and tone.	Write informative/ explanatory texts that address a topic with insufficient relevance, making partial use of content-specific vocabulary, transitions to connect ideas, and a conclusion, while partially maintaining an appropriate style and tone.	Write informative/ explanatory texts that address a topic inaccurately and without relevance to the subject.
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. (W3)	4W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Take risks when writing narratives to elaborately develop real or imagined experiences or events by fully establishing the situation, narrator, and other characters with the use of descriptive details, clear event sequences, purposeful and varied transitions to connect ideas, and a concluding statement or section that relates to the argument, while maintaining sophisticated style and tone.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events by effectively establishing the situation, narrator, and other characters with the use of descriptive details, clear event sequences, precise and content-specific vocabulary, appropriate transitions to connect ideas, and a concluding statement related to the argument, while maintaining an appropriate style and tone.	Write narratives to partially develop real or imagined experiences or events by partially establishing the situation, narrator, and other characters with the use of details and event sequences, making partial use of content-specific vocabulary, transitions to connect ideas, and a conclusion, while partially maintaining an appropriate style and tone.	Write narratives to partially or insufficiently develop real or imagined experiences or events, with insufficient use of dialogue, transitions, details, and a conclusion.

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Develop personal, cultural, textual, and thematic connections within and across genres through written responses to text and personal experiences. (W4)	4W4: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.	Create an elaborate poem, story, play, artwork, or other response with a strong connection to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.	Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response directly connected to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.	Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response with limited or partial connection to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.	Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response without connection to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W5)	4W5: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to respond and support analysis, reflection, and research by applying Grade 4 reading standards.	Write using significant evidence drawn from literary or informational texts to support in-depth analysis, reflection, and research.	Write using evidence drawn from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	Write using partially accurate or minimal evidence drawn from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	Write using inaccurate or insufficient evidence drawn from literary or informational texts with little or no accuracy or relevance to support analysis, reflection, and research.