

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

Performance Level Descriptions

Grade 6

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THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK /
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New York State Testing Program

Next Generation English Language Arts Test

Performance Level Descriptions

GRADE 6

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 6 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

| Anchor Standard | 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) | 6R1: Cite textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences. (RI&RL) | Make insightful inferences from a text; use precise textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly. | Make logical inferences from a text; use textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly. | Make inferences from a text; inconsistently use textual evidence to explain what the text says explicitly/implicitly. | Make 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) | 6R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is developed by key supporting details over the course of a text; summarize a text. (RI&RL) | Determine a theme or central idea of a text, and insightfully analyze how it is supported by key details; provide an accurate and sophisticated summary of the text. | Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze their development; summarize a text using relevant details. | Determine a theme or central idea of a text without explaining how details support the theme or central idea; summarize a text using some inaccurate or irrelevant details. | Inaccurately determine a theme or central idea of a text without explaining how details support the theme or central idea; summarize a text by retelling. |
| Students analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (R3) | 6R3: In literary texts, describe how events unfold, as well as how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. (RL) In informational texts, analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed. (RI) | In literary texts, insightfully describe how events unfold and how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. In informational texts, precisely analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed. | In literary texts, describe how events unfold and how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. In informational texts, analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed. | In literary texts, partially describe how events unfold and how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. In informational texts, partially analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed. | In literary texts, inaccurately describe events without including how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. In informational texts, inaccurately identify key individuals, events, or ideas without an analysis of how they are introduced, relate to each other, or are developed. |

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 6 English Language Arts

| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| 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) | 6R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. (RI&RL) | Determine with precision the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; provide detailed analysis of the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. | Inconsistently determine the meaning of words and phrases as used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; provide a basic, limited analysis of the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. | Inaccurately determine the meaning of words and phrases as used in a text; demonstrate literal or no understanding of the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. |
| 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) | 6R5: In literary texts, analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, stanza, chapter, scene, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and how it contributes to the development of theme/central idea, setting, or plot. (RL&RI) | In literary and informational texts, insightfully analyze in detail how a particular sentence, paragraph, stanza, chapter, scene, or section fits into the overall structure and contributes to the development of the theme/central idea, setting, or plot. | In literary and informational texts, analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, stanza, chapter, scene, or section fits into the overall structure and contributes to the development of the theme/central idea, setting, or plot. | In literary and informational texts, partially analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, stanza, chapter, scene, or section fits into the overall structure and contributes to the development of theme/central idea, setting, or plot. | In literary and informational texts, inaccurately analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, stanza, chapter, scene, or section fits into the overall structure of a literary or expository text and contributes to the development of the theme/central idea, setting, or plot. |

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 6 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| 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) | <p>6R6: Identify the point of view and explain how it is developed and conveys meaning. (RI&RL)</p> <p>Explain how an author’s geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective. (RI&RL)</p> | <p>Identify the point of view with an insightful and detailed explanation of how the point of view is developed and conveys meaning.</p> <p>Provide a detailed explanation of how an author’s geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.</p> | <p>Identify the point of view and explain how the point of view is developed and conveys meaning.</p> <p>Provide an accurate explanation of how an author’s geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.</p> | <p>Identify the point of view and partially explain how the point of view is developed and conveys meaning.</p> <p>Provide an incomplete explanation of how an author’s geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.</p> | <p>Inaccurately identify the point of view without explaining how the point of view is developed or conveys meaning.</p> <p>Provide an inaccurate explanation of how an author’s geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.</p> |
| Students integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats. (R7) | 6R7: Compare and contrast how different formats, including print and digital media, contribute to the understanding of a subject. (RI&RL) | Insightfully compare and contrast how different formats, including print and digital media, contribute to the understanding of a subject. | Compare and contrast how different formats, including print and digital media, contribute to the understanding of a subject. | Compare and contrast different formats, including print and digital media, without evaluating its contribution to the subject. | Partially or inaccurately compare and contrast different formats, including print and digital media, without evaluating its contribution to the subject |
| 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) | 6R8: Trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in texts, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and relevant evidence from claims that are not. (RI) | Insightfully trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and relevant evidence from claims that are not. | Trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and relevant evidence from claims that are not. | Partially trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text. | Inconsistently determine claims with inaccurate or irrelevant evidence. |

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 6 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| 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 band. For the Core Conventions Skills and Core Punctuation and Spelling Skills for Grades 6–8, the student is expected to know and be able to use the skills by the end of Grade 8. | Demonstrate a sophisticated command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking to produce writing with few errors. | Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking to produce writing with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension. | Demonstrate an emerging command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking to produce writing with some errors that may hinder comprehension. | Demonstrate a limited command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage by producing writing with errors that hinder comprehension. |
| Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (L2) | | Demonstrate a sophisticated command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to produce writing with few errors. | Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to produce writing with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension. | Demonstrate an emerging command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to produce writing with some errors that may hinder comprehension. | Demonstrate a limited command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling by producing writing with errors 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) | 6L3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. | Exhibit a skillful and sophisticated use of grade-appropriate language and its conventions when reading and writing. | Exhibit use of grade-appropriate language and its conventions when reading and writing. | Exhibit an inconsistent or imprecise use of grade-appropriate language and its conventions when reading and writing. | Exhibit an inaccurate use of grade-appropriate language and its conventions when reading and writing. |

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| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 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) | 6L4: 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 meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. | Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. | Partially determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, demonstrating a limited range of strategies. | Demonstrate a minimal ability to determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases. |
| Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L5) | 6L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. | Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words precisely and purposefully. | Demonstrate an understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words that suit the purpose. | Demonstrate a limited understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words that partially connect to the purpose. | Demonstrate a minimal understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings by choosing words that show 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) | 6L6: Acquire and accurately use general academic and content-specific words and phrases; apply vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. | Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases precisely with sophistication, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., <i>however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition</i>). | Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases carefully and accurately, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships. (e.g., <i>however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition</i>). | Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases partially and inconsistently, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships. (e.g., <i>however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition</i>). | Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases minimally or inaccurately. |

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|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W1) | 6W1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. | Write organized arguments, using key textual evidence to support claims and/or counterclaims that demonstrate an insightful understanding of the topic or text; use sophisticated and content-specific vocabulary and purposeful and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining sophisticated style and tone; concluding statement or section that explains the argument presented. | Write organized arguments, using relevant textual evidence to support claims and/or counterclaims that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text; use precise and content-specific vocabulary and appropriate and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining appropriate style and tone; concluding statement or section that explains the argument presented. | Write arguments, using textual evidence, some of which may be irrelevant, to support claims and/or counterclaims that demonstrate a limited understanding of the topic or text; writing may lack coherence and/or organization; use content-specific vocabulary and transitions to connect ideas; concluding statement that partially explains the argument presented. | Write arguments, using irrelevant or inaccurate claims and/or textual evidence, that demonstrate little-to-no understanding of the topic or texts. |
| 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) | 6W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. | Produce precise and insightful informative/explanatory texts that fully introduce and examine a topic and convey ideas clearly, coherently, and in an engaging way through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content and evidence; use sophisticated and content-specific vocabulary and purposeful and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining sophisticated style and tone; provide a concluding statement or section that explains the argument presented. | Produce informative/explanatory texts that introduce and examine a topic and convey ideas clearly through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content and evidence; use precise and content-specific vocabulary and appropriate and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining appropriate style and tone; provide a concluding statement or section that explains the argument presented. | Produce informative/explanatory texts that partially introduce and address a topic, lacking clarity and coherence, demonstrating inconsistent control of the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content and evidence; use content-specific vocabulary and transitions to connect ideas; provide a concluding statement that partially explains the argument presented. | Produce informative/explanatory texts that minimally address a topic with limited or no clarity and coherence, demonstrating inadequate control of the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content; might not provide a concluding statement. |

Next Generation Learning Standards Grade 6 English Language Arts Performance Level Descriptions

| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (W3) | 6W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and sequencing. | Write engaging narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using complex narrative techniques (including dialogue), insightful descriptive details, and clear sequencing and development of narrators and characters; use advanced and content-specific vocabulary and purposeful and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining sophisticated style and tone; provide a conclusion that fits the narrative presented. | Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective narrative techniques (including dialogue), descriptive details, and clear sequencing and development of narrators and characters; use precise and content-specific vocabulary and appropriate and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining appropriate style and tone; provide a conclusion that fits the narrative presented. | Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using partially developed narrative techniques, minimally descriptive details, and/or basic sequencing and development of narrators and characters; use content-specific vocabulary and transitions to connect ideas; provide a conclusion that partially fits the narrative presented. | Write underdeveloped narratives about real or imagined experiences or events using simple techniques, few descriptive details, and basic sequencing and development of narrators and characters; might not provide a conclusion. |
| Develop personal, cultural, textual, and thematic connections within and across genres through written responses to texts and personal experiences. (W4) | 6W4: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience. | Create a detailed poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to insightfully address a text, author, theme, or personal experience. | Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to address a text, author, theme, or personal experience. | Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to partially address a text, author, theme, or personal experience. | Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response with no relevant connection to a text, author, theme, or personal experience. |

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| Anchor Standard | Standard | Performance Level 4 | Performance Level 3 | Performance Level 2 | Performance Level 1 |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W5) | 6W5: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Apply Grade 6 reading standards to both literary and informational texts, where applicable. | Choose key evidence from literary or informational texts to support insightful analysis, reflection, and research while applying Grade 6 reading standards, where applicable. | Choose relevant evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research while applying Grade 6 reading standards, where applicable. | Choose evidence, some of which may be irrelevant, lacking support for analysis, reflection, and research while applying Grade 6 reading standards, where applicable. | Choose irrelevant and/or inaccurate evidence that fails to support analysis, reflection, or research while minimally applying Grade 6 reading standards, where applicable. |