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

Performance Level Descriptions

Grade 7

October 2020

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GRADE 7

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)

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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)	7R1: 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; evaluate and cite precise textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly.	Make logical inferences from a text; cite textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly.	Make some illogical inferences from a text; inconsistently cite a text when explaining what the text says explicitly/ implicitly.	Make some invalid inferences from a text; cite unrelated textual 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)	7R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the 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 its development over the course of the text; summarize the key supporting details and ideas of the text.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text, to analyze its development over the course of the text; insufficiently summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Inaccurately determine a theme or central idea of a text without explaining how details support the theme or central idea; inaccurately summarize the text.

Anchor Standard	Standard	Performance Level 4	Performance Level 3	Performance Level 2	Performance Level 1
Students analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (R3)	7R3: In literary texts, analyze how elements of plot are related, affect one another, and contribute to meaning. (RL)	In literary texts, insightfully analyze how particular elements of a plot are related, affect one another, and contribute to meaning, acknowledging the subtle ways in which the relationships are depicted.	In literary texts, analyze how particular elements of a plot are related, affect one another, and contribute to meaning.	In literary texts, partially analyze how particular elements of a plot are related and affect one another or contribute to meaning.	In literary texts, explain an element of a plot without analyzing how it relates to or affects another element or contributes to meaning.
	In informational texts, analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed. (RI)	In informational texts, insightfully analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed, acknowledging the subtlety in the relationships.	In informational texts, analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed.	In informational texts, partially analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, and/or relate to each other, and/or are developed.	In informational texts, recall individuals, events, and ideas without analyzing how they relate to each other and are developed.
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)	7R4: 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 a detailed, insightful 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; partially analyze 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.

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Anchor Standard	Standard	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)	7R5: In literary texts, analyze how structure, including genre-specific features, contributes to the development of themes and central ideas. (RL)	In literary texts, analyze with precision how structure, including genre-specific features, contributes to the development of themes and central ideas.	In literary texts, analyze how structure, including genre-specific features, contributes to the development of themes and central ideas.	In literary texts, partially analyze how the structure, including genre-features, contributes to the development of themes and central ideas.	In literary texts, identify a structure or genre-specific feature without analyzing how it contributes to the development of themes and central ideas.
	In informational texts, analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas. (RI)	In informational texts, analyze with precision the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas.	In informational texts, analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas.	In informational texts, partially analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas.	In informational texts, identify a structure an author uses to organize a text without analyzing how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas.
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)	7R6: In literary texts, analyze how an author develops and contrasts the point of view and the perspectives of different characters or narrators. (RL)	In literary texts, analyze with precision how an author develops and contrasts the points of view and perspectives of different characters or narrators.	In literary texts, analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view and perspectives of different characters or narrators.	In literary texts, partially analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view and/or perspectives of different characters or narrators.	In literary texts, identify a point of view and/or perspective without analyzing how an author develops and contrasts the point of view and perspectives of different characters or narrators.
	In informational texts, analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others. (RI)	In informational texts, analyze with precision how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.	In informational texts, analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.	In informational texts, partially analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.	In informational texts, identify the author's position without analyzing how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

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Students integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats. (R7)	7R7: Compare and contrast a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions in order to analyze the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of a subject. (RI&RL)	Compare and contrast with detailed precision a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions; skillfully analyze the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of a subject.	Compare and contrast a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions; analyze the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of a subject.	Partially compare and contrast a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions; minimally analyze the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of the subject.	Minimally compare and/or contrast a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions, without analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of a 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)	7R8: Trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient and recognizing when irrelevant evidence is introduced. (RI)	Skillfully trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, assessing with precision whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims and differentiating between relevant and irrelevant evidence.	Trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims and recognizing irrelevant evidence.	Partially trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, minimally assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant or irrelevant and sufficient to support the claims.	Minimally trace and/or evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text without assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

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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 8th grade.	Demonstrate a sophisticated command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage to produce writing with few errors.	Demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage to produce writing with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.	Demonstrate an emerging command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage 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)	7L3: 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 accurate 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.
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)	7L4: 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 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 an inability to determine or clarify the meaning 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)	7L5: 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 ability to understand 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)	7L6: 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.	Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases carefully and accurately.	Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases partially and inconsistently.	Use general academic and content-specific words and phrases minimally or inaccurately.

Anchor Standard	Standard	Performance Level 4	Performance Level 3	Performance Level 2	Performance Level 1
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W1)	7W1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Write a compelling argument that supports a claim with valid reasoning and relevant, well-chosen evidence, distinguishing the claim from a counterclaim; 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 a cohesive argument that supports a claim with clear reasoning and relevant evidence, distinguishing the claim from a counterclaim; 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 partial arguments to support a claim with reasoning and/or insufficient evidence, may include a counterclaim; 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 demonstrates 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)	7W2: 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; concluding statement or section that explains the argument presented.	Produce informative/ explanatory texts that completely 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, appropriate and varied transitions to connect ideas while maintaining appropriate style and tone; 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; 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.

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Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (W3)	7W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequencing.	Write complex narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events, skillfully using effective narrative techniques (including dialogue), insightful descriptive details, and clear sequencing and development of points of view of narrators and characters; use advanced 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 narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective narrative techniques (including dialogue), descriptive details, and clear sequencing and development of points of view of narrators and characters; 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 narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using partially developed narrative techniques, minimally descriptive details, and/or basic sequencing and development of points of view of narrators and characters; use content-specific vocabulary and transitions to connect ideas; concluding statement that partially explains the argument presented.	Write underdeveloped narratives about real or imagined experiences or events using simple techniques, few descriptive details, and basic sequencing and development of points of view of narrators and characters.
Develop personal, cultural, textual, and thematic connections within and across genres through written responses to texts and personal experiences. (W4)	7W4: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.	Create a sophisticated 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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Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W5)	7W5: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying Grade 7 reading standards to both literary and informational text, where applicable.	Draw relevant and well-chosen evidence from literary or informational texts to support skillful analysis, reflection, and research, applying Grade 7 reading standards where applicable.	Draw relevant evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying Grade 7 reading standards where applicable.	Draw partial evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying Grade 7 reading standards where applicable.	Draw evidence that fails to support analysis, reflection, or research while minimally applying Grade 7 reading standards where applicable.