

Washington Comprehensive Assessment Program

Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors give teachers, parents/guardians and students more information about a student's strengths and areas for improvement after taking our state assessments. Performance Level Descriptors are broken down by grade and by the score levels students can earn: Basic (Level 2), Proficient (Level 3) and Advanced (Level 4). There are no descriptors for Below Basic (Level 1).



Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 4

Basic Writing Descriptors

Basic 4th grade writing exhibits:

- Some focus with lapses (e.g., gaps in story structure, fragmented ideas, irrelevant details)
- Limited or loosely connected supporting details, minimal elaboration; sometimes seems to be little more than a list
- Some sense of organization, often list-like or formulaic, introductions often canned
- Some transitions, but often basic or formulaic, repetitive, or inconsistent
- Some or little voice
- Little sense of audience
- Little evidence of revising
- Simple vocabulary and sentence structure
- Run-on sentences with strings of *and's* and *then's* or short subject-verb sentences
- Conventions problematic, may impede understanding

Basic Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Basic 4th grade writers:

- Find moving from oral to written expression challenging
- May have limited story experience, reading ability, language skills, or speech problems
- Have difficulty rewording text, often copy from text
- Have some difficulty making connections or transferring information or knowledge from one situation to another
- See writing as a chore or may write only when prompted; may think of themselves as writers but their skills are still emerging or their attitudes hinder proficiency
- Think concretely
- Are often fearful of being judged or have little confidence
- Often need support, re-teaching in small groups or individually
- Have limited understanding/application of the writing process, need to be guided by teacher
- Use prewriting but not always effectively; may plan a piece of writing, but have difficulty executing plan
- Can write to prompts but lack of experience may limit ideas
- Must be prompted by teacher to clarify initial words or phrases
- Re-read what they have written, but are less apt to notice errors; often only do surface editing (e.g., spelling, margins, capital letters)
- Have difficulty recognizing spelling errors
- Demonstrate limited assessment of own strengths and weaknesses and only sometimes seek feedback from others or offer feedback (comments on writing of others are general or limited)

Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 4

Proficient Writing Descriptors

Proficient 4th grade writing exhibits:

- An adequate focus throughout the piece
- An adequate focus on purpose, topic, and audience (limited audience, not broader audience)
- A main idea with adequate supporting details which are often layered or elaborated (not a list – it's developed)
- Details (dialogue, reflections, examples) which are mostly relevant to their ideas
- Personal experiences used as anecdotal support
- Clear beginning, middle, and end (narrative)
- A sense of sequence
- A variety of organizational structures; lapses in structure can still occur
- Adequate transitions
- A sense of emerging style
- An effort to engage audiences (with occasional lapses); sense of who they are (voice)
- Emotions in stories (written with commitment)
- An awareness of word choice: appropriate, adequate vocabulary; beginning to use engaging words; limited use of tired words
- A variety of sentence structures and lengths (simple and complex sentences, introductory phrases and clauses)
- Occasional lapses in spelling of common words that don't impede understanding of text; correct spelling of high frequency words; the ability to use resources to help with spelling
- An understanding of the basic rules of conventions (usage, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure)
- Lapses in conventions caused by excitement in the process of writing

Proficient Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Proficient 4th grade writers:

- Are beginning to think of themselves as writers; understand and use writing as a way to communicate
- Use the language of writing (e.g., *transitions*, *voice*)
- Pick out main ideas, summarize, and put in own words
- Come on board quickly with new skills (e.g., transitions) and then apply them
- Take ownership and demonstrate pride in their writing
- Explain orally what they are thinking fluently, and are able to discuss and elaborate on ideas
- Demonstrate a sense of story when orally telling a story
- Develop a plan or plot independently (e.g., basic outline or graphic organizer), communicate the plan (verbally or in writing), and draft using a plan most of the time

Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 4

- Are able to write to forms/genres with instruction and identify the form/genres
- Independently revise and edit some of the time; choose to use some feedback

Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 4

Advanced Writing Descriptors

Advanced 4th grade writing exhibits:

- Focus; inclusion of selected, relevant details; deliberate use of the layering of details
- Ideas and organization that take the reader on a journey, often metacognitive
- Completeness—it's all there
- A variety of styles, forms, genres
- Crafting for effect (e.g., organization or humor)
- Consistent and creative use of transitions
- Acute awareness of audience, including broad audience; consistent engagement—a must read
- Effective use of figurative language and sound devices (similes, onomatopoeia, alliteration)
- Balance of elements (traits)
- Sophisticated, effective, specific vocabulary; word pictures that bring stories to life
- Intentional use of a variety of sentence structures
- Conventions that support and/or enhance the meaning, facilitate the reading of the piece

Advanced Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Advanced 4th grade writers:

- Are more observant, intuitive, reflective, expressive, descriptive, consistent, energetic
- Are well read; think about the reading/writing connection (aware of what writers do when they write)
- Have a strong desire to learn, to stretch; raise their hands quickly, want to share their ideas at length with lots of details
- Are driven by praise and appreciation
- Exhibit strong ownership and intrinsic pride in work
- Apply new skills quickly and independently with ease (e.g., new vocabulary)
- Help and coach others
- Synthesize information consistent with his or her own voice
- See themselves as writers and understand and enjoy it; confident in writing ability
- Have a wide range of ideas; can write on everything
- Exposed to and confident in writing in different genres
- Are adept at writing to prompts
- Understand and effectively use the entire writing process (e.g., re-read, revise)
- Independently prepare a strong plan, including details; consistently draft according to plan
- Use multiple resources and tools comfortably, confidently
- Evaluate own writing, independently and deliberately revise and edit
- Peer edit effectively; see value in feedback and use it to improve