

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 7

Basic Writing Descriptors

Basic 7th grade writing exhibits:

- Inconsistency (e.g., in conventions, development, organization, focus, voice)
- Some focus, may include extraneous material; inability to separate details from tangential
- Shallow, surface thinking with occasional supportive details; feels unsatisfying to the reader; the “fast-food” level of writing; a lot that says nothing
- “Listy” elaboration (lists with clauses or phrases, little layered elaboration); lack of specific details (stays general)
- Some understanding of organization; an incomplete organizational patterns (has some missing structures or lapses)
- Gaps so that reader must work to create meaning or connect ideas; parts of a formula, no sense of a big picture and thus requires rereading for understanding
- A stronger beginning that gets “lost”: a feeling of running out of gas—sputters, quits—ends with a brief conclusion
- Repetitive ideas and/or structures
- Choppy, inadequate or ineffective transitions, if any
- Very limited and predictable word choice that is flat and labored, stale and boring (e.g., *stuff, nice, good, fun, boring*)
- A slight hint of the person behind the words (voice)
- Some sense of audience awareness
- Simple sentences; predictable sentence patterns
- Conventions that
 - Somewhat impede communication
 - Are correct about 50% of the time; show some understanding of Standard English
 - Often seem hit **and** miss
 - Indicate basic-level students don’t have the whole picture
 - Include fragments which are usually not purposeful

Basic Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Basic 7th grade writers:

- Have limited writing skills which affect ALL traits
- Struggle with adequate use of the language of ideas
- Try to put forth best effort but frequently overwhelmed
- Think...write...think...write (their writing process);
- Impatient with the process and immature; struggle to get down what they want to say
- Have trouble making connections with their own writing
- Are unpredictable
- Can follow a basic plan; otherwise, tend to “wind” all over

Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 7

Proficient Writing Descriptors

Proficient 7th grade writing exhibits:

- Strengths in one area but problems in another (e.g., may be strong in development of ideas but weak in conventions)
- A beginning of elaboration or layering of details, may be uneven
- A logical flow as a result of the selection of **most** details
- A logical organization (introduction/opening and closure); may have lapses or formulaic introductions and conclusions
- The use of transitions, a few may be implied or obvious, but for the most part, basic transitions which may detract from flow of writing
- Details not well thought out and selected, but adequate
- “Adequacy”; “sufficient” job
- An adequate voice which is evident in word choice; for the most part directed appropriately to audience
- Adequate word choice that is beyond the conversational; safer in word choice possibly because of spelling concerns
- Adequate variety of sentence structure and length (simple, compound, dependent clauses)
- Some errors in standard conventions
- Sentence sense
- A lack of understanding of internal punctuation
- Paragraphing (logical breaks), one paragraph wrapped up and transitioned to another, but may be uneven

Proficient Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Proficient 7th grade writers:

- Are quantity writers vs. quality
- Are engaged enough to “play the game”
- May not sustain momentum, get fatigued, run out of energy
- Are jugglers, but can’t keep too many balls in the air
- Know what to do, but it’s not so natural – it’s a little rote
- Think of possibilities and hint at them vs. the Level 4’s who address them

Writing Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 7

Advanced Writing Descriptors

Advanced 7th grade writing exhibits:

- Crafting, sometimes artistically
- Consistent focus
- Engaging ideas, leaves the reader thinking; depth of knowledge (connections to experiences)
- More developed elaboration of details; layered elaboration
- Quality vs. Quantity; may be quality quantity
- A satisfying sense of consistency and wholeness; reader moves through effortlessly, feels natural; leaves the reader satisfied with the direction of the piece
- Subtle, embedded, implied transitions, so effective the reader hardly notices them
- Voice that is apparent in word choice and details; the writer’s “unique stamp”; the writer truly in the paper
- Carefully selected word choice, appropriate to audience and topic/subject
- Sentence structure that is smooth, rhythmic, natural, and effective; obvious sentence variety
- Control over conventions—manipulation of the rules; may have a few errors but doesn’t impede understanding

Advanced Writer Behavioral Descriptors

Advanced 7th grade writers:

- Are comfortable, purposeful, often sophisticated writers
- Are in control
- Want to read their papers out loud
- Are able to embed more than one mode within a piece (e.g., anecdotal support)
- Know where they are going
- Are risk takers in a variety of areas: word choice, making inferences, choosing organizational structure, use of anecdotes for support, applying the rules for punctuation, writing for more than one purpose, using a variety of forms
- Are not bound by typical writing formulas