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DELAWARE

STUDENT TESTING PROGRAM

**Performance Level Descriptors
for Reading, Writing, and
Mathematics**

Grade 9

Prepared by the Assessment and Analysis Group
Assessment and Accountability Branch
Delaware Department of Education
Spring 2006

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What is the purpose of this document?

The purpose of this document is to help parents, educators, and students understand the performance level scores a student receives on the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. In June, each student receives an Individual Student Report which identifies the student's performance level in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

In grades 3–10 there are 5 performance levels:

- 5 Distinguished
- 4 Exceeds the Standard
- 3 Meets the Standard
- 2 Below the Standard
- 1 Well Below the Standard

What is a Performance Level Descriptor?

For each Performance Level, descriptors based on the content standards have been developed by teachers. These descriptors identify and define what a student knows and can do in a specific content at a specific grade. The performance level descriptor provides a description of the typical performance and content characterized by the DSTP score. This content-specific information provides an overview of the degree to which the student is meeting the expectations of the content standards.

How to Use this Document

Look at your student's Individual Student Reports for Language Arts and Mathematics. Find the place where the performance level is reported (the upper left-hand side of the report). Then, read the pages in this document that describe that performance level.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Reading

Level 1: Well Below the Standard

- A. When using **grade appropriate text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Uses words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine the meaning of few unfamiliar words.
 - Rarely locates information in text to retell, restate, and support ideas and concepts.
 - Rarely demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, political, and historical information from texts.
 - Rarely compares and synthesizes ideas within and among texts to formulate and express opinions.
 - Rarely connects information with prior knowledge to draw conclusions about content, ideas, and author's choices and to make predictions about text.
 - Rarely uses summaries, graphic organizers, and outlines to organize text.
 - Rarely interprets and explains the effect of figurative language and rarely differentiates between literal and non-literal meanings.
 - Rarely recognizes the effect of point of view and the impact of author's decisions.
 - Rarely identifies the most likely reason an author wrote a text.
- B. When using **grade appropriate literary text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Rarely identifies story elements, genres, story features, and story structures.
 - Rarely makes inferences about characters and their motivations with minimal support from the story.
 - Rarely relates to the emotional appeal of stories and poems, and to the feelings of characters of varying genders, races, and disabilities.
- C. When using **grade appropriate informative and technical text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Rarely identifies and describes author's use of textual features and text structures.
 - Rarely makes inferences about content with minimal support from the text.
 - Rarely identifies and explains persuasive techniques and the purpose and effect of media messages.
 - Rarely evaluates texts for bias, misinformation, validity, completeness, accuracy, and clarity and rarely discriminates between fact and opinion.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Reading

Level 2: Below the Standard

- A. When using **grade appropriate text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Uses words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine the meaning of some unfamiliar words.
 - Inadequately locates information in text to retell, restate, and support ideas and concepts.
 - Inadequately demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, political, and historical information from texts.
 - Inadequately compares and synthesizes ideas within and among texts to formulate and express opinions.
 - Inadequately connects information with prior knowledge to draw conclusions about content, ideas, and author's choices and to make predictions about text.
 - Inconsistently uses summaries, graphic organizers, and outlines to organize text.
 - Inadequately interprets and explains the effect of figurative language and inadequately differentiates between literal and non-literal meanings.
 - Inadequately recognizes the effect of point of view and the impact of author's decisions.
 - Inconsistently identifies the most likely reason an author wrote a text.
- B. When using **grade appropriate literary text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Inconsistently identifies story elements, genres, story features, and story structures.
 - Inadequately makes inferences about characters and their motivations with mostly general support from the story.
 - Inadequately relates to the emotional appeal of stories and poems, and to the feelings of characters of varying genders, races, and disabilities.
- C. When using **grade appropriate informative and technical text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Inconsistently identifies and describes author's use of textual features and text structures.
 - Inadequately makes inferences about content with mostly general support from the text.
 - Inadequately identifies and explains persuasive techniques and the purpose and effect of media messages.
 - Inadequately evaluates texts for bias, misinformation, validity, completeness, accuracy, and clarity and inadequately discriminates between fact and opinion.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Reading

Level 3: Meets the Standard

- A. When using **grade appropriate text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Uses words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine the meaning of many unfamiliar words.
 - Adequately locates information in text to retell, restate, and support ideas and concepts.
 - Adequately demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, political, and historical information from texts.
 - Adequately compares and synthesizes ideas within and among texts to formulate and express opinions.
 - Adequately connects information with prior knowledge to draw conclusions about content, ideas, and author's choices and to make predictions about text.
 - Adequately uses summaries, graphic organizers, and outlines to organize text.
 - Adequately interprets and explains the effect of figurative language and adequately differentiates between literal and non-literal meanings.
 - Adequately recognizes the effect of point of view and the impact of author's decisions.
 - Adequately identifies the most likely reason an author wrote a text.
- B. When using **grade appropriate literary text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Adequately identifies story elements, genres, story features, and story structures.
 - Adequately makes inferences about characters and their motivations with some relevant support from the story.
 - Adequately relates to the emotional appeal of stories and poems, and to the feelings of characters of varying genders, races, and disabilities.
- C. When using **grade appropriate informative and technical text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Adequately identifies and describes author's use of textual features and text structures.
 - Adequately makes inferences about content with some relevant support from the text.
 - Adequately identifies and explains persuasive techniques and the purpose and effect of media messages.
 - Adequately evaluates texts for bias, misinformation, validity, completeness, accuracy, and clarity and adequately discriminates between fact and opinion.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Reading

Level 4: Exceeds the Standard

- A. When using **grade appropriate text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Uses words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine the meaning of most unfamiliar words.
 - Thoroughly locates information in text to retell, restate, and support ideas and concepts.
 - Thoroughly demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, political, and historical information from texts.
 - Thoroughly compares and synthesizes ideas within and among texts to formulate and express opinions.
 - Thoroughly connects information with prior knowledge to draw conclusions about content, ideas, and author's choices and to make predictions about text.
 - Thoroughly uses summaries, graphic organizers, and outlines to organize text.
 - Thoroughly interprets and explains the effect of figurative language and thoroughly differentiates between literal and non-literal meanings.
 - Thoroughly recognizes the effect of point of view and the impact of author's decisions.
 - Consistently identifies the most likely reason an author wrote a text.
- B. When using **grade appropriate literary text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Consistently identifies story elements, genres, story features, and story structures.
 - Thoroughly makes inferences about characters and their motivations with sufficient and relevant support from the story.
 - Thoroughly relates to the emotional appeal of stories and poems, and to the feelings of characters of varying genders, races, and disabilities.
- C. When using **grade appropriate informative and technical text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Consistently identifies and describes author's use of textual features and text structures.
 - Thoroughly makes inferences about content with sufficient and relevant support from the text.
 - Thoroughly identifies and explains persuasive techniques and the purpose and effect of media messages.
 - Thoroughly evaluates texts for bias, misinformation, validity, completeness, accuracy, and clarity and consistently discriminates between fact and opinion.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Reading

Level 5: Distinguished

- A. When using **grade appropriate text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Uses words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to determine the meaning of almost all unfamiliar words.
 - Thoroughly and effectively locates information in text to retell, restate, and support ideas and concepts.
 - Thoroughly and effectively demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of social, cultural, political, and historical information from texts.
 - Insightfully compares and synthesizes ideas within and among texts to formulate and express opinions.
 - Insightfully connects information with prior knowledge to draw conclusions about content, ideas, and author's choices and to make predictions about text.
 - Thoroughly and effectively uses summaries, graphic organizers, and outlines to organize text.
 - Thoroughly and effectively interprets and explains the effect of figurative language and thoroughly and effectively differentiates between literal and non-literal meanings.
 - Thoroughly and effectively recognizes the effect of point of view and the impact of author's decisions.
 - Consistently identifies the most likely reason an author wrote a text.
- B. When using **grade appropriate literary text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Thoroughly and effectively identifies story elements, genres, story features, and story structures.
 - Insightfully makes inferences about characters and their motivations with sufficient, specific, and relevant support from the story.
 - Thoroughly and effectively relates to the emotional appeal of stories and poems, and to the feelings of characters of varying genders, races, and disabilities.
- C. When using **grade appropriate informative and technical text**, a student who performs at this level:
- Thoroughly and effectively identifies and describes author's use of textual features and text structures.
 - Thoroughly and effectively makes inferences about content with sufficient, specific, and relevant support from the text.
 - Thoroughly and effectively identifies and explains persuasive techniques and the purpose and effect of media messages.
 - Thoroughly and effectively evaluates texts for bias, misinformation, validity, completeness, accuracy, and clarity and consistently discriminates between fact and opinion.

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Writing

Level 1: Well Below the Standard

Students at Level 1 do not have command of writing appropriate to the grade level. In both Stand-Alone and Text-Based Writing tasks, the writing rarely shows understanding of purpose and audience; the ideas are often inappropriate, inadequate for the task, and/or not organized. Inadequate sentence construction, poor word choices, and a limited understanding of standard written English often interfere with reader understanding.

- A. Purpose/Audience:
 - Makes a weak connection to prompt and shows superficial understanding of purpose and intended audience
- B. Development:
 - Generates few ideas with little support
 - May include irrelevant information
 - In text-based writing, does not use relevant information from text to develop ideas
- C. Organization:
 - Presents a list-like series of sentences
 - Rarely introduces the topic clearly
 - Rarely presents information in logical order
 - Provides few transitions
 - Rarely includes adequate conclusion
- D. Sentence Structure:
 - Sentences are often incomplete and show little variety
- E. Word Choice:
 - Often uses words that are general, inappropriate, and/or repetitive
- F. Conventions:
 - Limited use of basic conventions of standard written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage)

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Writing

Level 2: Below the Standard

Students at Level 2 demonstrate an inadequate command of writing appropriate to the grade level. In both Stand-Alone and Text-Based Writing tasks, the writing shows a limited or inconsistent understanding of purpose and audience; the ideas are frequently undeveloped and/or inadequately organized for the writing task; sentences and word choices are frequently ineffective; and standard written English is not consistently used.

- A. Purpose/Audience:
 - Makes a limited connection to prompt and shows partial understanding of purpose and intended audience
- B. Development:
 - Lists ideas with limited support
 - Details are minimally elaborated
 - May include some irrelevant information at times
 - In text-based writing, attempts to connect information from text to develop ideas
- C. Organization:
 - Attempts to organize sentences around a topic
 - May include an introduction, but not adequate to present the topic
 - Presents information in a somewhat logical order
 - May provide some transitions
 - May include a conclusion, but not adequate for the topic
- D. Sentence Structure:
 - Some sentences may be incomplete but may demonstrate some variety
- E. Word Choice:
 - Uses some words that are general, inappropriate, repetitive, and/or insufficient for purpose, style, and voice
- F. Conventions:
 - Inconsistently uses basic conventions of standard written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage)

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Writing

Level 3: Meets the Standard

Students at Level 3 demonstrate an adequate command of writing appropriate to the grade level. In both Stand-Alone and Text-Based Writing tasks, the writing shows an understanding of purpose and audience; the ideas are generally developed and organized sufficiently for the writing task. Sentences and word choices are adequate, and standard written English is generally used.

- A. Purpose/Audience:
 - Makes an effective connection to prompt and attempts to adjust content to demonstrate clear understanding of purpose and intended audience
- B. Development:
 - Generates ideas with adequate support using relevant information and details
 - Elaborates using prior knowledge to develop and clarify ideas
 - In text-based writing, connects some relevant information from text to develop ideas
- C. Organization:
 - Organizes the paper around a mostly coherent topic or theme
 - Writes introductions that adequately present the topic
 - Presents information in a mostly logical order
 - Provides adequate transitions
 - Develops an adequate closing
- D. Sentence Structure:
 - Sentences are usually complete and demonstrate adequate variety
- E. Word Choice:
 - Uses adequate word choices, usually avoiding repetition, with some attention to style and voice
- F. Conventions:
 - Usually uses conventions of standard written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage)

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Writing

Level 4: Exceeds the Standard

Students at Level 4 consistently demonstrate a strong command of writing appropriate to the grade level. In both Stand-Alone and Text-Based Writing tasks, the writing shows a strong understanding of purpose and audience; the ideas are developed and organized effectively; sentences and word choices communicate clearly and effectively; and standard written English is used consistently.

- A. Purpose/Audience:
 - Makes an effective connection to prompt and adjusts content to demonstrate clear understanding of purpose and intended audience
- B. Development:
 - Generates ideas with consistent support using sufficient and relevant information and/or details
 - Elaborates by analyzing and connecting information from prior knowledge to develop and clarify ideas
 - In text-based writing, connects sufficient and relevant information from text to develop ideas
- C. Organization:
 - Organizes the paper around a clear and coherent topic or theme
 - Develops effective introductions that clearly present the topic or theme
 - Consistently presents information in a logical order
 - Consistently provides effective transitions using a variety of words and/or phrases
 - Develops a conclusion that provides effective closure
- D. Sentence Structure:
 - Sentences are consistently complete and effectively varied
- E. Word Choice:
 - Consistently uses words that are precise and vivid with attention to style and voice
- F. Conventions:
 - Consistently uses conventions of standard written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage)
 - May vary conventions to support style and voice

Performance Level Descriptors for Grade 9 Writing

Level 5: Distinguished

Students at Level 5 demonstrate an exceptional command of writing appropriate to the grade level. In both Stand-Alone and Text-Based Writing tasks, the writing shows an excellent understanding of purpose and audience; the ideas are coherent, well developed, and insightfully presented; sentences and word choices communicate with distinctive style and voice; and standard written English is tailored to enhance the writing.

- A. Purpose/Audience:
 - Makes an insightful connection to prompt and adjusts content to demonstrate clear understanding of purpose and intended audience
- B. Development:
 - Generates ideas with consistently effective support using sufficient, specific, and relevant information and details
 - Effectively elaborates by analyzing and synthesizing information from prior knowledge to develop and clarify ideas
 - In text-based writing, effectively selects sufficient, specific, and relevant details to make insightful connections to develop ideas
- C. Organization:
 - Effectively organizes the paper around a clear and coherent topic or theme
 - Develops insightful introductions that clearly present the topic or theme
 - Consistently presents information in a logical and effective order
 - Consistently provides effective transitions using a variety of words, phrases, or other strategies
 - Develops a conclusion that provides insightful closure
- D. Sentence Structure:
 - Sentences are consistently complete
 - Sentences are effectively varied to achieve style
- E. Word Choice:
 - Consistently uses words that are precise and vivid and that effectively convey style and voice
- F. Conventions:
 - Effectively uses conventions of standard written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage)
 - May vary conventions to support style and voice

Grade 9 Mathematics Content Summary

- **understand decimal approximations and different representations of very small and very large numbers including some irrational numbers**
- **compare, order, estimate, and operate with real numbers including exponents and square roots**
- **classify functions and model situations that are linear or exponential by finding and using rates of change, graphs, tables, and equations**
- **solve linear equations; identify solutions to systems of equations and inequalities**
- **demonstrate properties of the real number system and use them to evaluate expressions for given variables**
- **given parameters, write an equation of the line**
- **solve problems involving surface area and volume of prisms and cylinders**
- **verify algebraic concepts such as slope, parallelism, perpendicularity, and linear inequalities using the coordinate plane**
- **use measurement formulae, including the Pythagorean Theorem, and geometric properties to solve problems**
- **draw and support conclusions given statistical data**
- **determine sample spaces, compute and interpret probabilities of events, and find expected values**

Grade 9 Performance Levels

Students in a particular level also demonstrate performance described in lower levels.

Performance Level 5

Students at this level expertly demonstrate knowledge of grade-level content. Students develop new approaches or use sophisticated strategies to successfully solve novel and complex problems. They demonstrate fluency with symbolic and formal mathematical language and methods. They skillfully communicate well-developed solutions that show evidence of insightful mathematical connections, judgment, and planning.

Performance Level 4

Students at this level consistently demonstrate grade-level content knowledge. They apply their knowledge to analyze and solve a variety of problems, including those that require multiple decisions or are set in unfamiliar contexts. They show evidence of planning and demonstrate understanding of symbolic or formal mathematical language and methods. They clearly justify results and communicate understanding.

Performance Level 3

Students at this level demonstrate knowledge of grade-level content. Students can apply familiar math knowledge to solve problems that may require more than one step. They use effective, often informal strategies and reasoning to solve problems. They develop adequate explanations that show results, indicate understanding, and communicate strategies.

Performance Level 2

Students at this level demonstrate gaps and misconceptions in grade-level content knowledge. They can solve problems that rely on previously learned routines that have been practiced extensively. They show evidence of solving problems that are based on recall or that have a specific mathematical strategy indicated. Explanations meant to show results, to indicate understanding, or to communicate strategies are incomplete or absent.

Performance Level 1

Students at this level do not demonstrate knowledge of grade-level content. They use inappropriate strategies to solve problems. Explanations are often absent, are not relevant to the mathematical content, or are restatements of the text.