

Grades 3–8
Mathematics and Literacy
General Performance Level Descriptions

Below Basic

Below Basic students fail to show sufficient mastery of skills in reading and writing or mathematics to attain the basic level.

Basic

Basic students show substantial skills in reading and writing or mathematics; however, they only partially demonstrate the abilities to apply these skills. They demonstrate a need for some additional assistance, commitment, or study to reach the proficient level.

Proficient

Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance for the grade tested and are well prepared for the next level of schooling. They can use established reading and writing or mathematics skills and knowledge to solve problems and complete tasks on their own. Students can tie ideas together and explain the ways their ideas are connected.

Advanced

Advanced students demonstrate superior performance well beyond proficient grade-level performance. They can apply established reading and writing or mathematics skills to solve complex problems and complete demanding tasks on their own. They can make insightful connections between abstract and concrete ideas and provide well-supported explanations and arguments.

*Mathematics Performance Level Definitions
Grade 4 Benchmark Examination*

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>Fourth-grade students performing at the basic level show some evidence of understanding the mathematical concepts and procedures in the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Fourth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>estimate and use basic facts to perform simple computations with whole numbers;</i> • <i>show some understanding of fractions, decimals, and percents and their relationships;</i> • <i>solve some simple, real-world problems in all the mathematics content strands;</i> • <i>when directed to do so, use—with some degree of accuracy—four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes; and</i> • <i>provide written responses that are often minimal and presented without supporting information.</i>
Proficient	<p>Fourth-grade students performing at the proficient level consistently apply integrated procedural knowledge and conceptual understanding to problem-solving in the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Fourth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>use whole numbers to estimate, compute, and determine whether results are reasonable;</i> • <i>have a conceptual understanding of fractions, decimals, and percents and their relationships;</i> • <i>are able to solve real-world problems in all the mathematics content strands</i> • <i>when directed to do so, accurately use four-function calculators, rulers, geometric shapes, and other technologies;</i> • <i>employ problem-solving strategies such as identifying and using appropriate information; and</i> • <i>organize and present written solutions with both supporting information and explanations of how they were achieved.</i>
Advanced	<p>Fourth-grade students performing at the advanced level apply integrated procedural knowledge and conceptual understanding to solve complex problems in the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Fourth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>solve complex and non-routine, real-world problems in all the mathematics content strands;</i> • <i>display independence and facility in the use of manipulatives (e.g., four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes), technology, and tools;</i> • <i>draw logical conclusions, and justify answers and solution processes by explaining why, as well as how, they were achieved;</i> • <i>go beyond the obvious in their interpretations; and</i> • <i>communicate their thoughts clearly and concisely.</i>

*English Language Arts (ELA) Performance Level Definitions
Grade 4 Benchmark Examination*

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>In the area of reading, fourth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for fourth graders, they make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences, and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.</p> <p><i>For example, when reading literary text, basic-level students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>tell what the story is generally about, providing limited details to support their understanding; and</i> • <i>connect aspects of the stories to their own experiences.</i> <p><i>When reading informational text, basic-level fourth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>tell what the selection is generally about or identify the purpose for reading it;</i> • <i>provide details to support their understanding; and</i> • <i>connect ideas from the text to their background knowledge and experiences.</i> <p>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate some control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are also able to sufficiently demonstrate conventional standards of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate appropriate response to the task in form, content and language;</i> • <i>use some supportive details;</i> • <i>demonstrate organization appropriate to the task; and</i> • <i>demonstrate sufficient command of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization to communicate to the reader.</i>
Proficient	<p>In the area of reading, fourth-grade students performing at the proficient level demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they are able to extend ideas in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experience. The connections between the text and what the students infer are clear.</p> <p><i>Specifically, when reading literary text, proficient-level fourth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>summarize the story;</i> • <i>draw conclusions about the characters or plot; and</i> • <i>recognize relationships such as cause and effect.</i> <p><i>When reading informational text, proficient-level students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>summarize the information and identify the author's intent or purpose;</i> • <i>draw reasonable conclusions from the text, recognize relationships such as cause and effect or similarities and differences; and</i> • <i>identify the meaning of the selection's key concepts.</i>

	<p>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students performing at the proficient level demonstrate reasonable control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are able to shape and control language, conforming to conventional standards of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>create an effective response to the task in form, content, and language;</i> • <i>demonstrate an awareness of the intended audience;</i> • <i>use effective organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>use sufficient elaboration to clarify and enhance the central idea;</i> • <i>use language appropriate to the task and intended audience; and</i> • <i>have few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization that interfere with communication.</i>
Advanced	<p>In the area of reading, fourth-grade students performing at the advanced level consistently generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices in various genres. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they are able to judge texts critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.</p> <p><i>Specifically, when reading literary text, advanced level students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>make generalizations about the point of the story;</i> • <i>extend the story’s meaning by integrating personal and other reading experiences with ideas suggested by the text; and</i> • <i>identify literary devices such as figurative language.</i> <p><i>When reading informational text, advanced-level fourth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>explain the author’s intent by using supporting material from the text; and</i> • <i>make critical judgments of the text (including its form and content) and explain their judgments clearly.</i> <p>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students performing at the advanced level demonstrate consistent control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are consistently able to shape and control language, conforming to conventional standards of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>In the area of writing, fourth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>create an effective and elaborated response to the task in form, content, and language;</i> • <i>express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking;</i> • <i>have unity of form and content in response to the writing task;</i> • <i>demonstrate awareness of the intended audience;</i> • <i>use effective organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>show proficient use of transitional elements;</i> • <i>elaborate and enhance the central idea with descriptive and supportive details;</i> • <i>use language appropriate to the task and intended audience; and</i> • <i>enhance meaning through control of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.</i>

*Mathematics Performance Level Definitions
Grade 6 Benchmark Examinations*

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>In the area of mathematics, sixth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate the ability to use mathematical skills and procedures in the five content strands at the knowledge and conceptual levels. Included in this level of performance is mastery of basic whole number computation and ordering when presented in problem settings.</p> <p><i>Specifically, sixth grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>complete problems correctly with the help of specific directions and problem-solving steps;</i> • <i>solve routine, real-world problems through the appropriate selection and use of strategies and technological tools including calculators, computers, and geometric shapes;</i> • <i>demonstrate a beginning understanding of algebraic representations;</i> • <i>are able to read representations such as charts and graphs and can perform calculations involving data sets; and</i> • <i>show limited skill in communicating mathematically.</i>
Proficient	<p>In the area of mathematics, sixth-grade students performing at the proficient level demonstrate proficiency in use of mathematical skills and concepts at the knowledge and conceptual levels, and apply mathematical procedures and skills to solve problems that involve applications of the five content strands.</p> <p><i>Specifically, sixth grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have a solid understanding of number relationships and can estimate and perform computations consistently;</i> • <i>understand basic geometric properties and can apply them in problem-solving situations;</i> • <i>can read and interpret representations of data sets and can draw conclusions based on the information;</i> • <i>consistently solve problems involving inequalities and ordering, and can verify their solutions; and</i> • <i>can communicate generally about their problem-solving techniques and strategies</i>
Advanced	<p>In the area of mathematics, sixth-grade students performing at the advanced level, in addition to routinely applying procedures and skills at the knowledge and conceptual understanding levels, solve problems involving complex applications and integration of the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Specifically, sixth grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>communicate effectively about numbers and demonstrate a high level of number sense;</i> • <i>extend geometric properties and apply them to problem situations;</i> • <i>implement procedures to solve abstract measurement problems;</i> • <i>make inferences and conclusions from data and probability models;</i> • <i>demonstrate use of variables and use clear written explanations when verifying problem-solving processes; and</i> • <i>synthesize the five content strands and make connections between strands</i>

*English Language Arts (ELA) Performance Level Definitions
Grade 6 Benchmark Examinations*

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>In the area of reading, sixth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read and make some interpretations. When reading text appropriate to sixth graders, they identify specific aspects of the text that reflect overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text to personal experience, and draw conclusions based on the text.</p> <p><i>For example, when reading literary text, basic-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read, identify specific aspects of the text that reflect overall meaning, and extend the ideas of the text by making simple inferences;</i> • <i>recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text by drawing conclusions; and</i> • <i>connect aspects of the story to their own experiences.</i> <p><i>When reading informational text, basic-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>tell what the selection is generally about or identify the purpose for reading it;</i> • <i>provide details to support their understanding;</i> • <i>connect ideas from the text to their background knowledge and experiences; and</i> • <i>select and use a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p>In the area of writing, sixth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate some control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are also able to demonstrate conventional standards of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>In the area of writing, sixth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate appropriate response to the task inform, content, and language;</i> • <i>maintain a consistent focus;</i> • <i>use supportive details;</i> • <i>demonstrate organization appropriate to the task; and</i> • <i>demonstrate sufficient command of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization to communicate to the reader.</i>
Proficient	<p>In the area of reading, sixth-grade students performing at the proficient level demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to sixth grade, they are able to extend ideas in the text by making clear inferences, draw conclusions, and make connections to their own experiences, including other reading experiences. The connections between the text and what the student infers are clear. Proficient sixth graders identify some of the devices authors use in composing text.</p> <p><i>Specifically, when reading literary text, proficient-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>summarize the story;</i> • <i>draw conclusions about the characters or plot; and</i> • <i>recognize relationships such as cause and effect.</i>

	<p><i>When reading informational text, proficient-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>summarize the information and identify the author’s intent or purpose;</i> • <i>draw reasonable conclusions from the text, recognize relationships such as cause and effect or similarities and differences;</i> • <i>identify the meaning of the selection’s key concepts; and</i> • <i>select and analyze a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p>In the area of writing, sixth-grade students performing at the proficient level demonstrate reasonable control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are able to shape and control language, conforming to conventional standards of sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.</p> <p><i>In the area of writing, sixth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>create an effective response to the task inform, content, and language consistent with the audience and purpose;</i> • <i>express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking;</i> • <i>use logical and observable organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>show effective use of transitional elements;</i> • <i>use sufficient elaboration to clarify and enhance the central idea;</i> • <i>use language (e.g., variety of word choice and sentence structure) appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>have few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization that interfere with communication; and</i> • <i>use some strategies such as analogies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes, and figurative language.</i>
Advanced	<p>In the area of reading, sixth-grade students performing at the advanced level describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text, consistently generalize about topics in the reading selection, and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices in various genres. When reading text appropriate to sixth grade, they are able to judge texts critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought, and extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world events. At this level, students’ responses are thorough, thoughtful, and extensive.</p> <p><i>Specifically, when reading literary text, advanced-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>make generalizations about the point of the story;</i> • <i>extend the story’s meaning by integrating personal and other reading experiences with ideas suggested by the text; and</i> • <i>identify literary devices such as figurative language.</i> <p><i>When reading informational text, advanced-level sixth-graders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>explain the author’s intent by using supportive material from the text;</i> • <i>make critical judgements of the text (including its form and content) and explain their judgements clearly; and</i> • <i>select and evaluate a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p>In the area of writing, sixth-grade students performing at the advanced level demonstrate consistent control over the features in the five writing domains, with emphasis on content and style. They are consistently able to shape and control language, conforming to conventional standards of</p>

sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.

In the area of writing, sixth-grade students at this level

- *create an effective and elaborated response to the task inform, content, and language consistent with audience and purpose;*
- *express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking;*
- *have unity inform and content in response to writing task;*
- *use logical, cohesive organization appropriate to the task;*
- *show sophisticated use of transitional elements;*
- *elaborate and enhance the central idea with varied and elaborated descriptive and supportive details in appropriate and extended response;*
- *use language appropriate to the task;*
- *begin to develop a personal style or voice;*
- *demonstrate precise and varied use of language (e.g., variety of word choice and sentence structures);*
- *use a variety of strategies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes, and figurative language; and*
- *enhance meaning through control of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization*

Mathematics Performance Level Definitions
ACTAAP Middle Level (Grade 8) Benchmark Examination

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the basic level exhibit evidence of conceptual and procedural understanding in the five mathematics content strands. This level of performance signifies an understanding of arithmetic operations-including estimation-on whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and percents.</p> <p><i>Eighth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>complete problems correctly with the help of structural prompts such as diagrams, charts, and graphs;</i> • <i>solve routine, real-world problems through the appropriate selection and use of strategies and technological tools-including calculators, computers, and geometric shapes;</i> • <i>use fundamental algebraic and informal geometric concepts in problem solving;</i> • <i>determine which of available data are necessary and sufficient for correct solutions and use them in problem solving; and</i> • <i>show limited skill in communicating mathematically.</i>
Proficient	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the proficient level apply mathematical concepts and procedures consistently to complex problems in the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Eighth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can conjecture and defend their ideas and give supporting examples;</i> • <i>understand the connections between fractions, percents, decimals, and other mathematical topics such as algebra and functions;</i> • <i>have a thorough understanding of basic-level arithmetic operations—an understanding sufficient for problem solving in practical situations;</i> • <i>are familiar with quantity and spatial relationships in problem solving and reasoning;</i> • <i>convey underlying reasoning skills beyond the level of arithmetic;</i> • <i>compare and contrast mathematical ideas and generate their own examples;</i> • <i>make inferences from data and graphs;</i> • <i>apply properties of informal geometry;</i> • <i>accurately use the tools of technology; and</i> • <i>understand the process of gathering and organizing data and are able to calculate, evaluate, and communicate results within the domain of statistics and probability.</i>
Advanced	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the advanced level reach beyond the recognition, identification, and application of mathematical rules in order to generalize and synthesize concepts and principles in the five mathematics content strands.</p> <p><i>Eighth-grade students performing at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>probe examples and counterexamples in order to shape generalizations from which they can develop models;</i> • <i>use number sense and geometric awareness to consider the reasonableness of an answer;</i> • <i>use abstract thinking to create unique and/or alternative problem-solving techniques; and</i> • <i>explain the reasoning processes underlying their conclusions.</i>

*English Language Arts (ELA) Performance Level Definitions
ACTAAP Grade 8 Benchmark Examination*

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DEFINITION
Basic	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the basic level demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read and make some interpretations. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they identify specific aspects of the text that reflect the overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text to personal experience and draw conclusions based on text.</p> <p><i>In the area of reading and use of resources, eight-grade students performing at the basic level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read, identify specific aspects of the text that reflect the overall meaning, and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences;</i> • <i>recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in a text by drawing conclusions; and</i> • <i>select and use a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p><i>In the area of writing, eighth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate appropriate response to the task inform, content and language;</i> • <i>maintain a consistent focus;</i> • <i>demonstrate organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>use supporting details; and</i> • <i>have some errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization that interfere with communication to the reader.</i>
Proficient	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the proficient level show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences-including other reading experiences. Proficient eighth graders identify some of the devices authors use in composing text.</p> <p><i>In the area of reading, eighth-grade students performing at the proficient level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information;</i> • <i>extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences-including other reading experiences;</i> • <i>analyze some of the devices authors use in composing text; and</i> • <i>select and analyze a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p><i>In the area of writing, eighth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>create an effective response to the task inform, content, and language consistent with audience and purpose;</i> • <i>express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking;</i> • <i>have logical and observable organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>show effective use of transitional elements;</i> • <i>use sufficient elaboration to clarify and enhance the central idea;</i> • <i>use language (e.g., variety of word choice and sentence structure) appropriate to</i>

	<p><i>the task;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>demonstrate sufficient command of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization to communicate with the reader; and</i> • <i>use some strategies such as analogies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes and figurative language.</i>
Advanced	<p>Eighth-grade students performing at the advanced level describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they analyze both meaning and form and support their analyses explicitly with examples from the text; they extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world event. At this level, student responses are thorough, thoughtful, and extensive.</p> <p><i>In the area of reading, eighth-grade students performing at the advanced level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text;</i> • <i>analyze both meaning and form and support their analyses explicitly with examples from the text;</i> • <i>extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world events; and</i> • <i>select and evaluate a variety of information from various sources.</i> <p><i>In the area of writing, eighth-grade students at this level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>create an effective and elaborated response to the task inform, content, and language consistent with audience and purpose;</i> • <i>express analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking;</i> • <i>have logical, cohesive organization appropriate to the task;</i> • <i>show sophisticated use of transitional elements;</i> • <i>use varied and elaborated supporting details in appropriate, extended response;</i> • <i>begin to develop a personal style or voice;</i> • <i>demonstrate precise and varied use of language, (e.g., variety of word choice and sentence structures);</i> • <i>use a variety of strategies such as analogies, illustrations, examples, anecdotes, and figurative language; and</i> • <i>enhance meaning through control o spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.</i>