

Proficiency Scales

(Proficiency Scales, Content Scales, and Topic Scales all mean the same thing)

It's important for teachers to have a thorough understanding of the proficiency scales used in standards-referenced grading. Understanding is key to having consistency across classrooms and buildings in the district.

The **broadest descriptors** we have for performance levels are the Academic Descriptors found in Grading Practice 1:

Scale Score	Academic Descriptor	Student-Friendly Description
4	Exceeding Standard	I have demonstrated deep understanding that goes beyond the learning goal.
3	Meeting Standard	I have met the learning goal that's in the topic scale.
2	Developing Toward Standard	I have foundational skills and knowledge for the learning goal and I am almost there.
1	Insufficient Progress	The evidence that I've submitted shows I have a long way to go to reach the learning goal.
0	No evidence of student understanding in submitted work	In work I've submitted, I haven't yet shown I understand the learning.
M	Missing—student has not submitted evidence	I have not yet submitted evidence of learning for the learning goal.

Student-Friendly Descriptions are just that—statements for students to ensure they clearly understand what the broad academic descriptors mean from the start.

Next, we have more specific academic descriptors in our proficiency scales for each of those broad levels above. The more specific academic descriptors below (blue box) are relevant to all content areas. If teachers are not absolutely sure of what "Developing Toward Standard" means, for example, they should refer to these Proficiency Scales in blue. It's critical teachers do not just assume things or make up their own descriptors for the four levels.

Use the table in blue.

Proficiency Scales	
Score 4 Exceeding Standard	In addition to exhibiting Level 3 performance, students demonstrate in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the learning goal (in Level 3).
Score 3 Meeting Standard	Students demonstrate they have the ability to meet the standard by submitting evidence for all learning targets, with no major errors or omissions regarding any of the information and/or processes (simple or complex) that make up the targets.
Score 2 Developing Toward Standard	Students demonstrate basic foundational knowledge of the learning targets, including recalling or recognizing vocabulary critical to the targets. There are no major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details and processes, BUT there are major errors or omissions regarding the more complex ideas and processes.
Score 1 Insufficient Progress	Student performance reflects insufficient progress towards foundational skills and knowledge. Elementary: Student performance reflects beginning-to-learn foundational skills & knowledge.
Score 0	There is no evidence of student understanding in submitted work, OR....
Score M No evidence or missing	Missing: the student has not submitted evidence to show understanding of the standard.

Finally, we have very clear, topic-specific content scales used for creating assessments and for assessing a student's evidence of a topic of study. The descriptors in these scales, for Levels 3 and 2, usually borrow wording from the Iowa Core State Standards, or national or other state standards but also stay true to the wording of the **blue generic descriptors** just above. The wording of Level 1 and Level 4 tend to be generic except in some certain content areas. Here's a math example from 8th grade:

Grading Topic: Equations in One Variable	
4 	<i>The student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the learning goal.</i>
3  Learning Goal	<p><i>Students demonstrate they have the ability to:</i></p> <p>A. Solve linear equations with rational number coefficients where there is one solution, infinitely many solutions, or no solutions. (8.EE.C.7) (procedural)</p> <p>B. Make sense of problems—describe the relationship between the structure of the equation and the number of solutions (MP1)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Retrieval -- Executing</i></p>
2 	<p><i>Students demonstrate they have the ability to:</i></p> <p>A. Solve linear equations with integer coefficients where there is one solution</p> <p>B. Recognize examples of linear equations with rational coefficients where there is one solution, infinitely many solutions, or no solution</p> <p>C. Use the distributive property and combine like terms when solving linear equations</p>
1 	<i>Student's performance reflects insufficient progress towards foundational skills and knowledge.</i>

Additional Standards for Mathematical Practice
<p>SFMP2: Students analyze linear equations.</p> <p>SFMP6: Students give explanations that are precise and use appropriate vocabulary.</p> <p>SFMP7: Students use the structure of an equation to know which steps to perform to solve it.</p>

Academic Vocabulary
One solution, no solution, infinite solution