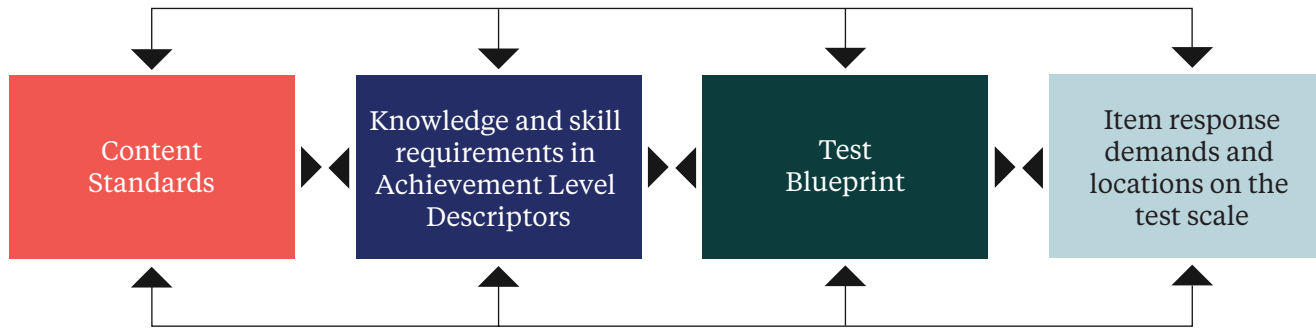


On the following pages, we present Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) for iMSSA. These ALDs represent intended interpretations of solid student achievement on the assessments for intended uses of test scores. All activities and decisions in the process of designing, developing, and implementing Cognia Interim Assessments are undertaken to support those intended interpretations and uses.

These assessments target college- and career-readiness content standards in Reading, Writing & Language, and Mathematics. Those standards are based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), similar to many rigorous standards in use across the U.S. and internationally. In turn, the ALDs are aligned with the content standards that are targeted on the assessments; test items are aligned with specific, targeted content standards; and the test forms are assembled as a collection of items that, together, cover a range of content standards and the range of levels of achievement displayed by students on the iMSSA score scales. This approach enables full alignment (Ferrara, 2017), from content standards to ALDs to test items to test forms and to score scales, as indicated in the figure below.

Full alignment of the iMSSA content standards, ALDs, test blueprints, items, test forms, and score reporting scales.



The ALDs describe the knowledge and skills expected from students whose test scores place them solidly in the Near Target or On Target achievement levels.

New Mexico Achievement Level Descriptors

As we begin to define the Achievement Level Descriptors for each grade and content, we first have to define each level.

On Target

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations.

They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards.

Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

The NM-MSSA Text Complexity and Demonstrated Skills statements define specifically what On Target means for each grade and content area.

Near Target

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations.

They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

The NM-MSSA Text Complexity and Demonstrated Skills statements define specifically what Near Target means for each grade and content area.

Needs Support

Students who **Need Support** display **limited mastery** of grade-level expectations.

They display **limited understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

The NM-MSSA Text Complexity and Demonstrated Skills statements **do not define** specifically what Needs Support means for each grade and content area as this category is used to indicate performance that does not meet the requirements for Near Target.

Principles that Guided the Development of ALDs for iMSSA

We began development of the ALDs with the assumption that the grade-level content standards represent what students should know and be able to do at the end of a given grade level. We used prior research on learning, cognition, and development in the subject areas, a variety of resources (e.g., *Living Word*, *Reading Teacher's Book of Lists*), and the teaching experiences of our content experts to define solid achievement at each level.

For example, consider the following grade 4 content standard and sub-objectives for Conventions of Standard English:

- 4.L.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- a. Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*).
 - b. Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking; I am walking; I will be walking*) verb tenses.
 - c. Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions.
 - d. Order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., *a small red bag* rather than *a red small bag*).
 - e. Form and use prepositional phrases.
 - f. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.
 - g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).

Students' understanding and skill related to this language usage standard could range from everyday speech to fairly sophisticated and nuanced usage. The table below shows sample ALDs to illustrate ranges of understanding and use of the sub-objectives of this standard across the Near Target or On Target achievement levels.

Near Target	On Target
Use familiar pronouns (e.g., <i>this, that</i>) correctly in sentences.	Use relative pronouns (e.g., <i>which, who</i>) and relative adverbs (e.g., <i>when</i>) correctly in sentences.
Identify and use regular and irregular present, past, and future tense verbs in sentences (e.g., <i>I go, I went, I will go</i>).	Form and use regular progressive verbs (e.g., <i>I was walking, I am walking, I will be walking</i>).
Use adjectives to describe objects.	Use adjectives to describe objects in an appropriate order (e.g., <i>the small red bag</i>).
Use simple prepositional phrases (e.g., <i>to the store</i>).	Use prepositional phrases involving adjectives and noun phrases (e.g., <i>to the grocery store; in the bright-green car</i>).
Identify the correct use of a homonym (e.g., <i>to, two, too</i>).	Use familiar homonyms correctly (e.g., <i>there, their, they're</i>).

In the ALDs above, we used verbs, adverbs, and adjectives to define item demands and levels of student knowledge and skill for the Near Target and On Target levels of achievement. We did this because the level of demand in a test item depends upon the way understanding and skills are assessed. For example, it is easier for students to identify a correct response than to produce it.

In some cases, a content standard might not be represented in both achievement levels. These instances are purposeful and represent cases where components of a standard do not lend themselves to both levels.

Finally, we considered whether the entire breadth of a content standard represents an on-grade-level expectation or whether certain components represent different levels of achievement. For example, the statement in the box below presents a skill related to grade 3 vocabulary standard 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 3 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

3.L.4.c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., *company*, *companion*).

For this standard, the root for *company* and *companion* is more abstract than would be typically understood by nine-year-olds. *Companion* also is an above-grade-level word. Where research suggests that the example(s) given for a standard are more challenging than what is developmentally appropriate for most students at a given grade level, we considered the intent of the standard and adjusted the examples to make the target more appropriate. For the standard 3.L.4.c, we reserved the more abstract example for more advanced third graders.

Near Target	On Target
Use the meaning of a familiar root word to determine the literal meaning of a simple form of a word (e.g., build, builder, building).	Use the meaning of a familiar abstract root word to determine the literal meaning of a more complex form of a word (e.g., worth, worthy and worthless).

With these guidelines in mind, our content experts drafted each ALD.

ALDs Development Process

After Cognia content experts developed an initial draft of the ALDs, we reexamined the progression of knowledge and skills across achievement levels within the same grade and across grade levels. Our goal was to ensure that achievement growth is evident within and across grade levels for each achievement level so that

- across grade levels, the Near Target ALD in grade 4 suggests a higher level of achievement than the Near Target level in grade 3 and a lower level of achievement than the Near Target level in grade 5 and so forth across grades 5 through 8 and for the On Target level.
- within grade levels, the Near Target ALD represents a lower level of achievement than the On Target ALD.

This overarching review ensures that recognizable and meaningful achievement growth is defined both within and across grade levels.

ALDs and Assessment Programs that Target the Common Core State Standards

To support assessment programs that have adopted the Common Core State Standards or similar standards, we compared the Cognia ALDs with the ALDs for frequently used assessments that target these standards. The focus was on consistency between our ALDs and ALDs from these Common Core assessment programs. Based on that comparison, we refined the Cognia ALDs.

The Cognia ALDs for each grade level are organized into two parts. The first part is a descriptive summary of the overall achievement of students at a given achievement level. The second part lists the more specific definitions of the sub-objectives in the overall descriptions.



Achievement Level Descriptors

Grade 3 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
Grade 3	<p>By the end of year, third graders at the Near Target level can write a paragraph to share an opinion, provide an explanation, or share a simple narrative with a main character. Students may include a reason for an opinion.</p> <p>Connections between the reasons and opinions may not be explicit. Students provide facts about a topic. Students can provide a concluding statement or sense of closure. They write simple subject-verb-object sentences with correct capitalization and ending punctuation.</p> <p>They use concrete words and simple phrases to explain their opinions and ideas and to describe experiences. Students at this level use basic grammar (past and present tenses), punctuation, and vocabulary to express their ideas.</p>	<p>By the end of year, third graders at the On Target level can write two or more paragraphs to present a supported opinion, provide a detailed explanation, and use information from texts to support their writing. Students can also write a narrative with real or imagined experiences using descriptive details.</p> <p>Students can give reasons, make simple connections between opinions and reasons, develop topics using facts and details, use dialogue to show characters' reactions, and provide a conclusion or sense of closure that is relevant. They use simple transition words to connect ideas and events. Students use language that is descriptive, that signals order or sequence, and that fosters understanding of topics and characters. Students use correct basic grammar (including all basic pronouns, subject-verb agreement, and regular past, present, and future tenses) and grade-level vocabulary in expressing their ideas.</p>

Language Usage—Grade 3

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a simple composition (e.g., paragraph).• Use a basic organizational structure for writing (beginning, middle, end), with minimal awareness of audience.• Provide at least one reason to support an opinion.• Present details or facts about a topic in list form.• Use simple linking words to connect ideas and information (e.g., and, but).• Use simple descriptive words (e.g., blue, nice, smart, hot).• Include actions and simple dialogue to show a character's reactions.• Use simple temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., then, next).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below.• Use appropriate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, opinion, information), including an introductory and a concluding statement.• Provide two or more reasons for a stated opinion.• Use linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons (e.g., because).• Group information by topic.• Use linking words and phrases to connect ideas within categories of information (e.g., another, one more).• Use descriptive details to illustrate people and places (e.g., friendly, warm, soft, round, windy).• Present a clear sequence of events.• Reveal characters at the opening of the narrative.• Include thoughts, actions, and simple dialogue (external) to show a character's reactions.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., first, last).

Language Usage—Grade 3

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce simple (SVO) sentences.• Use simple pronouns (he, she, it, you) correctly in sentences.• Identify and use regular singular and plural nouns.• Identify and use concrete nouns.• Identify and use familiar verbs.• Identify and use regular present and past tense verbs in sentences.• Identify and use descriptive, comparative, and superlative adjectives and common adverbs in sentences.• Identify simple coordinating conjunctions (and, or, so).• Capitalize name-based nouns in titles correctly (e.g., The adventures [sic] of Peter Rabbit).• Use commas in simple introductions correctly (e.g., Dear Sally,).• Use ending punctuation in dialogue.• Identify and form simple possessives (e.g., his, her, my).• Spell below-grade-level words; add suffixes that don't change base words (e.g., bad, badly; quiet, quietly).• Choose simple words for effect (e.g., The new kid is nice.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce compound sentences.• Use a range of pronouns (they, them, him, her, me, my) correctly in sentences.• Form and use regular and irregular plural nouns.• Use grade-level abstract nouns (e.g., problem).• Form and use regular and irregular verbs.• Form and use regular present, past, and future verb tenses in sentences (e.g., I walked; I walk; I will walk).• Use simple subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement correctly.• Form and use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs.• Use familiar coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (e.g., but, nor, because).• Capitalize appropriate words in titles (e.g., The Adventures of Peter Rabbit).• Use commas in simple and complex introductions and closings correctly (e.g., Dear Mr. James, and Sincerely, Sally Waters).• Use ending punctuation and beginning and ending quotation marks in dialogue.• Form and use possessives (e.g., ours, yours).• Spell grade-level words; add suffixes to common words that may change base words (e.g., cry, cries; sit, sitting).• Choose simple and complex words for effect (e.g., The new kid at school is friendly.).

Grade 4 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
Grade 4	<p>By the end of year, fourth graders at the Near Target level can write two to three paragraphs to share an opinion, provide an explanation, or share a simple narrative with a main character. Their writing has a basic structure (beginning, middle, and end). Students can give reasons and make simple connections between opinions and reasons, and develop topics using facts and details. They use dialogue to show characters' reactions, and provide a conclusion or sense of closure. They use simple transition words to connect ideas and events. Students provide some description to enhance understanding of characters and settings. Students correctly use quotation marks and correctly use basic grammar (regular and irregular past, present, and future tenses; subject/verb agreement) and a variety of descriptive vocabulary words to express their ideas.</p>	<p>By the end of year, fourth graders at the On Target level can write a simple but complete composition to present a supported opinion and provide a detailed explanation. They draw on information from resources and use domain-specific language to support explanations and opinions. They use introductory language, organize logically, and provide concluding statements. They can write narratives of real or imagined experiences using descriptions of events and settings, with more than one character, and with a problem to be solved. They use dialogue to show characters' reactions. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and events. They can use an array of grade-level words and phrases to describe experiences or convey information. They use varied vocabulary to describe people, places, and things.</p> <p>They can use compound and complex sentences with correct punctuation. They use correct capitalization in sentences, names, and titles. Students use correct basic punctuation and grade-level grammar (including basic relative pronouns, progressive tenses, and prepositional phrases) in developing their ideas.</p>

Language Usage—Grade 4

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a simple composition (two to three paragraphs).• Use basic organizational structure and language for writing (beginning, middle, end) with minimal awareness of audience.• Provide at least one reason to support an opinion.• Provide factual information about a topic or opinion.• Use simple linking words to connect ideas and information (e.g., and, but, so, because).• Use simple descriptive words (e.g., pretty, afraid, round, friendly, mean, soft, round, windy).• Include actions and dialogue to show a character’s reactions.• Use simple temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., then, next, after, before).• Relate their writing to ideas in texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below.• Use acceptable organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, opinion, information) including an introduction, sequential organization by events or logical organization by topics/reasons, and a concluding statement.• Provide facts, examples, and details to support topics and reasons for an opinion.• Use linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons; ideas and categories (e.g., since, because, another example, also).• Group ideas by reason or topic.• Use domain-specific vocabulary related to topics.• Reveal characters at the opening of the narrative.• Present events in a meaningful sequence.• Use descriptive details to illustrate people and places (e.g., achy, cool, unfriendly, bare, bubbly, deep).• Include thoughts, actions, and simple dialogue (external) to show a character’s reactions.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., first, last).• Summarize information from sources to avoid plagiarism.

Language Usage—Grade 4

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce complete simple and compound sentences.• Use familiar relative pronouns (e.g., this, that) correctly in sentences.• Identify and use regular and irregular present, past, and future tense verbs in sentences (e.g., I go, I went, I will go).• Use adjectives to describe objects.• Use simple prepositional phrases (e.g., to the store).• Identify the correct use of a homonym (e.g., to, two, too).• Capitalize titles and proper names correctly (e.g., The Adventures of Peter Rabbit).• Use quotation marks in dialogue.• Choose simple and complex words for effect (e.g., The new kid at school is friendly.).• Use appropriate language for the writing purpose.• Spell common grade-level words correctly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce complete compound and complex sentences.• Use relative pronouns (e.g., which, who) and relative adverbs (e.g., when) correctly in sentences.• Form and use regular progressive verbs (e.g., I was walking, I am walking, I will be walking).• Use adjectives to describe objects in an appropriate order (e.g., the small red bag).• Use prepositional phrases involving adjectives and noun phrases (e.g., to the grocery store; in the bright green car.).• Use familiar homonyms correctly (e.g., there, their, they're).• Correctly capitalize place names (e.g., Empire State Building).• Use ending punctuation and beginning and ending quotation marks in dialogue.• Use commas before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence (e.g., The teacher expected her students to get good grades, yet she gave her students no support.).• Choose appropriate words and phrases (e.g., Frank, the new boy at school, is friendly and helpful.).• Use the appropriate tone and language for the writing purpose.• Spell grade-level words correctly.

Grade 5 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
Grade 5	By the end of year, fifth graders at the Near Target level can write a simple composition to present an opinion supported by at least one detail and provide an explanation supported by at least one opinion. They organize their writing logically by topic. They draw on information from resources to support explanations and opinions. They use introductory language, organize logically, and provide concluding statements. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to link facts and details to opinions and topics. They use domain-specific language as appropriate for the topic. They can write narratives of real or imagined experiences using descriptions of events, with more than one character, and with a problem to be solved. They use dialogue to show characters' reactions to situations. They use descriptive vocabulary to illustrate people, places, and things. Students correctly use correct basic punctuation and grade-level grammar (including basic relative pronouns, progressive tenses, tenses that communicate time, and prepositional phrases) in developing their ideas. They use correct capitalization in sentences, names, and titles.	By the end of year, fifth graders at the On Target level can write a complete composition to present well-supported opinions and to provide detailed explanations. They clearly introduce explanations or opinions. They use information from provided resources to generate facts, details, and quotes to support their writing, and provide conclusions that tie their ideas together. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to link examples, facts, and details to reasons and topics. They use appropriate domain-related language to communicate information about a topic or opinion. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one primary character, a setting, a problem to be solved, and a resolution. Their narratives include opening statements to set the stage for a narrative, sequential organization, transitions between events, and language that draws the narrative to a close. They use dialogue and actions to show characters' reactions to situations. They use similes and descriptive phrases to describe characters and settings. They use a variety of sentence structures with correct grammar (including regular perfect tenses and tenses that communicate condition). They use commas appropriately for introductory elements and clauses.

Language Usage—Grade 5

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a full but simple composition.• Use acceptable organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, opinion, information), including an introduction, sequential organization by events or logical organization by topics/reasons, and a concluding statement.• Use headings to show organization.• Provide examples and details to support topics and reasons for an opinion.• Use linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons; ideas and categories (e.g., because, another example, also).• Use grade-level domain-specific vocabulary related to topics.• Reveal characters at the opening of the narrative.• Present events in a meaningful sequence.• Use descriptive details to illustrate people and places (e.g., achy, cool, unfriendly, bare, bubbly, deep).• Use concrete words to create setting.• Include thoughts, actions, and simple dialogue (external) to show a character’s reactions.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., first, last).• Summarize information from sources to avoid plagiarism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below.• Use appropriate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, opinion, information), including an introduction, sequential organization by events or logical organization by topics/reasons, and a conclusion drawing the writing to a close.• Provide well-chosen facts, details, and examples to support topics and reasons.• Use linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons; main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., for example, one example, if, since, even though, besides).• Use headings to identify topics and illustrations related to the text.• Use grade-level academic vocabulary related to topics and examples.• Reveal narrator and characters at the opening of the narrative.• Use descriptive and sensory details to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., lucky, fearful, free, warm, touchy, grim, dark, sandy, cloudy, breezy, dirty, gentle).• Include thoughts, actions, feelings, and dialogue to show a character’s experiences and reactions.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., so then, meanwhile, after a while).

Language Usage—Grade 5

Focus	Near Target	On Target
<p>At these achievement levels, students can:</p> <p>Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce complete compound and complex sentences.• Form and use regular perfect verbs (e.g., I was walking, I am walking, I will be walking).• Use verb tense to communicate time (I went to the store yesterday. I will be eating dinner later today. John had been waiting for the bus for 20 minutes.).• Identify the correct verb tense for the context.• Use commas to separate independent clauses and before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence (e.g., The teacher expected her students to get good grades, yet she gave her students no support.).• Use capital letters to identify titles.• Spell common grade-level words correctly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand compound and complex sentences to elaborate meaning.• Form and use regular perfect verb tenses (e.g., I was walking, I am walking, I will be walking.).• Use verb tense to communicate condition (e.g., Marta was in a lot of pain.).• Choose the best verb tense for the context.• Determine when to capitalize a familiar term (e.g., Mother, my mother).• Use commas in series and to set off introductory words (e.g., Then, Theresa ran down the street toward her house.).• Use underlining to identify titles.• Spell a variety of grade-level words correctly.

Grade 6 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
<p>Grade 6</p>	<p>By the end of year, sixth graders at the Near Target level can write a simple but complete composition to present supported arguments and to provide detailed explanations. They introduce explanations or arguments. They use information from provided resources to generate facts and details to support their arguments and explanations; they provide concluding statements. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to link examples, facts, and details to arguments and explanations. They use appropriate domain-specific language to communicate information about a topic or argument. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one primary character, a setting, and a problem to be solved.</p> <p>Their narratives include opening statements to set the stage for a narrative, sequential organization, transition words to show events, and an ending. They use dialogue and actions to show characters' reactions to situations. They use a variety of descriptive words and phrases to illustrate characters and settings. They use a variety of sentence structures with correct grammar (including regular perfect tenses and tenses that communicate condition). They use commas appropriately for introductory elements, series, and clauses.</p>	<p>By the end of year, sixth graders at the On Target level can write a complete composition to present arguments with strong reasons and supporting evidence. They can explain phenomena using detailed explanations. They clearly introduce explanations and arguments. They use a range of credible resources to generate facts, quotes, and examples that support their writing; they provide concluding statements or paragraphs summarizing ideas. They use a variety of organizational structures including classification, cause-effect, and comparison. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to show relationships between examples and facts and explanations or reasons. They use grade-level academic vocabulary to communicate their ideas. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one main character, a problem to be solved, and a resolution. The openings for their narratives introduce the characters and create the setting. They use sequential organization, transition words and phrases that move the narrative between events, and a clear ending. They use dialogue and actions to show characters' experiences and reactions to situations. They use a wide array of descriptive and sensory language to illustrate characters and settings. They can use varied sentence structures with correct grammar (including tenses that communicate sequence; appropriate use of relative, possessive, and objective pronouns; and clear connections between pronouns and nouns).</p> <p>They use parentheses to set off parenthetical statements.</p>

Language Usage—Grade 6

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a complete but simple composition. • Use acceptable organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information). • Provide an introduction to arguments that states the author’s position. • Provide an introduction to explanations that states the topic of the writing. • Provide details and examples to support topics and reasons. • Use simple linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons and to link main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., for example, one example, if, since, even though, besides). • Use headings to identify topics and add graphics (e.g., timelines, graphs) related to the text. • Use domain-related vocabulary in arguments and explanations. • Reveal characters at the opening of a narrative. • Use descriptive and sensory details to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., lucky, fearful, free, warm, touchy, grim, dark, sandy, cloudy, breezy, dirty, gentle). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below. • Use appropriate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information). • Establish a formal style for arguments and explanations. • Open arguments with a stated position and supporting reasons for the position. • Show awareness of counterarguments. • Use the introduction of an explanation to set the stage for the organizational structure. • Use cause and effect, comparison, and classification as strategies for organizing explanations and arguments. • Provide well-chosen facts, details, definitions, quotes, and examples to support explanations and arguments. • Use linking words and phrases to connect arguments, reasons, and evidence and to connect main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., as a specific example, especially). • Use transition sentences to introduce new ideas. • Use headings to identify topics and use graphics and illustrations to support textual explanations or arguments. • Use grade-level academic vocabulary related to arguments and explanations. • Reveal the main character’s/narrator’s point of view at the opening of the narrative. • Use sequential organization to present the narrative. • Use more sophisticated descriptive and sensory language to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., anxious, mumbling, muttering, chatter, chirp, crackle, scratchy, crisp, tender, moldy, moist).

Language Usage—Grade 6

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include dialogue that fits the character.• Use actions and feelings to show a character’s experiences and reactions.• Use a combination of mostly simple and some more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., so then, meanwhile, after a while).• Provide a concluding statement that draws the argument, explanation, or narrative to a close.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use thoughts, feelings, actions, and dialogue to show a character’s experiences and reactions.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., suddenly, shortly after, yesterday, earlier).
Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use compound and complex sentences to elaborate on meaning.• Use subject and objective pronouns appropriately for the purpose.• Use correct subjective pronoun-verb relationships.• Form and use regular perfect verbs (e.g., I was walking, I am walking, I will be walking).• Use common present, past, future, perfect, and progressive verbs correctly.• Use commas to separate independent clauses and before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence (e.g., The teacher expected her students to get good grades, yet she gave her students no support.).• Maintain consistency of grammatical style within sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a variety of compound and complex sentences to elaborate meaning.• Use subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns appropriately for the purpose.• Use correct number pronoun to noun relationships.• Use regular and irregular present, past, future, perfect, and progressive verbs correctly.• Maintain consistency of verb tense within paragraphs.• Use parentheses to set off parenthetical elements.• Maintain consistency of grammatical style within paragraphs.

Grade 7 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
<p>Grade 7</p>	<p>By the end of year, seventh graders at the Near Target level can write a simple but complete composition to present arguments with reasons and examples. They can explain phenomena and use examples to support their explanations. They introduce explanations and arguments with an opening statement. They use at least two resources to locate facts and examples that support their writing; they provide concluding statements or paragraphs summarizing ideas. They use a variety of organizational structures including classification, cause/effect, and comparison. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to show relationships between examples and explanations or reasons. They use domain-related vocabulary to communicate their ideas. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one main character, a problem, a sequence of events, and a clear ending. The openings for their narratives introduce the characters and create the setting.</p> <p>They use sequential organization, transition words and phrases that move the narrative between events, and a clear ending. They use dialogue and actions to show characters' experiences and reactions to situations. They use descriptive and sensory language to illustrate characters and settings. They use varied sentence structures with correct basic grammar (including tenses that communicate sequence; appropriate use of relative, possessive, and objective pronouns).</p>	<p>By the end of year, seventh graders at the On Target level can write a full composition to present arguments and counterarguments, with clearly stated reasons for both, and supporting evidence. They introduce arguments with a clear position, their reasons, and a realistic counterargument. They can write well-supported informational pieces. They clearly introduce informational pieces with a focus and the main topics of the work. Their explanations and arguments are anchored in facts, details, quotes, and examples from credible sources. They provide conclusions that tie together their ideas, related arguments, or explanations. They use a variety of organizational structures including definition, problem/solution, and compare/contrast. They use a variety of phrases to transition between topics and to show the relationship between quotations, examples, facts, and their reasons or explanations. They use a variety of grade-level academic vocabulary to communicate their ideas. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one developed character, a setting, a problem to be solved, and a solution.</p> <p>The openings for their narratives introduce the narrator and/or main character, the narrator's/main character's perspective, and the setting. They use sequential organization, including retrospectives; words and phrases that move the narrative smoothly between events; and an ending that wraps up the narrative and provides closure.</p> <p>They use descriptive and sensory language to create settings. They use dialogue, description, action, and figurative language to show characters' experiences and reactions to situations and to elaborate on events. They use appropriate sentence structures for the writing purpose (e.g., shorter sentences to create sense of urgency; detailed, complex sentences to create imagery) with correct grammar and effective use of noun and adverbial phrases. They use correct punctuation for coordinate adjectives, for independent clauses, and for introductory words and phrases.</p>

Language Usage—Grade 7

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a complete but simple composition. • Use adequate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information). • Open arguments with a stated position. • Use the introduction of an explanation to introduce the topic and possibly the sub-topics. • Use comparison and classification as strategies for organizing explanations and arguments. • Provide facts, quotes, and examples from sources to support explanations and arguments. • Use linking words and phrases to connect arguments, reasons, and evidence and to connect main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., for example, another example). • Use transition words, phrases, or sentences to introduce new ideas. • Use headings to identify topics and use graphics or illustrations to present additional information for explanations or arguments. • Use grade-level academic vocabulary related to arguments and explanations. • Introduce the main character or narrator at the opening of the narrative. • Use sequential organization to present the narrative. • Use descriptive and sensory language to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., anxious, mumbling, muttering, chatter, chirp, crackle, scratchy, crisp, tender, moldy, moist). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below. • Use appropriate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information) including an introduction, and a conclusion that draws the argument, explanation, or narrative to a close. • Use a formal style for arguments and explanations. • Open arguments with a position, supporting reasons for the position, and at least one counterargument. • Use the introduction for explanations to present the focus and a summary of the main ideas. • Use problem/solution, compare/contrast, or definition as strategies for organizing explanations and arguments. • Provide facts, details, definitions, quotes, and examples from credible sources to support explanations and arguments. • Use linking words and phrases to connect arguments, reasons, and evidence and to connect main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., in particular, specifically, a primary example). • Use transition sentences to connect one paragraph to the next. • Use headings and sub-headings to identify topics and sub-topics and use graphics (e.g., timelines and graphs) and illustrations to support explanations and arguments. • Use a specific, grade-level academic vocabulary related to arguments and explanations. • Reveal the main characters' or narrator's point of view at the opening of the narrative. • Present a narrative using naturally flowing, sequential organization with foreshadowing or reflection. • Use sensory and figurative language to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., "Her thoughts were like mercury; she had a hard time keeping them focused on just one idea at a time.").

Language Usage—Grade 7

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use feelings, actions, and description to develop characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use thoughts, feelings, actions, and dialogue to develop the main character and her/his experiences.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use description and actions to develop events.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., suddenly, shortly after, yesterday, earlier).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., unexpectedly, presently, yesterday, just before).
Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a variety of compound and complex sentences to elaborate meaning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose the appropriate simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns appropriately for the purpose.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the referent for pronouns is clear in complex sentences and prepositional phrases.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use phrases and clauses to minimize run-on sentences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain consistency of verb tense within paragraphs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose the best verb tense for the context.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use parentheses to set off parenthetical elements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use commas to separate coordinate adjectives (e.g., It was a fascinating, enjoyable movie.).
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain consistency of grammatical style throughout a document.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a variety of adverbs and adjectives to express ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose language that expresses ideas precisely.

Grade 8 Language Usage Achievement Level Descriptors

Students who are **On Target** display **mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **satisfactory understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness standards. Some students who are On Target display **superior** mastery of grade-level expectations and understanding and use of college- and career-readiness standards.

Students who are **Near Target** display **partial mastery** of grade-level expectations. They display **partial understanding and use** of college- and career-readiness knowledge and skills.

Grade	Near Target	On Target
<p>Grade 8</p>	<p>By the end of year, eighth graders at the Near Target level can write a simple but complete composition to present arguments with reasons and examples. They can explain phenomena and use examples to support their explanations. They introduce explanations and arguments with an opening statement. They use at least two resources to locate facts and examples that support their writing; they provide concluding statements or paragraphs summarizing ideas. They use a variety of organizational structures including classification, cause/effect, and comparison. They use words and phrases to transition between topics and to show relationships between examples and explanations or reasons. They use domain-related vocabulary to communicate their ideas. Students can write narratives about real or imagined events with more than one main character, a problem, a sequence of events, and a clear ending. The openings for their narratives introduce the characters and create the setting.</p> <p>They use sequential organization, transition words and phrases that move the narrative between events, and a clear ending. They use dialogue and actions to show characters' experiences and reactions to situations. They use descriptive and sensory language to illustrate characters and settings, They use varied sentence structures with correct basic grammar (including tenses that communicate sequence; appropriate use of relative, possessive, and objective pronouns).</p>	<p>By the end of year, eighth graders at the On Target level can write a complete composition to present arguments and counterarguments, with clearly stated reasons and supporting evidence for their arguments. They introduce arguments with a clear position, well-chosen reasons, and a relevant counterargument. Their explanations and arguments are supported by facts, details, quotes, and examples from credible sources. They can write well-supported explanations including introductions that explain the focus and main topics of the work and conclusions that tie their conclusions together in a coherent and interesting way. They select the organizational structure that best fits the purpose of their explanation or argument (e.g., definition, problem-solution, cause/effect, and argument/counterargument dialogue). They use a variety of phrases to transition between topics and to show the relationship between parts. They use a variety of grade-level academic vocabulary to communicate their ideas. Students can write compelling narratives about real or imagined events with more than one developed character, clear connections between characters, more than one setting, a problem to be solved, and resolution. The openings for their narratives introduce the narrator and/or main character, the narrator's/main character's perspective, and the initial setting. They use sequential organization, including foreshadowing and reflection; words and phrases that move the narrative smoothly between events and show time shifts; and an ending that draws the narrative to a close.</p> <p>They use sensory and figurative language to create settings. They use description, dialogue, and actions to develop characters and to show characters' experiences and reactions to situations. They use description and action to elaborate on events. They vary sentence structures to maintain interest and to best support the writing purpose. They use correct grammar and correct punctuation for a wide range of sentence structures (e.g., using commas to set apart subordinate clauses, restrictive clauses, coordinate adjectives, and multiple prepositional phrases).</p>

Language Usage—Grade 8

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a simple but complete composition. • Use adequate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information). • Open arguments with a stated position. • Use the introduction of an explanation to introduce the topic and possibly the sub-topics. • Use comparison and classification as strategies for organizing explanations and arguments. • Provide facts, quotes, and examples from sources to support explanations and arguments. • Use simple linking words and phrases to connect arguments, reasons, and evidence and to connect main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., for example, another example). • Use transition words, phrases, or sentences to introduce new ideas. • Use headings to identify topics and use graphics or illustrations to present additional information for explanations or arguments. • Use grade-level academic vocabulary related to arguments and explanations. • Reveal the main characters or narrator and their perspectives at the opening of the narrative. • Use sequential organization to present the narrative. • Use descriptive and sensory language to illustrate people, places, and events (e.g., anxious, mumbling, muttering, chatter, chirp, crackle, scratchy, crisp, tender, moldy, moist). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a complete composition that includes aspects, as appropriate, of the descriptors below. • Use appropriate organizational structure and language for the writing purpose and audience (narrative, argument, information) including an introduction, and a conclusion that draws the argument, explanation, or narrative to a close. • Use a formal style for arguments and explanations. • Open arguments with a position, supporting reasons for the position, and at least one counterargument. • Use the introduction for explanations to present the focus and a summary of the main ideas. • Use definition, problem/solution, cause/effect, or argument/counterargument dialogue as strategies for organizing explanations and arguments. • Provide facts, details, definitions, quotes, and examples from credible sources to support explanations and arguments. • Use linking words and phrases to connect arguments, reasons, and evidence and to connect main idea, topics, and examples (e.g., in particular, specifically, a primary example). • Use transition sentences to connect one paragraph to the next. • Use headings and sub-headings to identify topics and sub-topics and use graphics (e.g., timelines and graphs) and illustrations to support explanations and arguments. • Use a specific, grade-level academic vocabulary related to arguments and explanations. • Reveal the main characters' or narrator's point of view at the opening of the narrative. • Present a narrative using naturally flowing, sequential organization with foreshadowing or reflection. • Use description, actions, and dialogue to develop the main characters.

Language Usage—Grade 8

Focus	Near Target	On Target
At these achievement levels, students can:		
Text Types and Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use feelings, actions, and description to develop characters.• Use a combination of simple and more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., suddenly, shortly after, yesterday, earlier).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use description and actions to develop events.• Use a combination of mostly simple and some more complex temporal words/phrases to signify time/order (e.g., unexpectedly, presently, yesterday, just before).
Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a variety of compound and complex sentences to elaborate meaning.• Use subjective, objective, and possessive pronouns appropriately.• Ensure the referent for pronouns is clear in complex sentences and prepositional phrases.• Maintain consistency of verb tense within paragraphs.• Use parentheses to set off parenthetical elements.• Maintain consistency of grammatical style within paragraphs.• Use verbs in the active and passive voice (The girl knitted a scarf for her friend. The scarf was knitted by the girl.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose appropriate simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.• Use phrases and clauses to minimize run-on sentences.• Use verbs in the indicative (I was going to the party when . . .), imperative (Go get a towel and do it quickly), and subjunctive (If Molly had been president of the book club, we wouldn't have had to read that dumb book) moods.• Use active and passive voice effectively.• Use active voice for action and passive voice for uncertainty.• Use commas to indicate a pause.• Maintain consistency of grammatical style throughout a document.• Choose verbs in the active and passive voice as appropriate for the writing purpose (e.g., Sam completed data collection at the end of the class. The data were collected to answer a research question.).



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