

Missouri Assessment Program

Communication Arts Achievement Level Descriptors

In July 1998, a five-step scale of achievement levels was established to classify students' performance in the area of Communication Arts. The levels were **“Step 1”** (lowest), **“Progressing,”** **“Nearing Proficiency,”** **“Proficient,”** and **“Advanced.”** Each level, beginning with Step 1, identifies a progression of students' skills, knowledge, and abilities; that is, each level is inclusive of the skills identified in the preceding level(s). Associated with each level is a specific range of numerical scores that determines students' rankings. These five levels have been approved by the State Board of Education.

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) was designed to measure students' progress in meeting the Show-Me Standards, a set of academic goals adopted by the State Board of Education in January 1996, as part of the board's goal to raise the bar for academic achievement and student performance in Missouri's public schools. Throughout the process of developing the Show-Me Standards and the MAP, teachers, business leaders, and parents have strongly supported the need for high academic standards and assessments in which students are able to apply their knowledge and skills.

Teachers, parents, legislators, and business leaders across the state met to determine what students should be expected to know and be able to do, at grade levels 3, 7, 10, and 11, in order to be considered “proficient” in Communication Arts. The “proficient” category, which is the cornerstone of the Communication Arts achievement levels, reflects this emphasis. Although rigorous levels were established, educators and citizens believe proficiency can be achieved through hard work by teachers, students, and parents.

The achievement levels represent what teachers, parents, and employers should expect students to know and be able to do at each grade level and subject area. Perhaps most importantly, the levels represent what Missouri teachers and citizens think should be demanded from students today. Missouri teachers, parents, legislators, and business leaders carefully drafted descriptors for the Communication Arts achievement levels to help educators understand what each level represents and what additional skills are required by students to improve their levels of performance. The descriptors should be studied carefully because they illustrate the connection of the Missouri Show-Me Standards to the MAP by specifying the skills, knowledge, and abilities that students should have at each achievement level.

The following are descriptors for the Communication Arts achievement levels at grades 3, 7, and 11.

MAP COMMUNICATION ARTS ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 3

Step 1

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- locate general ideas, setting, and sequence
- follow brief directions
- identify similarities and simple synonyms
- identify basic story elements and obvious problems

Writing—Students

- minimally address the topic
- attempt to write simple sentences
- demonstrate minimal knowledge of Standard English (rules of grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization)

Progressing

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- locate specific information, such as main idea, setting, problems, and sequence
- make basic comparisons
- begin to organize data, information, and ideas into provided graphic organizers
- begin to initiate research by developing text-based questions, key words, and ideas

Writing—Students

- attempt to address the topic using minimal details and some organization
- write complete sentences
- demonstrate basic knowledge of Standard English

Nearing Proficiency

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- identify textual elements, including main characters, setting, problems, solutions, and sequence
- identify relevant textual details
- identify obvious cause and effect
- draw conclusions
- organize data, information, and ideas into provided form
- use the text to initiate research
- read and comprehend a variety of texts

Writing—Students

- write for a variety of purposes with evidence of a beginning, middle, and end
- apply the rules of Standard English

Proficient

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- comprehend textual elements of main characters, setting, problems, solutions, and sequence
- identify main ideas and details
- identify synonyms and antonyms
- identify and clearly define problems
- compare and contrast
- make and explain predictions and inferences
- identify implied cause-effect relationships

Writing—Students

- write for a variety of purposes and audiences
- write in an organized manner using supporting details
- demonstrate control of Standard English

Advanced

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- summarize and interpret textual elements, including main characters, setting, problems, solutions, and sequence
- make complex inferences
- interpret figurative language

Writing—Students

- write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences
- develop a controlling idea with specific and relevant details
- demonstrate a command of Standard English

MAP COMMUNICATION ARTS ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 7

Step 1

Reading—In fiction and non-fiction, students

- comprehend literal information
- attempt to use context clues to determine meaning

Writing—Students

- minimally address the topic
- use incomplete or simple sentences
- demonstrate minimal knowledge of Standard English (rules of grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization)

Progressing

Reading—In fiction and non-fiction, students

- comprehend main ideas
- identify obvious similarities and simple cause-effect relationships
- recognize literary elements of character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution
- recognize author's purpose
- organize information in a provided form
- use text to initiate research

Writing— Students

- write complete simple sentences
- attempt to address the topic using minimal supporting details
- begin to organize ideas logically
- demonstrate knowledge of Standard English

Nearing Proficiency

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- comprehend a variety of types of literary works
- support conclusions with details from the text
- consistently use context clues to determine meaning
- compare and contrast
- create graphic organizers
- understand literary elements
- recognize theme, mood, simple figurative language, and authorial choices, such as point of view, genre, and basic stylistic techniques
- explain simple cause-effect relationships
- recognize characters' problem-solving processes and evaluate solutions

Writing—Students

- write complete sentences
- use supporting details to address the topic
- use basic transitions and simple organizational skills
- apply the rules of Standard English

Proficient**Reading**—In fiction and non-fiction, students

- interpret and explain literary works, theme, mood, and figurative language
- sequence details and events
- identify implied cause-effect relationships
- make inferences and judgments relating to literary elements
- draw conclusions and make logical predictions
- evaluate problem-solving strategies and solutions used by characters
- develop ideas to initiate research

Writing—Students

- use precise language and organize writing in a logical manner
- use ample details to support and develop ideas
- use a variety of sentence structures
- write for a variety of purposes and audiences
- demonstrate control of Standard English

Advanced**Reading**—In fiction and non-fiction, students

- interpret, analyze, and synthesize literary elements and techniques, theme, mood, author's purpose and perspective, and characters' motivation
- apply information to new situations
- explain reliability of sources
- identify and evaluate alternative solutions and implied information

Writing—Students

- use vivid language
- use complex sentences with effective transitions within and between paragraphs
- demonstrate a command of Standard English

MAP COMMUNICATION ARTS ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

GRADE 11

Step 1

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- extract information
- recognize basic patterns
- organize information using a provided form
- use context clues to determine literal meaning
- recognize problems

Writing—Students

- address a topic
- write with some evidence of purpose
- respond in generalities
- demonstrate a limited vocabulary
- demonstrate minimal knowledge of sentence structure and Standard English (rules of grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization)

Progressing

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- read and comprehend simple works
- extract information to initiate research
- compare accuracy of information and reliability of sources
- identify characters, point of view, author's purpose, main idea, and other basic literary elements
- recognize patterns in information and organize using a provided form
- make decisions and recognize consequences

Writing—Students

- address an intended purpose or audience
- support main ideas with generalities only
- demonstrate some organizational techniques
- demonstrate beginning use of sentence structure and Standard English

Nearing Proficiency

Reading—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- comprehend a variety of types of literary works
- apply context clues to determine underlying meaning
- develop ideas to initiate research
- identify author's purpose and techniques
- question the accuracy of information
- discover relationships within and between texts, such as similarities and differences, figurative language, and cause and effect
- create graphic organizers
- identify problems, strategies, solutions, and consequences
- explain reasoning used to make decisions

Writing—Students

- address a variety of purposes and audiences
- demonstrate organization with evidence of a main idea and general supporting details
- identify and apply rules of sentence structure and Standard English

Proficient**Reading**—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- read to analyze a variety of types of literary works
- create appropriate graphic organizers
- develop and explain ideas to initiate research
- evaluate accuracy of information and reliability of sources
- evaluate relationships
- use details to support inferences and predict outcomes
- identify the process used by characters in recognizing and solving problems
- identify problems and proposed solutions from multiple perspectives
- evaluate effectiveness of problem-solving strategies and solutions

Writing—Students

- use clear organization
- use relevant details, examples, and reasons as supporting evidence for developing main ideas
- use transitional devices and precise language
- attempt to show individual style and voice
- demonstrate control of sentence structure and Standard English

Advanced**Reading**—In fiction and nonfiction, students

- evaluate a variety of types of literary works
- analyze literary elements
- evaluate the reliability of sources
- make complicated inferences and present perceptions and ideas regarding authorial choices
- analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of problem-solving strategies and solutions from multiple perspectives
- create organizers for analysis and presentation

Writing—Students

- use vivid details to support a well-developed main idea
- use advanced stylistic techniques
- demonstrate a command of sentence structure and Standard English