



English Language Arts Grade 3 Performance Level Descriptors

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Columbia, SC

South Carolina Department of Education
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Performance Levels and Performance Level Descriptors

For the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY), educators have developed four performance levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in South Carolina’s College- and Career-Ready Standards (SCCCRS). Most students have at least some knowledge of the information described in the content standards; however, performance levels succinctly describe the extent to which students have demonstrated mastery of the knowledge and skills expressed in the college- and career-ready standards. Performance levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level.

The four performance levels on SC READY are Does Not Meet Expectations, Approaches Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Exceeds Expectations.

The general meaning of each of the four levels is provided below:

- The student **does not meet** the expectations of the grade-level content standards.
- The student **approaches** expectations of the grade-level content standards.
- The student **meets** the expectations of the grade-level content standards.
- The student **exceeds** the expectations of the grade-level content standards.

More-detailed descriptions of the specific concepts and skills are provided for each indicator in the **Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)**. PLDs are descriptions of the knowledge and skills expected at each of the four performance levels and were developed by committees of South Carolina educators. The PLDs are based on the approved 2024 state-adopted ELA content standards.

PLDs show a progression of knowledge and skills that students are expected to have mastered across the performance levels. It is important to understand that a student should demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills within the student’s performance level as well as all content and skills in any performance levels that precede the student’s own, if any. For example, a student who Meets Expectations should also possess the knowledge and skills described at the Approaches Expectations and Does Not Meet Expectations performance levels.

Standard Expectations: Policies and Ranges

	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Policy	The student Does Not Meet Expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.	The student Approaches Expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.	The student Meets Expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.	The student Exceeds Expectations as defined by the grade-level content standards.
Range	The student needs substantial academic support to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student needs additional academic support to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student is prepared to be on track for college and career readiness.	The student is well prepared to be on track for college and career readiness.

Applications of Reading (AOR)

ELA.AOR.1

Evaluate and critique key literary elements that enhance and deepen meaning within and across texts.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.1.1: Explain how one or more characters develop throughout the plot.	Attempt to explain how one character develops throughout the plot.	Minimally explain how one character develops throughout the plot.	Explain how one or more characters develop throughout the plot.	Explain in depth how multiple characters develop throughout the plot.
ELA.3.AOR.1.2: Identify and explain the purpose of forms of figurative language to include metaphor, hyperbole, and idioms.	Attempt to identify and explain the meaning of forms of figurative language to include idioms	Identify and minimally explain the purpose of forms of figurative language to include metaphor, hyperbole, or idioms.	Identify and explain the purpose of forms of figurative language to include metaphor, hyperbole, and idioms.	Identify and explain in depth the purpose of forms of figurative language to include metaphor, hyperbole, and idioms.

ELA.AOR.2

Evaluate and critique the development of themes and central ideas within and across texts.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.2.1: Identify and explain an explicit theme in a literary text and how it is developed by key details.	Attempt to identify an explicit theme in a literary text.	Identify and minimally explain an explicit theme in a literary text and/or how it is developed by key details.	Identify and explain an explicit theme in a literary text and how it is developed by key details.	Identify and explain in depth an explicit theme in a literary text and how it is developed by key details.
ELA.3.AOR.2.2: Determine and explain a stated central idea and supporting details in an informational text.	Attempt to determine a stated central idea.	Determine and minimally explain a stated central idea and/or supporting details in an informational text.	Determine and explain a stated central idea and supporting details in an informational text.	Determine and explain in depth a stated central idea and supporting details in an informational text.

ELA.AOR.3

Evaluate how an author’s choice of point of view or perspective shapes style and meaning within and across literary texts.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.3.1: Determine and explain the differences between the perspectives of the characters and/or between the characters and the reader.	Attempt to explain the differences between the perspectives of characters.	Determine and minimally explain the differences between the perspectives of characters or between a character and the reader.	Determine and explain the differences between the perspectives of the characters and/or between the characters and the reader.	Determine and explain in depth the differences between the perspectives of the characters and between the characters and the reader.

ELA.AOR.4

Evaluate and critique how an author’s perspective and purpose shape style and meaning within and across informational texts.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.4.1: Determine and explain an author’s purpose (e.g., what an author wants to answer, explain, or describe); identify an author’s perspective on a topic.	Attempt to determine an author’s purpose (e.g., what an author wants to answer, explain, or describe).	Determine and minimally explain an author’s purpose (e.g., what an author wants to answer, explain, or describe); inconsistently identify an author’s perspective on a topic.	Determine and explain an author’s purpose (e.g., what an author wants to answer, explain, or describe); identify an author’s perspective on a topic.	Determine and explain in depth an author’s purpose (e.g., what an author wants to answer, explain, or describe); identify an author’s perspective on a topic.

ELA.AOR.5

Evaluate and critique how an author uses words, phrases, and text structures to craft text.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.5.1: Explain how sections of literary text (e.g., paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas) build on one another and contribute to the overall structure.	Attempt to explain how sections of literary text (e.g., paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas) build on one another.	Minimally explain how sections of literary text (e.g., paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas) build on one another and/or contribute to the overall structure.	Explain how sections of literary text (e.g., paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas) build on one another and contribute to the overall structure.	Explain in depth how sections of literary text (e.g., paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas) build on one another and contribute to the overall structure.
ELA.3.AOR.5.2: Explain how basic text features contribute to meaning in an informational text; identify the text structures of description/list and/or cause and effect.	Attempt to explain how basic text features contribute to meaning in an informational text; attempt to identify the text structure of description/list or cause and effect.	Minimally explain how basic text features contribute to meaning in an informational text; inconsistently identify the text structure of description/list and/or cause and effect.	Explain how basic text features contribute to meaning in an informational text; identify the text structures of description/list and/or cause and effect.	Explain in depth how basic text features contribute to meaning in an informational text; identify the text structures of description/list and cause and effect.
ELA.3.AOR.5.3: Identify an author's claim, and explain how an author uses reasons to support that claim in an informational text.	Attempt to identify an author's opinion, and/or attempt to explain how an author uses a reason to support that opinion in an informational text.	Inconsistently identify an author's claim, and minimally explain how an author uses a reason to support that claim in an informational text.	Identify an author's claim, and explain how an author uses reasons to support that claim in an informational text.	Identify an author's claim, and explain in depth how an author uses reasons to support that claim in an informational text.

ELA.AOR.6

Summarize and paraphrase text to support comprehension and understanding.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.AOR.6.1: Summarize a text to enhance comprehension: a. include plot, theme, and key details for a literary text; and b. include a central idea and supporting details for an informational text.	Attempt to summarize a text to enhance comprehension. When summarizing, attempt to: a. include main story elements or key details for a literary text; or b. include a central idea stated in the text or supporting details for an informational text.	Partially summarize a text to enhance comprehension. When summarizing, partially: a. include plot, theme, and/or key details for a literary text; and/or b. include a central idea and/or supporting details for an informational text.	Summarize a text to enhance comprehension: a. include plot, theme, and key details for a literary text; and b. include a central idea and supporting details for an informational text.	[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]

ELA.AOR.7

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.AOR.7.1: Determine or clarify the meaning of known and unknown words and phrases, choosing from an array of strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use sentence-level context clues (e.g., definitions, examples) to determine the meaning of a word or phrase; b. consult print and digital reference materials to build and integrate background knowledge; and c. consult print and digital reference materials to find the pronunciation, part of speech, and to determine or clarify the precise meaning of words and phrases. 	<p>Attempt to determine or clarify the meaning of known words and phrases, choosing from an array of strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. attempt to use sentence-level context clues (e.g., definitions, examples) to determine the meaning of a word; or b. [classroom-based] c. attempt to consult print reference materials to find the pronunciation, part of speech, or to determine or clarify the precise meaning of words and phrases. 	<p>Inconsistently determine the meaning of known or unknown words and phrases, choosing from an array of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. inconsistently use sentence-level context clues (e.g., definitions, examples) to determine the meaning of a word or phrase; and/or b. [classroom-based] c. inconsistently consult print and digital reference materials to find the pronunciation, part of speech, or to determine the precise meaning of words and phrases. 	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of known and unknown words and phrases, choosing from an array of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use sentence-level context clues (e.g., definitions, examples) to determine the meaning of a word or phrase; and b. [classroom-based] c. consult print and digital reference materials to find the pronunciation, part of speech, and to determine or clarify the precise meaning of words and phrases. 	<p>[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]</p>

ELA.AOR.8

Analyze word relationships and nuances in word meanings within literary and informational texts.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.AOR.8.1: Determine an author’s use of words and phrases in grade-level literary, informational, and multimedia texts:</p> <p>a. distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases (e.g., take steps);</p> <p>b. identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are helpful); and</p> <p>c. determine relationships between words (e.g., synonyms and antonyms) to better understand each of the words.</p>	<p>Attempt to determine an author’s use of words and phrases in grade-level literary, informational, and multimedia texts:</p> <p>a. attempt to distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases (e.g., take steps); or</p> <p>b. [classroom-based]</p> <p>c. attempt to determine relationships between words (e.g., synonyms and antonyms).</p>	<p>Inconsistently determine an author’s use of words and phrases in grade-level literary, informational, and multimedia texts:</p> <p>a. inconsistently distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases (e.g., take steps); and/or</p> <p>b. [classroom-based]</p> <p>c. inconsistently determine relationships between words (e.g., synonyms and antonyms) to better understand each of the words.</p>	<p>Determine an author’s use of words and phrases in grade-level literary, informational, and multimedia texts:</p> <p>a. distinguish between literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases (e.g., take steps); and</p> <p>b. [classroom-based]</p> <p>c. determine relationships between words (e.g., synonyms and antonyms) to better understand each of the words.</p>	<p>[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]</p>

ELA.AOR.9

Build and apply a range of academic vocabulary, as well as grade-level appropriate morphology to apply to reading, writing, and speaking.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.AOR.9.1: Identify and use derivational morphemes, prefixes, suffixes, and phonic patterns to determine the meaning of words in grade-level content.</p>	<p>Attempt to identify prefixes, or phonic patterns.</p>	<p>Identify derivational morphemes, prefixes, suffixes, or phonic patterns.</p>	<p>Identify and use derivational morphemes, prefixes, suffixes, and phonic patterns to determine the meaning of words in grade-level content.</p>	<p>[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]</p>

Research (R)

ELA.R.1

Use critical thinking skills to investigate, evaluate, and synthesize a variety of sources to obtain and refine knowledge.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.R.1.1: Ask and answer questions about print and non-print sources to narrow or broaden thinking about a topic for inquiry.	Attempt to ask and answer questions about print and non-print sources to attempt to narrow or broaden thinking about a topic for inquiry.	Ask or answer questions about print and non-print sources to partially narrow or broaden thinking about a topic for inquiry.	Ask and answer questions about print and non-print sources to narrow or broaden thinking about a topic for inquiry.	[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]
ELA.3.R.1.2: Group findings from a provided print or non-print source.	Attempt to group findings from a provided print or non-print source.	Partially group findings from a provided print or non-print source.	Group findings from a provided print or non-print source.	[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]

Written and Oral Communication (C)

ELA.C.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.C.1.1: Write opinion pieces about a topic. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; include an opinion statement; b. include reasons supported by details from a provided source; c. use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. organize information; and e. provide a concluding statement. 	<p>Attempt to write opinion pieces about a topic. When writing, attempts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; include an opinion statement; b. include reasons supported by details from a provided source; c. use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. organize information; and e. provide a concluding statement. 	<p>Write opinion pieces about a topic. When writing, minimally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; include an opinion statement; b. include reasons supported by details from a provided source; c. use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. organize information; and e. provide a concluding statement. 	<p>Write opinion pieces about a topic. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; include an opinion statement; b. include reasons supported by details from a provided source; c. use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. organize information; and e. provide a concluding statement. 	<p>Write opinion pieces about a topic. When writing, skillfully:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; include an opinion statement; b. include reasons supported by details from a provided source; c. use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. organize information; and e. provide a concluding statement.

ELA.C.2

Write informative/expository texts to analyze and explain complex ideas and information.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.C.2.1: Write informative/explanatory pieces to examine a topic and provide information. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; b. develop the topic with facts, definitions, and/or details related to the topic; c. group information and use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. use precise language and vocabulary to inform or explain about the topic; e. use and explain information from a provided source; and f. provide a concluding statement or section. 	<p>Write informative/explanatory pieces that attempt to examine a topic and provide information. When writing, attempts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; b. develop the topic with facts, definitions, and/or details related to the topic; c. group information and use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. use precise language and vocabulary to inform or explain about the topic; and e. use and explain information from a provided source; and f. provide a concluding statement or section. 	<p>Write informative/explanatory pieces that minimally examine a topic and provide information. When writing, minimally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; b. develop the topic with facts, definitions, and/or details related to the topic; c. group information and use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. use precise language and vocabulary to inform or explain about the topic; e. use and explain information from a provided source; and f. provide a concluding statement or section. 	<p>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and provide information. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; b. develop the topic with facts, definitions, and/or details related to the topic; c. group information and use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. use precise language and vocabulary to inform or explain about the topic; e. use and explain information from a provided source; and f. provide a concluding statement or section. 	<p>Write informative/explanatory texts that skillfully examine a topic and provide information. When writing, skillfully:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. introduce a topic; b. develop the topic with facts, definitions, and/or details related to the topic; c. group information and use grade-appropriate transitions to link ideas; d. use precise language and vocabulary to inform or explain about the topic; e. use and explain information from a provided source; and f. provide a concluding statement or section.

ELA.C.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective techniques.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.C.3.1: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending. 	<p>Write narratives that attempt to develop real or imagined experiences. When writing, attempts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, or feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending. 	<p>Write narratives that minimally develop real or imagined experiences. When writing, minimally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, or feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending. 	<p>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending. 	<p>Write narratives that skillfully develop real or imagined experiences. When writing, skillfully:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. establish a setting and introduce a narrator or characters; b. use temporal words and phrases to sequence a plot structure; c. use descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop characters; and d. provide an ending.

ELA.C.4

Demonstrate command of standard English grammar and conventions when writing.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<p>ELA.3.C.4.1: Write and expand grammatically correct sentences (e.g., simple, compound, and complex) and paragraphs. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. capitalize nouns (organizations, monuments, and landmarks) and appropriate words in titles and dialogue; b. use periods to punctuate abbreviations and within quotation marks; c. use commas and quotation marks to indicate direct speech and quotations from a text; use commas to separate items in a series and phrases and clauses; d. use apostrophes to create contractions; e. distinguish between and use interrogative and demonstrative pronouns; f. distinguish between and use comparative and superlative adverbs; g. identify and use prepositional phrases; h. use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (regular and irregular), and simple verb tenses; i. explain the function of adjectives and adverbs in simple, compound, and complex sentences; 	<p>Attempt to write grammatically correct sentences (e.g., simple, compound, and complex) and paragraphs. When writing, attempts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. capitalize nouns (organizations, monuments, and landmarks) and appropriate words in titles and dialogue; b. use periods to punctuate abbreviations and within quotation marks; c. use commas and quotation marks to indicate direct speech and quotations from a text; use commas to separate items in a series and phrases and clauses; d. use apostrophes to create contractions; e. distinguish between and use interrogative and demonstrative pronouns; f. distinguish between and use comparative and superlative adverbs; g. identify and use prepositional phrases; 	<p>Inconsistently write grammatically correct sentences (e.g., simple, compound, and complex) and paragraphs. When writing, inconsistently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. capitalize nouns (organizations, monuments, and landmarks) and appropriate words in titles and dialogue; b. use periods to punctuate abbreviations and within quotation marks; c. use commas and quotation marks to indicate direct speech and quotations from a text; use commas to separate items in a series and phrases and clauses; d. use apostrophes to create contractions; e. distinguish between and use interrogative and demonstrative pronouns; f. distinguish between and use comparative and superlative adverbs; g. identify and use prepositional phrases; h. use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (regular and irregular), and simple verb tenses; 	<p>Write and expand grammatically correct sentences (e.g., simple, compound, and complex) and paragraphs. When writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. capitalize nouns (organizations, monuments, and landmarks) and appropriate words in titles and dialogue; b. use periods to punctuate abbreviations and within quotation marks; c. use commas and quotation marks to indicate direct speech and quotations from a text; use commas to separate items in a series and phrases and clauses; d. use apostrophes to create contractions; e. distinguish between and use interrogative and demonstrative pronouns; f. distinguish between and use comparative and superlative adverbs; g. identify and use prepositional phrases; h. use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (regular and irregular), and simple verb tenses; 	<p>[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]</p>

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
j. distinguish between and use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and independent and dependent clauses; k. identify and revise sentence fragments and run-on sentences; and l. consult print and multimedia sources to check and correct spelling.	h. use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (regular and irregular), and simple verb tenses; i. explain the function of adjectives and adverbs in simple, compound, and complex sentences; j. distinguish between and use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and independent and dependent clauses; k. identify and revise sentence fragments and run-on sentences; and l. [classroom-based]	i. explain the function of adjectives and adverbs in simple, compound, and complex sentences; j. distinguish between and use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and independent and dependent clauses; k. identify and revise sentence fragments and run-on sentences; and l. [classroom-based]	i. explain the function of adjectives and adverbs in simple, compound, and complex sentences; j. distinguish between and use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and independent and dependent clauses; k. identify and revise sentence fragments and run-on sentences; and l. [classroom-based]	

ELA.C.5

Revise writing to improve clarity and enhance style appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.

Indicator	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
ELA.3.C.5.1: Improve writing by planning, revising, editing, and building on personal ideas and the ideas of others to strengthen writing.	Attempt to improve writing by planning, revising, editing, and building on personal ideas and the ideas of others to strengthen writing.	Minimally improve writing by planning, revising, editing, and building on personal ideas to strengthen writing.	Improve writing by planning, revising, editing, and building on personal ideas and the ideas of others to strengthen writing.	[Meets Expectations is the highest level for this indicator.]