

DRAFT Achievement Level Descriptors

Grade 8 English Language Arts

EFFECTIVE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

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Achievement Levels and Achievement Level Descriptors

With the implementation of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, Georgia educators have developed four achievement levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in Georgia's content standards. Most students have at least some knowledge of the content described in the content standards; however, achievement levels succinctly describe how much mastery a student has. Achievement levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level.

The four achievement levels on Georgia Milestones are *Beginning Learner*, *Developing Learner*, *Proficient Learner*, and *Distinguished Learner*. The general meaning of each of the four levels is provided below:

Beginning Learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students need substantial academic support to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for post-secondary readiness.

Developing Learners demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students need additional academic support to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for post-secondary readiness.

Proficient Learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students are prepared for the next grade level or course and are on track for post-secondary readiness.

Distinguished Learners demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students ***are well prepared*** for the next grade level or course and are well prepared for post-secondary readiness.

More detailed and content-specific concepts and skills are provided for each grade, content area, and course in the **Achievement Level Descriptors** (ALDs). ALDs are narrative descriptions of the knowledge and skills expected at each of the four achievement levels and were developed for each grade level, content area, and course by committees of Georgia educators. The ***draft ALDs for English Language Arts*** were developed by Georgia educators in July of 2023 and are subject to revisions during the standard setting process that occurs after the first administration of a new assessment.

ALDs show a progression of knowledge and skills for which students must demonstrate competency across the achievement levels. It is important to understand that a student should demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills within his/her achievement level as well as all content and skills in any achievement levels that precede his/her own, if any. For example, a Proficient Learner should also possess the knowledge and skills of a Developing Learner and a Beginning Learner.

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POLICY DESCRIPTORS			
Beginning Learner	**Developing Learner**	**Proficient Learner**	**Distinguished Learner**
Beginning Learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students *need substantial academic support* to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for *post-secondary readiness*.	**Developing Learners demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills** necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students *need additional academic support* to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for *post-secondary readiness*.	**Proficient Learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills** necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students *are prepared for the next grade level or course* and are on track for *post-secondary readiness*.	**Distinguished Learners demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills** necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students *are well prepared for the next grade level or course* and are well prepared for *post-secondary readiness*.

RANGE DESCRIPTORS			
A student who achieves the Beginning Learner level demonstrates minimal command of the grade-level standards, working with various grade-level texts.	A student who achieves the Developing Learner level demonstrates partial command of the grade-level standards, working with various grade-level texts.	A student who achieves the Proficient Learner level demonstrates proficiency of the grade-level standards, working with various grade-level texts.	A student who achieves the Distinguished Learner level demonstrates advanced proficiency of the grade-level standards, working with various grade-level texts.
Big Idea: Context Students recognize influences on texts and analyze how they shape meaning.			
8.T.C.1: Purpose & Audience – Analyze the impact of purpose and audience on a wide variety of texts.			
• Determine multiple purposes **within a single text.** • Determine multiple audiences **of a single text.** • Identify text mode feature(s) that aid comprehension of a disciplinary text. • Construct multimodal texts or presentations for a specific purpose or audience.	• Explain how multiple purposes target a specific audience **within a single text.** • Determine the audiences and purposes **of a single text.** • Use text mode feature(s) to aid comprehension of a disciplinary text and its related context. • Construct multimodal texts and/or presentations that serve more than one purpose and/or audience using at least one clearly identifiable feature of incorporated modes.	• Analyze the development of multiple purposes **within a single text** and how those purposes target specific audiences. • Use text mode feature(s) to aid comprehension and analysis of a variety of disciplinary text(s) and their related context(s). • Construct multimodal texts and/or presentations that serve more than one purpose and target a specific audience, using multiple, clearly identifiable features of incorporated modes.	Analyze the development of multiple purposes **within two texts** and how those purposes target specific audiences.

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8.T.C.2: Authors & Speakers – Analyze how authors' and/or speakers' perspectives influence texts and how circumstances shape their creation.			
• Compare varying perspectives on a particular topic found across multiple texts. • Identify the background information and context presented in the text (e.g., geography, location, era, historical happenings).	• Contrast varying perspectives on a particular topic found across multiple texts, **explaining how** the text(s) **establish or develop a different** perspective to shape beliefs. • Identify an author's bias. • Explain the impact of the provided background information or context on text development. • Identify a variety of credible sources to research the answer(s) to question(s) on a provided topic.	• Compare and contrast varying perspectives on a particular topic found across multiple texts, **analyzing how** text(s) **establish and develop** perspectives to shape perceptions or beliefs. • Identify an author's bias and determine how bias impacts text credibility. • Analyze the impact of background information and context (e.g., geography, location, era, historical happenings) on text development. • Use a variety of credible sources to research the answers to questions on a provided research topic.	• Identify an author's bias, determine how bias impacts text credibility, and provide textual evidence to support the impact. • Analyze how background information in one text (e.g., geography, location, era, historical happenings) impacts the audience's understanding of another text.
Big Idea: Structure & Style Students analyze and use organizational structures and style to shape ideas and information.			
8.T.SS.1: Organization – Analyze and use organizational structures to craft meaning.			

• Plan a text using a text structure or text feature appropriate to a provided purpose and/or audience.
• Use a phrase or clause to transition between ideas **within a sentence** of a paragraph.
	• Explain how the provided organizational structure(s) or feature(s) are used to convey meaning, respond to the audience, or achieve specific purpose(s).
	• Design a text using text structures or text features to convey information for a provided purpose, and/or audience.
	• Use words, phrases, and/or clauses to transition **between ideas within a paragraph**.
	• Craft part of a multi-paragraph text by focusing on one of the following:
	  ○ Craft a section of a text that guides the focus.
	  ○ Revise part of an introduction to address the research, question, purpose, and/or audience.
		• Analyze how authors use organizational structures or features to convey meaning, respond to the audience, or achieve specific purposes.
		• Design texts, flexibly employing a variety of text structures and text features to convey information and/or add style as appropriate to purpose and audience.
		• Use varied words, phrases, and clauses to transition between ideas and to aid overall cohesion **across two paragraphs.**
		• Craft part of a multi-paragraph text. by focusing on one of the following:
		  ○ Craft a plan for a complete text that guides the focus.
		  ○ Craft a complete introduction that addresses the research
			• Use varied words, phrases, and clauses to transition between ideas and to aid overall cohesion **throughout a text.**
			• Craft multi-paragraph texts using a coherent structure with an introduction that guides the focus; logically organized and integrated supporting facts, reasons, explanations, details, descriptions, and/or events; and a well-developed conclusion with a sense of finality.

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	○ Use supporting facts, reasons, details, descriptions and/or events to increase the focus in one section of the text. ○ Revise part of a conclusion with a sense of finality	question, purpose, and audience. ○ Use supporting facts, reasons, details, descriptions and/or events to increase the focus in multiple sections of the text. ○ Craft a complete conclusion with a sense of finality.	
8.T.SS.2: Craft – Interpret and use language to craft engaging texts.			
• Identify figurative language, connotative language, or literary device choices that are used for a specific purpose. • Determine situational use for formal or informal style.	• Describe the meaning of a provided excerpt of figurative language, connotative language, and/or literary device choices. • Use figurative language, literary devices, or connotative language for intentional effect(s) **in a section of text**. • Use formal or informal style for a given purpose, audience, or disciplinary context.	• Analyze how figurative language, connotative language, and literary device choices are used in texts to strategically achieve specific purposes for target audience(s). • Use figurative language, literary devices, or connotative language for intentional effect(s) when creating **a section of text** to achieve specific purpose(s) or appeal to the target audience. • Use formal or informal style characteristics as indicated by a text's purpose, audience, and disciplinary context.	• Use **a variety of** figurative language, literary devices, or connotative language for intentional effects **throughout a text** to achieve specific purposes or appeal to the target audience.
Big Idea: Technique Students analyze and apply various techniques to comprehend and shape meaning.			
8.T.T.1: Narrative Techniques – Analyze and apply narrative techniques.			
• Identify a narrative technique that is used (e.g., dialogue, description, foreshadowing) to develop plot, character(s), or setting. • Identify plot structure(s), conflict, or narrative device(s) (e.g., flashback, foreshadowing) within a text. • Identify the theme(s) in a text. • Identify themes or character types from different time periods in a modern literary work.	• Describe how a narrative technique **within a section of text** develops the plot, character(s), or setting. • Determine specific detail(s) **within the text** that convey information about plot, characters, and/or setting. • Analyze how plot structure(s), conflict, or narrative device(s) (e.g., flashback, foreshadowing) create an intended effect (e.g., suspense, tension, humor) on the audience.	• Analyze the development of the narrative techniques (e.g., description, foreshadowing, dialogue) used **throughout a text** to develop plot, characters, and setting. • Analyze how plot structures, conflict, and narrative devices (e.g., flashback, foreshadowing) work together to create an intended effect (e.g., suspense, tension, humor) on the audience.	• Analyze how narrative technique(s) are used to develop ideas **within other text genres** (e.g., argumentative, expository). • Apply narrative techniques to engage the audience and achieve a specific purpose **in other text genres** (e.g., argumentative, expository).

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• Apply a narrative technique to develop plot, characterization, or setting.	• Describe how an author reveals theme(s) through characters, events, and/or other story elements.
	• Explain how a modern literary work draws on a provided theme, event pattern, and/or character type from different time periods.
	• Apply **one** of the following narrative techniques to achieve a specific purpose:
	  ○ Clearly sequence plot when given part of the sequence.
	  ○ Use one instance of dialogue to achieve a specific purpose.
	  ○ Use a descriptive detail to achieve a specific purpose.
		• Analyze how authors convey and reveal themes through characters, events, and other story elements.
		• Analyze how a modern literary work draws on themes, event patterns, and/or character types from different time periods.
		• Apply **multiple** narrative techniques to enhance writing, engage audiences, and achieve specific purposes:
		  ○ Clearly sequence plot, including the intro, climax, conflict/resolution, and conclusion.
		  ○ Apply dialogue to achieve specific purpose(s).
		  ○ Use descriptive details to achieve specific purpose(s).	

8.T.T.2: Expository Techniques – Analyze and apply expository techniques.			
• Recognize the main idea(s) or key detail(s) in an expository text that is presented using a specific technique. • Recognize how the author provides a sense of closure. • Determine key information that is supported by only one of the authors who are writing about the same topic. • Determine idea(s) in which two or more authors writing about the same topic disagree. • Apply an expository technique to introduce the topic, develop the topic, or provide a sense of closure.	• Describe expository techniques, including multiple main ideas, facts, statistics, key details, information from text features, and/or a sense of closure. • Determine a main idea of an expository text and support that main idea with facts, statistics, key details, information from text features, and/or a sense of closure. • Evaluate how two or more authors writing about the same topic are similar or different in how they shape their presentations of key information. • Apply expository techniques **within a paragraph** to introduce the topic, develop the topic with an idea, a fact, a statistic, or a key detail, and/or provide a sense of closure.	• Analyze the development of expository techniques used to present and design content, including multiple main ideas, facts, statistics, key details, information from text features, and a sense of closure. • Analyze and evaluate how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts. • Apply multiple expository techniques (e.g., main idea, facts, statistics, key details, text features, sense of closure) **across two paragraphs** to enhance writing and engage audiences.	• Analyze the development of expository techniques used in **multiple texts** to present and design content. • Apply expository techniques **throughout the text** to enhance writing and engage audiences.

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	• Apply expository techniques **within a paragraph** to develop the topic with multiple ideas, facts, statistics, and/or key details. • Apply expository techniques **within a paragraph** using text features to enhance writing and engage audiences.		
8.T.T.3: Argumentative Techniques – Analyze and apply argumentative techniques.			
• Recognize an author's claim, supporting relevant and logical evidence, an identified counterclaim, or a conclusion that logically follows the argument. • **Apply an argumentative technique** to develop an introduction or a logical conclusion.	• Recognize the argumentative technique the author uses to develop a provided claim. • Recognize a rebuttal to an identified counterclaim. • When provided an argumentative technique (e.g., claim, counterclaim, reason), **apply an additional technique** (e.g., counterclaim, relevant and logical evidence) to enhance writing.	• Analyze the development of argumentative techniques used to present and design content, including an author's claim, supporting relevant and logical evidence, an identified counterclaim, a rebuttal, and/or a conclusion that logically follows the argument. • **Apply more than one argumentative technique** (e.g., author's claim, supporting relevant and logical evidence, an identified counterclaim, a rebuttal, and a conclusion) to enhance writing and engage audiences	• Apply **argumentative techniques throughout a text** to enhance writing and engage audiences
8.T.T.4: Poetic Techniques – Analyze and apply poetic techniques.			
• Recognize poetic technique(s) including stanzas, rhyme scheme, imagery, figurative language and/or cacophony.	• When provided a poetic technique, explain its use for presenting or designing content. • Apply **a poetic technique** (e.g., stanzas, rhyme/rhyme scheme, imagery, figurative language, sound devices) to produce poetry and engage an audience.	• Analyze the development of poetic techniques used to present and design content, including stanzas, rhyme scheme, imagery, figurative language and/or cacophony. • Apply **multiple poetic techniques** (e.g., stanzas, rhyme/rhyme scheme, imagery, figurative language, sound devices) to produce poetry and engage audiences.	• Apply poetic techniques to engage the audience and achieve a specific purpose **in other text genres** (e.g., argumentative, expository).

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Big Idea: Research & Analysis Students use, discuss, analyze, and curate texts as they engage in various conversations, activities, and projects about a range of grade-level texts and topics.			
8.T.RA.1: Research & Inquiry – Conduct research, generating questions to guide investigations of complex topics of interest and using credible resources to support analyses.			
• Generate questions to guide research to investigate topic(s).	• Generate question(s) to guide research about a topic to extend the investigation of the topics and ideas. • Conduct research by locating and gathering information from **one credible source** (including print, digital, and personal communication) about texts or related topics. • Draw upon research to support ideas and information.	• Generate questions to guide research and make connections between related topics of interest, formulating questions to investigate complex topics and ideas. • Conduct research by locating, gathering, curating, and/or integrating information from **multiple credible sources** (including print, digital, and personal communication) about texts and related topics. • Draw from accumulated knowledge and research to analyze texts, challenging or extending ideas and information.	
8.T.RA.2: Curating Sources & Evidence – Utilize multiple print and digital texts to address a specific topic or question, assessing source credibility and relevance and integrating evidence properly to avoid plagiarism.			
• Follow a **standard** format for citation when integrating textual evidence.	• Locate evidence in **a print, digital, or multimodal source** to support a central idea or the answer to a question. • Determine ideas and/or information within print and/or digital text(s) that make the text credible or relevant. • Follow **Modern Language Association** (MLA) guidelines **when integrating textual evidence**.	• Locate evidence in **multiple print, digital, and/or multimodal sources** to support a central idea or question needed to document particular modes and genres. • Analyze print, digital, and multimodal sources for credibility and relevance, determining whether the ideas and information support the topic under investigation. • Follow **Modern Language Association** (MLA) guidelines **when integrating and citing textual evidence** or **creating a Works Cited entry** for a source.	• Locate evidence in print and digital sources to support **multiple** central ideas or questions.
Big Idea: Periods & Movements Students demonstrate knowledge of dominant themes, genres, and verbal styles of literature from a particular time period.			

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8.T.PM.1: Periods & Movements – Demonstrate knowledge of dominant themes, genres, and verbal styles of literature from a particular time period.			
• Identify how/when an author conveys a particular time period in literature.	• Identify a specific element (e.g., character, event, conflict, style, theme) that a modern writer adapted into their own works. • Determine the common theme in two pieces of literature by different writers within a given time period.	• Compare and contrast a modern author's adaptation of a myth or text (fictional or historical) to the original myth or text. • Compare and contrast the treatment of a common theme by different writers within a given time period.	• Compare and contrast two modern authors' adaptations of a text to the original version.
Big Idea: Grammar Conventions Students observe, analyze, and use the structures and conventions of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics as they interpret and construct texts.			
8.L.GC.1: Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics – Draw from knowledge of the conventions of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics when analyzing and constructing texts.			
• Form and use the progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive verb aspects. • Form and use participles. • Recognize and correct vague pronoun references. • Use correlative conjunctions to join words, phrases, or clauses. • Use conventional capitalization, quotation marks, commas, end punctuation, and attributions to indicate exact words and lines of dialogue. • Use semicolons to separate items in a series or list when at least one of the items already contains commas.	• Use commas, parentheses, and dashes to set off nonessential words, phrases, or clauses. • Use demonstrative pronouns.	• Use ellipses appropriately. • Use hyphens with appropriate affixes and compound words. • Use semicolons, with or without a conjunctive adverb, to form compound and compound-complex sentences. • Use parts of speech and their associated phrases or clauses to perform indicated sentence functions (e.g., subject, direct object, predicate nominative, modifier). • Use colons to introduce lists, examples, and explanations.	

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8.L.GC.2: Syntax – Apply understanding of syntax to comprehend, analyze, condense, and combine ideas and information, enhancing clarity, style, and meaning.			
• Determine when active voice should be used. • Determine when misplaced and/or dangling modifier(s) should be corrected in writing.	• Use a variety of simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to condense and combine ideas **within a paragraph.** • Use active voice **in a sentence**, ensuring subject-verb agreement. • Integrate provided modifier(s) while avoiding misplacement.	• Apply understandings of syntax to comprehend and analyze a variety of grade-level texts. • Use a variety of simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences to condense and combine ideas, maintaining consistent verb tense **throughout the text.** • Distinguish between active and passive voice, revising **a section of text** to maintain consistency in active voice. • Build and enrich ideas and information in texts by integrating modifying phrases and clauses and eliminating misplaced or dangling modifiers to convey meaning and facilitate engagement.	• Maintain consistent use of active voice **throughout a text** for deliberate effect.
Big Idea: Vocabulary Students engage in a wide range of written and spoken activities during which they expand and deepen their vocabularies, build word analysis skillsets (morphology), and determine or clarify the meanings of words and phrases.			
8.L.V.1: General, Academic, & Specialized Vocabulary – Use a variety of approaches to continuously build vocabulary across a range of real-life, academic, and disciplinary contexts and apply those understandings to analyze texts and to communicate effectively.			
		• Determine the meaning of a range of general, academic, and/or disciplinary vocabulary through **grade-level** print, digital, and/or multimodal texts or content. • Use grade-level general, academic, and/or disciplinary vocabulary to communicate clearly and precisely in a variety of settings.	• Use grade-level general, academic, and/or disciplinary vocabulary words to communicate clearly and precisely

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8.L.V.2: Word Analysis – Use word knowledge and word analysis skills to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases and to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes.			
	• Deconstruct word(s) to determine or clarify meaning using etymology knowledge when the tested Greek and Latin root, root word, or affix **was previously introduced**. • Identify the connection between parts of speech and the meaning of words (e.g., discuss as a verb vs. discussion as a noun). • Construct a **word** using a Greek or Latin root or root word and an affix.	• Deconstruct word(s) to determine or clarify meaning using etymology knowledge when the tested Greek and Latin root, root word, or affix is **at grade-level**. • Apply knowledge of parts of speech to determine the meanings of words and phrases in grade-level texts. • Construct and use **words** based on knowledge of Greek and Latin roots, root words, and/or affixes and use those words appropriately in context. • Use knowledge of parts of speech to determine precise words and phrases when constructing texts.	
8.L.V.3: Meaning & Purpose – Analyze the denotative and connotative meanings of words and phrases and strategically apply those understandings when interpreting and constructing texts.			
	• Describe relationships between words, phrases, and/or clauses (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, analogies, contextual clues) **within a sentence** to determine the meaning of unknown **or** multiple-meaning words and phrases. • Use available print and/or digital resources, including reference materials and digital tools, to determine, clarify, or verify the **meaning of unknown words.**	• Analyze relationships between words, phrases, and/or clauses (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, analogies, contextual clues) **beyond a sentence** to determine, distinguish, or clarify the meaning of unknown **and/or** multiple-meaning words and phrases. • Distinguish between the connotations of words that share a similar denotation (e.g., confident, assertive, egotistic, pompous, smug). • Use available print and/or digital resources, including reference materials and digital tools (e.g., online search, embedded word processing features), to determine, clarify, or verify the meaning of **multiple-meaning words and phrases.**	• Analyze relationships between words, phrases, and/or clauses (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, analogies, contextual clues) **across a text** to determine, distinguish, and/or clarify the meaning of unknown **and/or** multiple-meaning words and phrases.

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		• Determine or clarify the nuanced meanings of closely related words or phrases using available print and/or digital resources to make strategic decisions when writing.	

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