

Depth of Knowledge

Level 1 -

- Requires students to recite or recall of information including fact, formula, or simple procedure.
- May be asked to demonstrate a rote response, use a well-known formula, follow a set procedure (like a recipe), or perform a clearly defined series of steps.

Level 2 -

- Requires some mental processing beyond a habitual response.
- Requires students to make some decisions on how to approach a task or problem

Level 3 -

- Requires reasoning, planning, using evidence and in most cases to “explain their thinking.”
- Requires students to go beyond; to explain, to generalize, or connect ideas

Level 4 -

- Requires some complex reasoning, planning, developing and thinking over an extended period of time.
- May be asked to develop a hypothesis and perform complex analysis

Writing Depth of Knowledge Descriptions

Four levels of depth-of-knowledge are used in this analysis. The levels represent a hierarchy based on complexity (rather than difficulty). This difference takes some time to ponder and refine. The hierarchy is based on two main factors: 1) sophistication and complexity, and 2) the likelihood that students at the grade level tested would have received prior instruction or would have had an opportunity to learn the content. Some assessment items have a low depth-of-knowledge level because the knowledge required is commonly known and student with normal instruction at a grade level should have had the opportunity to learn how to routinely perform what is being asked.

Writing Level 1

Level 1 requires the student to write or recite simple facts. The focus of this writing or recitation is not on complex synthesis or analysis, but on basic ideas.

The students are asked to list ideas or words, as in a brainstorming activity, prior to written composition; are engaged in a simple spelling or vocabulary assessment; or are asked to write simple sentences. Students are expected to

write, speak, and edit using the conventions of Standard English.

This includes using appropriate grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Students demonstrate a basic understanding and appropriate use of such reference materials as a dictionary, thesaurus, or Web site. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 1 performance are:

- Use punctuation marks correctly.
- Identify Standard English grammatical structures, including the correct use of verb tenses.

Writing Level 2

Level 2 requires some mental processing. At this level, students are engaged in first-draft writing or brief extemporaneous speaking for a limited number of purposes and audiences.

Students are expected to begin connecting ideas, using a simple organizational structure. For example, students may be engaged in note-taking, outlining, or simple summaries. Text may be limited to one paragraph. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 2 performance are:

- Construct or edit compound or complex sentences, with attention to correct use of phrases and clauses.
- Use simple organizational strategies to structure written work.
- Write summaries that contain the main idea of the reading selection and pertinent details.

Writing Level 3

Level 3 requires some higher-level mental processing. Students are engaged in developing compositions that include multiple paragraphs. These compositions may include complex sentence structure and may demonstrate some synthesis and analysis.

Students show awareness of their audience and purpose through focus, organization, and the use of appropriate compositional elements. The use of appropriate compositional elements includes such things as addressing chronological order in a narrative, or including supporting facts and details in an informational report.

At this stage, students are engaged in editing and revising to improve the quality of the composition. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 3 performance are:

- Support ideas with details and examples.
- Use voice appropriate to the purpose and audience.
- Edit writing to produce a logical progression of ideas.

Writing Level 4

Higher-level thinking is central to Level 4. The standard at this level is a multi-paragraph composition that demonstrates the ability to synthesize and analyze complex ideas or themes. There is evidence of a deep awareness of purpose and audience.

For example, informational papers include hypotheses and supporting evidence. Students are expected to create compositions that demonstrate a distinct voice and that stimulate the reader or listener to consider new perspectives on the addressed ideas and themes. An example that represents, but does not constitute all of, Level 4 performance is:

- Write an analysis of two selections, identifying the common theme and generating a purpose that is appropriate for both