

Scales

(“Topic scale” or just “Topic” is the most common term for our 4-level scale in DMPS)

It’s important for teachers to have a thorough understanding of the topic scales used in standards-referenced grading. Understanding is key to having consistency across classrooms and buildings in the district.

The **broadest descriptors** we have for performance levels are the Academic Descriptors found in Guiding Practice 1:

Scale Score	Academic Descriptor	Student-Friendly Description
4	Exceeding Standard	I have demonstrated deep understanding that goes beyond the learning goal.
3	Meeting Standard	I have met the learning goal that’s in the topic scale.
2	Developing Toward Standard	I have foundational skills and knowledge for the learning goal and I am almost there.
1	Insufficient Progress	The evidence that I’ve submitted shows I have a long way to go to reach the learning goal.
0	No evidence of student understanding in submitted work	In work I’ve submitted, I haven’t yet shown I understand the learning.
M	Missing—student has not submitted evidence	I have not yet submitted evidence of learning for the learning goal.

Student-Friendly Descriptions are just that—statements for students to ensure they clearly understand what the broad academic descriptors mean from the start.

Next, we have more specific academic descriptors in our topic scales for each of those broad levels above. The more specific academic descriptors below are relevant to all content areas. If teachers are not absolutely sure of what “Developing Toward Standard” means, for example, they can refer to these scale descriptors in blue. It’s critical teachers do not just assume things or make up their own descriptors for the four levels.

[Use the table in blue.](#)

Topic Scales	
Score 4 Exceeding Standard	In addition to exhibiting Level 3 performance, students demonstrate in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the target. (Knowledge demonstrated is at a higher cognitive level, not exceeding grade level.)
Score 3 Meeting Standard	Students demonstrate they have the ability to meet the grade-level standard. There are no major errors or omissions regarding any of the information and/or processes (simple or complex) that make up the target.
Score 2 Developing Toward Standard	Students demonstrate basic foundational knowledge of the target, including recalling or recognizing vocabulary critical to the target. There are no major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details and processes, BUT there are major errors or omissions regarding the more complex ideas and processes.
Score 1 Insufficient Progress	Student performance reflects insufficient progress towards foundational skills and knowledge. (Level 1 is simply not a Level 2.)
Score 0	There is no evidence of student understanding in submitted work.
Score M No evidence or missing	Missing: the student has not submitted evidence to show understanding of the standard.

Finally, we have very clear, topic-specific scales used for creating assessments and for assessing a student's evidence of a topic of study. The descriptors in these scales usually borrow the wording of especially Level 1 and Level 4 in blue above. Levels 2 and 3 are worded specifically to the work of that topic but stay true to the spirit of the wording of the [blue generic descriptors just above](#). Here's a Grade 3 literacy example:

Analyze Point of View, Relationships, Interactions, and Conflicts (RI.3.3, RI.3.5, RI.3.6, RL.3.2, RL.3.6)	
4	In addition, to score a 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the goal.
3 Learning Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedure in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. (RI.3.3) ● Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently. (RI.3.5) ● Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text. (RI.3.6) ● Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. (RL.3.2) ● Distinguish their own point of view (perspective) from that of the narrator or those of the characters. (RL.3.6)
2	Students demonstrate basic foundational knowledge of the goal but still need support regarding the more complex ideas.
1	Student's performance reflects beginning to learn foundational skills and knowledge.