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Vermont Framework for Proficiency: Developing Proficiency Scales

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a process by which SU/SDs can develop proficiency scales that are connected to their Priority Performance Indicators (PPIs). This document is part of the larger Vermont Framework for Proficiency.

Introduction

A **proficiency scale** is a criterion-based assessment tool that is task-neutral and includes explicit expectations for learning at each level. A proficiency scale should be designed to show a continuum of distinct levels of knowledge and skills relative to a specific performance indicator. These distinct levels are qualitative (not quantitative) and describe what the student can do (rather than not do) at each proficiency level. The proficiency scale is used to assess where a student is along the learning progression and determine if a student has mastered the overarching Critical Proficiency (CP). These results will be used in concert with those from other PPIs to report student attainment of the corresponding CP.

Just as the proficiency scales for each PPI at grade 12 show what a student should know and do upon graduation, proficiency scales for each grade or grade band leading up to grade 12 should reflect an appropriate level of skills and knowledge for that grade level. This document uses the Presentation PPI from the [English Language Arts Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy](#) as a model to walk through the process by which educators can go from PPI to proficiency scale at any grade level. While the specifics may look different across content areas, the general process will remain the same.

Contents

Unpacking Grade Level Standards

While ELA is being used as an example, the first step in developing proficiency scales for any content area or grade level is determining what a student has to know and do in order to demonstrate proficiency in a given PPI. This begins with unpacking the grade level standard(s) that correspond to the selected PPI. This will inform the "proficient" level of the scale.

The Presentation PPI is made up of the following CCSS Anchor Standards:

- Speaking and Listening 4, 5, and 6 (SL.4-6); and
- Reading 1 (R.1).

The teaching of the PPI can be supported by the following CCSS Anchor Standards:

- Writing 4, 5, 6, and 9 (W.4-6, 9); and
- Language 1 (L.1)

In this example, there are two sets of corresponding grade level standards, one for grades 9-10 and one for grades 11-2.

For each grade level standard that makes up the PPI, analyze the standard by differentiating between the nouns and the verbs that indicate what a student is doing (in this example, the nouns have been **bolded** and the verbs have been *italicized*, as illustrated in the table below). This makes it easier to see exactly what the student needs to know and do to demonstrate proficiency in the PPI. As defined in the AOE's Student-Centered Terminology, **proficient** means that a learner has demonstrated competence in relation to identified learning targets, performance indicators, and/or Critical Proficiencies by applying skills and knowledge to new or different contexts and problems.

Priority Performance Indicator	Grade Level Standard(s) (Analysis: **Bold** the nouns; *italicize* the verbs indicating what students are doing)
Presentation: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence in such a way that the development, organization, style, register, and media are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (CCSS.ELA.Literacy.CCRA.SL.4-6) *(R.1) (W4-6, 9) (L.1)*	*Present* **information**, **findings**, and supporting **evidence** clearly, concisely, and logically such that **listeners** can follow the **line** of **reasoning** and the **organization**, **development**, **substance**, and **style** are appropriate to **purpose**, **audience**, and **task**. (SL.9-10.4) *Present* **information**, **findings**, and supporting **evidence**, *conveying* a clear and distinct **perspective**, such that **listeners** can follow the **line** of **reasoning**, alternative or opposing **perspectives** *are addressed*, and the **organization**, **development**, **substance**, and **style** are appropriate to **purpose**, **audience**, and a **range** of formal and informal **tasks**. (SL.11-12.4) *Make* strategic use of digital **media** (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive **elements**) in **presentations** *to enhance* **understanding** of **findings**, **reasoning**, and **evidence** and *to add* **interest**. (SL.9-10.5, SL.11-12.5) *Adapt* **speech** to a **variety** of **contexts** and **tasks**, *demonstrating* a **command** of formal **English** when indicated or appropriate. (SL.9-10.6, SL.11-12.6)

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Learning Targets

After analyzing the standard(s), the next step is to write two or more learning targets that describe each discreet skill that the student will need to demonstrate in order to be proficient. The following learning targets have been written based on the analysis of the grade level standard(s) that make up the Presentation PPI.

- I can present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly and concisely so that listeners can follow my line of reasoning.
- I can convey a clear and distinct perspective that listeners can follow. (Grades 11-12)
- I can address alternative or opposing perspectives. (Grades 11-12)
- I can choose organization, development, substance, and style that are appropriate to my purpose, audience, and task.
- I can make strategic use of digital media in presentations.
- I can enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence by adding digital media.
- I can add interest to my presentation with digital media.
- I can adapt my speech to a variety of contexts and tasks.
- I can demonstrate command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Finally, combine these learning targets into a series of statements that all follow the stem "I can" and are written in student-facing language; these are the criteria for proficient.

I can:
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly and concisely;
- Organize the presentation logically so that the development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task;
- Make strategic use of digital media to enhance understanding and add interest; and
- Adapt speech to fit the purpose, audience, and task.

Be sure to check that all elements of the PPI are included in the criteria for proficient and that all verbs match the [depth of knowledge](#) in the PPI.

Vertical Alignment

Once the criteria for proficient have been established at each grade level, it is important to check that the cognitive complexity and expectations build appropriately across grade levels and to make revisions as necessary, as demonstrated for the Presentation PPI in the table below. It is also recommended that educators go back and check the vertical alignment at each level of the proficiency scale, once the scale is complete.

Grade Band	Criteria for Proficient
Grades 6-8	I can: • Present claims and findings in a focused, coherent manner; • Emphasize important points with relevant descriptions, facts, details, and examples; • Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation; • Include multimedia components and visual displays into presentations to emphasize important points; • Adapt speech to fit the purpose and task.
Grades 9-12	I can: • Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly and concisely; • Organize the presentation logically so that the development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task; • Make strategic use of digital media to enhance understanding and add interest; and • Adapt speech to fit the purpose, audience, and task.

Determining Criteria for the Remaining Levels

The next step in the process of developing proficiency scales is to use the criteria for proficient to determine criteria for other levels of the scale. It is essential that all students can find themselves somewhere on the proficiency scale and understand what they need to do in order to move along the continuum.

Use the Proficiency Scale Quality Criteria to help you develop the criteria at the remaining levels of the scale. Keep in mind that:

• Proficiency scales should be task neutral.
• All levels of the proficiency scale should describe what the student can do (rather than cannot do). For example, for "developing," ask, "What do students have to know and do in order to be *almost proficient*?"
• Proficiency scale descriptors should be qualitative (not quantitative) and describe student performance at each proficiency level.
• Proficiency scale levels should be written in student-facing language.
• The descriptors at the "beginning" and "developing" levels do not have to include all elements of the PPI.
• The "beginning" level should identify foundational skills or knowledge a student demonstrates first when working toward proficiency.
• The "developing" level should identify foundational skills or knowledge a student demonstrates as a steppingstone to "proficient".
• The "expanding" level should require creative and flexible application of skills and knowledge at an advanced level.
• Every student should find themselves somewhere on the proficiency scale (after some instruction has occurred and with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and/or services as needed).

The table below shows a sample proficiency scale for Presentation at the graduation level. Notice how there are different numbers of learning targets in each level of the scale. This is because not all skills in the proficient column have four distinct levels of proficiency.

Priority Performance Indicator	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Expanding
Presentation: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence in such a way that the development, organization, style, register, and media are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (CCSS.ELA.Literacy.CCRA.SL.4-6) *(R.1) (W4-6, 9) (L.1)*	I can: • Present information on a topic; • Follow a suggested organizational format; and • Include digital media in the presentation.	I can: • Present information, findings, and evidence; • Organize the presentation so that it is appropriate to purpose, audience, and task; • Add digital media for clarity or to add interest to the presentation; and • Use a consistent tone.	I can: • Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly and concisely; • Organize the presentation logically so that the development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task; • Make strategic use of digital media to enhance understanding and add interest; and • Adapt speech to fit the purpose, audience, and task.	I can: • Engage the audience with compelling presentations that seamlessly integrate digital media with information, findings, and evidence; • Convey a clear perspective while addressing alternate or opposing perspectives; and • Adapt presentations to diverse purposes and audiences while maintaining the integrity and message of the original version. - or - I can create alternative evidence that expands upon proficient.

Further Reading

Visit the Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements page to learn more about the Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Hierarchies Development Process and to view the Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Content Hierarchies, Priority Performance Indicators and Transferable Skills Connections, and the Unpacking Priority Performance Indicators and Proficiency Scales Template.

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