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Introduction to Performance Level Descriptors

What Are Performance Level Descriptors?

Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) describe what students at each grade and performance level should know and be able to do in relation to the Michigan content standards (e.g. Benchmarks, Domains, or Grade Level Content Expectations) in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies. The PLDs describe four levels of achievement: *Apprentice*, *Basic*, *Met Michigan Standards*, and *Exceeded Michigan Standards*.

There are two types of PLDs: *Parent Report PLDs* are brief descriptions, and *Standard Setting PLDs* are much more detailed descriptions.

How Can I Use the PLDs?

Both types of PLDs can be used to obtain information about student performance on the MEAP. The PLDs can be a useful guide to understanding the general level of knowledge and skill of individual students as well as groups of students.

The Standard Setting PLDs make several very specific statements about student knowledge and skill. Because students learn in a highly individual manner, and the Standard Setting PLDs are very specific descriptions, not every statement will be accurate for every student. An individual student should be well described by most of the statements at his or her performance level, but all of the statements may not apply.

Teachers should be consulted to more accurately interpret the results of students' MEAP assessments, since teachers have day-to-day, first-hand experience concerning the strengths and weaknesses of individual students.

What Is the Primary Purpose of PLDs?

The primary purpose of Parent Report PLDs is to provide general interpretive information about student performance on the MEAP. They are printed on the reports that are sent to the parents and/or guardians of each student who took the MEAP.

The primary purpose of the Standard Setting PLDs was to guide stakeholder committees consisting of parents, educators, and community members in setting performance standards on the MEAP. These committees were asked to determine the levels of overall performance on each MEAP assessment that distinguish among the various performance levels. For example, these committees were asked to determine where the line is that divides *basic* and *met* performance? The members of these committees were carefully selected to represent the diversity of Michigan's population.

How Were the PLDs Developed?

Both types of PLDs were also developed by stakeholder committees, consisting of educators with experience and training in each subject and grade. The members of these committees were also carefully selected to represent the diversity of Michigan's population.

The Parent Report PLDs were developed by stakeholder committees that were asked to provide a general description of the knowledge and skill of students in each performance level in each subject.

The Standard Setting PLDs were developed by a different set of stakeholder committees that first became intimately familiar with the Parent Report PLDs, the MEAP assessments, and the content standards for their subjects (e.g. Benchmarks, Domains, or Grade Level Content Expectations). They were then asked to add detail to the Parent Report PLDs by considering the relevant content standards and actual MEAP assessments to describe student performance on each assessment consistent with the different levels of performance described by the Parent Report PLDs.

The final step in the development of Standard Setting PLDs was a system-wide revision of the Standard Setting PLDs across grade levels within each performance level and across performance levels within each grade. This revision process assured that the PLDs clearly describe the progression from one level to the next within a grade (e.g. what more is expected of a fourth grade student performing at the *exceeded* level than a fourth grade student performing at the *met* level?). The revision process also assured that the PLDs clearly describe the progression from one grade to the next within a performance level (e.g. what more is expected of a fourth grade student performing at the *met* level than a third grade student performing at the *met* level?).