Performance Level Descriptors

Prior to the standard-setting activity, committees of Arkansas educators developed performance level descriptors (PLDs). The PLDs describe what students at various performance levels know and can do. The PLDs below are specific to Arkansas Students with Disabilities. The PLDs specific to Grade 10 Science follow.

**Performance Levels and Definitions for the
Grades 3 through 11 Alternate Portfolio Assessment for
Students with Disabilities**

The five performance levels for Students with Disabilities are generally defined as:

Independent: Students at the Independent Level demonstrate performance well beyond the Functional Independence Level. They demonstrate mastery of authentic, age-appropriate, and challenging tasks in multiple settings. They can apply established literacy, mathematics, or science skills to real-world situations. They can generalize learned skills to solve new challenges. The student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical disabilities.

Functional Independence: Students at the Functional Independence Level frequently meet authentic, age-appropriate challenges. They demonstrate reasonable performance in multiple settings and are prepared for more challenging tasks. They can apply established literacy, mathematics, or science skills to real-world situations but may require minimal prompting. They perform these skills accurately in most instances but make occasional errors. The student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical disabilities.

Supported Independence: Students at the Supported Independence Level are attempting to meet authentic, age-appropriate challenges but have limited success. They demonstrate a partial or minimal ability to apply literacy, mathematics, or science skills and require frequent prompting. They make errors but occasionally perform these skills accurately. The student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical disabilities.

Emergent: Students at the Emergent Level do not sufficiently demonstrate the literacy, mathematics, or science skills needed to attain the Supported Independence Level. They are just beginning to show understanding or use of these skills and may require continuous prompting. In addition, the student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical disabilities.

Not Evident: Students at the Not Evident Level demonstrate no evidence of performance towards the science skills being assessed.

**Performance Levels and Descriptors for the
Alternate Portfolio Assessment for Students with Disabilities
in Grade 10 Science**

Performance Level	Definition
Independent	Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at the Independent Level demonstrate performance well beyond the Functional Independence Level. They demonstrate mastery of authentic, age-appropriate, and challenging tasks in multiple settings. They can apply established science skills to real-world problems on their own. They can generalize learned skills to solve new challenges. The student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical disabilities. *Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at this level may be able to:* • *conduct investigations to identify various plant and animal cell structures;* • *complete a Punnett square to predict the appearance of offspring;* • *describe the relationship between natural selection and evolution;* • *classify organisms based on multiple taxonomic levels (e.g., phylum, class);* • *sequence stages of reproductive cycles (e.g., metamorphosis, development of an embryo); and* • *compare and contrast the role of various organisms in the flow of energy through an ecosystem.*
Functional Independence	Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at the Functional Independence Level frequently meet authentic, age-appropriate challenges. They demonstrate reasonable performance in multiple settings and are prepared for more challenging tasks. They can apply established science skills to real-world situations but may require minimal prompting or support. They perform these skills accurately in most instances but make occasional errors. The student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical or sensory disabilities. Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at this level may be able to: • compare and contrast plant and animal cells; • predict the appearance of offspring based on observation of the parents; • describe changes in populations due to natural selection; • classify organisms into the appropriate kingdom; • compare the reproductive cycles of organisms (e.g., asexual and sexual reproduction); and • describe how energy flows through an ecosystem.

Performance Levels and Descriptors for the
Alternate Portfolio Assessment for Students with Disabilities
in Grade 10 Science (continued)

Performance Level	Definition
Supported Independence	Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at the Supported Independence Level are attempting to meet authentic, age-appropriate challenges but have limited success. They demonstrate a partial or minimal ability to apply science skills and require considerable prompting or support. They make errors but occasionally perform these skills accurately. Student may be unable to perform these skills without extensive support and assistance due to physical or sensory disabilities. *Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at this level may be able to:* • *identify cell structures specific to plant cells or animal cells;* • *recognize the difference in dominant and recessive traits;* • *identify changes that occur in organisms to enable survival;* • *identify organisms belonging to each of the six kingdoms;* • *describe the reproductive cycle of a variety of common organisms; and* • *examine the interactions among organisms in an ecosystem.*
Emergent	Tenth-grade students with disabilities at the Emergent Level do not sufficiently demonstrate the science skills needed to attain the Supported Independence Level. They are just beginning to show understanding or use of these skills; however, they are unable to perform these skills accurately without extensive support and assistance due to physical or sensory disabilities. Tenth-grade students with disabilities performing at this level may be able to: • List of differences between animal and plant cells; • identify inherited traits found in various organisms; • describe variations within populations of organisms; • identify various common organisms by their kingdom; • match organisms with examples of their reproductive cycles (e.g., insect: metamorphosis, bacteria: binary fission); and • list examples of producers and consumers in an ecosystem.
Not Evident	Tenth-grade students with disabilities at the Not Evident Level demonstrate no evidence of performance toward the science skills being assessed.