



# Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) Learning Progressions

This resource has been developed to provide educators with an understanding of the purpose and use of the Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions, specifically its use for instructional planning and as a tool for analyzing student responses based on Text Dependent Analysis prompts.

Learning Progressions have been defined in multiple ways...

“descriptions of the successively more sophisticated ways of thinking about an important domain of knowledge and practice that can follow one another as children learn about or investigate a topic over a broad span of time. They are crucially dependent on instructional practices if they are to occur” (Corcoran, Mosher & Rogat, 2009, p. 37).

“descriptions of successively more sophisticated ways of reasoning within a content domain” (Smith, Wiser, Anderson, & Krajcik, 2006, p. 1).

“descriptions of the successively more sophisticated ways of thinking about an idea that follow one another as students learn” (Wilson & Berthenthal, 2005).

“picture of the path students typically follow as they learn...a description of skills, understandings, and knowledge in the sequence in which they typically develop” (Masters & Forster, 1996).

The **Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions** have been developed as an instructional tool that illustrates the pathway in which students typically demonstrate their ability to integrate reading comprehension and analysis through a written essay. These learning progressions began as a potential continuum of student responses to TDA prompts using complex texts<sup>1</sup> over the course of time. Based on the results of the exploratory research (Thompson & Lyons, 2017) conducted in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), classroom teachers in grades 3-8 from across the state of Pennsylvania came together to refine and validate the TDA Learning Progression level descriptions. Teachers refined these descriptions by examining student work at multiple points throughout the course of a school year.



The results of this intense study of student work using the TDA Learning Progressions has resulted in the development of a series of instructional resources<sup>2</sup> that includes the following:

- Annotated student work based on the TDA Learning Progressions,
- Specific lessons to address the needs of students based on the next level in these Progressions, and
- Curricular replacement units that are designed to instruct students through a deep dive into the reading elements and understanding analysis.

The developed lessons and units are intended to move students forward based upon their “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978). This view of learning asserts that when a student is taught within their zone of proximal development for a set of knowledge and skills within a task, providing the appropriate assistance will give the student enough of a “boost” to achieve the expectations. In other words, if a student is operating at a *beginning* level, receiving instruction for the *emerging* level will allow them to move in a forward direction in their demonstration of the content. When the teacher understands what the next level in student learning looks like, they may provide the necessary assistance to move the student along on this continuum of TDA learning.

In 2021, the Center for Assessment and the PDE engaged in a similar study to explore the extent to which students in grades K-2 learn and demonstrate the underlying expectations of analysis given developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunity to learn. This study resulted in the development of a K-2 TDA Learning Progression along with grade appropriate lessons, analysis questions/prompts, and evidence of students’ pathway to demonstrating reading comprehension, analysis, and when appropriate, writing. It is important to note that students in grades K-2 were not expected to independently write a response to a TDA prompt. The student responses included student writing with teacher scribing, dictation, drawing, and/or students’ orally explaining responses.

The TDA Learning Progressions are structured in grade spans (K-2, 3-5 and 6-8) with 4 levels, *Beginning*, *Emerging*, *Developing*, and *Meeting*. The levels describe the typical path we see in student responses as they move toward demonstrating more sophisticated understanding. Although there are differences in student abilities between grades K-2, 3-5, and grades 6-8, the paths toward success are similar enough to negate the need for grade-specific TDA Learning Progressions. Additionally, since the knowledge, skills, and reasoning necessary for analysis are intertwined, there are overlaps between the underlying criteria. Consequently, the levels described on the TDA Learning Progressions are **not** intended to coincide with a rubric score, which provide a holistic view of students’ ability to demonstrate the criteria on the TDA Scoring Guidelines. Rather, these levels provide the teacher with an indication of student strengths and needs based on what students **can** do at a specific point in time, and therefore, allow teachers to use this information for differentiating instruction.

The underlying components of a TDA (**Reading Comprehension**, **Essay Writing**, and **Analysis**) were used to establish the TDA Learning Progressions and are further delineated into more specific criteria to provide the most information possible for the teacher. These criteria include:



Underlying Component	Criteria
Reading Comprehension	Focus on the Prompt Understanding of Text
Analysis	Textual Evidence Inferences Explanation and Elaboration
Essay Writing	Organization Word and Sentence Choice Conventions of Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar

Each criterion includes a description of the observable learning that characterizes typical student work at that level. It would not be feasible or useful to identify every possible iteration of what students demonstrate when responding to a TDA prompt for a myriad of different texts. Instead, the most common characteristics of student work at each level are used to provide a description that will apply to most student work samples. Consequently, when using these Learning Progressions, teachers will need to make a professional judgment regarding the best descriptor on the continuum for their students to plan the most appropriate instruction.

There are multiple dimensions to a performance on a TDA prompt—which encompasses **Reading Comprehension**, **Essay Writing**, and **Analysis**—and therefore a single student will often be at different levels within the same response depending upon the underlying component and criteria being examined. For example, a student may demonstrate that they are at the *meeting* level for both criteria under **Reading Comprehension**, but at the *beginning* or *emerging* level for the criteria under **Analysis**, and at the *developing* or *meeting* level for the criteria under **Essay Writing**. Getting at this fine-grained analysis of student work will allow teachers to differentiate instruction and create flexible small group instruction that meets the specific needs of students.

Although we have provided possible lessons based on the annotated student work, we hope that teachers will use the TDA Learning Progressions to:

- ✓ Analyze student work<sup>3</sup> to make instructional decisions appropriate for his/her students;
- ✓ Create instructional TDA prompts that allow students to practice deconstructing prompts;
- ✓ Create close reading lessons that allow students to comprehend text, identify reading elements, and practice analyzing with teacher guidance and collaborative discussions<sup>4</sup> with peers;
- ✓ Create instructional formative tools (e.g., organizers, sentence starters) that will guide students in their ability to respond to a TDA prompt;
- ✓ Use or create replacement units<sup>5</sup> that function as curricular materials to aid student understanding of the underlying components of a text dependent analysis prompt.



## The Thompson TDA Model

---

Thompson, J. (2018, 2022). Text Dependent Analysis Toolkit: Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) Learning Progressions. [www.nciea.org](http://www.nciea.org), <http://www.education.pa.gov>, and <http://pdesas.org>.

<sup>1</sup> See TDA Series: How to Select a Complex Text

<sup>2</sup> See TDA toolkit for the examples of the instructional resources described

<sup>3</sup> See TDA Series: Student Work Analysis

<sup>4</sup> See TDA Series: Collaborative Discussions for Close Reading

<sup>5</sup> See TDA Series: Replacement Units



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades K-2

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>				
<b>Focus on the Question/ Prompt</b>	Responds to a question/prompt by including random details which may include reading elements.	Responds to a question/prompt by identifying different reading element(s) and/or structure.	Responds to a question/prompt by identifying the reading element(s) and/or structure in which an expected reading element/structure is included.	Responds to a question/prompt by identifying and/or explaining the expected reading element(s) (e.g., character/s, setting, major events) and/or structure (beginning, middle, end) using a combination of the words and illustrations.
<b>Understanding of Text</b>	Dictates/writes, draws, and/ or orally tells random information about the text and/or personal connections.	Dictates/writes, draws, and/ or orally retells the text which includes minimal, irrelevant, or some inaccurate information, and/ or personal connections.	Dictates/writes, draws, and/ or orally retells the text using generally relevant text evidence.	Dictates/writes, draws, and/or orally retells the text using appropriate text evidence about the reading elements and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.
<b>Analysis</b>				
<b>Textual Evidence</b>	Provides a variety of inaccurate and/or irrelevant details from the text.	Provides a mix of relevant, irrelevant, or inaccurate details from the text (words and illustrations), some which are connected to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the question/ prompt.	Provides a mix of specific details and general information from the text (words and illustrations) that generally support the reading elements and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.	Provides relevant and specific details from the text (words and illustrations) that support the reading elements and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.
<b>Inferences</b>	Restates information about the text and/or personal experiences without making inferences.	Makes unclear or weak inferences about the textual evidence (words and illustrations).	Makes subtle inferences about the textual evidence (words and illustrations), relying mostly on prior knowledge or assumes the reader understands the meaning of the inference.	Makes appropriate and accurate inferences about the selected evidence (words and illustrations) and prior knowledge.
<b>Explanation</b>	States text information and/or personal experiences without a connection to the reading element(s) and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.	States an unclear connection between the evidence and inferences to the reading element(s) and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.	States a partially explains how the evidence and inferences support the meaning of the reading element(s) and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.	States how the evidence and inferences support the meaning of the reading element(s) and/or structure identified in the question/prompt.

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades K-2

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Writing and/or Verbal Response</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	Provides random details of story element(s) and/or events.	Provides a structure that introduces the reading elements. Events are identified in a haphazard order.	Provides loosely grouped details of reading element(s). Events are identified and described in a mostly logical order.	Provides logically grouped details of reading element(s). Events are identified and described in chronological order.
<b>Word and Sentence Choice</b>	Uses basic and repetitive vocabulary, including vague pronouns. Sentence structure is often flawed.	Uses simple and repetitive words and phrases. Uses short and repetitive sentences or run-on sentences about the text.	Uses appropriate vocabulary that is specific to the content of the text and question/prompt. Uses basic and/or run-on sentences to provide information related to the text.	Uses grade-appropriate specific academic and subject specific vocabulary (e.g., theme, character traits, beginning, middle, end) that is specific to the content of the text and question/prompt. Uses grade-appropriate sentences to introduce, explain, and conclude information about the text.
<b>When applicable:</b> <b>Conventions of Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar</b>  <b>NOTE:</b> Students should have opportunities to experiment with writing and therefore it may not be appropriate to review for conventions.	Uses unclear capitalization spelling, and punctuation rules <u>when writing</u> . Errors interfere with meaning.	Uses few capitalization spelling, and punctuation rules <u>when writing</u> . Errors sometimes interfere with meaning.	Uses some grade-appropriate capitalization spelling, and punctuation <u>when writing</u> . Errors do not interfere with meaning.	Consistently uses grade-appropriate capitalization spelling, and punctuation <u>when writing</u> . Errors do not interfere with meaning.

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades 3-5

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>				
<b>Focus on the Prompt</b>	Writes generally about the text using his/her own focus.	Acknowledges the expectations of the prompt and writes about one reading element and/or structure.	Responds to the prompt by addressing each reading element and/or structure separately.	Responds to the prompt by addressing the interrelationship between the reading elements and/or structure, and maintains focus throughout the entire essay.
<b>Understanding of Text</b>	Writes information about the text which includes blatant inaccuracies or misconceptions about the textual information and may incorporate personal narrative.	Writes a retelling/summary, which may include personal connections demonstrating general understanding of the text with some inaccurate details and/or without making inferences.	Writes details from the text which are not fully connected to the inferences made about the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Writes using relevant key details from the text that are integrated with the inferences about the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.
<b>Analysis</b>				
<b>Textual Evidence</b>	Copies a variety of words, phrases, or sentences directly from the text(s) in an incoherent manner.	Provides a mix of relevant and inaccurate or irrelevant details from the text(s), some are connected to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Provides a mix of relevant and irrelevant details from the text(s) that are generally connected to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Paraphrases or quotes relevant and precise details from the text(s) that support the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.
<b>Inferences</b>	Restates the text evidence in their own words and makes no inferences.	Makes a weak, underdeveloped, or inaccurate inference about the textual evidence and may rely on prior knowledge rather than text evidence.	Inconsistently makes inferences about the textual evidence identifying its meaning or importance as related to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Consistently makes inferences about each piece of evidence and explains how it supports the meaning or importance of the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.
<b>Explanation and Elaboration</b>	Provides information from the text without an explanation of why it was selected or how it contributes to the understanding of the elements and/or structure.	Attempts to connect details from the text to inferences made, but the explanation is unclear, underdeveloped, or unrelated to the reading elements and/or structure.	Generally draws coherent connections between the text evidence and the inferences about the reading elements and/or structure which are partially explained.	Fully explains and elaborates on the connections between the text evidence and inferences about the reading elements and/or structure with a clear explanation and/or generalization.

## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades 3-5

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Essay Writing</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	No identifiable structure is provided.	Provides a structure that introduces the topic.  Ideas are grouped into a somewhat logical structure (a sense of an introduction, body, and conclusion).	Provides a formulaic or repetitive structure and introduction that is appropriate for the analysis.  Ideas are grouped into logical parts with each part about one aspect of the text and elements and/or structure.  Transitions are used to show sequence (e.g., <i>before</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>then</i> , <i>later</i> ).	Provides a structure that is logical, coherent, and flows in a way as to be unobtrusive.
<b>Word and Sentence Choice</b>	Uses basic and repetitive vocabulary; pronoun use is often vague.  Sentence structure is often flawed.	Uses simple and repetitive words and phrases beyond formulaic transitions.  Includes sentences that do not add meaning. The use of personal pronouns is distracting.  Uses mainly simple and repetitive sentence structures with some variation in their beginnings.	Uses a varied vocabulary that is mostly appropriate for the content of the text and prompt.  Uses both simple and compound sentences that vary in their beginnings and length.  Simple conjunctions are used in compound sentences.	Uses academic and subject specific vocabulary (e.g., theme, characters traits, compare/contrast structure) and vocabulary that is specific to the content of the prompt.  Uses a variety of simple and compound sentences that have a variety of structures, beginnings, and lengths.
<b>Conventions of Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar</b>	Spells most high frequency words correctly and uses primary word chunks (e.g., <i>-at</i> , <i>-it</i> , <i>-op</i> ) to spell correctly.  Uses capital letters and punctuation inconsistently.  Inconsistent use of subject-verb or noun-pronoun agreement.	Uses grade-level appropriate word patterns to spell known and unknown words correctly, with some errors.  Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation (periods, question marks, or exclamation marks) correctly and consistently.  Few errors in subject-verb or noun-pronoun agreement.	Uses spelling patterns and rules to spell unfamiliar words correctly and spells words from the text correctly.  Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation, including commas for lists, and apostrophes for contractions, as well as quotation marks for direct quotes.	Uses spelling patterns and rules to spell unfamiliar multi-syllabic words correctly.  Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation, including commas to fix run-on sentences. Attempts complex punctuation (e.g., using apostrophes for possession, commas for clauses, or semicolons).

(Note: see grade level academic standards to determine grade level specific reading and writing elements.)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades 6-8

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>				
<b>Focus on the Prompt</b>	Acknowledges the prompt and reading elements and/or structure or may include elements outside of the prompt.	Acknowledges the expectations of the prompt and writes about one reading element or structure.	Responds to the prompt by addressing each reading element and/or structure separately.	Responds to the prompt by addressing the interrelationship between the reading elements and/or structure, and maintains focus throughout the entire essay.
<b>Understanding of Text</b>	Writes information about the text which includes blatant inaccuracies or misconceptions about the textual information and may incorporate personal narrative.	Writes a retelling/summary, which may include personal connections demonstrating general understanding of the text with some inaccurate details and/or without making inferences.	Writes details from the text which are not fully connected to the inferences made about the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Writes using relevant key details from the text that are integrated with the inferences about the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.
<b>Analysis</b>				
<b>Textual Evidence</b>	Provides a mix of relevant and inaccurate or irrelevant details from the text(s), some are connected to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Provides a mix of relevant and irrelevant details from the text(s) that are generally connected to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Paraphrases or quotes relevant events from the text(s) that support the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Paraphrases and quotes relevant and precise details from the text that support the reading elements and/or structure of the prompt; includes definitions, and multiple examples when appropriate, and correctly acknowledges the source of the evidence.
<b>Inferences</b>	Makes weak or inaccurate inferences about the textual evidence and may rely on prior knowledge rather than text evidence.	Inconsistently makes inferences about the textual evidence identifying its meaning or importance as related to the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Consistently makes straightforward inferences about each piece of evidence and explains how it supports the meaning or importance of the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.	Makes sophisticated inferences and interpretation about each piece of text evidence and connects to ideas related to the meaning of the text and the reading elements and/or structure identified in the prompt.
<b>Explanation and Elaboration</b>	Provides information from the text without an explanation of why it was selected or how it contributes to the elements and/or structure.	Attempts to connect details from the text to inferences made, but the explanation is unclear or lacking.	Generally draws coherent connections between the text evidence and the inferences about the reading elements and/or structure which are partially explained.	Fully connects the text evidence and inferences about the reading elements and/or structure through a clear and coherent explanation and generalization demonstrating a deeper meaning of the text.

## Text Dependent Analysis Learning Progressions Grades 6-8

Criteria	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Meeting
<b>Essay Writing</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	<p>Provides a structure that introduces the topic.</p> <p>Ideas are separated by body paragraphs with the sense of an introduction and/or conclusion.</p>	<p>Provides a formulaic or repetitive structure and introduction that is basically appropriate for the analysis.</p> <p>Ideas are grouped into related parts.</p> <p>Transitions are used to show sequence (e.g., <i>before, after, then, later</i>).</p> <p>Includes a basic conclusion.</p>	<p>Provides a formulaic structure and introduction that sets the context and states a purpose through a thesis statement.</p> <p>Ideas are grouped into logical parts with each part about one aspect of the text and elements and/or structure.</p> <p>Ideas are linked or connected with each other through the fluent use of transitions.</p>	<p>Provides a logical structure that is coherent and flows in a way as to be unobtrusive.</p> <p>States a purpose through a clearly constructed thesis statement.</p> <p>Draws a conclusion about the elements and/or structure of the prompt that restates important ideas and may offer a final insight about the text.</p>
<b>Word and Sentence Choice</b>	<p>Uses simple and repetitive words and phrases; includes clichés and sentences that do not add meaning.</p> <p>Use of personal pronouns is distracting.</p> <p>Uses mainly simple and repetitive sentence structures with some variation in their beginnings.</p>	<p>Uses vocabulary from the text or prompt; includes clichés and sentences that do not add meaning.</p> <p>Uses both simple and compound sentences that vary in their beginnings and length. Simple conjunctions are used in compound sentences.</p>	<p>Uses a varied vocabulary that is mostly appropriate for the content of the text and prompt.</p> <p>Third person is used throughout.</p> <p>Uses a variety of simple and compound sentences that have a variety of structures, beginnings, and lengths.</p>	<p>Uses academic and subject specific vocabulary (e.g., symbolism, foreshadowing) and vocabulary that is specific to the content of the prompt.</p> <p>Uses comparisons or images to clarify and explain ideas and information.</p> <p>Uses a variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences, in a manner that enhances the flow of the essay.</p>
<b>Conventions of Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar</b>	<p>Uses grade-level appropriate word patterns to spell known and unknown words correctly, with some errors.</p> <p>Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation correctly and consistently.</p> <p>Few errors in subject-verb or noun-pronoun agreement.</p>	<p>Uses spelling patterns and rules to spell unfamiliar words correctly and spells words from the text correctly.</p> <p>Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation, including commas for lists, and apostrophes for contractions, as well as quotation marks for direct quotes.</p>	<p>Uses spelling patterns and rules to spell unfamiliar multi-syllabic words correctly.</p> <p>Uses appropriate capitalization and punctuation, including commas to fix run-on sentences. Attempts complex punctuation.</p>	<p>Sophisticated use of grammar and conventions.</p>

(Note: see grade level academic standards to determine grade level specific reading and writing elements.)

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).