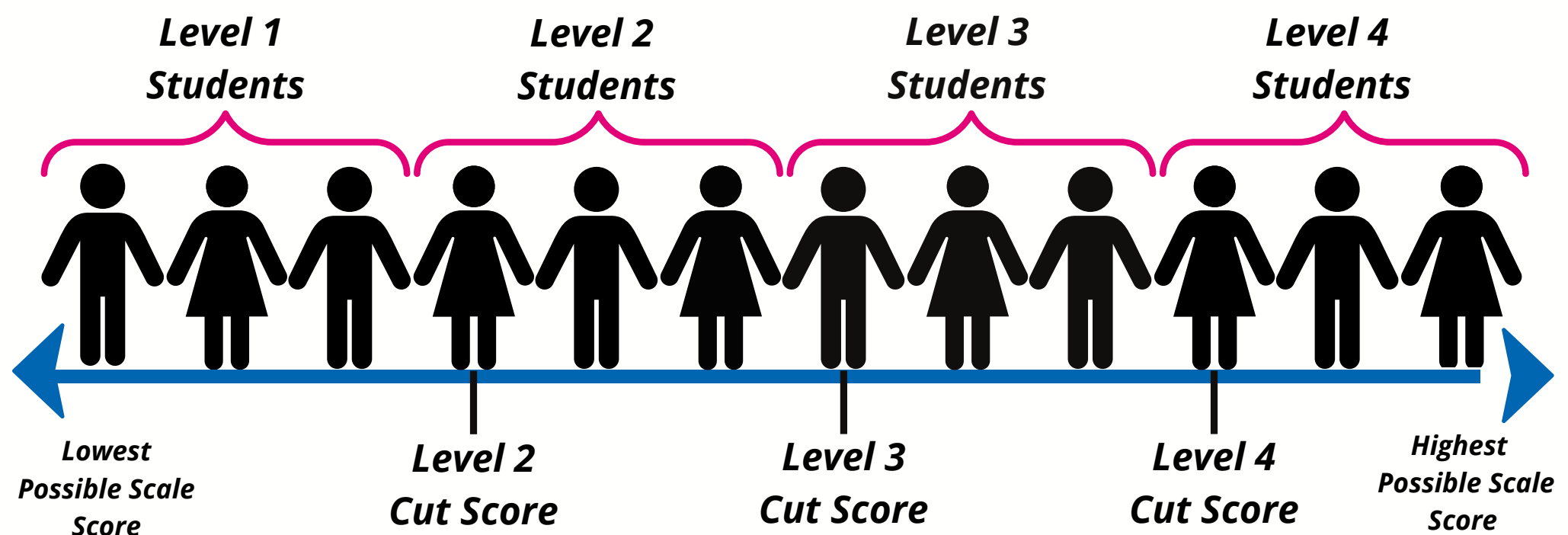# ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

What are achievement levels?

Achievement levels describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in the state content standards and give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve each level. Cut scores separate students into achievement levels on the test scale.

Achievement level descriptors (or ALDs) describe the expectations for students in each achievement level. For example, what does a student need to know to be considered a Level 3 Student?

Level 1 Students   **Level 2 Students**   **Level 3 Students**   **Level 4 Students**

Lowest Possible Scale Score   **Level 2 Cut Score**   **Level 3 Cut Score**   **Level 4 Cut Score**   *Highest Possible Scale Score*

Types of ALDs

Policy ALDs

Policy ALDs briefly describe the intended interpretation of the achievement levels. These ALDS are very high-level and not specific to any grade or content area assessment.

Range ALDs

Range ALDs are grade- and content-specific descriptors that describe the cognitive and content rigor that is encompassed within particular achievement levels. The range ALDs are developed at the beginning of the testing program and used by test developers to guide item writing. These ALDs describe what students in each achievement level should be able to do based on the grade level content standards.

Threshold ALDs

Threshold ALDs describe the minimum performance required for meeting a particular achievement-level expectation. These ALDs are created in conjunction with or following range ALDs and are important when setting cut scores.

Reporting ALDs

Reporting ALDs are often condensed and simplified versions of the Range ALDs printed on the backs of score reports. Parents and students can use the Reporting ALDs to understand the student's performance better.

ALDs are cumulative, where the knowledge and skills of lower level ALDs are assumed by the higher level ALDs. For example, a Level 3 student is assumed to also possess the knowledge and skills described in Levels 1 and 2.

How can ALDs be used in the classroom?

Before Instruction

Use the Range ALDs to guide instructional planning and student task alignment. Pre-assess students' knowledge and skills aligned to the standard/skill to be taught. Refer to the Range ALDs to create differentiated groups aligned to the pre-assessment data.

During Instruction

Formatively assess students' knowledge and skills and adjust differentiated groups accordingly. Refer to the Range ALDs to ensure students are progressing toward proficiency.

After Instruction

Assess students' knowledge and skills to ensure proficiency was met by all students. Use the Range ALDs as a guide for the assessment. Provide remediation for students who did not progress to proficiency and acceleration for others who have met proficiency.