AI-Powered, Integrated Unit Goals and Lesson Objectives for K-12 English Learners

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Abstract

For the more than five million K–12 students in the U.S. who are classified as English learners (ELs) [also referred to as multilingual learners], school success increasingly depends on integrated instruction that seamlessly blends three types of educational standards: English language development (ELD), foundational literacy, and academic content in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. Recognizing this critical need, this article offers research-based guidance and practical planning templates for designing concise, standards-aligned unit goals and lesson objectives. To significantly reduce the burden of manually aligning multiple sets of educational standards, the author introduces a responsible artificial intelligence (AI) workflow that combines structured templates with a closed-AI system limited to vetted documents. This innovative approach empowers language educators to shift from time-consuming standards retrieval and alignment tasks to more collaborative instructional design with content area and literacy colleagues. Ultimately, this approach transforms standards-aligned unit and lesson planning, enhancing efficiency and allowing these teams to dedicate more time to deeper instructional planning, specifically addressing the early literacy needs of K-12 ELs and the disciplinary literacy needs of long-term ELs (LTELs). This ensures all multilingual learners can receive the targeted, coherent instruction essential for academic success.

Keywords

English language development (ELD), English learners (ELs), multilingual learners, integrated unit planning, WIDA, English language arts/literacy, artificial intelligence (AI) in education

Introduction

Over 5 million K–12 students in the U.S. are classified as English learners (ELs) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024)[1]. Academic success for these students increasingly depends on instruction that integrates and aligns English language development (ELD), disciplinary content, and literacy skills (Blitz, 2025; Uccelli et al., 2015). Within the broader EL category, distinct EL student groups face persistent challenges: ELs in Kindergarten and first grade (especially those with special education needs) often show slower early reading growth compared to non-EL peers

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[1] In this article, the terms *English learner* and *multilingual learner* are used interchangeably to refer to the same group of K–12 students. The Georgia Department of Education, federal policy, and WIDA use *English learner* to link English proficiency levels with assessments of students' readiness to engage in academic content. WIDA also uses *multilingual learner* to emphasize students' broader linguistic assets and abilities in the classroom (WIDA, 2023).

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(Johnson, 2022), while long-term ELs (LTELs) in middle school (those students who remain in EL status for six years or more) may plateau in oral proficiency but lag in their disciplinary literacy development, limiting reclassification from EL status and general academic achievement (Rhinehart et al., 2024).

EL language, literacy, and content achievement are impacted by the complexity involved in planning instruction that successfully integrates multiple sets of educational standards (Shafer Willner, 2023a; Kray et al., 2023). To address these intertwined challenges for Georgia educators, this article presents a Georgia-specific case study for integrating three distinct sets of K–12 instructional standards: Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework (WIDA, 2020), and Georgia's newly revised K-12 ELA Literacy Foundations Standards (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE], 2025a). This fragmentation results in disjointed instruction, particularly affecting EL subgroups with distinctive needs.

The differing constructs, formats, and outcomes of these distinct K-12 educational standards often create barriers to efficient, cohesive instructional planning. In response, the article offers practical solutions for content, language, and literacy educators to align instruction without sacrificing clarity or rigor. First, it models a backward design approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), using standards-aligned unit goals to drive focused, measurable lesson objectives, informed by WIDA implementation guidance (Kray et al., 2023). Second, it introduces a closed artificial intelligence (AI) system—a platform limited to pre-vetted, standards-based documents—to support consistent, efficient generation of unit goals and lesson objectives. By handling time-consuming administrative tasks, AI gives educators more time for meaningful, collaborative planning (Wen & Jiang, 2025), especially vital when addressing the needs of multilingual learners or those requiring specialized instruction (García & Kleifgen, 2022; Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST], 2024). By streamlining standards-aligned planning, this approach enables educators to more systematically address the early literacy needs of K-12 ELs and the disciplinary literacy needs of LTELs, ensuring all multilingual learners receive the targeted, coherent instruction required for academic success.

The next sections summarize federal guidance and research on embedding WIDA-based ELD Standards within Georgia's content standards, outline the research base and templates for standards-aligned, integrated planning, and point educators to GaDOE correspondence mappings that provide expert educator recommendations for content-to-language standards integration.

Requirements and Components of State English Language Development Standards
K-12 educational standards guide the development of coherent local instruction and assessment systems, targeting grade-level expectations. Unlike curricula, which include the specific instructional materials, teaching methods, and lesson plans used in classrooms (the "how"), educational standards provide broad learning expectations that guide "what" students should achieve (Fullan, 2001). This distinction allows local educators the flexibility to design or select curricula that best meet their students' needs while still aligning with state-level shared expectations (Shafer Willner, 2023b).[2]

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[2] Explicitly supporting the design of instruction that promotes local control is why WIDA refers to its *standards* as a *standards framework* (Shafer Willner, 2023b). This allows districts leeway to create integrated ELD-ELA-SOR *curricula* while maintaining the integrity of the ELD standards construct. ELD standards are not equivalent to ELA standards, but chart a unique, complementary set of targets.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA of 2015) requires each state's ELD standards to define the language demands found in the state academic content standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. For more than two decades, federal requirements for ELD standards have been firmly rooted in established ELD research, including Bailey and Butler's (2003) academic language framework, Schleppegrell's (2020) extensive work around the language of schooling, and the strong evidence rating reported in the What Works Clearinghouse educator's practice guide (Baker et al., 2014). Thus, state ELD standards promote an approach called *content-based language learning*.

The ELD standards used in Georgia—the WIDA ELD Standards Framework (WIDA, 2020)—have four components: WIDA Standards Statements, Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, and Proficiency Level Descriptors (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
WIDA ELD Standards Framework Components and Sample Planning Questions
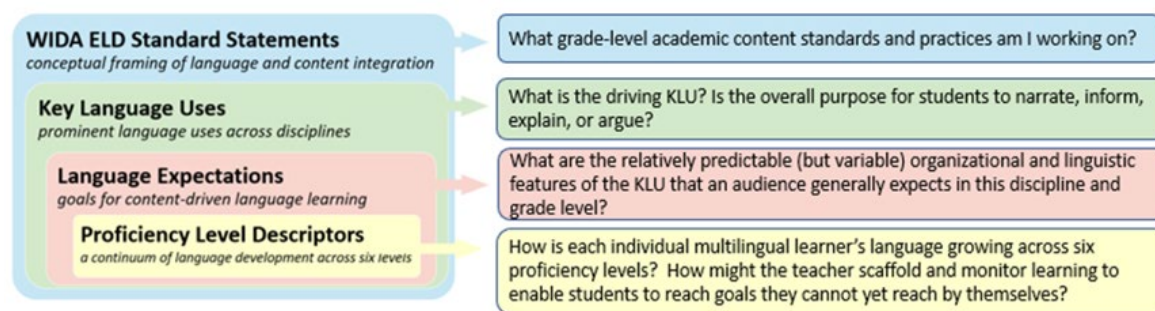
[Reprinted with permission from WIDA]

WIDA uses these components in the instructional planning process, recommending that educators tie together individual language lesson objectives within broader, integrated unit goals (WIDA, 2020, p. 46).

Evidence-Based Recommendations around Integrated Instructional Planning
Research and case studies have highlighted that greater attention to collaborative, integrated planning produces statistically significant gains in ELs' vocabulary knowledge, argumentative writing, content comprehension, and oral language proficiency (Edelman et al., 2022). During integrated instruction, content and language objectives are intentionally paired, an instructional design approach advanced by the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for the past several decades (Short, 2017). SIOP primarily emphasizes multimodal scaffolding—such as verbal, visual, and hands-on supports—to make academic content accessible to multilingual learners while promoting English language development. This EL-focused scaffolding also reflects the core principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2024), that is, offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression for all learners.

A related type of content-based language learning draws on a K-12 variant of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Here, genre-based pedagogy promotes

linguistic scaffolding by explicitly teaching students the language patterns and language features[3] needed to participate in specific academic genres (Martin & Rose, 2007). When language objectives utilize genre-based framing, they can effectively support multilingual learners in engaging more deeply with academic language (Mahan & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2024). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of incorporating both linguistic and UDL-based scaffolding in content-based language instructional planning.

Integrated Unit Goal Design
Using the unit goal template adapted from Shafer Willner (2023b), educators can first establish a content area context for language use, followed by an ELD focus tied to the WIDA Key Language Uses (narrate, inform, explain, and/or argue) (see Table 1.) In other words, ELD instruction is not decontextualized and generic, but embedded in and shaped by content area contexts.

Table 1
Template for Integrated Unit Goals

Focus	Template
Integrated Unit Goal Template for Content-Based Language Learning	In [content area], when learning [essential questions, big ideas/enduring understandings, and themes associated with this list of specific content standards], multilingual learners will [communicative purpose/Key Language Use] using the *language for learning* in [WIDA Language Expectations].
Example	In social studies, when learning about "how people in the past helped make the world a better place" and the lives of historical figures in American history (GA Standard SS1H1, ELA.1.T.SS.2.a, ELA.1.T.RA.IV, ELA.1.F.PA.5, ELA.1.F.PA.6, ELA.1.F.P.1), multilingual learners will interpret and express informational texts using the *language for learning* in ELD-SI.K-3.Inform, ELD-SS.1.Inform.Interpretive, and ELD-SS.1.Inform.Expressive[4].

Note: See Table 6 for an AI-generated response using this template.

The process used to map connections between content and ELD standards can be facilitated through a new type of WIDA and state resource called *standards correspondence*[5] *mappings*. State panels of expert educators match content and language standards via the WIDA Key Language Uses. Not only do these mappings provide educators with planning options, but they also satisfy federal peer review requirements (Shafer Willner, 2023a). The 2022 GaDOE content-to-ELD correspondence mappings were created by four state-convened educator panels. They have been published in the GaDOE Inspire platform, with the ELA-to-ELD standards correspondence mapping updated in Summer 2025 (GaDOE, 2025b). Figure 2 shows sample correspondences

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[3] The term *language features* refers to elements of a text that contribute to its meaning, style, and purpose, while the term *language forms* refers to observable, structural components of language. This concept is a key distinction between the foundational literacy standards in ELA and the focus of language in ELD standards.

[4] The content-to-language relationship is encoded within the WIDA Language Expectation reference code: [WIDA Standard Statement] + [Grade Level Cluster] + [Key Language Use] + [Communication Mode]. For example: ELD-SS.1.Inform.Expressive. This alphanumeric code can also be used in local learning management systems to digitally connect integrated planning with curricular resources.

[5] *Correspondences* are also referred to as *alignments*, *associations*, *crosswalks,* or *correlations* (Shafer Willner, 2023a).

between GaDOE Grade 1 Social Studies Standards (SS1H1) and WIDA Language Expectations (ELD-SI.K-3.Inform and ELD-SS.1.Inform.Expressive)[6]

Figure 2
Sample GaDOE-WIDA Standards Correspondence Mapping[7]
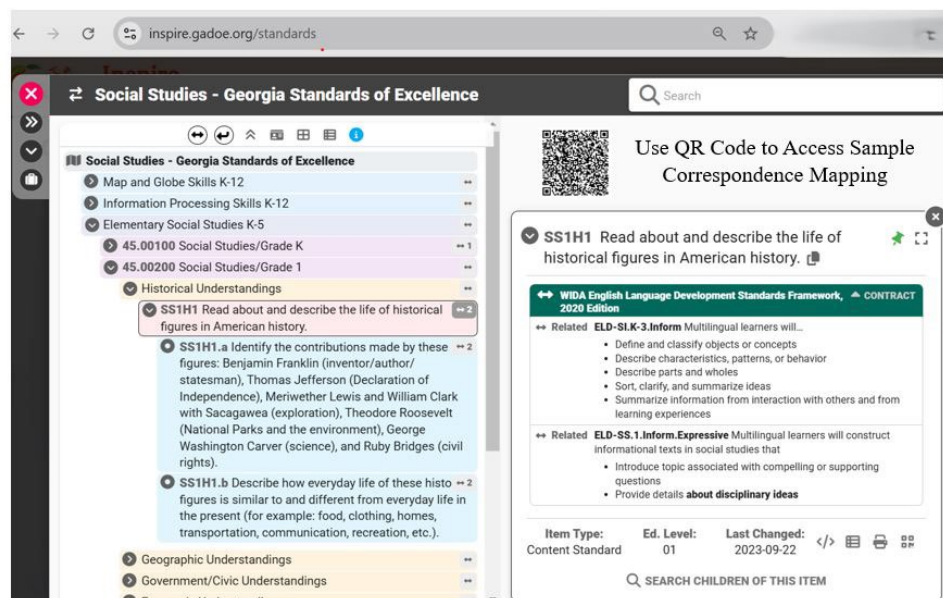
[Reprinted with permission from GaDOE]

Creating Integrated Lesson Objectives
Once broader unit goals have been defined, educators can create three types of lesson objectives to guide instruction: (1) discipline-specific academic language, (2) focused language study, and (3) ELD-embedded foundational literacy skills. The first two follow 2017 Council for the Great City Schools (CGCS) recommendations; the third was created for this article.[8]

          1. Discipline-Specific Academic Language Expansion Lessons. The first type of lesson objective targets discipline-specific uses of language (CSGCS, 2017, p. 13). To provide all ELs (and their peers) with opportunities to master grade-level cluster Language Expectations—that is, the most prominent language uses needed for engagement in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies (WIDA, 2021)—this first type of lesson objective introduces a prominent language function for each grade-level cluster supported by either linguistic or UDL scaffolding. Table 2 provides a template and example for the Language Function, "describe characteristics, patterns, or behavior" from the ELD-SI.K-3.Inform Language Expectation.

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[6] Click on the circled double arrows on the left side of the horizontal menu to reveal the "associations" [correspondence matches] between these two sets of standards.
[7] To download the .csv file for the correspondence mapping pictured in Figure 2, click on the three vertical bullets in the upper righthand corner of the screen. Choose the "Table" view and the "Filter" option for "Associations."
Ensure both "WIDA" and "Related" checkboxes are selected. Finally, "export" the file.
[8] Please note that the lesson objective samples provided in this article offer standard-related information for lesson objectives; educators are encouraged to add more specific, local curricular customizations to their lesson objectives.

Table 2
Standards-Aligned Lesson Objective Template Using a WIDA Language Function

Focus	Template
Lesson Objective Using WIDA Language Functions [for Discipline-Specific Academic Language Expansion]	*Within the context of integrated unit goals and for a particular selection of content standards (indicated above in Table 1), . . .* When learning the language for [communicative purpose/Key Language Use], multilingual learners will [a Language Function from a Language Expectation] using [appropriate linguistic scaffolding and/or UDL principles].
Example	*In social studies, when learning about "how people in the past helped make the world a better place" and the lives of historical figures in American history (GA Standard SS1H1) . . .* When learning the language to Inform, multilingual learners will describe characteristics, patterns, or behavior using graphic organizers and educator modeling.

Note: See Table 6 for an AI-generated response using this template.

2. Focused Language Study Lessons. A second type of lesson objective, shown in Table 3, is focused language study. This activity provides multilingual learners with explicit practice in how language works in context (CGCS, 2017, p. 13). In other words, during these lessons, educators offer explicit instruction on how to use certain language features (e.g., sentences, phrases, clauses, word groups) to carry out a specific WIDA Language Function. The increased metalinguistic awareness that results from this type of genre-based lesson improves student engagement with grade-level disciplinary expectations (Schleppegrell, 2020).

Table 3
Standards-Aligned Lesson Objective Template for Teaching about a Language Feature for a WIDA Language Function

Focus	Template
Lesson Objective Using Language Features [Focused Language Study]	*Within the context of integrated unit goals and for a particular selection of content standards (indicated above in Table 1), . . .* When [a Language Function from a Language Expectation], multilingual learners will learn to [Key Language Use], using [Language Features] with [multimodality, scaffolding, or UDL support].
Example	*In social studies, when learning about "how people in the past helped make the world a better place" and the lives of historical figures in American history (GA Standard SS1H1) . . .* When describing characteristics, patterns, or behavior, multilingual learners will learn to Inform using frequently used multi-word noun groups with peer support.

Note: See Table 6 for an AI-generated response using this template.

3. Integrating Foundational Literacy Lessons. In 2023, the Reading League (TRL) in collaboration with the National Committee for Effective Literacy (NCEL) and the CGCS issued complementary, evidence-based guidance around foundational literacy and ELs. Both guidance documents recommended that educators: (1) offer explicit language instruction to build decoding and academic comprehension skills (TRL/NCEL, 2023); (2) integrate oral language development, contrastive analysis, code-based instruction, and meaning-making strategies into literacy lessons for ELs (CGCS, 2023, p. 7); and (3) emphasize all five foundational reading skills to support the academic progress of ELs (TRL/NCEL, 2023).

Supporting the development of local curricula, the third type of lesson objective in this sequence uses a dual target model to guide development of ELD-embedded foundational literacy skills. This lesson objective ensures ELs have meaningful opportunities to develop literacy skills as they build their knowledge about how language works for a particular Key Language Use [genre family]. As an example, the Table 4 template answers the question: What sound patterns do ELs need to interpret and/or express the words in a multi-word noun group? This example shows how a phonemic awareness skill from the newly revised Georgia ELA standards can be embedded within a lesson objective related to genre-linked word choice. Foundational literacy lessons should be systematic and responsive to student needs.

Table 4
Standards-Aligned Lesson Objective Template for Integrated ELD—Literacy Lesson Objectives

Focus	Template
Lesson Objectives that Integrate ELD and Literacy	*Within the context of integrated unit goals and for a particular selection of content standards (indicated above in Table 1), . . .* While learning to select and adjust Language Features during an ELD lesson, multilingual learners will also practice oral and/or written [foundational literacy skill(s) identified in state foundational literacy standards] with [appropriate linguistic scaffolding and/or Universal Design for Learning support].
Example	*In social studies, when learning about "how people in the past helped make the world a better place" and the lives of historical figures in American history (GA Standard SS1H1) . . .* While learning to select and adjust frequently used multi-word noun groups during an ELD lesson, multilingual learners will also orally practice blending sounds using magnetic letters and a list of target rimes to build words in a "Make-a-Word" center. (1.F.PA.5 Onsets & Rimes)

Note: See Table 6 for three AI-generated responses using this template.

To summarize, effective integrated units are built around intentional alignment across content, language, and literacy standards. The next section outlines a process for using AI to develop standards-aligned unit goals and lesson objectives.

Instructional Planning Using a Closed Artificial Intelligence System
Integrated instruction for multilingual learners requires educators to navigate numerous complexities, including the alignment of content, language, and literacy standards, as well as the differentiation of materials by proficiency, modality, and cultural or linguistic background (García & Kleifgen, 2022; CAST, 2024; Kray et al., 2023). Traditionally, this process demands significant expertise and time.

The emergence of user-friendly AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Co-Pilot, Perplexity, and Claude, now enables educators without technical training to use natural language prompts (vs. highly technical Python coding) to automate many routine aspects of instructional planning (Yan et al., 2024). By streamlining complex planning tasks, these large language models (LLMs) free up time for educators to focus on higher-leverage instructional decisions (Wen & Jiang, 2025).

Despite these benefits, caution is essential. Uncritical reliance on open-access AI can expose educators to outputs that may contain bias, outdated information, or even fabricated sources (Dziubata, 2024). For this reason, ongoing monitoring and professional guidance remain crucial when integrating AI-generated content into educational contexts.

To address these concerns, closed-AI systems (that is, platforms limited to educator-vetted resources) can help ensure greater accuracy and reliability. Tools like Google NotebookLM, which operate within secure domains and restrict the LLM's knowledge base to provided documents (Lawton, 2024) can significantly reduce the risk of AI confabulation (i.e., plausible yet fabricated citations, factors, or text) (Maleki et al., 2024). Use of closed AI systems can be especially valuable for specialized information, such as ELD standards, where precise references are necessary to avoid confusion between different resources (e.g., the WIDA ELD Standards Framework vs. WIDA Can Do Descriptors).

Indeed, uploading journal articles such as this one into closed-AI systems can transform scholarly writing into actionable templates, making it easier for educators to implement best practices. Still, the role of the educator as an active reviewer is irreplaceable: verifying content accuracy, ensuring current resources, and continually refining AI interactions are key responsibilities (Mosqueira-Rey et al., 2023; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021). In effect, while AI-powered solutions have the potential to greatly enhance instructional planning for multilingual learners, they are most effective when educators leverage these tools thoughtfully and maintain a central role in oversight and decision-making.

Using Google NotebookLM to Generate Integrated Unit Goals and Lesson Objectives
When Georgia educators "seed" a closed AI with vetted standards documents and planning templates, the AI LLM can draft unit goals, lesson objectives, and, with ongoing guidance, explore initial ideas for activities that braid together Georgia's state academic content standards, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, and structured-literacy routines in minutes rather than hours. Table 5 includes a list of steps as well as source documents educators can upload to the closed-AI system. It includes a customized prompt designed to focus AI on the templates in this article.

Table 5
Using Google NotebookLM for AI-Enhanced ELD Planning[9]

Step	Directions	Additional Notes/Resources
1	Go to Google Notebooks: https://notebooklm.google/	Use a closed AI system to restrict the range of source documents. Add templates to guide and improve the structure of responses.
2	Upload specific state academic standards (ELA, math, science, social studies). Digital versions of Georgia CASE standards available at https://inspire.gadoe.org/standards	Consider limiting documents to necessary grade-level standards by copying/pasting the standards into a document to be saved as a PDF. Always follow state and district guidelines about materials. GaDOE and WIDA's educational standards are public domain; a few states may restrict the use of their state standards with AI. Digital versions of all state standards available at: https://casenetwork.1edtech.org/
3	Upload specific grade-level cluster WIDA Language Expectations from the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition and 2025 WIDA Language Charts (the streamlined, aligned version of the 2020 WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors).	Use 2020 WIDA Language Expectations, not older standards editions from 2004-2016. Upload only the required grade-level cluster (e.g., K, 1, 2-3, etc.). • Obtain Language Expectations from the WIDA Standards Digital Explorer[10]: http://standards.wida.us • WIDA Language Charts (released in May 2025, both as PDFs and spreadsheets), found at https://wida.wisc.edu/revisingaccess
4	If available, upload the state's correspondence mapping. WIDA also has a correspondence mapping [associations] available in the table view in its Standards Digital Explorer.	Each state's correspondence mapping connects academic content standards with the WIDA ELD Standards Framework. Figure 2 provides a QR code for accessing this mapping. [The alt text for this figure contains its direct URL, which is very long.]
5	Upload the PDF of this article. The article itself will serve as a source document	This article includes prompts, templates,[11] and model responses to use when guiding the AI tool. The appendix features a 3-week integrated unit template

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[9] Reminder about Responsible Use of AI: This article's AI prompts, templates, and information are designed for public, instructional planning aligned with the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, specifically for use with non-sensitive content. Educators should avoid using them with student records or personally identifiable information (pii) and must ensure compliance with their local AI guidelines (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2025).

[10] Kudos to GaDOE staff Angela Ingram and Margaret Baker, who introduced WIDA staff to the Content and Academic Standards Exchange (CASE) (1EdTech, 2025), the open access specification used to digitally encode the WIDA standards into the WIDA Standards Digital Explorers (WIDA, 2025).

[11] Remember that AI requires ongoing dialogue between the user and the LLM. Over-dependence on fixed templates may result in outputs that are repetitive or lack authenticity (Gierl & Lai, 2013).

Step	Directions	Additional Notes/Resources
		which is referenced by the sample AI prompt (Churchill & Shafer Willner, 2024).
6	(Optional) Upload additional instructional planning templates.	Add additional relevant resources or templates.
7	(Optional) Upload the PDF of the CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines: https://udlguidelines.cast.org/.	Incorporate evidence-based strategies to support diverse learning styles. UDL offers multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression to help English learners.
8	Enter your prompt into the AI chat box.	[Beginning of Sample Prompt] You are an expert ESOL educator in Georgia. Create two options for a 3-week integrated Social Studies, ELA, and ELD unit for Grade 1 English learners [multilingual learners]. The unit should include integrated unit goals and lesson objectives for language functions, language features, and foundational literacy. Refer to the templates in the uploaded copy of this article. Its ELD standards should be drawn from the uploaded Language Expectations and other components of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. The content standards should be drawn from the uploaded state standards. Be sure to list the alphanumeric codes and full wording of the standards below the unit goals and lessons created. Literacy objectives and activities might include lesson objectives for comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness and answer the question: What [state ELA standards-aligned foundational literacy skills] might ELs need to interpret and/or express the Language Functions and associated Language Features identified for the ELD lessons? Increase personalization for students in relation to the WIDA Language Charts dimensions and proficiency levels. Draw ideas for multimodal scaffolding from the CAST UDL Guidelines. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task. [End of Sample Prompt]
9	Refine the AI response with follow-up prompts.	Use additional prompts to clarify integration of content-based language uses and further customize the response to meet individual student strengths and needs.
10	Ask AI to improve your prompt. Save the newly refined prompt for future use.	End each session with: "Please improve my original prompt."

Note: Recommended source documents, resources, and worked examples mentioned in Table 5 can be accessed at https://sites.google.com/view/ai-eld-planning/home.

Reminders About AI Prompts. The prompt in this article provides educators with a foundation for building their own standards-aligned prompts. Since AI LLMs determine responses based on the most likely next words, their output is inherently variable, not fixed. This means even slight changes to a prompt or updates to the LLM itself can produce different, yet valid, results. Always review AI-generated content for accuracy and appropriateness before use.

Sample AI Response. The following provides an excerpt from the Google NotebookLM response generated for this article. It spotlights integrated Social Studies, English language arts, and English Language Development unit goals for Grade 1, accompanied by integrated lesson objectives for discipline-specific academic language expansion, focused language study, and Literacy/ELD skill development.

Grade 1 Integrated Unit Draft: American Heroes

Integrated Unit Goal for Content-Based Language Learning: In social studies, when learning about "how people in the past helped make the world a better place" and the lives of historical figures in American history (GA Standard SS1H1, ELA.1.T.SS.2.a, ELA.1.T.RA.IV, ELA.1.F.PA.5, ELA.1.F.PA.6, ELA.1.F.P.1), ELs will interpret and express informational texts using the language for learning in ELD-SI.K-3.Inform, ELD-SS.1.Inform.Interpretive, and ELD-SS.1.Inform.Expressive.

ELD-SI.K-3.Inform
Multilingual learners will…
- Define and classify objects or concepts
- Describe characteristics, patterns, or behavior
- Describe parts and wholes
- Sort, clarify, and summarize ideas
- Summarize information from interaction with others and from learning experiences

ELD-LA.1.Inform.Interpretive
Multilingual learners will interpret informational texts in language arts by
- Identifying main topic and/or entity and key details
- Asking and answering questions about descriptions of attributes and characteristics
- Identifying word choices in relation to topic or content area

ELD-LA.1.Inform.Expressive
Multilingual learners will construct informational texts in language arts that
- Introduce and define topic and/or entity for audience
- Describe attributes and characteristics with facts, definitions, and relevant details

SS1H1 Read about and describe the life of historical figures in American history
ELA. 1.T.SS.2.a Identify and explain the use of descriptive words in texts.
ELA.1.T.RA.IV. BIG IDEA: Research & Analysis Students use, discuss, analyze, and curate texts as they engage in various conversations, activities, and projects about a range of grade-level texts and topics.
1.F.PA.5 Onsets & Rimes Blend and segment onsets and rimes in spoken words.
1.F.PA.6 Phonemic Awareness Identify and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words
1.F.P.1 Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences Identify and produce phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Table 6
Sample Language Objectives

	Language Functions Lesson	**Language Features Lesson**	**ELD-Embedded Foundational Literacy Lesson**
Week 1: Introducing Benjamin Franklin	Objective 1: When learning the language to Inform, English learners will learn to define and classify objects or concepts, with appropriate linguistic scaffolding, such as sentence stems.	Objective 2: When defining and classifying objects or concepts, English learners will learn to select and adjust frequently used single-word noun groups, with modeling and guided practice.	Objective 3: While learning to select and adjust frequently used single-word noun groups during an ELD lesson, English learners will orally practice blending and segmenting target phonemes in genre-specific words (1.F.PA.6 Phonemic Awareness) using pictures of the words and colored counters for Elkonin [sound] boxes[12].
Week 2: Exploring Thomas Jefferson	Objective 1: When learning the language to Inform, English learners will learn to describe characteristics, patterns, or behavior with educator modeling and the use of graphic organizers.	Objective 2: When describing characteristics, patterns, or behavior, English learners will learn to select and adjust frequently used multi-word noun groups with peer support.	Objective 3: While learning to select and adjust frequently used multi-word noun groups during an ELD lesson, English learners will practice blending sounds using magnetic letters and a list of target rimes to build words in a "Make-a-Word" center. (1.F.PA.5 Onsets & Rimes)
Week 3: Researching a Hero	Objective 1: When learning the language to Inform, English learners will learn to summarize information from interaction with others and from learning experiences through small-group research projects.	Objective 2: When summarizing information from interaction with others and from learning experiences, English learners will learn to select and adjust multi-word noun groups with connectors, with opportunities for independent practice.	Objective 3: While learning to select and adjust multi-word noun groups with connectors during an ELD lesson, English learners will practice identifying and producing phoneme-grapheme correspondences by writing the letter in a sand tray or forming it with play-doh, and saying the sound aloud. [1.F.P.1 Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences).

Due to space considerations, shortened versions are included here. The full response generated for this AI prompt can be retrieved from https://sites.google.com/view/ai-eld-planning/home.

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[12] Expert educator advice on use of Elkonin boxes to determine the difference between a language development and a disability appears on page 16 of the WIDA Focus Bulletin *Identifying multilingual learners with specific learning disabilities: Data, advice, and resources for school teams* (Shafer Willner, 2025).

Discussion and Recommendations

ELs' success in schooling increasingly relies on instruction that integrates ELD, foundational literacy, and content standards (Blitz, 2025; Uccelli et al., 2015). To support Georgia educators, this article provides research-based guidance and planning templates for concise, standards-aligned unit goals and lesson objectives. It illustrates how AI prompt frameworks and closed-AI systems might automate standards mapping, streamline teacher workflows and support best practices in lesson design. Automating routine planning tasks gives educators more time for meaningful, collaborative planning (Wen & Jiang, 2025). In turn, collaborative planning among content, language, and literacy educators produces more accessible and challenging content for diverse learners (Baker et al., 2014).

To be effective, AI-powered, integrated unit and lesson planning must be paired with training that supports sound instructional decision-making so teachers can thoughtfully prompt, evaluate, and customize AI outputs. By combining structured templates with a closed-AI system limited to vetted documents, educators can streamline planning by leveraging AI for routine tasks, thereby reserving educator expertise for deepening instructional design and directly addressing learner diversity and leading to stronger outcomes for ELs.

Future Research Directions

Integrating foundational literacy into content-based language learning is a critical step toward improving outcomes for ELs. Pilot studies might examine how AI tools affect content, language, and literacy educators' collaborative planning time, conversations, the quality of resulting goals, objectives, and the broad range of activities, assessments, curricula, and scaffolding involved. An iterative cycle of research and refinement is essential to improving both planning practices and EL learning outcomes.

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Appendix A: Sample Templates for a Three-Week Integrated Unit

This simplified three-week unit template was developed by NJTESOL/NJBE presenter Maggie Churchill (Closter Public School District, NJ) and Shafer Willner. It can be used by the AI tool as a model for the basic framing of an integrated Social Studies/ELA/ELD unit. The unit unfolds over three weeks (reflected in Table A-1), with sequential activities leading to weekly outcomes. Formative assessments gauge student reliance on the provided linguistic or UDL scaffolding (Table A-2) and occur at the end of Weeks 1 and 2.

      To gauge end-of-unit language growth throughout the school year, classroom-based summative assessments can be utilized for individual end-of-unit assessments. These assessments of students' linguistic growth can reference either the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors (WIDA, 2020) or the May 2025 WIDA Language Charts (which offer streamlined, aligned versions of the PLDs). Educator observations and reflections about formative or summative assessment data can be used to inform instructional next steps (WIDA, 2025).

Table A1
Sample Template for a Three-Week Integrated Unit (Churchill & Shafer Willner, 2024)

Unit Planning
• **Essential Question:** Create an essential question, big idea [enduring understanding], or theme that connects ELD, content, and ELA/literacy standards, guiding inquiry-based learning and interdisciplinary connections. • **Unit Goals**: Create an overarching set of unit goals from which lesson objectives might be pulled. • **Formative Assessments**: Use ongoing formative assessments to measure student progress and adjust instruction as needed.

Lesson Planning	Activity Sequences			Weekly Outcome	Assessments
Week 1 Lesson: Build the Field Build student knowledge to enhance comprehension and engagement with complex texts • Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern) • Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features • Objective 3: Practice Foundational Literacy Skills	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Task or Product	Week 1 Formative Assessment: Gauge the student's reliance on the scaffold and/or sentence stem provided for this task. [See Table A-2 Model.]
Week 2 Lesson: Deconstruction The process of analyzing a text to understand how its meaning is constructed through language • Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern) • Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features • Objective 3: Practice Foundational Literacy Skills	Activity 4	Activity 5	Activity 6	Task or Product	Week 2 Formative Assessment. Which version of the chart was used to complete the task. [See Table A-2 Model.]

Week 3 Lesson: Co-Construction The process of creating meaning through language by making deliberate choices about how to organize and use linguistic resources to achieve a specific purpose • Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern) • Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features • Objective 3: Practice Foundational Literacy Skills	Activity 7	Activity 8	Activity 8	Culminat-ing Activity, Essay, or Project	End-of-unit/ summative language assessment of student work using the WIDA PLDs [or the aligned WIDA Language Charts]

Table A2
Formative Assessment Model

Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Bridging (3)	Independent (4)
Student can complete the sentence frame/chart *after* working with their partner. Student relies heavily on sentence frame/chart when sharing.	Student can complete sentence frame/chart *before* working with partner. Sharing with partner helps to clarify student thinking. Student might rely on sentence frame/chart when sharing with whole group (or be reminded to do so).	Student can complete sentence frame/chart *before* working with partner. Student might share using own words; might occasionally reference on the sentence frame/chart.	Student can complete sentence frame/chart *before* working with partner. Student can easily share using own words.