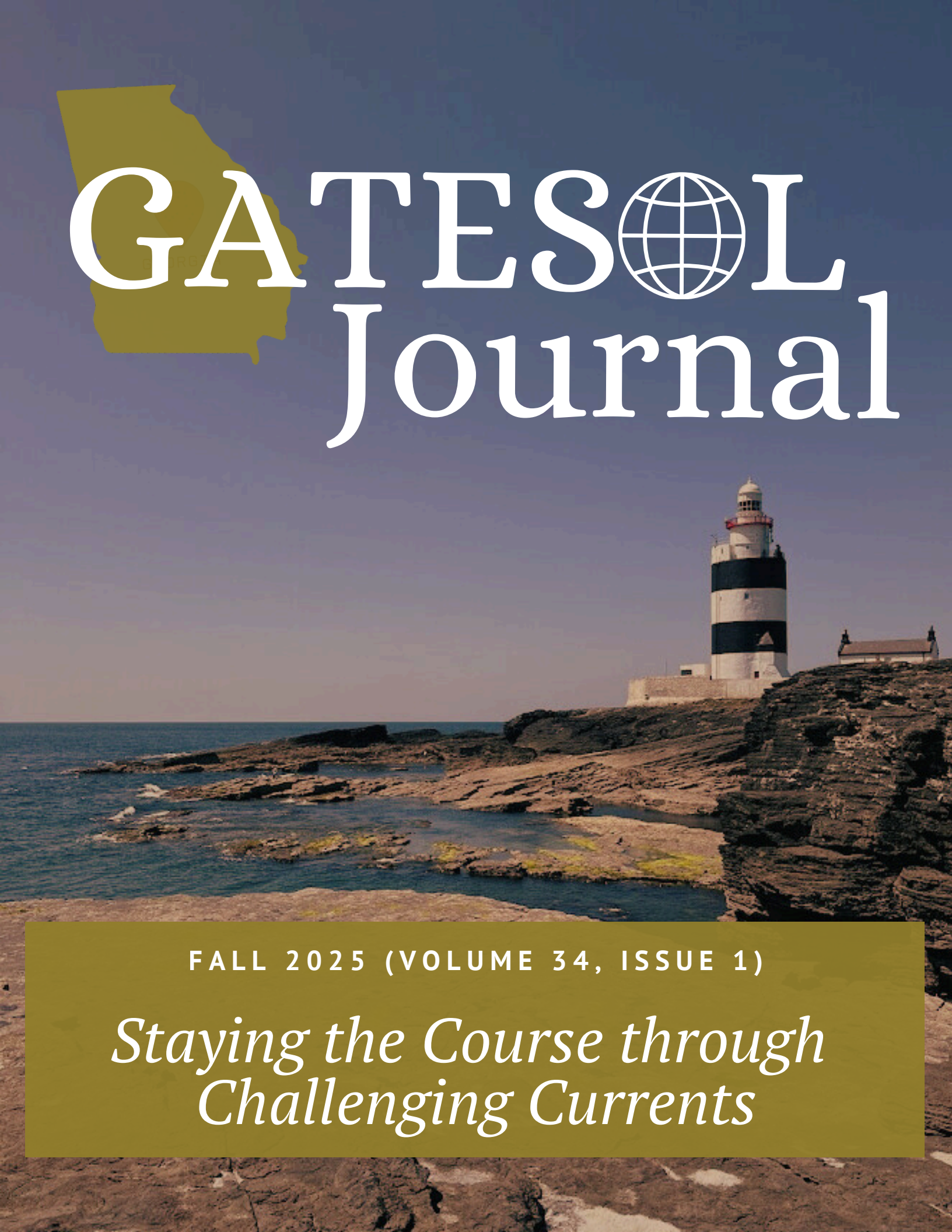

# GATESOL Journal

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## *Staying the Course through Challenging Currents*

# GATESOL Journal

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# Staying the Course through Challenging Currents

*GATESOL Journal*
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Amid the volatile waves of rapidly shifting expectations, unpredictable policy updates, and ever-changing circumstances, many educators are struggling to stay afloat. It is from within this context that we publish the fall 2025 issue of *GATESOL Journal.* While the articles featured in this issue vary in focus (i.e., supporting teachers of newcomers in rural schools, utilizing closed-model artificial intelligence to streamline standards alignment, and refining generative AI prompts to scaffold writing), all address the challenge of meeting student and teacher needs, despite changing demographics and evolving technologies. Taken as a whole, this journal issue envisions the educational horizon as one in which technological tools and human expertise are thoughtfully harnessed in service of educational growth and English language development.

**Shifting Tides**

In Leckie and Wall's empirical research article, they detail their work with four rural elementary school teachers to identify pragmatic approaches in supporting newcomer English learners. Although seasoned professionals, these general education teachers had little or no prior experience working with this student population, a situation that is not uncommon in rural schools. Compounding the challenges of unfamiliarity, many rural school districts lack the resources and supports more often found in their counterparts with established multilingual communities and larger numbers of identified ELs. Employing a formative experiment approach, the researchers guided the participant teachers through cycles of observation, goal setting, and reflection to modify and refine instruction. With mentorship, the teachers were able to use the students' home languages, incorporate visual supports, and foster culturally sustaining learning environments in general education settings to propel academic and English language development.

**Braiding a Strong Rope**

Shafer Willner's pedagogical practice piece delineates how educators can utilize a closed artificial intelligence system to align content standards, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, and K-12 ELA Literacy Foundations standards to streamline the planning process. Rather than resisting technological innovation or becoming mired in the minutiae of aligning curricular, literacy, and language development standards, the author proposes braiding these standards with the assistance of closed AI. Using Georgia as an anchor, Shafer Willner outlines how educators can use the tool

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for generating unit goals and lesson objectives that are accurate, relevant, and well-aligned. This time-saving strategy efficiently integrates academic content, foundational literacy, and English language development goals, potentially freeing up teachers to focus energy on collaborative planning and differentiation.

**Helming the Craft**

Dos Santos's teaching technique explores how teachers can guide multilingual learners in crafting well-structured prompts to leverage generative AI for writing support. The article describes how students in a ninth-grade ELA class employed the Prompt Creation Reference Chart (dos Santos et al., 2025) to refine structured prompts to provide scaffolding for a persuasive book review assignment. By using the chart to determine the author, purpose, and request, multilingual students engineered generative AI prompts that resulted in customized scaffolding. The students then revised the prompts to produce a manageable set of steps to steer their writing. Applying the output to the writing task allowed learners to build confidence and develop their skills in writing as a social practice. Through this example, dos Santos highlights the potential of generative AI to serve as a tool for critical engagement and suggests that the structured chart encourages thoughtful prompt engineering, thereby fostering the ethical use of artificial intelligence platforms.

**Navigating the Currents**

The fall 2025 issue of the *GATESOL Journal* shines a light on the numerous ways that educators can embrace the opportunities that are often overshadowed by uncertainty. While educators may feel unmoored by the relentless fluctuations that currently impact our profession, we can take inspiration from the educators, learners, community members, and leaders in the field who are striving to chart a course to safe harbor. The articles in this issue illuminate inspiring ways for those who work with multilingual learners to embody adaptability and resilience in the face of changing contexts. Although shifting currents create challenges, they also offer possibilities for us to recommit to our mission and set out on new routes.

**References**

dos Santos, A. E., Boa Sorte, P., & de Oliveira, L. C. (2025). Generative artificial intelligence in writing: ChatGPT and critical questioning for multilingual learners. In C. Wang & Z. Tian (Eds.), *Rethinking writing education in the age of generative AI* (pp. 138–154). Routledge.

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*Research Article*

# What if There are Only a Few? Supporting English Learners in Rural Contexts

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**Abstract**
This paper describes the efforts of two teacher educators and four elementary school teachers to identify pragmatic approaches for educating newcomer English learners (ELs) in a rural context with a very small but rapidly growing EL population. We used a formative experiment methodological approach (Reinking & Bradley, 2004, 2008) consisting of iterative cycles of goal setting, observations and instructional supports, and adjustments to capitalize on teachers' experiences and expertise to identify four relevant, meaningful, and practicable approaches to instruction and assessment to benefit newcomer ELs. The four ways are: (1) finding ways to use students' home languages, (2) incorporating visual supports, (3) focusing on vocabulary development, and (4) fostering culturally sustaining positive learning environments. While these approaches have been used in other settings, this study is innovative in its focus on how teachers can leverage these supports in general educational settings to respond to demographic changes in the region. Our findings indicate that collaboration with experienced teachers led to the development of pragmatic approaches and policy clarifications that the school system has been able to apply in multiple contexts. These approaches, in turn, supported the ELs' English language development and overall academic progress.

**Keywords**
English learners, elementary education, emergent English learners, rural schools, rural ESOL

## Introduction

Georgia is part of the *New Destination South*, where there have been increasing Hispanic and Asian communities in recent decades (Census Brief, 2001, 2002, 2011, 2012; comparable briefs for the 2020 census were not located; Marrow, 2011). Census QuickFacts (2024) estimated that the state population in 2024 included 11.1% Hispanic people and 4.3% Asian people. Such patterns mirror increasing numbers of public school students who are English learners (ELs). In the 2023-2024

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school year, according to data on the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (n.d.) Report Card, there were approximately 1,868,000 students in grades P-12 in Georgia; of these, 19.24% of students were Hispanic and 4.97% of students were Asian American Pacific Islander. Approximately 12% of students were Els, with Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic being the most common languages spoken.

While 12% of students in the state are ELs, some districts have as many as 28% of their student population learning English as an additional language while other systems do not have any ELs. As such, the resources and expertise supporting effective instruction for ELs tend to be focused in school systems with higher numbers of English learners. Federal Title III funds and FTE dollars are allocated based on the number of students served, which provides districts with higher numbers of ELs additional dollars to provide instructional services for students and professional development for teachers. For example, while urban districts in Georgia and across the nation may have newcomer schools and special classes to meet the needs of newcomers, most school systems do not have the resources to offer specialized programs or classes specifically for newcomer students. In rural schools, which often lack capacity for special programs and classes, many teachers may not have worked with ELs, much less newcomer students, throughout their entire careers; when they are confronted with meeting the academic and social needs of ELs, they often feel ill-equipped.

Even for experienced, effective teachers, it can be a challenge to modify instructional practices to make content concepts clear and to support ELs' developing English proficiency. Research indicates that there is still a struggle to prepare new teachers (e.g., Chesley & Jordan, 2012) and to provide professional development for practicing educators (Choi & Morrison, 2014) to effectively teach ELs. This is particularly true in rural contexts with low incidences of English learners (Coady et al., 2019).

In the district where this study took place, only 2% of the students were ELs (Governor's Office of Student Achievement Report Card, n. d.). About 88% of students and teachers in the district were white. According to an annual report on the district site, more than 30 languages were spoken by ELs, with Spanish being most common. Given the low number of ELs, most ESOL teachers were itinerant, meaning they travelled between schools to provide support, thereby limiting opportunities to provide ongoing, sustained support for individual teachers or schools. One school in the district, Loblolly Pine Elementary (a pseudonym), for the first time, had four students who were new immigrants to the country and had minimal English skills. The four teachers in this study were experienced educators at Loblolly Pine Elementary who wanted to support the newcomer ELs in their classrooms but felt ill-equipped to do so. The purpose of this study was to collaborate with general education teachers to enhance their instructional practices for teaching newcomer ELs.

**Relevant Literature**

For this study, Alisa Leckie, one of the university researchers, worked with four elementary school teachers, each of whom had one or two emergent ELs in their classes. This was a new experience for each educator, despite their many years of teaching experience. One teacher, speaking with Alisa midway through the year, reflected on the new-to-her experience of teaching an emergent EL student, noting that, "I'm someone with 30 years of experience… I had no experience with it." This impression connects to two main areas in the literature: effective practices for ELs and our rural context.

### *Effective Practices for ELs*

Effective practices for teaching English learners include using students' home languages (Krashen, 1985; Sayer, 2013), incorporating visual support (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Vardell et al., 2006), and focusing on vocabulary development (Carlo et al., 2004). According to Templeton et al. (2015), "[e]very teacher is a teacher of language" (p. 3), meaning that these practices are also appropriate across content areas. Integrating these practices results in target outcomes for ELs, including oral and written language proficiency and content mastery (Piñón et al., 2022).

However, research does not tend to specify differential practices for ELs with minimal, if any, English language proficiency compared to more English-proficient peers. Although guidance documents such as the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors (WIDA, 2020) provide support to educators in explaining *what* ELs of varying proficiencies can do in instructional contexts, they provide little guidance for *how* to integrate these practices into their instruction. The majority of research on ELs focuses on schools and systems with high numbers of ELs. Only a small portion of this research focuses on newcomers, or emergent ELs, with minimal levels of English language proficiency.

### *Rural Context*

Another key perspective that frames this work is the rural context of our college and partner school. Research has identified common themes across rural contexts while acknowledging that these contexts vary widely (Moffa & McHenry-Sorber, 2018). This rural context, as noted, is historically and predominantly white while rapidly changing; the school, like many rural schools, is central to the community (Rural Schools Collaborative, n.d.). Recognizing this context allowed us to approach the study through an asset-based perspective, avoiding the commonly used deficit perspective in rural research (cf. White & Kline, 2012). Burton et al. (2013) noted that many studies draw on a "one-dimensional characterization" of rural teachers (p. 8). To counter this view, we highlight that this study focused on experienced, effective teachers facing a new situation: emergent ELs in their rural classrooms. Alisa was familiar with the school through previous partnership efforts, and the teachers approached her for assistance with emergent ELs. These teachers wanted to ensure success for all students, but in the words of one teacher, they "had no experience" with ELs. In this way, the teachers self-selected for the study.

## Conceptual Framework

Two perspectives informed this work: linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas et al., 2008) and culturally relevant pedagogy/culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Lucas et al. (2008) explained six understandings about second language acquisition that teachers need to consider:

- *Academic language proficiency* differs from *conversational language proficiency* and takes longer to develop.
- Second-language learners need input just beyond their current levels of competence and numerous opportunities with academic and conversational language.
- Social interactions between ELs and English-speaking peers assist academic and social language development.
- ELs with solid literacy skills in their first language are more likely to achieve parity with English-speaking peers.
- A welcoming, positive learning environment with minimal anxiety about performing in a second language is essential for student learning.

- Explicit instruction in language function and form is essential to second-language learning.

These principles informed our work with the teachers and our approach to analysis.

We also drew on culturally relevant/culturally sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Three components of culturally relevant pedagogy are a focus on student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally sustaining pedagogies seek to foster, or sustain, "linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). Together, these approaches aligned with our goals. One goal was to support teachers in sustaining cultural and linguistic pluralism and funds of knowledge (cf. Gonzalez et al., 2005) in their changing rural community; thus, we scaffolded teachers' own cultural competence and recognition of the cultural and linguistic assets ELs brought to the classroom as a way to diminish a tendency to lean toward assimilation.

The following questions guided this study: (1) How does the integration of vocabulary development, students' home language, and visual support facilitate the academic achievement of emergent ELs in a rural context? (2) How does *modeling* how to integrate vocabulary development, students' home languages, and visual support followed by *instructional support* result in shifts in educational practice among elementary teachers working with emergent ELs?

## Method

We used a formative design approach (Reinking & Bradley, 2004, 2008) for this work with four upper elementary teachers as they implemented practices to improve academic achievement for emergent ELs. Formative experiments harness innovative instructional interventions to yield positive, pragmatic educational change (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). Formative experiments allow for the creation of interventions responsive to particular contexts—here, emergent ELs in one rural school, Loblolly Pine Elementary. Since the goal of formative experiments is pragmatic pedagogical changes, we focused on changes in each teacher's instructional practices.

Alisa met with the teachers at multiple points during the year to discuss student progress, representative instructional practices, curricular materials, and modifications. There were three main cycles over the course of a school year; each cycle included goal setting, observations and instructional support, and reflection and adjustments. Alisa observed the teachers and met with them to discuss the topics above and how they were currently implementing best practices in their instruction. Teachers would identify ways to enhance their existing instructional practice to better benefit the emergent ELs in their classes. Then, teachers would implement ideas and monitor student progress. At the conclusion of each cycle, Alisa would meet with teachers for reflection: to discuss progress and to revisit and refine goals for the next cycle. At the conclusion of the year, Amanda Wall, another university researcher, conducted a focus group interview with the teachers.

### *Participants and Researcher Roles*

The teachers (all names are pseudonyms) were: Ms. Ash, Ms. Donner, Dr. Allie, and Ms. Hall:

- Ms. Ash taught fifth grade. She had 20 years of teaching experience. She had earned master's and specialist degrees.
- Ms. Donner taught fifth grade. Together, she and Ms. Ash divided the teaching of ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Ms. Donner had 21 years of teaching experience. She had earned a gifted endorsement.
- Dr. Allie taught fourth grade ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. She had 12 years of teaching experience. She had earned a master's and a doctorate degree.

- Ms. Hall taught third grade ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Ms. Hall had 29 years of teaching experience. Ms. Hall had a master's degree.

Ms. Ash and Ms. Donner were a fifth-grade team; they collaborated closely. Dr. Allie and Ms. Hall taught all four academic content areas in self-contained classrooms. As noted above, teachers self-selected for this initiative based on their new experience of teaching emergent EL students.

There were four emergent ELs in the upper elementary grades at the time of the study:

- Lila, fifth grade. Her home language is Thai. Her teachers were Ms. Ash and Ms. Donner.
- Leon, fourth grade. His home language is French, specifically Haitian French. His teacher was Dr. Allie.
- José, fourth grade. His home language is Spanish. His teacher was Dr. Allie.
- Marie, third grade. Her home language is French, specifically Haitian French. Her teacher was Ms. Hall. Marie and Leon are siblings.

The small sample size connects to the context of the study and the new experience of teaching emergent ELs for these accomplished teachers. Even among this small population of four emergent ELs, there were three home languages.

Both authors were familiar with the district through their roles as university supervisors for teacher candidates during clinical experiences. Alisa knows Spanish and has extensive experience teaching EL students. Amanda has a background in Romance languages. Both authors are committed to strong school-university partnerships. Alisa previously provided ESOL endorsement coursework for other teachers in the district and worked with the district ESOL coordinator to support teachers working with ELs. This study grew from that work.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Four approaches were identified to focus instructional supports for students. These became the framework for data collection and analysis. Consistent with a formative design approach, there were three cycles throughout the year during which the study occurred. Data sources included regular observation and meeting notes, sample instructional materials, and transcriptions from individual interviews and the focus group. Alisa worked with the teachers throughout the school year to provide support for emergent ELs. She visited the school bi-weekly, observing and conferencing with the teachers. In keeping with a formative approach and our focus on practical pedagogical change, there were three goal-setting cycles. These cycles focused on modifying instruction for students (e.g., creating vocabulary lists, selecting sentence frames) and discussing these materials and student work samples with teachers. Teachers shared and described student artifacts during conferences, although we did not include student work as separate data sources. Audio recordings of teachers' meetings included teachers' interpretations and their assessment of evidence of student learning.

We developed an *a priori* coding scheme from the promising practices identified through previous research, as noted earlier (Carlo et al., 2004; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Krashen, 1985; Piñón et al., 2022; Sayer, 2013; Vardell et al., 2006), and aligned with the tenets of linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas et al., 2008). The codes were: how teachers integrated students' home languages, visual supports, and vocabulary development for their emergent ELs. Information about student progress is based on teachers' notes and interviews; we did not have access to student assessment data. The data sources align with the purpose of the study to focus on instructional practices to support emergent ELs in this school.

We established the beginning coding structure. To reduce bias in interpretation, due to Alisa's close work with teachers, Amanda led data analysis. We initially coded the data separately. Data from each cycle informed discussions with teachers for the next cycle, following the pragmatic goal of change underlying formative experiments. Emergent themes (Merriam, 2009) augmented the original organizational coding scheme (Maxwell, 2005) as the study progressed. Categories, themes, and findings evolved iteratively across the cycles. We analyzed data to note instructional practices and to note shifts in teachers' instructional practices. Through discussion after the initial analysis, we streamlined themes and resolved discrepancies.

## Findings

Our research questions were: (1) How does the integration of vocabulary development, students' home language, and visual support facilitate the academic achievement of emergent ELs in a rural context? (2) How does *modeling* how to integrate vocabulary development, students' home languages, and visual support followed by *instructional support* result in shifts in educational practice among elementary teachers working with emergent ELs? We organized findings in four areas: 1) finding ways to use students' home languages, 2) incorporating visual supports, 3) focusing on vocabulary development, and 4) fostering positive learning environments.

### *Finding Ways to Use Students' Home Languages*

Students' home languages were used in conjunction with English for some assignments and assessments. At the beginning of the year, Alisa spoke with teachers about using Google Translate (or a comparable tool) to give assessments to newcomer EL students first in their home language to assess their understanding of content, particularly on text-heavy assessments in Language Arts and Social Studies. She encouraged teachers both to focus on vocabulary development in Math and Science and to provide those assessments in English to see how the newcomer ELs' language skills were developing. Translating all assessments was not feasible in terms of teachers' time constraints, nor would it have allowed them to assess English language development. Teachers made intentional decisions about when and why to use translation.

The use of students' home languages was also helpful during writing tasks. As an example, Ms. Hall provided a writing prompt in French for Marie mid-year. Marie generated ideas in French first, then worked to write her response in English. This opportunity to write first in French, her home language, allowed Marie to focus on content concepts and to list relevant examples and points for her assignment. Then, with the support of a word-to-word bilingual dictionary, her own developing knowledge of English, and some peer support, Marie wrote her response in English. This sequence allowed her to focus separately on content concepts and language concepts before uniting these in her written response.

The structures of students' home languages related to patterns teachers observed and the supports they provided in students' use of English. Leon, José, and Marie spoke Romance languages with many words and structures in common with English. This promoted their English language development when the home language and English language words were paired on vocabulary cards. This helped both teachers and students notice the large number of cognates among English, Spanish, and French.

Lila's home language, however, was Thai, which is structured differently from English. Lila's teachers referred to resources like The Language Gulper (Gutman & Avanzati, 2013) for information about the Thai language to better support Lila. For example, verb tenses in Thai are structured very differently from English. Instead of conjugating verbs to indicate time, Thai

linguistic structures use time-related adverbs or word order to express time. This awareness allowed Lila's teachers to notice patterns in her use of English and identify ways to develop her understanding of linguistic structures in English.

In one cycle in February, Lila's teachers set an ELA goal for her to focus on English verb tenses by highlighting examples of different verb tenses in selected passages. While other students were evaluated on their responses to comprehension questions, Lila was assessed on her increasing knowledge of morphemes indicating verb tense. Although some texts were modified so Lila could develop reading comprehension skills, it was not feasible to adapt every text used. By selecting a grammar skill or linguistic feature to focus on, when adapted texts were not available, her teachers were still able to engage Lila in learning.

***Incorporating Visual Supports***

At the focus group in May, teachers noted "visual learning" and "pictures" as strategies they had used throughout the year that had worked well for their emergent ELs. We entered the study with the idea that visual supports referred to images, videos, and visible text (word/phrase walls and text annotations) that would enhance learning for emergent EL students. The primary forms of visual support were paper or electronic flashcards and labels. Teachers worked with emergent EL students to use flashcards to develop their knowledge of general English terms (e.g., chair, table, flower) as well as content concepts (e.g., division, evaporation, character). In early cycles, these tended to be teacher-created flashcards. Over time, the students started to create their own flashcards. This shift was related to students' increased understanding and independence.

As an example, Ms. Hall, Marie's teacher, further focused on providing visual support for Math through labeling; this goal of providing visual support lasted through the first two cycles. Ms. Hall would intentionally label the aspects of graphs, shapes, and parts of mathematical sentences for Marie. This labeling allowed Marie to connect spoken words to their written counterparts in order to make math concepts more comprehensible. Pictures were important supports for content concepts. While teachers had included visuals to support their instruction on a regular basis prior to working with emergent ELs, they became more intentional and consistent about their use over the span of the year. Again, many students gained proficiency in selecting visuals themselves to support vocabulary and content knowledge. They also developed skills in selecting images to demonstrate their understanding of concepts to successfully complete class assignments. Ms. Hall described a presentation Marie gave in class in May. Marie gathered pictures to support her presentation about "real kids, real heroes." Ms. Hall commented that, "You could hear a pin drop in this room… everyone wanted to hear what [Marie] had to say."

Text modifications and annotations were another aspect of visual support for students. In December, Lila successfully read a text adapted with key ideas and key terms were in bold print. Throughout the first two cycles, Ms. Ash and Ms. Donner, her teachers, had increased implementation of text adaptations. These adaptations allowed Lila to focus her attention and effort on the parts of the text that were most critical for her comprehension. In a mid-year cycle meeting in February, Dr. Allie, José's teacher, mentioned how he marked his copy of the class novel by circling different words. Earlier in the year, she had annotated texts for José and Leon, but, over time, each student began to annotate his own texts. Dr. Allie mentioned again how José would mark texts during the focus group in May, suggesting the continued importance of this practice. Both José and Leon had individual copies of the class novel that they could mark and write notes in. By providing copies of texts that the two boys could write in and annotate, Dr. Allie supported their content learning and English language acquisition.

***Focusing on Vocabulary Development***

There were several ways teachers focused on vocabulary development to support emergent ELs. This was a focus across content areas, following the idea that "vocabulary knowledge *is* content knowledge" (Templeton et al., 2015, p. 3, emphasis in original).

Alisa worked with Ms. Hall to develop a list of keywords and phrases for Marie to focus on in different units of study across content areas. Here are sample keywords and phrases from one cycle:

- ELA: *claim, main reason, best meaning of a word, identify the main idea, organize your key points*
- Math: *how many, number sentence, factor, expression, frequency, line plot*
- Science: *temperature, change in temperature, warmer, cooler, thermometer*.

Similar processes took place for other students. For Lila's fifth-grade study of World War II through the Cold War, Ms. Ash and Ms. Donner identified key terms and dates to focus Lila's learning along with her classmates.

Text adaptations were another way that vocabulary development was supported. Texts were adapted through annotations (as noted under visual supports) and modified content. At the end of the first cycle, Dr. Allie explained how she presented José with a simplified version of a book the class was reading, *Who Was Neil Armstrong?* (Edwards, 2008). José had gained "some basic English vocabulary," so he was asked to circle words he did know so that flashcards could be developed for important words he hadn't circled. In February, during the second cycle, Dr. Allie reported on Leon's reading books commonly assigned to first and second graders, although he was in fourth grade. These less complex texts had been given to Leon to support his basic English vocabulary as well as accuracy, fluency, and rate of reading.

***Fostering Positive Learning Environments***

A positive, culturally sustaining, and responsive classroom environment provided a supportive atmosphere for each of the emergent ELs. These culturally responsive and sustaining environments provided encouragement and a degree of protection for the ELs, helping them to feel part of the class and school communities.

Dr. Allie taught both José and Leon. She noted at one point how she structured a group for them to sit next to her and to one another, commenting that, "They have a nice little friendship." Farther along in the conversation, she reflected on the overall classroom environment: "But they just feel like part of us, you know?"

Ms. Hall noted the positive classroom learning environment at multiple points throughout the year. In February, she relayed how "the children just are constantly building her [Marie] up." In May, toward the end of the third cycle, Ms. Hall summarized that Marie "has been embraced by boys and girls, and certainly me." She also specified small groups as a beneficial classroom structure.

Most of these examples relate to a positive classroom environment on a general level. Teachers also worked to include students' home cultures and knowledge into instruction. One specific example of a connection to a student's home culture was when Ms. Donner noted how Lila's classmates enjoyed seeing examples of Thai money she shared during their unit on decimals in Math. When teachers recognized that Lila was struggling with the money-related decimal problems because decimals are not used in money exchanges in Thailand, they positioned her as an expert and asked her to share her money and commerce experiences from Thailand. Similarly, during a unit on trickster tales, Ms. Hall helped Marie identify and retell a trickster tale she knew

already. This allowed Marie to expand her peers' literary experiences, as recounting and retelling stories were part of their ELA standards. Mrs. Hall was able to intentionally support Marie's development of skills related to that standard and the content of the trickster tale unit.

### *Using These Approaches Together*

While we highlight each of these four approaches separately, we also note that teachers drew on these approaches together to support their newcomer ELs. One example of this integrated approach comes from Dr. Allie and how she supported José and Leon during a study of *George Washington's Socks* (Woodruff, 1993). The two boys had their own copies of the text to mark and annotate. They could note unfamiliar words and make flashcards. They also used these annotated texts to read aloud to Dr. Allie in small group settings. Through visual support, focus on vocabulary, and a positive learning environment, José and Leon showed Dr. Allie growth with content concepts and with the English language.

In May, Ms. Ash reflected on Lila's year. She shared an example of when Lila scored 100 on an assessment and recalled how Lila was both humble and "very aware of what her abilities are." Ms. Ash continued: "She knows she's very smart; it's just the language barrier. It's not any kind of intelligence indicator. It's just the language barrier." Ms. Ash's recognition of her student's language challenges highlights how she paid attention to Lila: how Lila was using English, how she responded to strategies and adaptations, and how she grew in knowledge and skills with content and with English during the year. This reflection connects to the use of Lila's home language, focusing on vocabulary, and providing a culturally sustaining learning environment.

## Discussion

Our research questions explored how expanded instructional practices supported the academic achievement of newcomer ELs, and how modeling and instructional support for teachers supported these expanded practices. The limitations of the study relate to its context and participants. The school where the study took place is a rural elementary school in a partner district with historically few EL students. The new situation of four emergent EL students in the classrooms of veteran teachers with little to no experience teaching ELs led to Alisa's collaboration with the teachers and the framing of the study.

While the specific context of this study is a limitation in terms of generalizability, it is also a strength in terms of yielding tangible practices and examples for teachers of emergent ELs, particularly in rural contexts with very small populations of EL students. We identified four key practices teachers implemented over the year in various ways to support emergent ELs and their academic achievement through informal assessment, teacher-created formative and summative assessments, and district assessments.

First, teachers came to *recognize and support students' home language* and to use intentional translation to engage students socially and to foster their academic success. Teachers observed some initial school and system administration barriers due to perceptions that allowing students to use their home language would be a "crutch" and hinder their acquisition of English. In fact, emergent ELs self-selected to limit and eventually discontinue home language support as their English proficiency developed. Second, teachers incorporated a range of *visual supports*, some of which the students created. Third, teachers *focused on students' vocabulary development* through these visual supports and other scaffolds like sentence frames. From providing images for key vocabulary terms to using bold text and other means to emphasize words and phrases, teachers designed ways to foster access to content concepts and augment their own and students' overall

metalinguistic knowledge of English. Fourth, and underlying all of the above, teachers *fostered positive learning environments* by creating inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms. At times, their culturally based instructional decisions were intentionally planned through work with Alisa and one another, and at times incidental, such as when Lila shared Thai currency. Through their individualized attention to these emergent ELs, teachers recognized some culturally incongruent aspects of content and instruction; from there, they were able to address and resolve inconsistencies.

The structure of iterative cycles of goal setting, observation and instructional support, and reflection allowed teachers to identify the instructional practices they were already using and to see how those practices supported newcomer ELs. With increased and intentional use of those practices along with a few additional modifications, the teachers were able to notice gains in focus areas and to see how their own shifts in practice supported students.

We highlight the power of a formative experiment methodological approach (Reinking & Bradley, 2004, 2008) in creating interventions responsive to a particular group of students in a particular context – in this case, emergent English learners in rural contexts. The goal of formative experiments is to bring about positive and pragmatic educational change, and this study documents pragmatic changes that resulted from the iterative and collaborative cycles that are the foundation of this method, as well as the utility of this approach in addressing professional development needs in changing contexts of all kinds – demographic and curricular. Additionally, this work informed the development of district guidelines for evaluating newcomer ELs' learning.

The modeling and coaching supported teachers in noticing, discussing, planning, and enacting practices to support emergent ELs within the larger regular class setting. The cycles of goal setting, observation and instructional support, and reflection provided teachers with opportunities to focus on specific aspects of instruction and learning environment. In February, during the second cycle, Dr. Allie recalled how she had been "super overwhelmed" when she first started to teach José and Leon. At the focus group in May, Dr. Allie commented, "So these students come in straight from another country. It's very overwhelming and challenging. And just… feeling like I'm failing them because I don't know where to start." Alisa spent time with teachers in three iterative cycles discussing each student's progress in English proficiency generally and each teacher's curriculum specifically. Each teacher was able to identify focus areas for each emergent EL. Subsequently, teachers made instructional modifications like developing vocabulary lists, selecting phrases to emphasize, and pairing images with content concepts. Alisa suggested additional strategies to support each student. This clear focus on what to emphasize in instruction helped teachers' intentionality.

Through modeling, Alisa progressed from initiating ideas to discussing teacher-initiated strategies and approaches. Over the course of the year, Alisa modeled and discussed practices with teachers. She also listened and acted as a sounding board for teachers as they progressed with knowledge of their emergent ELs and types of practices; in this way, teachers' knowledge and skills were expanded, and teachers took ownership of their own understanding (Belans, 2020).

Ms. Hall commented in February that Alisa "showed me how to target words that I didn't have to worry as much about her getting the whole sentence if we could just pull out *polygon*. Pick out the *polygon*." In this example, Ms. Hall discussed how she focused on key vocabulary (and related content concepts) through modeling and support. In the same meeting, Ms. Hall told Alisa, "You made it very tangible…. It just took me back. I had no experience with it." Ms. Hall repeated the idea of her novel experience teaching an EL for the first time after decades in the classroom. Ms. Hall came back to the importance of modeling in the focus group, when she said she started

the partnership was "a cry for help" and came to appreciate how she was able "to understand what we are allowed to do with instruction, what we aren't allowed to do with instruction." This modeling supported teachers in modifying aspects of instruction to support –and challenge– emergent EL students while following their standards-based curriculum and district guidelines for instruction and assessment.

This year-long collaboration between university researchers and experienced educators through a formative experiment approach was particularly beneficial when addressing novel educational circumstances. Teachers' knowledge of curriculum, communities, resources, the school system, and the local community informed the pragmatic implementation of best practices and related to the need for policy updates and guidance to capitalize on the expertise of experienced educators to develop school-wide capacity in teaching a new student population.

## Conclusion

This research is meaningful in its practical outcomes. This year-long initiative allowed teachers at the focal elementary school to develop capacity, and also inspired the teachers, administrators, and school system leaders to develop guidelines for assessing and grading the work of emergent ELs in ways that provide accurate and meaningful information to students, parents, and administrators, largely as a result of this project. Collaboration with the district continued, resulting in the development of a newcomer kit with specific supports, like those used with the students in this study (cf. Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lucas et al., 2008; Paris, 2012). As the school and district continue to welcome emergent ELs, there are more and more teachers educating these students who can provide support to one another. The iterative cycles of goal setting, instructional supports, and reflection and implementation provide a model for teachers to continue.

The guidance document was developed through collaboration with these teachers. The district can now share this guidance document with other teachers in other schools; the document includes ideas for teaching ELs and evaluating their learning. Additionally, the teachers have gained the capacity to be teacher leaders to their colleagues who have ELs in their classes in future years. This research is also important in the way we frame continuing work with general education teachers of ELs in rural schools. While this study focused on elementary teachers, similar approaches could be adopted by teachers at the middle and secondary levels with appropriate modifications. The rural context is key to this research as we continue to expand practices for teaching ELs in schools where there have historically been few ELs and where numbers now call on general education teachers to modify their practices. The entire project united school and university partners to support students.

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# 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

[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]

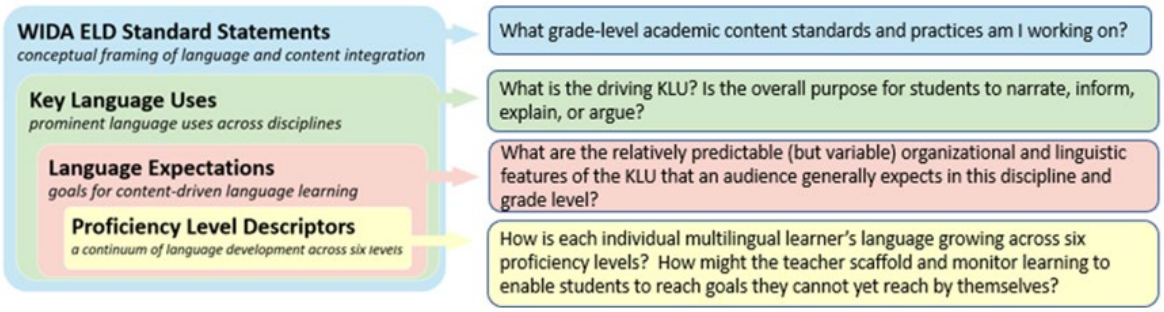
[2] Explicitly supporting the design of instruction that promotes local control is why WIDA refers to its *standards* as a *standards framework* (Shafer Willner, 2023b). This allows districts leeway to create integrated ELD-ELA-SOR *curricula* while maintaining the integrity of the ELD standards construct. 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

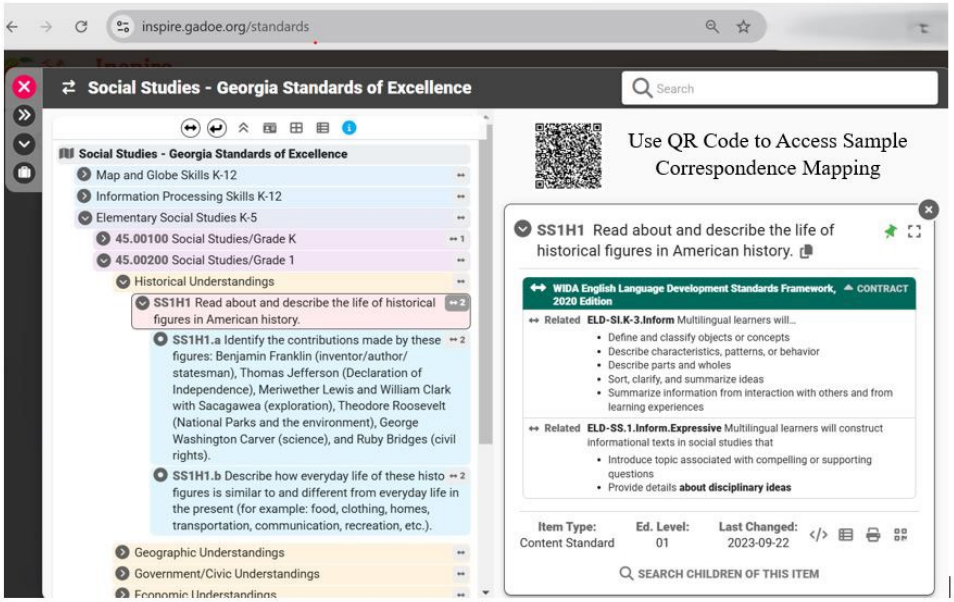
[3] The term *language features* refers to elements of a text that contribute to its meaning, style, and purpose, while the term *language forms* refers to observable, structural components of language. This concept is a key distinction between the foundational literacy standards in ELA and the focus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

[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), . . .*<br>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) . . .*<br>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), . . .*<br>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) . . .*<br>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), . . .*<br><br>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) . . .*<br><br>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).<br>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.<br>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.<br>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.).<br>• Obtain Language Expectations from the WIDA Standards Digital Explorer[10]: http://standards.wida.us<br>• 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 |

[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]<br>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.<br>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.<br>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.<br>Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.<br>[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.

[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**<br>Build student knowledge to enhance comprehension and engagement with complex texts<br>• Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern)<br>• Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features<br>• 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**<br>The process of analyzing a text to understand how its meaning is constructed through language<br>• Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern)<br>• Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features<br>• 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**<br>The process of creating meaning through language by making deliberate choices about how to organize and use linguistic resources to achieve a specific purpose<br>• Objective 1: Introduce a Language Function (a prominent disciplinary language pattern)<br>• Objective 2: Learn to use associated Language Features<br>• 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.<br>Student relies heavily on sentence frame/chart when sharing. | Student can complete sentence frame/chart *before* working with partner.<br>Sharing with partner helps to clarify student thinking.<br>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.<br>Student might share using own words; might occasionally reference on the sentence frame/chart. | Student can complete sentence frame/chart *before* working with partner.<br>Student can easily share using own words. |

# Optimizing AI Text Generators for Multilingual Learners: The Art of Crafting Effective Prompts

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**Abstract**
The transformative role of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in language learning has shifted perspectives on the concept of writing. The challenges of writing are uniquely complex, encompassing a range of cognitive, cultural, and emotional dimensions. This article explores the crucial role of prompt engineering in leveraging the potential of GenAI platforms as a scaffolding strategy for writing with a focus on multilingual learners. By showcasing practical applications and examples, this teaching technique underscores the significance of well-structured prompts in providing scaffolding to support writing as a social practice, based on the Prompt Creation Reference Chart (dos Santos et al., 2025).

**Keywords**
Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), prompt engineering, scaffolding, writing, multilingual learners

## Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) occupies a prominent position in the contemporary landscape of technological advancements impacting societal contexts, including education. The transformative capacity of AI text generators in language learning has shifted perspectives on the concept of writing (dos Santos, 2024). The prior advent of digital technologies, which broadened the scope of literacy to encompass diverse multimodal forms – visual, auditory, and textual elements, has influenced this shift (Casanave, 2020). This expansion of literacy perspectives enriches learning experiences and challenges traditional educational frameworks.

The challenges of writing are uniquely complex, encompassing a range of cognitive, cultural, and emotional dimensions (Casanave, 2018, 2020; Boa Sorte et al., 2021; Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019). Specifically, writing anxiety impacts writing ability since it can affect the brainstorming of ideas and can lead to writer's block (Wern & Rahmat, 2021). The introduction of AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT has significantly altered second language (L2) writing pedagogies by automating and enhancing the writing process, offering new methods for student engagement and learning (Yan, 2023). GenAI can be a powerful ally, providing tailored support through customized prompts that guide learners in navigating writing challenges (dos Santos et al., 2025). This article explores the crucial role of prompt engineering in leveraging GenAI platforms as a scaffolding strategy for writing, with a focus on multilingual learners (MLs). By showcasing practical applications and examples, this teaching technique underscores the significance of developing well-structured prompts to provide scaffolding to support writing as a social practice.

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## ChatGPT: Applications in Language Learning and Education

AI text generators, of which ChatGPT is one example, can offer educators opportunities to develop higher levels of critical thinking by identifying and applying creative strategies for their integration (dos Santos et al., 2023). Educators can use ChatGPT to create study plans tailored to each student's needs, allowing for more effective and efficient learning (Skrabut, 2023). AI text generators[1] can assist in generating questions that promote critical thinking and active engagement. GenAI platforms can help educators develop rubrics for assessing assignments, ensuring consistent grading. Teachers can employ ChatGPT to create realistic problem scenarios and case studies, providing students with practical applications of theoretical knowledge, thus preparing them for real-world challenges.

### *ChatGPT: Ethics and Implications*

The utilization of GenAI in education presents opportunities and challenges. While students may benefit from improved writing efficiency, significant academic integrity concerns have surfaced (Jarrah et al., 2023; Yan, 2023). These include potential threats to traditional learning paradigms and the necessity to revisit plagiarism definitions in an AI-dominated era. Additionally, AI tools like ChatGPT pose ethical challenges in academia, especially in research and publishing. Reviewers and editors struggle to distinguish AI-generated content from original work, raising concerns about biases or misconduct like data fabrication (Casal & Kessler, 2023).

Given these ethical challenges, it is important to discuss AI text generators' impact on authorship, creativity, and plagiarism (Boa Sorte et al., 2021). There is a need to integrate clear guidelines into curricula to promote the ethical usage of AI tools, while acknowledging their limitations and biases. Such integration is crucial for maintaining educational value and fostering an environment that supports innovation and ethical responsibility (Yan, 2023).

## Practical Applications of AI Text Generators as a Scaffolding Strategy for Writing

In writing instruction for MLs, scaffolding is crucial (de Oliveira & Jones, 2023). By building on learners' existing knowledge and progressively increasing task complexity, scaffolding enhances L2 writing skills. Scaffolding includes guided practice, tailored feedback, and demonstrations of writing strategies through modeling, with explicit guidance gradually decreasing as learners' competence and confidence grow. When effectively employed, scaffolding can promote linguistic accuracy and integrate writing as a critical social practice. It equips learners to convey complex ideas and engage with diverse tasks across genres and disciplines, preparing them to navigate and contribute to various social contexts through skillful communication. Modern pedagogical frameworks can incorporate AI tools like ChatGPT and QuillBot, adapting traditional scaffolding to enhance interaction and personalized learning (Duncanson, 2024; Barrot, 2023).

### *Teaching Example*

In this ninth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class, students strengthen argument-based writing skills by producing 250 to 500-word book reviews. The students' goal is to persuade peers to read the book they reviewed, part of their reading project. The task aligns with the 'argue' Key Language Use in the WIDA framework (WIDA, 2020, p. 219), requiring well-supported arguments with robust evidence and reasoning. This cognitive load can be challenging and may

[1] "AI text generators" refers to a variety of text-based GenAI platforms (rather than other forms of GenAI such as music, images, or code). ChatGPT is one such example and is the platform used for the teaching technique illustrated.

trigger emotional reactions such as anguish and anxiety, especially when learners struggle with abstract thinking or articulating ideas (Casanave, 2018; Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019). To address these cognitive and emotional challenges, learners are encouraged to collaborate in pairs or small groups, using ChatGPT as a resource. The collaboration is structured into five steps, described below.

**Step One: Initial Exploration of Prompt Writing and ChatGPT's Responses.** Students are encouraged to explore ChatGPT freely by writing prompts and discussing the outputs. For instance, one student's prompt, "Write a review about the book [*Title*]", lacks specific information (e.g., background, detailed characteristics of the task) and exemplifies unethical use of this platform since it bypasses the intellectual effort involved in writing, including critical analysis and creativity. Another student tried the prompt "How can I write a book review?" ChatGPT's response was an extensive 14-step guide in bullet-point format, which can be overwhelming for some students because of the excessive amount of information. Nevertheless, the output provided general insights and some initial characteristics of a scaffolding strategy for writing. These human-AI interactions highlight the need for additional guidance to help students overcome writing challenges with ChatGPT.

**Step Two: Introducing the Prompt Creation Reference Chart.** The teacher facilitates a discussion about the important role of prompt engineering in leveraging the potential of GenAI platforms. The teacher presents the Prompt Creation Reference Chart (dos Santos et al., 2025), a tool that enables learners to customize well-structured prompts to generate outputs that serve as scaffolding during writing.

The Prompt Creation Reference Chart (see Figure 1) consists of three essential elements for the engineering of a well-structured, effective initial prompt: author, request, and purpose. The chart further describes each element as "(1) the prompt's *author*: background information, (2) the main characteristics of the *request*: design, target audience, and theme, (3) and the *purpose* of the prompt: what the prompt is for, what the user wants to achieve" (dos Santos et al., 2025, p. 17).

**Step Three: Completing the Prompt Creation Reference Chart.** Following the structure of the Prompt Creation Reference Chart, students can include the necessary descriptive information related to each of the three elements (see Figure 1). The teacher guides students through the chart completion process by eliciting information based on the format of the assignment.

**Step Four: Crafting the Prompt Following the Prompt Creation Reference Chart.** With the importance of the teacher-to-student gradual release of responsibility in mind, the teacher modeled writing a ChatGPT prompt. The teacher used the chart as a guide, resulting in the following prompt (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1**
*Prompt Creation Reference Chart* (Adapted from dos Santos et al., 2025)

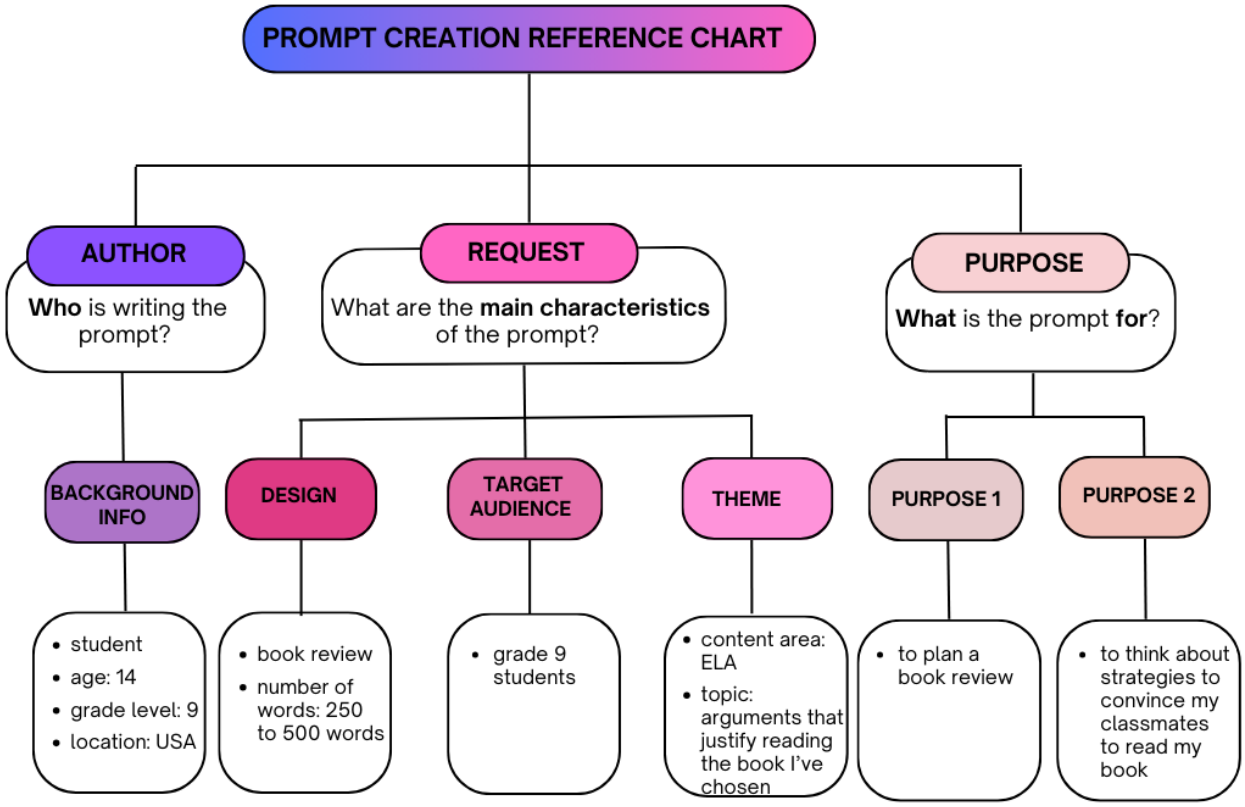
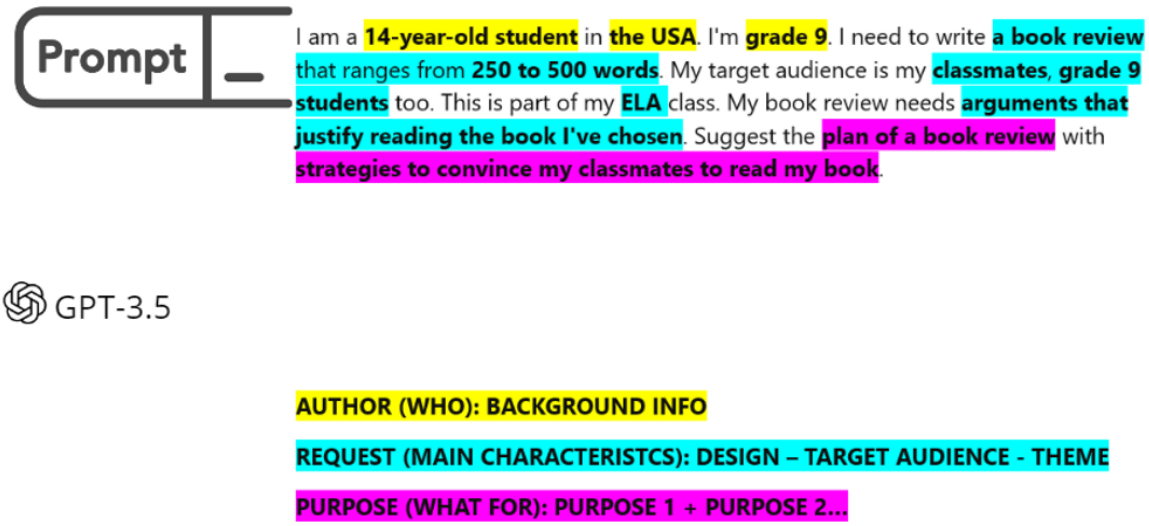


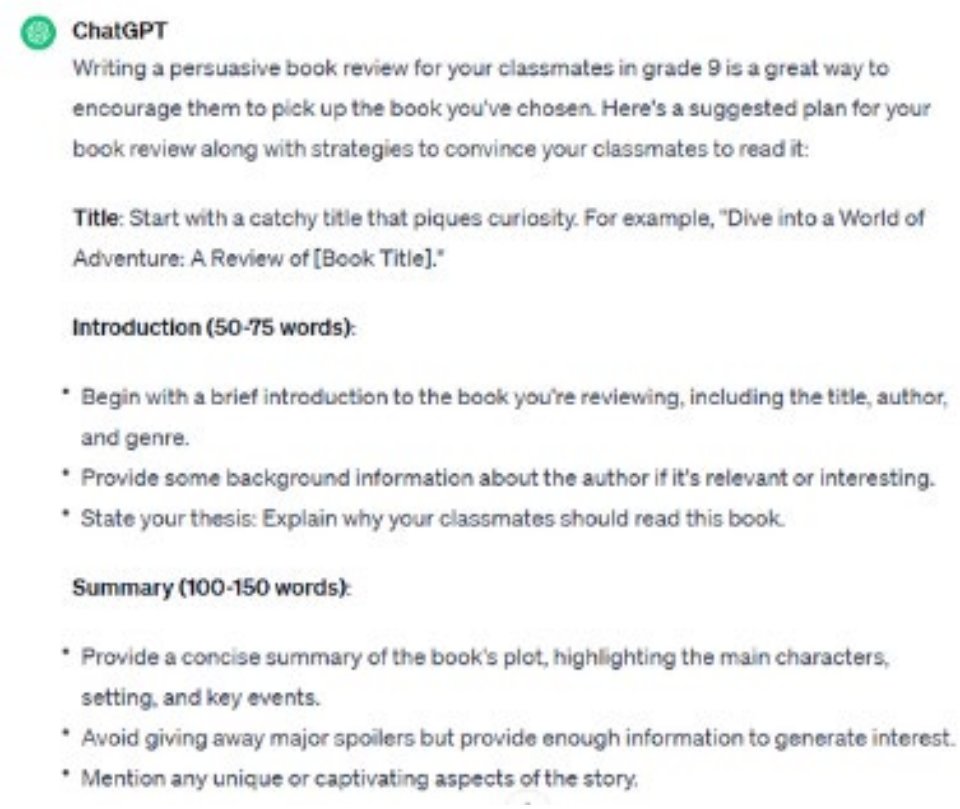

**Figure 2**
*Creating a Customized Prompt*



The selection of three colors aids in visually understanding prompt engineering. Upon analyzing the color-highlighted segments, it becomes apparent that the elements *author* and *request* are straightforward, boosting students' confidence to begin writing their own prompts. However, the *purpose* element is pivotal in employing GenAI ethically as a scaffolding technique. At this point, educators should raise students' awareness about ethical and purpose-driven questions directing the writing of prompts: "What is my prompt for?" and "What do I want to achieve with it?" These replace command-based prompts like "Write a review about the book [*Title*]," a misuse of GenAI in education settings, emphasizing the need for ethical modeling in human-AI interactions.

**Step Five: Discussing ChatGPT's Response.** Unlike the general guide created from the prompt "How can I write a book review?," ChatGPT generated a structured set of instructions for composing a book review tailored for ninth-grade students. ChatGPT meticulously segments the review process into distinct parts, guiding students during the writing of the review. These include an introduction with a catchy title, a concise summary that avoids spoilers, character analysis, and themes (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**
*ChatGPT Output (OpenAI, 2023)*



**Character Analysis (100-150 words)**:

* Discuss the main characters and their development throughout the book.
* Explain why readers will relate to or be fascinated by these characters.
* Give specific examples from the book to illustrate your points.

**Themes and Messages (75-100 words)**:

* Identify the central themes or messages conveyed in the book.
* Explain why these themes are relevant or thought-provoking for grade 9 students.
* Relate the themes to real-life experiences or issues faced by teenagers.

**Writing Style and Language (50-75 words)**:

* Comment on the author's writing style, including whether it's engaging, descriptive, or easy to understand.
* Mention any memorable quotes or passages that showcase the author's skill.
* Discuss how the language used in the book enhances the reading experience.

**Emotional Impact (50-75 words)**:

* Share how the book made you feel while reading it.
* Describe any emotional moments that stuck with you.
* Explain how the book can resonate with your classmates' emotions and experiences.

**Recommendation and Closing (50-75 words)**:

* Reiterate your thesis statement, emphasizing why your classmates should read this book.
* Use persuasive language to encourage them to pick it up.
* Mention any awards, accolades, or critical acclaim the book has received.

**Conclusion (25-50 words)**:

* Summarize your main points briefly.
* End with a strong closing statement that leaves a lasting impression.
* Consider a call to action, such as "Don't miss out on this incredible journey; grab a copy today!"

**Additional Strategies**:

1. Personal Connection: Share any personal experiences or moments from the book that resonated with you. This can make your review more relatable.
2. Use Quotes: Incorporate a few well-chosen quotes from the book to demonstrate the author's writing style or to emphasize key themes.
3. Compare and Contrast: If the book is similar to popular books or movies, make comparisons to those to help your classmates understand what to expect.
4. Address Potential Concerns: If there are any potential drawbacks to the book (e.g., mature content or challenging language), briefly acknowledge them and explain why they shouldn't deter your classmates from reading it.
5. Be Enthusiastic: Let your passion for the book shine through in your writing. If you genuinely loved it, your enthusiasm will be contagious.

By following this plan and incorporating these strategies, you'll create a compelling book review that will convince your grade 9 classmates to pick up the book you've chosen and embark on an exciting reading adventure.

Continuing with the review process, the guidance covers writing style, emotional impact, and a persuasive conclusion. Each section is equipped with precise word count limits and strategic advice, such as incorporating personal reflections, notable quotes, and comparisons to familiar works, enhancing both the engagement and analytical depth of the review. This structured guidance simplifies the writing task by encouraging critical thinking and effective communication among students.

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates how GenAI can be used as a scaffolding strategy for MLs writing a persuasive book review assignment, and how prompt engineering can encourage students to engage critically with writing. Although planned with an ELA ninth-grade context in mind, the recommendations in this paper are transferable across other subjects, school grade levels, and higher education, supporting MLs as they navigate cognitive and emotional challenges in writing.

The Prompt Creation Reference Chart (dos Santos et al., 2025) highlights key characteristics—*author*, *request*, and *purpose*—that guide the creation of structured prompts. These prompts scaffold MLs' writing by breaking down the process into manageable steps, fostering ethical GenAI engagement, and enhancing AI response efficacy. Integrating GenAI supports various writing stages (Barrot, 2023; Duncanson, 2024; Yan, 2023), from idea generation to content structuring and grammar refinement, creating an adaptive and personalized learning environment. This approach maintains learner engagement through interactive feedback and fosters independence as GenAI gradually adjusts the support level based on learner progress. The adoption of structured prompts guides students in interacting with AI text generators, building their confidence and autonomy in writing.

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