

WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition

# FAQ Series: Key Language Uses

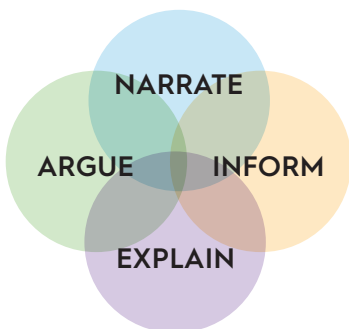


## What are Key Language Uses?

Key Language Uses—Narrate, Inform, Explain, and Argue—describe prominent ways that language is used in school. For example, every day students and teachers narrate, inform, explain, and argue. Of course, students and teachers use language in other ways too, but by identifying these four prominent uses, WIDA helps educators focus their approach to instruction.

## Why frame English Language Development Standards around Key Language Uses?

One of the Big Ideas in the 2020 Edition is a functional approach to language development. The four Key Language Uses are central to this Big Idea, as they emphasize the ways that language is used for particular purposes, with particular audiences, and in particular sociocultural contexts.



## All Key Language Uses are present across all grade levels and disciplines.

The emphasis placed on these four Key Language Uses is not intended to restrict curriculum and instruction; rather it accentuates the most prominent genre families as an organizing principle for the ELD Standards Framework.

The decision to frame the 2020 Edition around Key Language Uses grew out of an extensive analysis led by the WIDA standards development team.



Visit the [ELD Standards Framework](#) webpage to see more FAQs in this series, along with additional supporting resources and the 2020 Edition.

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## Are the Key Language Uses in the 2020 Edition different from the key uses in the Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition (2016)?

Four key uses of academic language were introduced in the Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition (2016): Recount, Explain, Argue, and Discuss. Four years later, as part of the development of the 2020 Edition, WIDA researchers analyzed the latest academic content standards, research literature, and disciplinary practices and felt a need to update their approach. WIDA identified four Key Language Uses—Narrate, Inform, Explain, and Argue—that appear across all content areas and that teachers can use to prioritize and organize the integration of content and language. In the 2020 Edition, the Key Language Uses help language and content teachers collaborate and coordinate instruction for multilingual learners.

## In what ways have the Key Language Uses changed in the 2020 Edition from their introduction in the Can Do Descriptors (2016)?

In the 2020 Edition, Key Language Uses have been redefined as genre families.

- Recount (2016) was divided into Narrate and Inform (2020) to better differentiate among the characteristics of the wide varieties of texts that were found under Recount.
- Discuss (2016) is technically not a genre family. However, research shows that students are constantly discussing various topics across a diverse number of contexts and situations. With that in mind, in the 2020 Edition, Discuss was embedded across all four Key Language Uses.

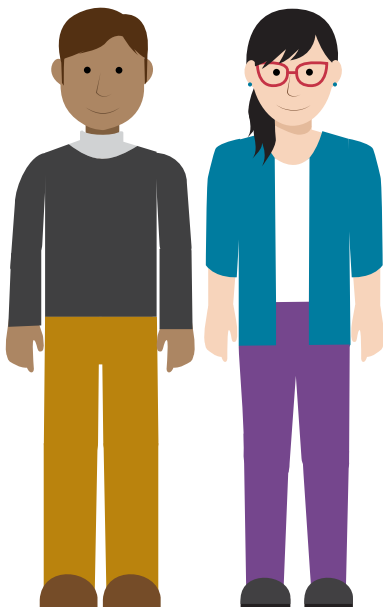


## Where do the Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition (2016), fit into this updated framework (2020 Edition)? Will they be updated to include the new Key Language Uses of Narrate and Inform?

The Can Do Descriptors have not yet been updated to reflect the 2020 Edition; however, they remain available as a valuable tool for communicating with stakeholders about what students can do at each language proficiency level. WIDA is monitoring educator use to help inform the timing for updating the materials.

## What does it mean when the 2020 Edition refers to the Key Language Uses as *multimodal*?

This means students may use multiple means of communication, action, and engagement as they narrate, inform, explain, and argue. For example, in addition to the use of spoken and written language, students also communicate through movement, gestures, facial expressions, images, equations, maps, symbols, diagrams, electronic devices, and other means.



## Where can I learn more about the role of Key Language Uses in the 2020 Edition?



For a more detailed look at the features of each Key Language Use, read Section 4. Appendix C shows K-12 distribution tables of the most prominent Key Language Uses by grade-level cluster and WIDA ELD Standard Statements.