# Taking a Genre-Based Approach to Curricular Development Using the Curriculum Amplification Guide



## Introduction

Leveraging teachable moments that arise spontaneously during instruction can lead to authentic, student-led learning experiences emerging directly from students' misunderstandings and questions. When scaffolding happens during instruction, these are **micro-scaffolding practices.** While necessary pit stops and detours are welcome as students travel to their learning destinations, teachable moments should not drive language instruction. Language development should be addressed systematically and in service of the grade-level content learning goals. To do this, educators must consider **macro-scaffolding practices,** which happen during the conceptualization of the intended learning goals. This includes setting and organizing learning goals and designing and sequencing activities across a unit and curriculum (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework, 2020 Edition: Kindergarten–Grade 12, introduces the Sample Collaborative Planning Process (p. 237), which guides teachers at the unit level to plan ways to integrate content and language. This Focus Bulletin addresses ways educators can make pedagogical choices across an entire curriculum that inform and accelerate unit- and lesson-level planning.

# Curriculum Amplification Guide

The Curriculum Amplification Guide is designed to help educators make intentional decisions to form a more cohesive learning experience by providing opportunities for language development throughout all academic units of a curriculum. While **WIDA PRIME** is a tool to analyze a content curriculum's degree of alignment to the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, it is primarily for curriculum publishers and is often too comprehensive for a classroom teacher to use within a reasonable timeframe. The Curriculum Amplification Guide is designed with the limitations of educators' time and the opportunities within WIDA PRIME in mind. Like WIDA PRIME, the Curriculum Amplification Guide leads educators through three analysis criteria but with a narrow focus on the Key Language Uses (KLUs). KLUs are genre families or categories of texts that share specific characteristics, such as purpose, organization, and patterns of language (WIDA, 2020, p. 26). This process not only supports educators in taking a genre-based approach to developing language and planning macro-scaffolding practices but also sets them up for engaging in more specific, micro-level scaffolding practices while working directly with students in a way that deliberately connects to the language and content learning goals.
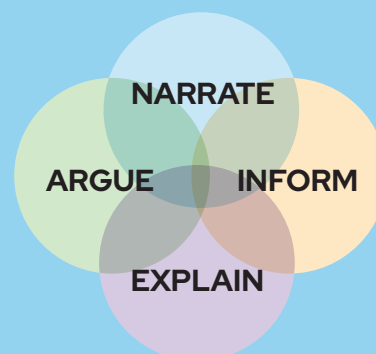
The Curriculum Amplification Guide is organized by the following analysis criteria:

- **Match:** Identify the most prominent KLU of each unit in the curriculum.
- **Depth:** Identify the materials and activities across the units that explicitly teach the language of the most prominent KLU for each unit.
- **Breadth:** Take inventory of how the KLUs are systematically and consistently addressed across the entire curriculum.

Each criterion of analysis builds on one another in a way that allows educators to start and stop where it makes the most sense for them. This Focus Bulletin contextualizes the Curriculum Amplification Guide within Mrs. White's high school English language development class of newcomers in grades 9–12. In the Example From the Field sections, we get to hear from Mrs. White and how she took a genre-based approach to align content and language during her first year of implementing a published curriculum for English language development. Notice her ideas for amplifying the integration of content and language as she navigated the why and how of each criterion of the process.

Mrs. White

# Match

| Criteria | Steps to Engaging in KLU Alignment | Materials to Engage in KLU Alignment | Guiding Questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Match**<br><br>Identify the most prominent Key Language Uses related to the units' academic content standards. | • Identify the content standards, recurring and major expressive tasks, and the summative assessments for each unit.<br>• Identify the most prominent KLU for each unit. | Notice how students are expected to use language throughout a sample set of curriculum materials with a focus on the following:<br><br>• Content standards<br>• Recurring expressive tasks<br>• Summative assessments | What is the most prominent KLU that the content standards of each unit reflect?<br><br>What is the overarching purpose of language use that students are expected to express in each unit? |

## Why?

Key Language Uses (KLUs) are the organizing feature of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework. Selecting the most prominent KLU for a unit supports educators by narrowing the scope of possible effective language goals. The KLUs also provide a throughline that connects lesson-level language learning tasks to a larger, overarching content-focused purpose of language use.

This criterion can support amplifying the curriculum by highlighting the most prominent KLU for each unit and the overarching purpose of language that students are expected to express by the end of the unit.

## How?

Once the grade-level content objectives have been identified, the next task is to think about how students will successfully demonstrate their understanding of the content by the end of the unit. While examining the summative task, identify how students are expected to express their learning. Are they arguing? Informing? Explaining? Or maybe they are narrating? This exploration may expose multiple KLUs. In this case, the next step may be to find ways to edit the assessment to be more focused on the most prominent KLU.

Depending on how much time it takes to do the work of matching each unit to a KLU, it may make sense for some educators to stop here and focus on amplifying their curriculum by tweaking assessments or culminating tasks to be focused on one KLU. This is also a good time to ensure there is at least one mentor text to support students as they practice engaging in that KLU.

## Example From the Field

I have been tasked this year to implement a new English language development (ELD) curriculum for newcomers. This curriculum is composed of 10 thematic units, and each unit contains sections centered on the language of math, science, social studies, and language arts, including a section on reading skills, and ends with a summative task focused on writing skills. I started by looking at each unit's summative task, focusing on what students are being asked to write. The summative writing tasks informed my decisions on the most prominent Key Language Use (KLU) of each unit.

### Opportunities for Amplification

While in content curricula educators are asked to identify the language goals, my curriculum is centered on English language development for newcomers with a wide variety of embedded content–centered language. The wide variety of content being addressed is not conducive to creating a cohesive learning experience throughout the unit. Additionally, unit 2 had no clear, single content focus.

This prompted me to take the following actions:

- Narrow the content focus for each unit.
- Identify a content focus for unit 2.

| Identified KLU |
| --- |
| **Unit 1:** Introductions<br>**KLU:** Narrate<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 2:** At School<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Unknown |
| **Unit 3:** In the Classroom<br>**KLU:** Narrate<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 4:** My Day<br>**KLU:** Narrate<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 5:** My Class Schedule<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Social Studies |
| **Unit 6:** My Family<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 7:** Where You Live<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 8:** In the Community<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Career and College Planning |
| **Unit 9:** Eating and Shopping<br>**KLU:** Narrate<br>**Content:** Language Arts |
| **Unit 10:** Health and Safety<br>**KLU:** Inform<br>**Content:** Science |

# Depth

| Criteria | Steps to Engaging in KLU Alignment | Materials to Engage in KLU Alignment | Guiding Questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Depth**<br><br>Identify a variety of texts, tasks, and purposes addressed across the Key Language Uses. | • Group units by their identified most prominent KLU.<br>• Review at least one recurring expressive and interpretive task per unit.<br>• Identify the specific genres that students are expected to interpret and express across the units. | • Summative assessments<br>• Recurring unit activities (a chapter in a book, lab reports, journaling, etc.)<br>• Interpretive materials (readings, videos, graphs, etc.)<br>• Table 4-1 Definitions of Key Language Uses on p. 219 of WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, for genre examples | Where are there opportunities for students to engage in a variety of texts and tasks?<br><br>How do the materials reveal common and unique linguistic and organizational features of each KLU?<br><br>What mentor texts support the most prominent KLU of each unit? |

## Why?

It is important that multilingual learners are exposed to myriad text types as they learn the language used to meet various purposes and audiences across the KLUs. Exploring the depth of alignment allows educators to notice the variety of KLUs addressed and the genres within each of them. Additionally, this work highlights the connections and disconnections between the interpretive and expressive learning tasks to help form more alignment between the language models and expected language use among students.

This criterion can support amplifying the curriculum by highlighting the following:

- The opportunities for students to engage in a variety of texts and tasks
- The materials that reveal common and unique linguistic and organizational features of each KLU
- The mentor texts that support the most prominent KLU of each unit

## How?

When each unit across a yearlong curriculum has the most prominent KLU identified, the next task is to identify the specific ways the KLUs are addressed. To begin this process, start by grouping units by KLU only for the purpose of analyzing the curriculum. Then, review at least one major or recurring expressive and interpretive task for each unit. With the most prominent KLU in mind, identify the specific genres that are being addressed in your selected tasks. It is common for there to be interpretive materials that may not align with the expressive task. If there are no or very limited opportunities for students to interpret materials that model the language they are expected to express, this might be an indication that there is an opportunity to amplify the curriculum by building more interpretive tasks that align with their expressive demands.

While the Match criterion of analysis highlights the purpose of language use on the summative assessment, the Depth criterion gives us an opportunity to look closer at the learning resources that will support students as they build capacity to successfully express their learning on the summative assessment. For some educators, it may make sense to stop here and focus on building the lesson-level materials and activities that engage students in and model the language necessary to express their content learning by the end of each unit.

### Example From the Field

The curriculum I worked with had numerous materials across a span of topics. However, while all materials may have been connected to the units' broad themes, the content and language learning materials and tasks were varied and random with no clear connection. The Depth criterion prompted me to take a more critical look at the learning materials and activities. Identifying the content focus and KLU within this ELD curriculum in the Match criterion informed my decisions on which lesson-level interpretive and expressive materials and activities to expand on and which to cut.

| Identified KLU | Unit Name or # | Identified Genres |
|---|---|---|
| **Narrate** | **Unit 1:** Introductions<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a short comic of people greeting each other.<br>• Make a list of school rules.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Develop a personal recount about their school. |
| **Narrate** | **Unit 3:** In the Classroom<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read to infer author's message in a poem.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a poem about a classroom experience. |
| **Narrate** | **Unit 4:** My Day<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a science fiction story.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a science fiction story. |
| **Narrate** | **Unit 9:** Eating and Shopping<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a folktale.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a description of images to create a story. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 2:** At School<br>**Content:** Unknown | **Interpretive**<br>• Listen to someone give directions in a dialogue.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Create a descriptive text about their school. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 5:** My Class Schedule<br>**Content:** Social Studies | **Interpretive**<br>• Identify details to support the main idea of a news article.<br>• Synthesize the weather and climate from a weather report.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write an email describing their life. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 6:** My Family<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a fiction text.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a summary of a fiction text.<br>• Write a description of your family. |

| Identified KLU | Unit Name or # | Identified Genres |
|---|---|---|
| **Inform** | **Unit 7:** Where You Live<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a biography.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Retell the key events of a biography.<br>• Write a biography about a famous person. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 8:** In the Community<br>**Content:** Career and College Planning | **Interpretive**<br>• Read an informational text about jobs.<br>• Read and interpret the results of a career interest survey.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a summary of an experience. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 10:** Health and Safety<br>**Content:** Science | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a play.<br>• Read an informative text.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write about your perspective on an issue. |

**Opportunities for Amplification**

While looking closely at the readings and activities to see how they align to the summative assessment, I focused my attention on specific units that needed the most work—units 2, 5, 6, and 10. I was still unclear on the content focus for unit 2. Unit 5 was missing a mentor text to align with the expressive task. Unit 6 had reading materials more aligned with Narrate than Inform. Unit 10 addressed topics that spanned fiction plays, staying safe at school, and describing how they feel, which all felt quite random and disconnected from each other.

This prompted me to take the following actions:

- Focus on the language of Inform while reading fiction texts in unit 6.
- Provide mentor texts and extra activities around structuring an email in unit 5.
- Consider cutting unit 10.
- Find supplemental readings and activities centered on students' interests and experiences across units.

In the following table, you will find additional ideas that I had to strengthen the alignment of the units, which were focused on the KLU Inform and needed the most attention.

## Notes: Opportunities for Amplification

**Unit 2:** At School

- Merge unit 2 with unit 1 to center on people and places.
- Take a tour and use our school map to label places and people.
- Print the script of the audio conversation, and have students identify the language patterns necessary for giving directions.
- Replace the final expressive task with a pamphlet for a new student telling them about the school.

**Unit 5:** My Class Schedule

- Provide a mentor text on what an email looks like.
- Provide an opportunity to practice writing emails to each other using our shared email format.
- Make the focus of this unit on writing a descriptive email of their life now or in the past.

**Unit 6:** My Family

- Focus on the expanded noun groups, adjectives, adverbs, and other descriptive language in the fiction text.
- Provide opportunities for students to discuss fiction vs nonfiction.
- Have students interview a family member.
- Replace the descriptive writing about their family with a story based on true events captured in their interview.

**Unit 7:** Where You Live

- Bring short biographies of people that are significant to the cultures and experience of the students.
- Have students choose a famous person they would like to share with the class to write their biographies.
- Make the biographies in the form of presentations that include video, audio, and other modes of communication.

**Unit 8:** In the Community

- Change the expressive task to have students write about what job they want and how they could get that job.
- Build on sequence vocabulary.
- Do an exploration of trade schools, 2-year and 4-year colleges, and military and other post-secondary options.

**Unit 10:** Health and Safety

- No clear content focus.
- Cut this unit for time.

# Breadth

| Criteria | Steps to Engaging in KLU Alignment | Materials to Engage in KLU Alignment | Guiding Questions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Breadth**<br><br>Identify how the Key Language Uses are systematically and consistently addressed across units. | • Take inventory of the most prominent KLUs that have been identified across each unit.<br>• Find opportunities to intentionally build on previous language development.<br>• Ensure the curriculum addresses a variety of genres. | • Scope and sequence<br>• All identified most prominent KLUs for each unit<br>• Identified genres that will be addressed in each KLU<br>• Previous grade-level curriculum materials for vertical alignment | How many times are each of the most prominent KLUs addressed throughout the curriculum?<br><br>Looking across each KLU being addressed, what genres are addressed throughout the curriculum? |

## Why?

When language is taught alongside grade-level content standards in a systematic, sustained, and cohesive way, it supports multilingual learners to build language skills iteratively and incrementally. Establishing a cohesive learning experience includes ensuring that lessons gradually build the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful by the end of the unit. It also includes looking across the curriculum to confirm that the units are designed to reiterate and build on one another. Analyzing the breadth of content-language integration gives educators an opportunity to make sure that all the pieces of the curricular puzzle are present and fit together.

This criterion can support amplifying the curriculum by highlighting the following:

- The number of times each KLU is addressed throughout the curriculum
- The different genres addressed across each KLU
- Opportunities to intentionally expand on the learning across units

## How?

While analyzing the depth of content-language integration, educators are asked to group the units by KLU to identify the specific genres that are addressed across the same KLU. This juxtaposition also supports educators in analyzing the breadth of content-language integration by guiding them to first take notice of the number of times each KLU is addressed and the unique genres within each addressed KLU that students are expected to interpret and express across the units. Once educators have pinpointed this information, it positions them to determine how the genres addressed in each unit expand on and reinforce each other. This exploration may reveal a KLU that is not being addressed enough, or one being addressed too much. It could also uncover opportunities to rearrange the units' language goals to ensure iterative and gradual language development.

After taking such a worm's eye view of the curriculum during the Depth criterion analysis, it was refreshing to take a bird's eye view to see some interesting patterns and make some important decisions. One observation was that we are only engaging in Narrate and Inform as our KLUs, but we are covering a wide variety of genres within each. For example, while exploring the KLU Narrate, we are interpreting and expressing comics, pamphlets, poems, and fiction and nonfiction stories. I also noticed that most of the units' summative assessments are focused on the content of language arts.

**Opportunities for Amplification**

Since this is my first year implementing this new curriculum, I approached it chronologically. After looking at the breadth of implementation, I noticed some opportunities to continue narrowing the scope of the units to form a more cohesive learning experience. Unit 10 was especially challenging to find a clear content-language focus and did not make sense for a final unit of the school year. Unit 2 also had a vague content learning goal and made more sense to use in conjunction with unit 1 content so that students could get to know the language associated with the school environment while learning the language for meeting new people. Units 4 and 9 were both focusing on fiction stories, so I chose to merge them into a single unit to give students opportunities to explore the language of Narrate with two different types of fiction stories. This resulted in ending the year with unit 8, focusing on career and college planning, which makes the most sense for my students, who range in age from 16 to 20 years old.

This prompted me to take the following actions:

- Combine units with similar themes (Units 1 and 2, Units 4 and 9).
- Cut unit 10.
- End the school year on the topic of college and career readiness.

## Potential Impact on Cross-Curricular Development

Taking a genre-based approach to designing language development across curricula equips educators for cross-curricular development. When educators across a grade level have done this work, they can compare curricula to find if and when they are teaching Key Language Uses (KLUs) at the same time. In this way, they can determine opportunities to collaborate and share resources and activities across their planning and instruction. They may also identify when educators have already addressed a KLU that they will be focusing on later, and then they can share and expand on the specific language students have already built in the other classes. This cross pollination enhances the cohesion of the learning experiences for multilingual learners across all content courses. It also supports more sustainable collaborative practices across classroom educators and English language specialists.

In the following table, you will find Mrs. White's final decisions on the completed Curriculum Amplification Template.

# Curriculum Amplification Template: Key Language Use (KLU) Alignment Sample

Class: Newcomer ELD Class
Grade Level: 9th–12th
Subject: English Language Development (ELD)

| KLU | Unit Name or # | Identified Genres | Notes: Opportunities for Amplification |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Narrate** | **Units 1 & 2:** Introductions and At School **Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a short comic of people greeting each other.<br>• Make a list of school rules.<br>• Listen to someone give directions in a dialogue.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Create a pamphlet about their school introducing it to new students.<br>• Make a comic telling a story about a student's first day of school. | • Have students bring in a comic they like, discuss it with a partner, and notice how it is structured.<br>• Change the expressive task to making a comic of conversations around a school.<br>• Provide a storyboard for students to use as they draft their comic.<br>• Practice asking and answering WH-questions.<br>• Take a tour and use our school map to label places and people.<br>• Print the script of the audio conversation, and have students identify the language patterns necessary for giving directions.<br>• Use a writing template with direction-words provided.<br>• Include an expressive task of writing a pamphlet describing the school to a new student.<br>• Replace the final expressive tasks with a comic talking about their first day at school. |
| **Narrate** | **Unit 3:** In the Classroom **Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read to infer author's message in a poem.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a poem about a classroom experience. | • Provide additional poems connected to students' lived experiences and interests, and have students use thinking strategies (ask questions, determine importance, synthesize) to infer author's message.<br>• Have students talk about their communities in their home country compared to what community looks like for them here.<br>• Have students deconstruct language in poems to notice language patterns that they can imitate in their own poems.<br>• Provide a vocabulary bank during poem writing. |

| KLU | Unit Name or # | Identified Genres | Notes: Opportunities for Amplification |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Narrate** | **Units 4 & 9:** My Day and Eating and Shopping **Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive** <br>• Read a science fiction story. <br>• Read a folktale. <br><br>**Expressive** <br>• Write a science fiction story. <br>• Write a description of folktale images to create a story. | • Deconstruct the language use across science fiction stories and folktales that add descriptions. <br>• Practice summarizing stories using sequencing vocabulary. <br>• Have students bring a folktale they know (in any language). <br>• Create a sort using pictures illustrating events from their stories to prompt their summaries. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 5:** My Class Schedule **Content:** Social Studies | **Interpretive** <br>• Identify details to support the main idea of a news article. <br>• Synthesize the weather and climate from a weather report. <br><br>**Expressive** <br>• Write an email describing their life. | • Provide mentor text on what an email looks like. <br>• Provide an opportunity to practice writing emails to each other using our shared email format. <br>• Make the focus of this unit on writing a descriptive email of their life now or in the past. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 6:** My Family **Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive** <br>• Read a fiction text. <br><br>**Expressive** <br>• Write a summary of a fiction text. <br>• Write a description of your family. | • Focus on the expanded noun groups, adjectives, adverbs, and other descriptive language in the fiction text. <br>• Provide opportunities for students to discuss fiction vs. nonfiction. <br>• Have students interview a family member. <br>• Replace the description writing assignment about their family with a story based on true events captured in their interview. |

| KLU | Unit Name or # | Identified Genres | Notes: Opportunities for Amplification |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Inform** | **Unit 7:** Where You Live<br>**Content:** Language Arts | **Interpretive**<br>• Read a biography.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Retell the key events of a biography.<br>• Write a biography about a famous person. | • Bring short biographies of people that are significant to the cultures and experiences of the students.<br>• Have students choose a famous person they would like to share with the class to write their biographies.<br>• Make the biographies in the form of presentations that include video, audio, and other modes of communication. |
| **Inform** | **Unit 8:** In the Community<br>**Content:** Career and College Planning | **Interpretive**<br>• Read an informational text about jobs.<br>• Read and interpret the results of a career interest survey.<br><br>**Expressive**<br>• Write a summary of an experience. | • Change the expressive task to have students write about what job they want with a focus on language for Inform.<br>• Build on sequence vocabulary.<br>• Do an exploration of trade schools, 2-year and 4-year colleges, and military and other post-secondary options. |

## Conclusion

The process of aligning a curriculum to the WIDA ELD Standards Framework can feel overwhelming, and the impact on student learning may seem nebulous. This Focus Bulletin highlights specific actions educators can take to either begin or deepen alignment work and specific ways those actions would amplify the curriculum for multilingual learners. Engaging with the Curriculum Amplification Guide will look different across various contexts. For Mrs. White, her curriculum was more language focused, so it made sense for her to add the extra step of identifying more specific content learning goals. For educators working with content curricula who are just starting the process of alignment, it may be more helpful to focus on matching the units across the curriculum to a Key Language Use (KLU) and follow up in the coming years by developing the depth and breadth of a curriculum. For those who have already aligned each content unit to a KLU (and possibly even Language Functions and Features), it may make more sense to engage in the Curriculum Amplification Guide with a focus on analyzing the depth and breadth of alignment and then consider next steps for working toward more gradewide cross-curricular development.

Click here to see the full Curriculum Amplification Guide and template.

## References

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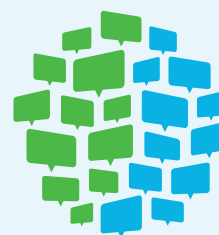
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