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Research Report

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Advancing Implementation: Phase 2: Research on WIDA English Language Development Standards, Part 2: A Case Study of Transformative Practices in a Rural North Carolina District

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> This report presents a case study of how the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, is being implemented in a single K–12 system, with a particular focus on multilingual learner (ML) teacher agency, collaboration, and equity. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, artifacts, and district data from this site, the study traces how educators interpret and enact the standards in classrooms, PLCs, and leadership spaces.

WIDA Research

WIDA research expands knowledge on effectively teaching multilingual learners and assessing what they know and can do in a fair and valid way. We work in partnership with districts, states, and national experts to conduct research focused on understanding and supporting the highest quality educational practices and outcomes for multilingual learners to inform educators, policymakers, families/caregivers, and the research community.

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Summary

This report presents an in-depth case study of how the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, is being implemented in a single K–12 system, with a particular focus on multilingual learner (ML) teacher agency, collaboration, and equity. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, artifacts, and district data from this site, the study traces how educators interpret and enact the standards in classrooms, PLCs, and leadership spaces; how they integrate language and content in disciplines like math and science; and how they navigate barriers such as time, competing initiatives, and resource gaps. It highlights profiles of successful "early adopters," showcases innovative practices (including AI-supported and blended learning approaches), and surfaces pressing opportunity concerns around newcomers, exit criteria, rural/urban disparities, and MLs with disabilities. The report concludes with concrete implications for district leaders, WIDA product and PL teams, and future research, offering a roadmap for strengthening standards-aligned instruction, professional learning, and policy supports to advance more equitable outcomes for multilingual learners.

Special Acknowledgment of: District educators engaged as partners in this research study

Phase 2 of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, Standards Implementation Study—Part 2

Contents

Introduction

This report presents findings from the second phase of a multi-tiered study on the implementation of the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework, 2020 Edition (hereafter, WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, or 2020 Edition), with an in-depth case analysis of a rural district in the Southeast United States. Drawing from a mixed-methods design that integrates WIDA ACCESS proficiency and exit data (2020–2025), end-of-year program surveys, educator interviews, focus groups, and rich artifacts such as ELD interactive student workbooks and Professional Learning Community (PLC) documentation, the study explores how teacher agency, collaborative structures, and resource-aligned instructional design shape effective standards implementation.

This study highlights how a rural district advanced the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, through teacher agency, collaboration, and innovative use of technology. Findings show that integrated content–language instruction, asset-based practices, and family engagement drive sustained gains in multilingual learners' language growth, particularly in speaking and writing.

This research advances WIDA's agenda on opportunity, teacher agency, and equity for multilingual learners, offering a replicable model for standards implementation and policy advocacy. Findings highlight the importance of practical resources, targeted professional development, and systems that elevate teacher voice and leadership, particularly in rural and resource-constrained contexts.

Background and Purpose

This study focuses on the implementation of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. While the large convenience sample provided valuable insights, the self-selected nature of participants limits the extent to which findings can be generalized across the consortium. The initial activities provided a robust snapshot of current practices within a sizable, though non-representative, sample; however, a multi-tiered case study approach was necessary to examine specific actions and contextual needs at the teacher, district, and state levels in K–12 settings. Accordingly, Phase 2 used a case-study design to investigate the factors influencing both exemplary and struggling districts in their implementation of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition.

Additionally, K–12 classroom-based research conducted through research–practitioner partnerships can illuminate the needs of in-service teachers. Because several SEAs involved in the study are developing professional development for pre-service teacher education programs, WIDA would also benefit from examining pre-service teachers' understanding of the ELD Standards and their readiness to implement them effectively.

Research Aims

The aim of this study is to investigate how the implementation of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, shapes teacher agency, instructional practice, and equitable language outcomes for multilingual learners in a rural district context. Specifically, the research seeks to

- Examine how educators interpret, adapt, and operationalize the updated standards, focusing on shifts brought by the 2020 Edition, such as Key Language Uses (KLUs) and Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs).
- Analyze the impact of professional learning communities, blended learning models, and resource-aligned instructional strategies on student proficiency growth and exit rates, particularly in the productive domains of writing and speaking.
- Identify systemic factors, resource constraints, and collaborative structures that mediate consistency, innovation, and equity in ELD standards enactment at both classroom and district levels.

Through this inquiry, the study aims to generate practical and policy-relevant insights that inform future professional development, curriculum design, and district-level strategies for advancing multilingual learner success.

Case Study Rationale

This study focuses on an excelling rural district to illuminate key drivers of successful WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition implementation. By examining how this district uses the WIDA frequency report to track cohort progress across listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as individual growth and exit rates under the revised 4.5 exit criterion—the study highlights concrete practices that can inform broader implementation efforts. Progress and exit patterns are examined at the state level to reduce confounding factors in direct district-to-district comparisons.

Recruiting a district that volunteered to participate ensures genuine interest and commitment, allowing for a more meaningful exploration of local practices and teacher agency in an engaged context. Studying excelling districts provides models for systems struggling to meet growth goals, even as future research aims to include less successful districts that are typically harder to recruit.

The case study approach complements the larger SIS project by examining district-level factors, educator supports, and integration of WIDA ELD Standards with content instruction through fine-grained, context-sensitive analysis. Unlike broader survey work, the study foregrounds educators' reasoning, local adaptation, and classroom practice, revealing not just what occurs but how and why key implementation decisions are made, and which tools (such as the WIDA Can Do Descriptors) educators find most useful.

Case Study Timeline

During this period, the collection of district-level quantitative data began, encompassing WIDA ACCESS frequency and exit reports, as well as supporting program documentation and demographic data. The case study, conducted by WIDA from October 2024 to May 2025, provided a sequential account of ELD standards implementation in the district (Table 1).

Table 1

Case Study Timeline Summary

Timeframe	Activities
Oct 2024	• Recruitment via email/staff meetings • Call for participation issued
Late Oct–Early Nov	• Identification and confirmation of participating district (district expressed interest and partnership was formally established)
Nov–Dec 2024	• Collection of district-level quantitative data (WIDA ACCESS frequency, exit reports, program docs, demographics)
Jan–Mar 2025	• Artifact collection: interactive student workbooks (Gr 6–8), lesson plans, PLC documentation • Ongoing participant clarification/follow-up
Early Spring 2025	• Preliminary data analysis: integrating qualitative and quantitative insights • Artifact collection: interactive ELD student workbooks (Grades 6–8), lesson plans, AI prompt engineering samples • District PLC participation and meeting recording data gathered • Collection of additional artifacts (e.g., co-planning documents, implementation reflections) • Ongoing participant clarification/follow-up
Apr–May 2025	• Synthesized findings • Member checking • Consolidation of the comprehensive report
May 2025–Sep 2025	• Evidence-based analysis and reporting
Sep 2025–Dec 2025	• Final report revision, design, and preparation for publication and print dissemination.

Theoretical Framework

This report adopts the same multilingual learner (ML) teacher agency framework as SIS Phase 2, Part 1.[1] In brief, agency is understood as

- Autonomy and professional leadership in shaping instruction and curriculum.
- Transformative agency to disrupt inequities and advocate for MLs.
- Curriculum and digital agency to adapt materials, integrate technology, and innovate.
- Distributed agency enacted through professional learning networks and collaborative structures.

A detailed review of these perspectives and the associated citations is provided in Report 1.

Methods

Participants, Setting, and Data Sources

During Part 1 data collection for Phase 2 (see the corresponding report for details) in Fall 2024, a participating district was identified through an expressed interest and a subsequent follow-up engagement process. Building on this identification, Part 2 of the study proceeded with a comprehensive gathering of qualitative and quantitative data in partnership with the district. Key sources of evidence included professional learning community (PLC) participation records and meeting recordings; ELD student interactive workbooks (grades 6–8); lesson plans and AI-generated prompts; and additional instructional artifacts such as co-planning documents and implementation reflections. This multi-source approach was designed to capture classroom practices, collaborative processes, and the real-world enactment of ELDs within the district, enabling robust triangulation and deeper insights into implementation.

Note: details on the data sources are provided within the Findings section, adjacent to the corresponding results for context.

Contextual Framing and Demographic Data

Context

The district, which the state's Department of Commerce classifies as Development Tier I, is in a rural area of this state and exemplifies both the challenges and the innovative potential of rural education in the United States. Like many rural districts in the state, this district faces significant hurdles: multilingual (ML) specialists are difficult to recruit and retain, resources are

[1] See SIS Phase 2 Report 1 for full framework

often stretched thin, and poverty rates are higher than in many urban and suburban areas. Despite these barriers, this district has developed and implemented exemplary ELD practices that offer a model for other rural districts nationwide.

The district's approach is distinguished by its intentional investment in ML learners, including targeted use of federal funds, collaborative professional learning communities, and the adoption of research-based strategies such as OCDE Project GLAD®. The district leverages community partnerships, digital tools, and family engagement initiatives to bridge resource gaps and ensure that ML students are not left behind. For example, this district's educators have embraced hybrid learning and technology integration, using tools like Google Slides and iPads to create interactive, culturally responsive materials that engage students and families alike. They have also prioritized ongoing, place-conscious professional development, fostering a culture where teachers collaborate, share expertise, and adapt instruction to local contexts.

What sets this district apart is its asset-based mindset: rather than viewing rural challenges as deficits, leaders and educators see these challenges as opportunities for innovation and community connection. By centering assets, leveraging local strengths, and building sustainable systems for ML support, this district demonstrates that rural districts can lead in ELD implementation. Their practices—intentional investment in ML staffing, collaborative teacher-led PD, integration of technology, and robust family engagement—are not only effective locally but also scalable and replicable for rural schools across the country seeking to accelerate learning for multilingual learners.

In sum, the district's ELD journey reveals that with vision, collaboration, and innovation, rural schools can overcome resource constraints and serve as national exemplars in multilingual learner education.

Note: this district's Title I Poverty status is worth noting because those percentages determine the amount of funding. The district is a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district, so students in all 20 schools receive free lunch, regardless of their individual household's socioeconomic status.

Demographic Data

According to district information and their participation in Title III federal programs, the district serves students who speak a variety of home languages. Based on typical patterns in the state and the presence of federal language support programs, the most reported student languages in the district are presented in the following Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Home languages other than English spoken in the District (Shared 2025–2026 CNA PDF-LL)

Home Language	Number of MLS
Aguacateco	1
Bulgarian	2
Chinese (Mandarin)	2
French	2
Greek, Modern	1
Hmong	1
Kachin; Jingpho	2
Korean	1
Mam	8
Spanish	868
Tarasco	1
Vietnamese	15
Total ML Students	**904**

Note. CNA stands for Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Table 3

Demographic Overview of the District for Academic Year 2025–2026

Category	All Students	Asian	African American or Black	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Two or more	White	No ethnicities indicated
Count	7444	39	122	2057	4	284	4938	0
Percentage	100	.52	1.64	27.6	.14	3.8	66.3	0

Note. Males comprised 3,764 students, or 50.5% of the total. Females comprised 3,680 students, or 49.5% of the total.

The district serves a diverse student population, including 963 students with disabilities, 121 children and youth experiencing homelessness, and 489 academically and intellectually gifted students. There are 904 multilingual learners, 40 foster students, and 4,351 students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Additionally, the district includes 192 immigrant students, 902 students from military families, and 120 students participating in the Migratory Education Program (Agricultural). These numbers reflect the district's commitment to meeting a wide range of educational, linguistic, and socio-economic needs. The breadth of subgroup populations underscores the importance of tailored supports and programming for all learners.

The District School Data (October 2024–May 2025)

While our national survey and focus group data provide valuable high-level insights, they naturally capture a broad perspective. To understand how the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition is being implemented and how teacher agency plays a role, it is essential to observe these practices at the classroom and district level. Site visits and direct observations allow us to see how the standards are enacted in real time within the dynamic interactions between teachers and students. Additionally, receiving data remotely offers a more scalable approach, enabling us to gather insights from a broader range of sites and participants without the constraints of travel.

This district, located in a rural area of the Southeast United States, generously volunteered to participate in this research, offering a unique opportunity to explore these questions in depth. By focusing on this district, we can gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of WIDA ELD

Standards Framework, 2020 Edition is utilized in practice and how educators exercise agency in this process.

The effectiveness of standards implementation is revealed in everyday moments. The true measure of standards implementation and potential lies in whether they meaningfully shape student–teacher interactions, for without this impact, their potential remains unfulfilled.

A comprehensive evaluation of ELD standards implementation relies on drawing from both qualitative and quantitative sources. To capture the complexity of instructional practices, program impact, and learner outcomes, this study analyzed standardized assessments, teacher and stakeholder surveys, student work, instructional materials, and collaboration artifacts. Together, these materials provide a multidimensional perspective on program effectiveness and ELD standards enactment.

Data Analysis

Focus group interview data were complemented by artifacts submitted as examples of successful standards implementation, adding contextualized, naturally occurring materials to supplement the analysis (Raptis, 2012). Additional artifacts and follow-up interviews after the nationwide survey provided further depth and representation. Participant names were pseudonymized to protect confidentiality.

Guided by a qualitative constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the analysis drew on participants' perspectives to understand how they constructed meaning around standards implementation (Creswell, 2014). Focus group questions elicited both individual and collective views, and data analysis followed an inductive, grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using NVivo, themes were coded iteratively around areas such as teacher agency, collaboration, resource access, professional development, instructional practices, family engagement, and policy contexts. ELD student workbooks were examined through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). To compare coding results, Epistemic Network Analysis (ENA) and quantitative ethnography were also applied (Shaffer & Ruis, 2017). See Appendix A for Types of Data Gathered and Analysis Methods.

Research Questions Guiding the Current Study

To guide this second phase of the Standards Implementation Study, we articulated a set of research questions that link the broader consortium-level aims with a focused, district-level case analysis. These questions are designed to clarify where and how the 2020 Edition is being implemented, what distinguishes higher-performing contexts, and which methodological approaches can most productively illuminate educators' experiences. Together, they frame the selection of case study sites, the analytic focus of this report, and the kinds of practical and policy-relevant insights the study seeks to generate.

- What distinguishing factors and practices contribute to higher levels of WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition implementation in districts identified as high-performing compared to those with average outcomes?
- In which educational, demographic, and policy contexts should research be conducted to most effectively examine the implementation of the 2020 Edition?
- How do our guiding research questions influence the selection of case study sites for investigating the 2020 Edition implementation?
- What unique insights or understandings can be gained through this research approach that would not be accessible through other methodologies?
- How is the implementation of the 2020 Edition currently unfolding in practice, and in what ways can this understanding inform and support educators?
- In what ways can educators be supported to effectively implement the 2020 Edition, beyond reliance on the official implementation guide?
- How are English Language Development frameworks being integrated with instruction in other content areas, and what are the implications for student learning?
- How can existing resources be better aligned and connected to create coherent learning pathways for educators and students, and are there potential strategies or opportunities that have not yet been considered, particularly from the perspective of State Education Agencies (SEAs)?
- What features made the WIDA Can Do Descriptors/WIDA Language Charts particularly effective or popular among participants, especially for guiding differentiated planning, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and communication about language expectations across proficiency levels?

Results

Transformative Practices of Using WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition to Move Multilingual Learners Through English Proficiency Levels for Exiting WIDA ACCESS for Academic Success

Findings from District Data

During Phase 2 of the study, the participating district shared five years of WIDA frequency data, which allowed for the correlation of ELD progression data with transformative practices from a rural district that mirrors many districts across the United States. The following section provides data and a review of change agents that are replicable and sustainable for other districts to use to grow their multilingual learners' English development, as well as their multilingual specialists' instructional craftsmanship as they coach and support general education classroom teachers.

Note: the state where this district is located has used the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition as the basis for its state ELD Standard Course of Study.

Best Practices and Evidence-Based Strategies

Effective best practices for supporting multilingual learners integrate research-backed instructional strategies with systemic assets frameworks. OCDE Project GLAD® employs asset-based, collaborative methods to build academic language through primary-language support and scaffolded content instruction, aligning with the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, and emphasizing language development across disciplines. Genre-based scaffolding, rooted in systemic functional linguistics, helps students master academic writing structures through explicit modeling and iterative practice, mirroring CLIL/CBI principles that fuse language and content learning (Table 4).

High-impact family engagement models, such as L1 parent portals, rotation nights, and student-led conferences, promote culturally responsive partnerships, a core tenet of quality leadership models that prioritize community collaboration. Blended learning tools powered by AI optimize personalized instruction and adaptive assessments, streamlining curriculum design while maintaining alignment with standards like WIDA's focus on interpretive and expressive communication. Cross-disciplinary PLCs and co-teaching models break down subject silos, fostering collaborative planning that reflects CLIL's integrative approach. Finally, Techquity initiatives ensure technology addresses systemic barriers, advancing equitable access through intentional tool selection, a practice underscored by additive perspective frameworks that demand resource redistribution and inclusive systems. Together, these strategies operationalize national research on language acquisition, content integration, and systemic practices to create holistic support systems for diverse learners. (Note: Techquity is a purposeful term used by the district to represent equitable access and meaningful engagement with technology for multilingual learners and their families. This approach leverages digital tools to empower students and families to bridge languages, support content learning, and actively participate in education.)

Table 4

District Best Practices for Equitable Multilingual Learning: National Research and Frameworks Alignment

District Best Practices	Description/Key Features	Connected National Frameworks/Research
OCDE Project GLAD® & Genre-Based Scaffoldings	Language-rich content instruction, academic vocabulary, genre modeling, visual scaffolding, SEL, and input charts	WIDA ELD Standards, 2020 Editions; Sheltered Instruction; Content-Language Integration (CLIL/CBI)
Family Engagement Models (L1 Parent Portals, Rotation Nights)	Connecting families through home language portals/events, builds home-school linkages, centers families as partners	WIDA's "can do" philosophy (asset-based engagement); Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy; National PTA Standards
Blended Learning & AI-Powered Planning Tools	Digital platforms, AI-driven lesson/resources, differentiated supports for access and engagement	ISTE Standards for Students; UDL; WIDA Techquity/equity & access guidance
Cross-Disciplinary PLCs & Co-Teaching	Joint planning, instructional integration (content and ELD), teacher growth via collaboration	WIDA Collaboration Guiding Principle; CLIL/CBI; Professional Learning Community (PLC Models)
Techquity (Technological Equity)	Ensuring equal tech access; addressing digital divide; using tech to remove barriers for MLS	WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition; Principle of Equity; Digital Equity Initiatives; Quality Leadership Standards

Note. OCDE stands for Orange County Department of Education.

Blended Learning

This district's approach to blended learning stands out as a model that can be adapted by districts nationwide, regardless of size or setting. By thoughtfully combining face-to-face instruction with digital tools such as Google Slides, iPads, and interactive online platforms, this district's educators create flexible, student-centered environments where multilingual learners can thrive. This strategy allows teachers to differentiate instruction, provide immediate feedback, and offer engaging, culturally responsive materials that students can access both in the classroom and at home.

Importantly, the district's blended learning model is grounded in collaboration: teachers regularly share resources, co-design lessons, and participate in ongoing professional development to refine their practice. The result is a dynamic, inclusive learning ecosystem that not only addresses the challenges of limited rural resources but also empowers students to take ownership of their learning. The district's success demonstrates that with intentional planning and a commitment to viewing students' assets, blended learning can be a powerful lever for accelerating language development and academic achievement in any district.

By intentionally screencasting direct instruction, the ML Specialist Co-facilitator can asynchronously co-teach the ELD lesson across the district, while an in-person ML Specialist differentiates for needs as ML students rotate through stations. Additionally, ML students take ownership of the number of times they need to view the co-facilitated instruction, leading to "close viewing," where they view the screencast for different purposes. Screencasting allows the ML Specialists to "clone themselves" and deliver purposeful, targeted instruction. MLs can drive the place and pace to create unique learning opportunities according to their needs. Instruction is not done to them, instead instruction is with them in partnership as they learn to become owners of learning both English and content.

Data Sources

To provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of English Language Development (ELD) standards implementation in the district, this case study drew upon an array of qualitative and quantitative data sources collected between 2020 and 2025 (Table 5). Central to the analysis were multi-year WIDA ACCESS frequency and exit data, which enabled tracking not just of individual student proficiency gains, but—importantly—of cohort movement along the proficiency continuum across grade levels. This longitudinal, "diagonal" approach to cohort analysis highlighted patterns of progress and persistent plateaus, providing actionable insights into where targeted instructional shifts were most needed.

Complementing these quantitative trends, End-of-Year (EOY) Multilingual Learner/Migrant Education Program (ML/MEP) survey responses from 2021–2022, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025 captured ML teacher and stakeholder perspectives on program strengths, perceived needs, and the impact of district initiatives. To ground the analysis in classroom reality, I examined a robust collection of ELD student interactive workbooks, representing numerous students across grades 6, 7, and 8, which provided direct evidence of genre-based writing, speaking practice, and multimodal engagement aligned with the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition.

Additionally, the study incorporated critical artifacts from professional learning communities (PLCs), including video recordings and PowerPoint slides from weekly PD sessions focused on growing student proficiency in the productive language domains. As the researcher, I virtually observed multiple district ML professional development sessions, with attention to PLCs targeting the speaking domain. These observations underscored a district-wide recognition of the need for professional learning related not only to reading but to writing and, especially, intentional and purposeful listening and speaking—areas often underemphasized in general education settings across the US.

Together, these diverse data sources allowed for triangulation of trends, a grounded understanding of both instructional practice and student learning, and the generation of recommendations for ongoing and future professional development—both locally and for WIDA's broader national network.

Table 5

Data Sources for ELD Standards Implementation in the District

Data Source	Years Collected	Description/Purpose	Notes
WIDA ACCESS frequency and exit data	2020–2025	Multi-year proficiency data enabled tracking not just of individual student gains, but—importantly—of cohort movement along the proficiency continuum across grade levels. This longitudinal, "diagonal" analysis highlighted patterns of progress and persistent plateaus, providing actionable insights into where targeted instructional shifts were most needed.	The power is on the diagonal, moving cohorts to the next grade level (not just by proficiency level). Movement of students through proficiency level by cohort is important.

Data Source	Years Collected	Description/Purpose	Notes
EOY Multilingual Learner/Migrant ED Program (ML/MEP) survey responses	2021–2022 2023–2024 2024–2025	Captured ML teacher and stakeholder perspectives on program strengths, perceived needs, and the impact of district initiatives.	MEP stands for Migratory Education Program (families involved in agricultural production who move seasonally).
ELD Student interactive workbooks	2023–2025	Robust collection representing numerous students across grades 6, 7, and 8; provided direct evidence of genre-based writing, speaking practice, and multimodal engagement aligned with the SIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition.	(Specify how many, what grade level if detailed data is available)
PLC video recording and PowerPoint slides	2023–2025	Artifacts from professional learning communities, including video recordings and slides from weekly PD sessions focused on growing student proficiency in the productive language domains.	Focus areas: speaking and multimodal engagement; central to district-wide recognition of PD needs
Researcher (Hannah Park) virtual observations of the district ML PD sessions	2023–2025	Observed multiple district ML professional development sessions, with attention to PLCs targeting the speaking domain. Underscored district-wide recognition of the need for professional learning related not only to reading but also writing and especially intentional and purposeful listening and speaking	General education classes focus primarily on reading; intentional listening and purposeful speaking are underemphasized nationally
Documentation of recognized PD needs	2023–2025	Prompted recommendations for what PD is needed from WIDA, across the US, in writing and speaking	Points to broader national implications for ongoing and future professional development

Note. MEP stands for Migratory Education Program (families involved in agricultural production who move seasonally).

Elaboration on Speaking Frequency

- Focusing on Speaking in 2024–2025, the district ML found this needed to be an intentional focus from teacher level to student level. Teachers had to learn how to teach speaking. They had to intentionally design instructions with speaking prompts.
- Looking at the data, most of the students who exited were in grades 4 and 5. Using the WIDA Frequency Report supports that intentional instruction on Speaking had led students from Expanding into Bridging and Reaching language proficiency levels.
- In grade 3, SY 22–23, 24% were in Expanding, as fourth graders in SY 23–24, 27% were in Expanding, and as fifth graders, in SY 24–25, 38% were in Expanding, but 10% had transitioned into Bridging, and 4% had progressed into Reaching. (Tip: View the cohorts on the diagonal.)
- The district staff (ML staff and teaching assistants) took all domains of a WIDA sample test as students. (See Appendix B for Teachers' Reflections on Speaking Domain as Students and Impact on Them as Educators.)
- The intentional use of data to drive PD planning, ELD lesson planning, and ML student instruction and expectations are observed through PLCs and the mini-action research for focusing on speaking support.

Process of Mini Action Research Projects for 2024–2025

1. Root-cause analysis of data trends from SY 2023–2024 WIDA ACCESS results showed frequency deficits in speaking.
2. The LIEP (Language Instruction Education Plan) submitted to the state Department of Public Instruction used intentional speaking intervention and support as a focus area for SY 24–25 for both ML staff and ML students (see Figures 3–8 in Appendix C for the district's Speaking and Writing Domain Task Examples).
3. PD Planning: Used WIDA resources and research to develop a PD plan for ML staff in the district.
4. PD implemented.
5. Were they successful? WIDA ACCESS Speaking Frequency Reports, moving from Expanded into Bridging and Reaching

Note. It is important not to infer direct causal relationships between instructional interventions and changes in WIDA ACCESS scores. These instructional supports and materials are best described as factors and conditions within the learning environment that may relate to student achievement. Improvements in ACCESS speaking proficiency could be associated with targeted supports, but academic growth is influenced by multiple variables. This report discusses these findings in terms of their relationship to learning conditions rather than discuss causation.

ELD Student Interactive Workbook

The ELD student interactive workbook is a digital document for each ELD lesson that becomes integral in measuring student growth in English language development over time as an ML student portfolio. Each ELD lesson is aligned with state ELD Standards, which are based on the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. Grade-level content is added to provide integrated support for general education. ML students are encouraged to use Techquity to help them remove barriers to understanding and create expressive outcomes that support their growth.

Each ELD student's interactive workbook has a metacognitive component for students to rate their knowledge of a skill or content standard before and after ELD instruction. Using a Likert-like scale, students become actively engaged in their learning progression in both English and subject content (see Appendix D for ELD Student Interactive Workbook Coding Scheme).

Resource Development Recommendations for WIDA Based on the District WIDA ACCESS Frequency Data (2020–2025)

District WIDA ACCESS Frequency Data Analysis (2020–2025)

Typically, districts may look at the frequency data as an overall summary of English proficiency levels or a total percentage score. This research challenges that practice and prescribes that grade span cohort analysis over time is a better way to approach statistical analysis of language growth, as it exposes trends that need addressing for the following school year's intentional focus.

Here is when districts look at the frequency data in a very generic manner, which is not recommended. There needs to be a grade-level lens that will demonstrate growth over time for proficiency level (Table 6). Key patterns from the data for grades K–6, shown in Table 5, include:

- PL1 (Entering) remains stubbornly high, with a dip in SY 2023–2024 but a return to a higher level in 2024–2025.
- PL2 (Emerging) shows a slight increase over time.
- PL3–PL4 (Developing/Expanding): Most students who move up plateau here; very few reach PL5 or PL6.
- PL5–PL6 (Bridging/Reaching): Almost no students reach these advanced levels.

The goal was to grow the proficiency level of students in Expanding into Bridging or Reaching.

Table 6

Multi-Year Proficiency Trends: Elementary (K–6) Composite Proficiency Levels (% of Students)

School Year	PL1 (Entering)	PL2 (Emerging)	PL3 (Developing)	PL4 (Expanding)	PL5 (Bridging)	PL6 (Reaching)
2020–2021	68%	11%	16%	5%	0%	0%
2021–2022	72%	11%	11%	4%	2%	0%
2022–2023	70%	16%	12%	2%	0%	0%
2023–2024	58%	12%	16%	13%	1%	0%
2024–2025	66%	19%	8%	6%	1%	0%

Similar patterns were present in the data for secondary grades (7–12) shown in Table 7. A large proportion of students remain in the lowest proficiency bands (PL1–PL2); some growth is observed at PL3–PL4, but only a few students progress to PL5–PL6, and in secondary grades, there are no students achieving PL5–PL6.

Table 7

Multi-Year Proficiency Trends: Secondary (7–12) Composite Proficiency Levels (% of Students)

School Year	PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
2020–2021	32%	14%	45%	9%	0%	0%
2021–2022	15%	33%	54%	14%	0%	0%
2022–2023	6%	26%	42%	15%	0%	0%
2023–2024	8%	36%	38%	18%	0%	0%
2024–2025	13%	39%	31%	17%	0%	0%

In summary, when districts look at only high-level data such as this, transformational change needs are not revealed, and growth for ML students and staff is jeopardized.

Exit Data

Currently, if a student places at 1.0 in the initial WIDA Screener, it will take, on average, 5 years for the student to exit ML services. The district ML data supports the **5-year trajectory for exiting ML services** since most exits occur at grades 4 and 5. This state is requesting the US Department of Education to approve 4.5 as the exit score rather than 4.8 (Table 8).

The district's MLs' focus on speaking has supported additional exits, especially with middle and high schoolers who are known to be shy and unwilling to speak during the WIDA ACCESS Speaking Test.

Table 8

District Exits by Grade Level

Grades	# of Exits 4.5 >	Grades	# of Exits 4.8 >
K	2	K	1
1	2	1	0
2	6	2	2
3	10	3	6
4	29	4	20
5	33	5	21
6	1	6	0
7	5	7	0
8	7	8	3
9	4	9	1
10	9	10	3
11	6	11	3
12	2	12	0
	116		**60**

Domain-Specific Patterns (2024–2025 Example)

The district has exhibited a higher success rate of exiting ML students and supporting those MLs in meeting Annual Progress towards exiting compared to state-wide averages (Table 9). This district has used WIDA frequency data for English language proficiency level growth to determine LIEP goals, strategies, PD, and use of supplemental funds with intentionality.

- Writing (K–6)
    - Most students are at Developing (PL3); very few are at Expanding (PL4) or higher.
    - Writing proficiency lags behind other domains.
- Speaking (K–6)
    - Slightly more students reach Expanding (PL4), but Bridging/Reaching are rare.

The power of analyzing the individual domains of Speaking and Writing and tracking growth through proficiency levels has been a priority for the district over merely analyzing Composite scores for both frequency and individual student score reports.

Table 9

District Progress and Exit Rates (4.8 Composite or Higher); K–12

School Year	Total EL Progress (Exited plus Annual Progress)		Percent Exiting EL Status		Percent Meeting Annual Progress Toward Exiting	
	District	State	District	State	District	State
2020–2021	COVID	COVID	9.1	<5	COVID	COVID
2021–2022	24.5	21.1	6.2	6.1	18.3	15.0
2022–2023	32.4	24.9	11.7	6.9	20.7	18.0
2023–2024	32.5	27.3	7.6	7.3	24.9	19.9
2024–2025*	40.1	35.2	16.3	13.0	23.8	22.2

* In 2024–2025, the North Carolina exit criterion was lowered from 4.8 to 4.5.

In summary, the percentage of students exiting EL services increases when Writing and Speaking domain proficiency levels increase. This reflects the value in reviewing domain-specific data for proficiency levels in frequency reports, rather than just an overall/composite score. If focus is placed on domain growth in Speaking and Writing, it follows that the outcome will be an increase in students scoring high enough on ACCESS to be exited from EL services.

One ML Specialist stated the following about the 2024–2025 Frequency data analysis:

> "I have completed my Frequency Report Analysis and my student data analysis [Figure 1]. I would like to later discuss 2nd-grade [L]istening scores and 3rd-grade [L]istening and [R]eading scores. I know the scores reflect my students' progress and help to guide my teaching, but I am also curious if these grades and domains are low across the county. Feel free to use my data as an example. Then we could maybe think about the test and how it could have been an increase in the language of mathematics and science. Who knows!
>
> Of all my students, I only had 9 students not grow in their overall score. I was pleased with this data! All my 2nd & 3rd graders either grew or stayed the same level in writing! I want to credit the cooperative strip paragraph for that. In 4th grade, all grew in writing but one. My speaking scores grew! All students grew in Speaking in 4th grade, with one student staying on the same level."

Figure 1 represents an ML Specialist's analysis and reflection on school-level WIDA student data. The image highlights yellow as growth; green remaining the same, and pink as a decrease in domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. There are 13 examples of student data (52 data points with redacted names), resulting in three decreases in the Reading domain, one decrease in the Writing domain, and one instance of "remaining the same" in Speaking. The other 48 data points show growth.

Figure 1

Screenshot of Teacher's school analysis of Frequency report and domains to drive instructional focus for the SY 25-26 (Yellow: Grew, Green remained the same, pink is decreased.)

Tier	Cluster	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
		Scale Score	Prof Level	Scale Score	Prof Level	Scale Score	Prof Level	Scale Score	Prof Level
BC	4-5	362	4.9	378	4.6	312	2.1 2.5	293	3.0 3.2
BC	4-5	400	6.0	389	4.8	338	3.1	323	3.5
BC	4-5	427	6.0	389	4.8	347	3.6	353	4.0
BC	4-5	383	5.8	347	4.0	364	5.0	304	3.2
BC	4-5	409	6.0	358	4.2	317	2.3 3.7	353	4.0
BC	4-5	409	6.0	412	5.3	349	3.7	323	3.5
A	4-5	307	2.8	366	4.4	273	1.7	306	3.2
BC	4-5	478	6.0	412	5.3	381	5.9	370	4.3
BC	4-5	450	6.0	424	5.7	373	5.5	388	4.7
BC	4-5	464	6.0	424	5.7	399	6.0	353	4.0
A	4-5	287	2.3	237	1.9	226	2.6	282	2.7
BC	4-5	438	6.0	400	5.0	329	2.7 2.9	337	3.7
BC	4-5	418	6.0	368	4.4	353	3.9	370	4.3

Cohort Growth (Diagonal Analysis)

Based on the Composite scores, some cohorts progress from PL1 to PL2/PL3 over several years, but many plateau at PL3 (Developing). Few reach advanced levels (Expanding/Bridging/Reaching).

When domain scores are reviewed, specific trends emerge, which create a "next steps" model for intervention, support, and transformation (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10 presents a cohort-growth "diagonal" view of WIDA ACCESS overall proficiency levels for grades K–6 from 2020–2021 through 2024–2025. Rather than summarizing students at a single point in time, the table follows the same cohorts as they move across grades, showing how many students remain at Entering or Emerging, how many students progress into Developing and Expanding, and how few reach Bridging or Reaching in any year. Reading across rows and diagonals highlights that most students move out of PL1 over time but tend to plateau at PL3–PL4, with only small numbers advancing to PL5 and almost none to PL6, even after multiple years of instruction. This cohort-based pattern underscores why district leaders shifted from looking only at composite scores to examining proficiency distributions over time, using the frequency data to identify where cohorts stall and to target speaking and writing interventions for specific grades.

Table 10

District WIDA Frequency Data: K-12 WIDA ACCESS Language Proficiency Distribution by Domains (Overall)

Proficiency Level by Year			**2020–2021**	**2021–2022**	**2022–2023**	**2023–2024**	**2024–2025**
	K	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Entering PL1	68%	6%	5%	6%	2%	6%	6%
2021–2022	72%	14%	4%	5%	3%	5%	6%
2022–2023	70	11%	8%	4%	1%	2%	3%
2023–2024	58%	20%	12%	10%	6%	11%	7%
2024–2025	66%	14%	14%	9%	10%	8%	8%
Emerging PL2	11%	45%	17%	19%	6%	9%	18%
2021–2022	11%	34%	23%	19%	8%	5%	27%
2022–2023	16%	43%	23%	12%	4%	6%	8%
2023–2024	12%	21%	24%	14%	4%	11%	13%
2024–2025	19%	46%	28%	23%	11%	6%	20%
Developing PL3	16%	44%	51%	41%	23%	33%	55%
2021–2022	11%	46%	51%	40%	27%	22%	62%
2022–2023	12%	43%	51%	51%	29%	19%	59%
2023–2024	16%	51%	46%	49%	24%	20%	43%
2024–2025	8%	30%	38%	40%	21%	19%	54%

Proficiency Level by Year			2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Expanding PL4	5%	4%	26%	30%	53%	41%	20%
2021–2022	4%	5%	21%	35%	46%	52%	6%
2022–2023	2%	3%	18%	32%	37%	44%	29%
2023–2024	13%	5%	15%	24%	52%	41%	37%
2024–2025	6%	8%	19%	26%	38%	46%	18%
Bridging PL5	0%	0%	1%	4%	15%	11%	2%
2021–2022	2%	1%	0%	1%	13%	14%	0%
2022–2023	0%	0%	3%	1%	28%	22%	0%
2023–2024	1%	1%	2%	4%	8%	17%	0%
2024–2025	1%	0%	1%	1%	19%	19%	0%
Reaching PL6	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2021–2022	0%	0	0	0%	3%	2%	0%
2022–2023	0%	0	0	0%	0%	8%	0%
2023–2024	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
2024–2025	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%

Note.

- Criteria: Language Proficiency: Use Frequency Reports WIDA ACCESS Comparison
- Appropriate range of EL Proficiency Levels (Domain-specific and/or proficiency levels - highest %)
- The data reflect patterns of student language development, with most students concentrated in the lower proficiency levels (Entering, Emerging, and Developing)
- Very few students achieve Bridging (PL5) or Reaching (PL6) levels across all grades and years

Table 11

Assessment Dashboard: WIDA ACCESS proficiency level distribution data across school years (2021–2022 through 2024–2025) by grade levels (7–12)

OVERALL	7	8	9	10	11	12
Entering	9%	3%	9%	5%	4%	11%
2021–2022	8%	12%	20%	4%	6%	14%
2022–2023	9%	9%	18%	22%	12%	20%
2023–2024	18%	18%	19%	20%	24%	21%
2024–2025	9%	13%	12%	15%	17%	18%
Emerging	13%	13%	12%	35%	21%	11%
2021–2022	16%	22%	22%	28%	31%	19%
2022–2023	7%	13%	11%	16%	15%	15%
2023–2024	3%	8%	15%	20%	16%	11%
2024–2025	19%	8%	19%	10%	10%	21%
Developing	60%	50%	68%	50%	29%	37%
2021–2022	55%	49%	42%	56%	44%	38%
2022–2023	59%	52%	54%	36%	65%	55%
2023–2024	42%	41%	38%	38%	34%	53%
2024–2025	44%	39%	41%	37%	42%	36%
Expanding	13%	27%	15%	10%	46%	42%
2021–2022	20%*	18%	16%*	12%	13%*	29%
2022–2023	22%	27%*	18%	24%*	8%	10%*
2023–2024	34%	33%	25%	21%	26%	11%
2024–2025	28%	36%	23%	32%	25%	25%
Bridging	4%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2021–2022	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%
2022–2023	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
2023–2024	3%	0%	3%	2%	0%	5%
2024–2025	0%	3%	1%	3%	6%	0%
Reaching	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2021–2022	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2022–2023	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2023–2024	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2024–2025	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note.

- Percentages marked with an asterisk (*) indicate either (a) the most frequent (modal) proficiency level for that grade in a given year or (b) a notable cohort shift in proficiency (e.g., when a grade moves from predominantly PL2 to PL3).

- Across all years, the **largest share of secondary students is consistently clustered at Developing (PL3)**, indicating that most multilingual learners plateau at an intermediate level rather than progressing into advanced proficiency.
- **Emerging (PL2) remains the second-most common level** in many grades, indicating that a substantial number of students are still in early stages of proficiency even after several years in the system.
- **Very few students reach Bridging (PL5), and none reach Reaching (PL6)** in any of the secondary grades or years represented, underscoring the difficulty of moving older students into the highest proficiency bands.
- Where bolded or highlighted values shift from PL2 to PL3 or from PL3 to PL4 over time, they mark **cohort-level gains** (for example, a class that becomes majority Developing rather than Emerging), but these gains rarely extend into PL5.
- Taken together, the patterns in Table 11 demonstrate that **secondary cohorts make some progress out of the lowest levels but remain concentrated in PL2–PL3**, which is why the district prioritized targeted speaking and writing supports at the secondary level instead of relying solely on composite scores.

Implications for WIDA Research and Product Development

Research Implications

The findings of this study point to several potential implications for WIDA research activities. These include

- **Persistent plateau.** The data indicate an "experienced ELs (formerly known as long-term EL)" phenomenon, where students remain at PL1–PL3 for years. Research is needed to understand why students stall and which interventions are effective.
- **Domain gaps.** Writing and Speak lag behind other domains. Research should focus on instructional practices and curricular supports that accelerate Writing and Speaking development.
- **What WIDA ACCESS expects from MLs in the Speaking and Writing domains** may differ from general education (gen ed) expectations and instruction. Research needs to be done to create intentional, integrated instructional strategies and understanding that bridge gen ed and designated ML services.
- **More research is needed to learn more about how K–12 data is understood at the district, school, and classroom levels.** This is also a professional development item. Secondary teacher preparation for teacher education programs.
- **Exit criteria.** The consistently low exit rates suggest that the 4.8 composite threshold may be too high or supports for moving students to proficiency are insufficient. This state has an exit criterion of 4.8 but is awaiting approval from the US Department of Education to use 4.5 as the exit criterion instead. Using 4.5 will double the number of students exiting EL support services

Product Development Implications

There are several product development implications arising from this study. They include

- **Targeted supports.** The data demonstrated a need for more robust, differentiated instructional resources, especially for students stuck at PL2–PL3, and for the development of writing skills.
- **Progress monitoring.** Tools could be developed to help educators track and respond to slow or stalled growth, integrating formative assessment and intervention recommendations.
- **Professional learning.** WIDA should expand PD offerings focused on moving students from Developing to Expanding/Bridging, with an emphasis on the Writing and Speaking domains, and academic language. Services for multilingual learners are more than vocabulary building. General education teachers need PD that focuses on pedagogy, supporting the growth of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing for MLs. Educators, particularly those in rural districts, also need PD focused on literacy skills related to students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Literacy experiences for groups that are linguistically and culturally different should be considered (e.g., speakers of Arabic and Asian languages have unique needs from Spanish-speaking groups).
- **Family and community engagement.** WIDA should consider products that help schools engage families and communities in supporting language development.
- **Transition from kindergarten to Grade 1.** Kindergarten ACCESS is a pencil-and-paper delivered assessment, while grade 1 students in this state take ACCESS Online (with only the Writing test being the pencil-and-paper delivery mode). There needs to be intentional practice for students with an online format for the Listening, Speaking, and Reading domains.
- **WIDA can provide more information about the development process for ACCESS** and share insights into how ACCESS was created and implemented, helping teachers, students, and families understand the features and application of a growth rubric.
- **Writing and instructional activities related to WIDA.** Currently, many of the writing and instructional activities available for WIDA assessments come from third-party programs. It would be helpful to learn whether WIDA has plans to develop its own speaking and writing materials for teachers and students. There are samples, but no lessons for educators to use. Third parties are profiting from WIDA products, but districts may not trust third-party products or may lack the funds to pay for these third-party products.

Note. WIDA as an organization does not advocate for or endorse any non-WIDA products or technologies for instruction mentioned in this report. Opinions shared by educators about such products are the individual opinions of that person. Schools, districts, and states are responsible for making choices about appropriate and applicable technologies and products.

Findings from ELD Interactive Student Workbooks

Grade 6 Medusa Unit (n = 29)

The Medusa ELD Student Interactive Notebook is a multimodal resource that integrates Greek mythology content with language development across reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is organized into metacognitive self-assessments, background knowledge prompts, station rotations, and a culminating performance task.

Table 12

Key Components and Purposes

Component	Purpose
Metacognition & self-assessment	Monitor understanding of myths before/after instruction
Background knowledge questions	Connect prior knowledge and cultural references to new content
Station rotations (myths, theme, observation charts, WALTeR, rap)	Build vocabulary, theme, and oral fluency collaboratively
Art/poetry and media comparison	Analyze tone, mood, and representation of Medusa
Jeopardy, choice board, Athens/Olympians	Reinforce content and differentiate tasks
Mythical hero CER + Medusa infographic	Synthesize learning in academic writing and visuals

Strengths observed included strong integration of reading, writing (graphic organizers, CER, infographics), speaking (raps, partner talk), and listening (multimedia), as well as consistent use of academic vocabulary related to myth and heroism. Collaboration and student agency were evident in partner tasks, choice boards, and technology use (e.g., audio/video links), and most students completed metacognitive reflections.

Areas for growth included more detailed background knowledge responses and deeper art/poetry analysis, along with stronger reasoning in CER writing and more complete infographic products for some students. Instructionally, modeling CER with sentence frames, prompting students to cite specific textual or visual evidence, and using strong student infographics and recordings as exemplars would further strengthen learning.

Grade 7 Age of Exploration Unit (n = 26)

Grade 7 notebooks document an Age of Exploration unit that blends historical content with ELD goals through self-assessment, video-based inquiry, readings (e.g., "Henry's Freedom Box"), Columbian Exchange tasks, and choice-based follow-up activities.

Table 13

Summary of Strengths and Needs

Area	Strengths	Growth Opportunities
Metacognition	Before/after self-assessment completed by most	Encourage more specific reflections on learning
Content understanding	Grasp of hardships, motivations, and Columbian Exchange	Support more evidence-based written responses
Oral language & retelling	Empathetic, detailed retellings for some students	More consistent completion of oral/recorded tasks
Collaboration	Partner ideas included in central idea/key details	Structure roles to deepen discussion
Grammar/sentence writing	Some creative sentences and parts-of-speech work	Scaffold for completeness and accuracy
Tech integration	Use of digital tools to support reading and speaking	Encourage all students to use available tech supports

Students showed solid understanding of the hardships of sailors, the Atlantic slave trade, and global impacts of exploration, often demonstrating empathy and historical perspective in retellings and reflections. Partner work and the use of digital supports such as text-to-speech tools appeared in several notebooks.

Common needs included brief or skipped responses in grammar and partner sections, uneven participation in oral language tasks, and incomplete documentation of collaboration. Recommended moves include modeling and framing grammar/sentence-writing tasks, assigning structured roles for partner talk, highlighting strong retellings as exemplars, and systematically encouraging use of digital supports.

Grade 8 Energy Conservation & Transfer Unit (n = 28)

Grade 8 science notebooks focus on energy conservation and transfer and are organized around metacognition, academic vocabulary, station rotations, process grids, independent writing, and closure reflections. A rubric-based review indicates that most students completed self-assessments, vocabulary tasks, and notes across multiple energy sources.

Table 14

Rubric Snapshot (Observed Patterns)

Criterion	Most Common Level (Across Notebooks)
Metacognition	Meets: before/after checked, some reflection
Academic vocabulary	Meets: most Frayer models and sentences completed
Key concept explanation	Meets: basic but accurate explanations
Process grid/notetaking	Meets: most stations complete, variable detail
Station responses	Meets: questions answered with basic detail
Partner discussion	Meets: partner named, basic review recorded
Independent writing	Meets/Approaching: basic structure, some content gaps
Self-reflection/closure	Meets: general reflection with some next steps

Students generally demonstrated clear understanding of the law of conservation of energy and distinctions between renewable and nonrenewable sources, frequently using appropriate science vocabulary and complex sentences. Collaboration appeared through partner review and quiz reflection, and many students set learning goals or identified next steps in their self-reflection.

Areas for growth included more detailed process-grid notes, stronger essay structure for some students (topic sentences and conclusions), deeper vocabulary examples and non-examples, and more consistent documentation of partner collaboration. Instructionally, modeling detailed note-taking, reinforcing essay structure with organizers and peer review, expanding vocabulary work, and prompting students to record and reflect on partner interactions would further support both language proficiency and science understanding.

Conclusion

Taken together, the Grade 6, 7, and 8 interactive notebooks illustrate how well-designed ELD tasks can integrate content learning with sustained language development across disciplines. Across units, students engaged in metacognition, collaboration, and multimodal composition, demonstrating growing proficiency in academic vocabulary, extended writing, and oral language, while also revealing specific areas where additional modeling, scaffolding, and feedback can further accelerate growth.

Findings from EOY ML/MEP Survey (2021–2022; 2023–2024; 2024–2025)

Across three survey cycles, the district's ELD implementation is anchored in OCDE Project GLAD® strategies, weekly PLCs, and growing use of technology such as iPads and AI-supported planning. Educators report strong instructional practices and collaboration alongside persistent challenges in time, staffing, and family engagement, especially in rural and small-school contexts. Leadership emphasizes that consistent, sustained ELD services are essential for reliable growth trajectories for multilingual learners.

Theme 1: Teacher Agency and Leadership

Teacher agency and leadership drive ELD success as educators adapt curriculum, guide colleagues, and advocate for multilingual learners, often with limited resources. Teachers describe using "iPads and AI prompts" to create posters and scaffolds so students can "set language goals and track progress," a process they feel "drives engagement." National Board and other PD experiences position ML specialists to lead PLCs and coach gen ed teachers; one noted that "NB certification pushed me to lead PLCs on writing scaffolds. Now, gen ed teachers ask me for strategies—it is empowering," while another shared, "I am truly grateful for the professional development I have received during our ML PLC time. Our department has become stronger, and our ML ELD lessons have become more effective and impactful."

Theme 2: Project GLAD® as Core Framework

Project GLAD® functions as a core instructional framework, not an add-on, with teachers routinely using strategies such as pictorial input charts, chants, and process grids to integrate language and content. Educators report that "the Project GLAD® strategies are implemented in our lesson plans and always having the materials we need has been a tremendous help," and one teacher reflected, "This year I have learned so many new GLAD® strategies to use with my ML students. The strategies have engaged my students, and they show excitement with learning."

Theme 3: Collaboration Through PLCs and Co-Teaching

Collaboration through weekly PLCs, co-teaching, and shared PD reduces isolation and builds coherence across schools. Teachers use these structures to co-plan, align GLAD® strategies with content, and share digital resources, noting that "co-teaching and blended learning allowed me to integrate the district ML's best practices into gen ed classrooms" and that "co-teaching PD helped me lead gen ed teachers in strategy implementation." During literacy blocks, "co-teaching… lets me model GLAD® strategies. Now, gen ed teachers use sentence stems in science/math." PLCs are described as a centralized hub: "The weekly PLC meetings have been wonderful… I do not feel alone in the classroom but as if I am in a team because of this meeting," and "The weekly EL (ML) & MEP PLC & PD sessions maintain me accountable and help me have everything in a centralized hub."

Theme 4: Resourcefulness, Materials, and Technology

Resourcefulness with materials and technology underpins multimodal instruction, as teachers combine GLAD® tools, local bilingual texts, and digital platforms, including iPads, screencasts, and AI. One educator shared that "the iPads were the icing on the cake… students are already excited about using them. I can now create my own posters to enhance classroom walls." Another noted that "students used sentence strips for cooperative paragraphs and loved the new iPads." Print tools are equally valuable: "Laminators and chart paper improved writing abilities—students thrived with process grids and chants," and "the books I received for new students have been absolutely fantastic…. I find myself reaching for them constantly during lessons." Teachers also "created WIDA-like writing prompts from our ELD standards and looked at how the language changes at each new proficiency level so we can see where our students are and where they need to be."

Theme 5: Systemic Barriers, Time, and Advocacy

Systemic barriers—limited planning time, heavy caseloads, uneven staffing, and policy confusion between language needs and disability—constrain consistency of services. A district leader warned, "If we don't fight for MLs' right to sustained support, we're setting them up to fail in the gen ed pipeline," and stressed that "a minimum of 90 minutes per week up to 150 minutes per week for each ML student is a non-negotiable for the trend line and progress measures to be reliable and valid." Teachers echoed these pressures, explaining that "ML specialists are stretched thin" and that "teachers rarely have a full planning period at their disposal due to various duties. Time to work independently on what is most relevant to my classes would be priceless." One teacher admitted, "I have been overwhelmed at times…. I am updating some pieces of my lesson plans and then having to redo mostly or majority of a lesson. I just do not think it is fair that I have to do more work than I need to." Another urged, "We need more ML teachers and ML TAs and more focus on Parent Involvement…. Our ML population continues to grow each year." Educators also emphasize, "It's so important to recognize that a language barrier is not the same as a learning disability, and I strive to help our team make that distinction."

Theme 6: Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement is an emerging strength, supported through ML family nights, rotation-station events, and parent-facing digital resources in home languages. Teachers are working to "create a parent Canvas page and screencasts about resources like USA Learns.org" and want to "put together something like a welcome packet families can get when they enroll." They note that "parent Canvas pages with L1 screencasts on credits/college apps doubled meeting attendance" and that "monthly communications or a newsletter in their

L1 can keep parents informed and engaged with school activities, upcoming events, and important updates." One educator celebrated that "in October, I hosted my ML Family Night, and we had a fantastic turnout! We offered a variety of informative sessions through rotation stations, giving parents a chance to experience a 'glimpse of GLAD.'" Another explained, "We had our ML Parent and Family Engagement and Outreach night and set it up like a rotation station…. Parents got to experience what the kids do in the classroom."

Theme 7: Emerging Resource and PD Priorities

Emerging resource and PD priorities include centralized digital hubs, micro-PD modules, culturally responsive family kits, AI supports, and shared newcomer lesson templates that reduce duplication of effort. Teachers value that "screen recordings allow me to go back over the material at any time for refresher/reminder" and that "bite-sized PD fits my schedule. I apply it tomorrow." AI is considered a useful scaffold: "AI prompts help teachers see alignment… bridges the buy-in gap," and "AI drafts saved me hours differentiating for newcomers." They also highlight that "bilingual take-home books with QR-linked read-alouds help parents learn alongside their kids," and envision "Animoto/YouTube video – How to use translation tools – made by students posted to the district website. Staff AND Parents need to embrace this and depend less on ML Specialists." As one teacher concluded, "I would also like a specific lesson plan to use with emergent bilinguals. I know we have one that everyone is contributing to."

Theme 8: Future Research Directions

Educators' comments point toward clear lines of inquiry about collaboration, equity, technology, and sustainability that can guide next-phase research and continuous improvement. One promising area is the impact of co-teaching and PLC structures, as one teacher explained that "co-teaching as an example, it helped me be more of a leader and helping a general ed teacher implement some strategies that I use in my classroom to be used in their classroom," suggesting a need to study how these models redistribute expertise and influence classroom practice. Another line of inquiry centers on resource distribution and equity—captured in the stark contrast that "some schools have iPads; others share dog-eared flashcards," raising questions about how uneven access to materials and technology shapes ML opportunities and outcomes. Finally, family engagement models warrant closer examination, including digital strategies. For example, one educator reported that "parent Canvas pages with L1 screencasts on credits/college apps doubled meeting attendance," highlighting the potential of multilingual, tech-mediated communication to transform school–family partnerships.

Overall Summary

Taken together, the three years of survey data present an ELD system where teacher agency, GLAD®-aligned instruction, and PLC-based collaboration are the main engines of success, particularly in rural and small-district contexts. Teachers are leveraging materials, technology, and AI tools to build multimodal, standards-aligned supports, even as they navigate ongoing challenges in time, staffing, and policy alignment. Family engagement is expanding through multilingual, tech-enabled outreach, and educators are calling for centralized digital resources, micro-PD, and culturally responsive materials to ensure consistent, equitable access for multilingual learners. This experience offers a replicable model for similar districts: empower educators as leaders, invest in collaborative structures, systematize access to GLAD® and digital tools, and center access and equity in every ELD decision

Across three years of survey data, the district's ELD implementation demonstrated that teacher agency, an opportunity-driven collaboration, is the engine of success in rural contexts. Teachers led innovation by adapting lessons, leveraging technology, and building strong professional communities. Persistent barriers—resource gaps, time constraints, and policy misalignments—are met with creative solutions and advocacy. Family engagement is robust and culturally responsive, and centralized digital resources are emerging as a powerful lever for access. The district's experience offers a replicable model for rural districts nationwide: it empowers teachers, invests in collaborative structures, and centers access in every decision.

This section highlights the most salient findings from a multi-year, districtwide analysis of multilingual learner (ML) progress and implementation of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. Each theme condenses extensive qualitative and quantitative data into actionable insights. Detailed evidence, coding schemes, and sample artifacts are included in later sections and in the appendix.

Theme 1: Domain-Specific Proficiency

Analysis of WIDA ACCESS data shows uneven growth across domains, with persistent plateaus in speaking and writing that delay student exit. Addressing productive skills directly—through targeted instruction and domain-specific PD—is essential.

Theme 2: Teacher Agency and Collaboration

Surveys, PLC documentation, and PD records demonstrate that empowered educators drive success when supported with agency and structured collaboration. Teacher-led PLCs and micro-PD foster sustained innovation and instructional growth.

Theme 3: Content-Language Integration

Student work and portfolios show that multimodal, content-integrated instruction accelerates language development. Genre-based writing, digital portfolios, and technology-enhanced feedback strengthen alignment between language and disciplinary learning.

Theme 4: Family Engagement

Culturally and linguistically responsive outreach—through bilingual portals, translated screencasts, and family events—improves participation, trust, and at-home language practices.

Theme 5: Systemic Barriers

Interviews and exit analyses reveal challenges such as inconsistent service minutes, restrictive exit thresholds, and rural resource inequities. Addressing these barriers requires policy advocacy, investment in professional learning, and stronger leadership capacity.

State and federal agencies should review exit policies to prioritize domain-specific growth over composite benchmarks, invest in ongoing teacher and leader PD, and support districts in building the infrastructure for robust data-driven and asset-based multilingual programs. Program leadership capacity, budget flexibility, and cross-sector advocacy are needed for sustained improvement. Together, these findings provide a roadmap for scaling effective practices, deepening family and community partnerships, and realigning resources to ensure multilingual learners have equitable opportunities to thrive.

Contributions of the Study

The rural implementation model described here demonstrated how teacher agency and collaboration can effectively offset resource gaps, offering a practical blueprint for rural districts aiming to integrate the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition. This work underscores the importance of policy advocacy, highlighting the need for state and federal policies that fund the integration of ELDL and special language designations (dual identification), as well as supports for post-exit monitoring, with a specific emphasis on addressing persistent rural-urban resource disparities. The model centers teacher voice, capturing educators' lived insights on barriers such as time, training, and access to support, and uses these perspectives to inform scalable solutions, elevating voices that are often marginalized in top-down implementation studies. As a result, the framework offers a replicable approach where teacher agency, collaboration, and technology work together to overcome systemic constraints and enable effective ELD implementation in resource-challenged settings.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations. First, findings are specific to a rural district context and may not be generalizable to urban or international contexts without further research on divergent demographic and resource environments. Data collection captured only early-state implementation (Phases 1-2), so issues of long-term sustainability and student outcomes (such as gains reflected in ACCESS scores) remain unmeasured. Professional learning variables, including the frequency, duration, content alignment, follow-up support, and collaborative nature of PD offerings, were not systematically varied or controlled for across sites, potentially influencing both teacher practice and student achievement in ways not fully accounted for here. Additionally, because participants were self-selected and already highly engaged in ELD efforts, there is the potential for selection bias that may skew the results toward more positive practices and underreporting barriers countered by less engaged practitioners. In addition, this research could only capture a limited window into classroom processes, including the extent and quality of student talk in content-language integration within disciplines such as science. Future studies should employ longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-methods approaches to more robustly examine the interplay between PD models, classroom practice (such as student discourse routines), and student outcomes, tracking multilingual learner outcomes over time, comparing rural and urban sites, and examining the impact of AI and blended learning on opportunity and teacher workload. In addition to the limitations already noted, other significant variables should be considered, particularly regarding professional learning offerings to clarify which support structures and instructional strategies are most impactful for multilingual learners across diverse educational setting.

Conclusion

Phase 2 of the district's WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition implementation study advances understanding of how rural districts can leverage teacher agency and collaboration to overcome systemic barriers. By addressing development needs, expanding research perspectives, and acknowledging limitations, this work lays the groundwork for equitable, sustainable ELD practices in diverse educational landscapes. Findings from the district's data bridge research and practice, offering actionable strategies for content-language integration. By addressing development needs, advancing opportunity-focused research, and centering teacher agency, this work charts a path toward inclusive, evidence-based systems where all MLs thrive.

Contributions to WIDA's Research Agenda

This study advances WIDA's research priorities by highlighting the pivotal role of teacher agency in rural districts, demonstrating how educator leadership drives English Language Development (ELD) implementation, despite limited resources. It recommends integrating teacher agency frameworks into WIDA's Curriculum Amplification Guide to empower teachers as adaptive leaders. The research also bridges content-language integration gaps by showing how rural educators embed ELD standards into STEM and literacy using genre-based scaffolding, aligning with WIDA's disciplinary language focus and suggesting the development of cross-disciplinary lesson exemplars. Additionally, it underscores the resource disparities rural districts face, reinforcing the need for advocacy for enhanced federal and state funding. Finally, the study validates the promise of AI and blended learning tools in supporting multilingual learners, recommending piloting AI-generated scaffolds through WIDA's Curriculum Amplification Template in collaboration with district partners.

This study directly advances WIDA's mission to promote equitable, research-driven practices for MLs. By disseminating findings through targeted journals and conferences, the district's insights can inform WIDA's resource development, policy advocacy, and professional learning initiatives, while also offering a replicable model for rural districts nationwide.

Executive Summary & Action Steps
Phase 2 Study of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition Implementation in a Rural District in the Southeast

Overview

This study examines Phase 2 of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition implementation in a rural Southeastern district. Using WIDA ACCESS frequency scores, 19 educator interviews, three years of survey data, and focus group transcripts, it shows how teacher agency, collaboration, and creative use of resources support multilingual learners (MLs) despite rural constraints. The findings inform curriculum, professional learning, policy, and family engagement, offering a model for similar districts.

The report also situates these practices within the expectations of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, which emphasizes content-language integration, formative use of Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs), and Key Language Uses (argue, explain, narrate, inform) as anchors for planning. Highlighted practices—such as focused interventions in writing and speaking and family engagement aligned to language goals—reflect these shifts, requiring teachers to prioritize disciplinary literacy, genre-based writing, and meaningful family engagement tied to academic language.

Key Findings

- **Teacher Agency is Central.** Educators' ability to adapt instruction, lead professional learning communities (PLCs), and advocate for multilingual learners (MLs) was the primary driver of implementation success, particularly in the face of rural resource constraints.
- **Collaboration Expands Opportunity.** Structured co-planning, co-teaching, and peer learning communities created consistency in instructional quality and ensured that MLs received coherent support across schools and subject areas.
- **Resourcefulness Bridges Gaps.** Teachers leveraged technology—such as AI, blended learning platforms, and Google Slides—to design culturally responsive materials, share resources, and support newcomers.
- **Integrated Content-Language Instruction Accelerates Growth.** Embedding the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition into STEM and CTE courses, paired with genre-based scaffolding, supported simultaneous gains in language development and academic achievement.

- **Family Engagement is Transformative**. Culturally responsive outreach—such as home language screencasts, family nights, and parent surveys—built trust with families and strengthened student outcomes.
- **Persistent Barriers Limit Access.** Structural issues—time constraints, credit requirements, and scheduling—restricted access to ELD. When ELD is treated as an elective rather than a core course (2–3 credits), MLs lose essential opportunities for language development in ELA, math, science, and social studies.

Recommendations

- **Invest in Teacher-Led Innovation.** Support teacher agency through micro-PD, leadership roles in PLCs, and autonomy in resource adaptation.
- **Build Centralized, Culturally Responsive Resource Hubs.** Develop digital banks of lesson plans, scaffolds, and family engagement tools accessible to all staff.
- **Prioritize Integrated Content-Language PD.** Offer practical, curriculum-aligned training for both EL and content teachers, with a focus on STEM and CTE integration.
- **Strengthen Family and Community Engagement and Partnerships.** Expand L1 communication, parent education events, and culturally relevant materials to empower families as partners.
- **Advocate for Policy and Funding Opportunities.** Push for extended monitoring of exited ELs, increased rural funding, and state/federal support for ELD/SLD collaboration.

Action Steps by Audience

For Teachers

- Engage actively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) dedicated to English Language Development (ELD) and the integration of language with content. Take turns both leading and participating, ensuring collaborative reflection on effective strategies and lesson design.
- Contribute to and utilize shared digital resource hubs, such as lesson banks or online forums, to both access and co-develop practical materials aligned with Key Language Uses and Proficiency Level Descriptors.
- Embed explicit language objectives and differentiated scaffolds (e.g., sentence stems, visual aids, process grids) within all content area instruction, adapting resources to diverse student needs and learning goals.
- Maintain ongoing, culturally responsive communication with families, providing resources and updates in students' home languages and organizing engagement events to build partnership and support multilingual learning at home.

For School/District Leaders

- Intentionally allocate dedicated time and resources for teacher teams to engage in co-planning, and prioritize short, targeted professional development (micro-PD) that connects standards to authentic classroom challenges.
- Build and sustain structures for ongoing cross-departmental collaboration, ensuring meaningful participation from ELD, content area, and special education staff.
- Conduct regular audits to track access to language development resources and monitor ML outcomes, using results to drive continuous improvement.
- Recognize and scale grassroots innovations by supporting teacher-led pilot projects, professional learning initiatives, and peer coaching models.
- Ensure alignment and coherence from WIDA Frequency Data to the state Language Instruction Education Plan (LIEP), connecting these metrics to ML professional development plans and targeted service outcomes.

For Policymakers

- Provide increased, targeted funding for robust rural ELD programs and supports for newcomers, addressing resource disparities that limit educator and student opportunity.
- Mandate and monitor effective post-exit support for reclassified English learners, ensuring that academic progress is sustained beyond program exit.
- Enforce and incentivize policies that require integrated ELD/content professional learning, as well as the development and dissemination of practical, standards-aligned resources.
- Actively address staffing, technology, and material gaps between rural and urban districts through equitable funding and dedicated grants.

For Families

- Participate in school-hosted family and community engagement nights to learn about classroom strategies and resources that support language learning at home.
- Take advantage of school-provided resources in home languages (L1) and digital communication tools to stay informed and involved.
- Communicate regularly with teachers, sharing feedback, expressing concerns, and advocating for needs to help tailor learning experiences for each child.
- Respond to surveys or join meetings that provide input on program design and quality, reinforcing a home–school–community partnership for ELD success.

These action steps help ensure that all stakeholders play an active role in bringing the updated WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition to life in daily practice, driving greater coherence, equity, and student success.

Conclusion

The experience of this rural district shows that when teacher agency, collaboration, and resourcefulness are prioritized, rural schools can become leaders in ELD innovation. The findings and action steps outlined here offer a roadmap for educators, leaders, policymakers, and families to create conditions that enable multilingual learners to thrive. Importantly, these lessons are both sustainable and replicable, not only for rural and small-to-medium districts, but also for larger urban systems, and they will inform WIDA's ongoing research, professional learning, and development of future products and services.

Appendix A: Types of Data Gathered and Analysis Methods: Multi-Year English Learner Outcomes and Program Evaluation (2020–2025)

1. WIDA ACCESS Frequency Data (2020–2025) and Exit Data

Quantitative Analysis

- Proficiency Trends. Frequency reports (school, district) were analyzed to track longitudinal changes in student performance across listening, reading, writing, and speaking domains. Cross-tabulation charts compared outcomes by grade, demographic subgroups, and ELD program participation.
- Exit Criteria Compliance. Exit data was evaluated against OSPI's thresholds (e.g., 4.8 Overall score for grades 2–12) to assess alignment with state reclassification policies. Composite scores (Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension) will highlight disparities in domain-specific mastery.
- Growth Metrics. Scale scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median) and regression models to identify predictors of proficiency gains, referencing WIDA's vertically scaled scores for year-to-year comparisons.

Qualitative Interpretation

- Confidence bands and proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) contextualized score variations, ensuring interpretations account for testing conditions and student well-being.

2. EOY ML/MEP Survey Responses (2021–2025)

Mixed-Methods Approach

- **Quantitative**
  - Descriptive statistics (percentages, means) summarized Likert-scale responses on program satisfaction, resource accessibility, and professional development efficacy.
- Cross-tabulation tables compared trends across survey cycles (2021–2022 vs. 2024–2025) and subgroups (e.g., grade-level teachers, administrators)
- **Qualitative**
  - Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified recurring themes (e.g., "scaffolding challenges," "technology integration") using NVivo and hand coding. Sentiment analysis coded responses as positive, neutral, or negative.
- **Triangulation**
  - Survey findings were cross-referenced with WIDA proficiency data and PLC feedback to validate trends.

3. Student Work Samples: ELD Interactive Workbooks (Grades 6–8)

Competency-Based Evaluation

- **Rubric Development**
  - Workbooks were evaluated using WIDA Can Do Descriptors to assess their alignment with essential language functions (e.g., "argue," "narrate") and cognitive demands (e.g., "compare," "analyze"). However, with the district's adoption of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition, these can-do descriptors were updated to align with the new framework. As a result, the continued use of "can-do descriptors" as a blanket term has become increasingly inaccurate. It remains an ongoing challenge to ensure colleagues use current terminology, as the previous "can-do" approach no longer fully represents the instructional and assessment practices in place.
  - Rubrics are aligned with the new WIDA Language Charts. In fact, beginning fall 2025, the district will launch its 2025–2026 professional development series for multilingual learners, focusing on AI prompt engineering in conjunction with the WIDA Language Charts to support ELD student growth planning. This district will utilize WIDA resources and engage in a book study to collaboratively develop high-quality, ML-specific prompts, with the goal of enhancing ELD domain task planning and optimizing student outcomes.
- **Pattern Identification**
  - Coding student responses for errors/misconceptions (e.g., syntax, academic vocabulary) informed instructional gaps.

4. Teaching Materials: Lesson Plans and Screencasts

Content Analysis

- **Alignment with Standards.** Lesson plans were coded for explicit integration of the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition (e.g., "Language for Social Studies") using a checklist derived from the implementation guide provided by WIDA.
- **Screencast Efficacy.** Videos were evaluated for cognitive load management (e.g., segmentation, signaling), referencing annotations and pause frequencies from PMC's screencast framework.
- **Differentiation Strategies.** Materials were scored for scaffolding (e.g., graphic organizers, sentence frames) and multimodal supports (e.g., visuals, audio).**5. PLC Video Recordings and PPT Slides**

Discourse Analysis

- **Collaborative Patterns.** Video transcripts were coded for dialogue types (e.g., co-construction, justification) using grounded theory. Example codes:
    - *Rapport-building*: "I appreciate how you modeled that strategy."
    - *Problem-solving*: "What if we tier the vocabulary supports?"
- **PPT Content.** Slides were analyzed for evidence-based practices (e.g., data-driven goals, WIDA PLD references) and alignment with survey-identified needs.
- **Teacher Agency.** Frequency of teacher-led vs. administrator-led discussions quantified agency in decision-making.

Appendix B: ML Teachers' Reflections on Speaking Domain as Students & Impact on Them as Educators

Sofia, beginning ML teacher

- As I was going through the Grades 4–5 Speaking sample. I understood why it is so easy for students to "steal" Nina's answer. There is much information given to the students they need to retain before they can adequately answer.
- I previously thought I was doing all I could, but after reflecting on my current strategies. I need to give my students more opportunities to practice speaking. I currently use [name of app], and I let students listen to it and check their own work. There are grade levels where I can do more one-on-one activities, due to the class size, and I feel like that is more effective. I ask open-ended questions and make corrections when students make an error. Of course, I always make it a point to create a safe and judgment-free environment. I explain that we are all ML students, and we are all "here" to reach English proficiency.
- The speaking poster immediately supports my students that are points away from exiting. In the future, I am going to be using Level-6 examples and giving students visuals to set expectations. For the other students I need to practice it more with them and scaffold so it can become part of their thinking process and mental organization of thoughts. The more they see it the more they will be able to naturally organize their thoughts. Also, having the speaking poster or any poster up in the class will serve as a visual memory trigger during testing when our walls have to be covered and posters removed. My goal is to use the posters as much as I can and point to them during lessons to establish this visual cueing.

Jonathan, grade 5 ML teacher

- 5th grade students in the WIDA speaking test are expected to use specific and technical vocabulary, in this case, related to a science project (Rock candy investigation: learning what happens when sugar dissolves in water). The need to use complex sentences organized to explain what happens on each step of the experiment.
- Personally, it took me a moment to organize my thoughts to explain the whole process in the last part of the speaking test and honestly I run out of time. So, now I know that my students could have the same situation.
- I need to support our students by helping them notice the pictures and analyze things that they know in English because as we recognized in the PLC, some kids are just trying to go through and finish the test.

- ∉ I need to help my students understand that the length and quality of speaking will help them with score to achieve their personal performance goals for 2025.
- ∉ What works: After Mrs. Day challenged me to record the read aloud with the 5th-grade students, I realized that their affective filter went down, and now they are very comfortable in front of the mic. Students love to make Read Aloud videos.
- ∉ I can teach memory support by Create Visuals or Graphic Organizers: Use visuals like mind maps or charts that outline how to construct responses. For instance, a chart might show steps to take in a response, with examples of academic language at each stage.

Appendix C: Speaking and Writing Domain Task Examples (Figures 3–8)

Figure 3 reflects a WIDA ACCESS for ELLs speaking domain webinar screenshot showing a virtual test administrator named Mislea (all names pseudonym) presenting content to students. The slide explains that speaking tasks include academic content input for student responses, task modeling by Nina as an essential test design component, and emphasizes that test takers first 'listen to the model' before responding to demonstrate the speaking task.

Figure 3

WIDA ACCESS Speaking Task Overview

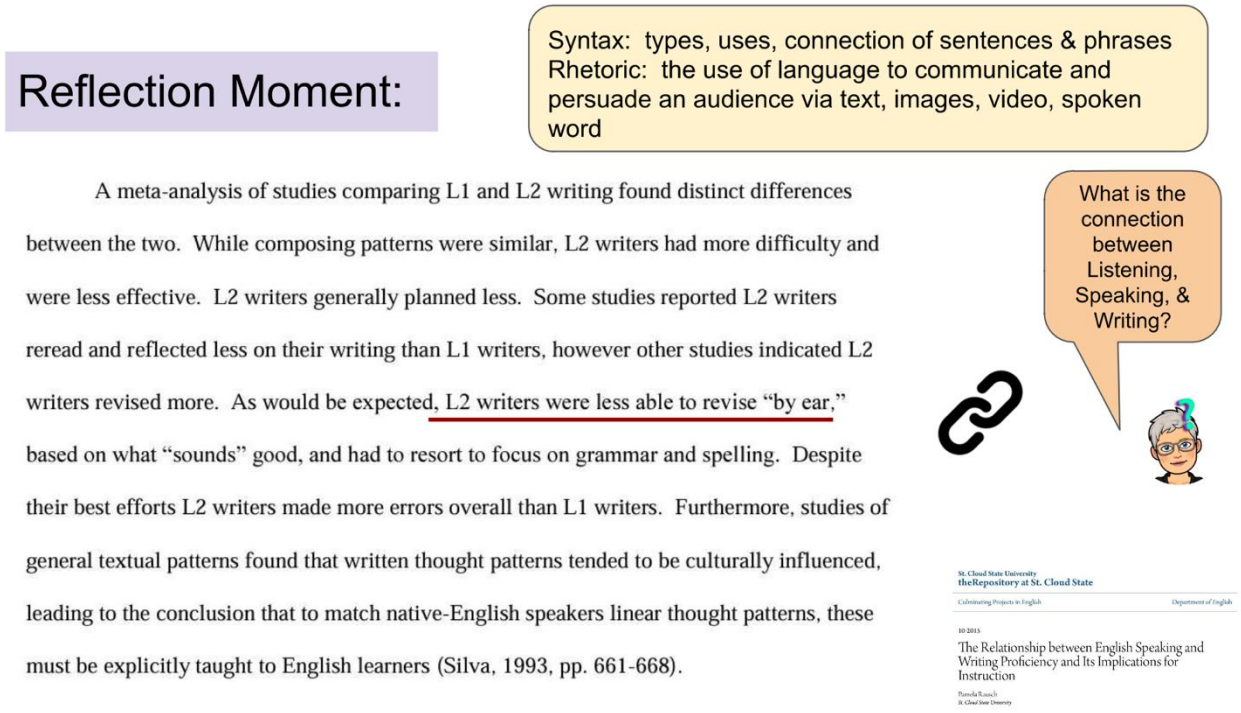


Figure 4 is an agenda from the weekly, virtual ML Staff meeting that references the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework. The image highlights the Annotated Language Samples sections for all grade levels, from Kindergarten to Grades 9-12. The table also shows the document's structure, which includes Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, Functions and Features, and Proficiency Level Descriptors. A customized Speaking Domain poster is added for ML staff reflection.

Figure 4

Professional Development Agenda for Speaking Focus

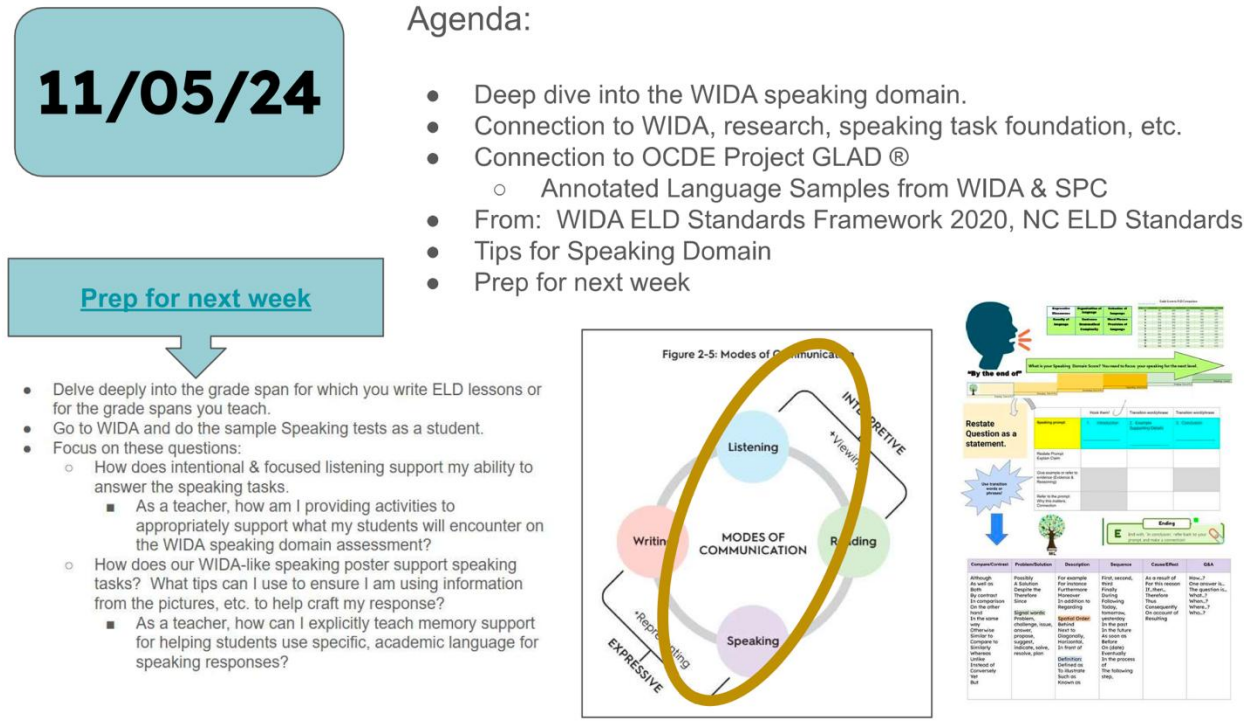


Figure 5 presents WIDA Speaking domain proficiency descriptors for Level 5 (Bridging) students, detailing expectations for complex sentence structures, grammatical variety, technical vocabulary, and content-specific vocabulary production. The text emphasizes multiple complex sentences organized at the sentence level and decision-making regarding technical and content-specific vocabulary use within the discourse dimension.

Figure 5

WIDA proficiency level descriptors for speaking

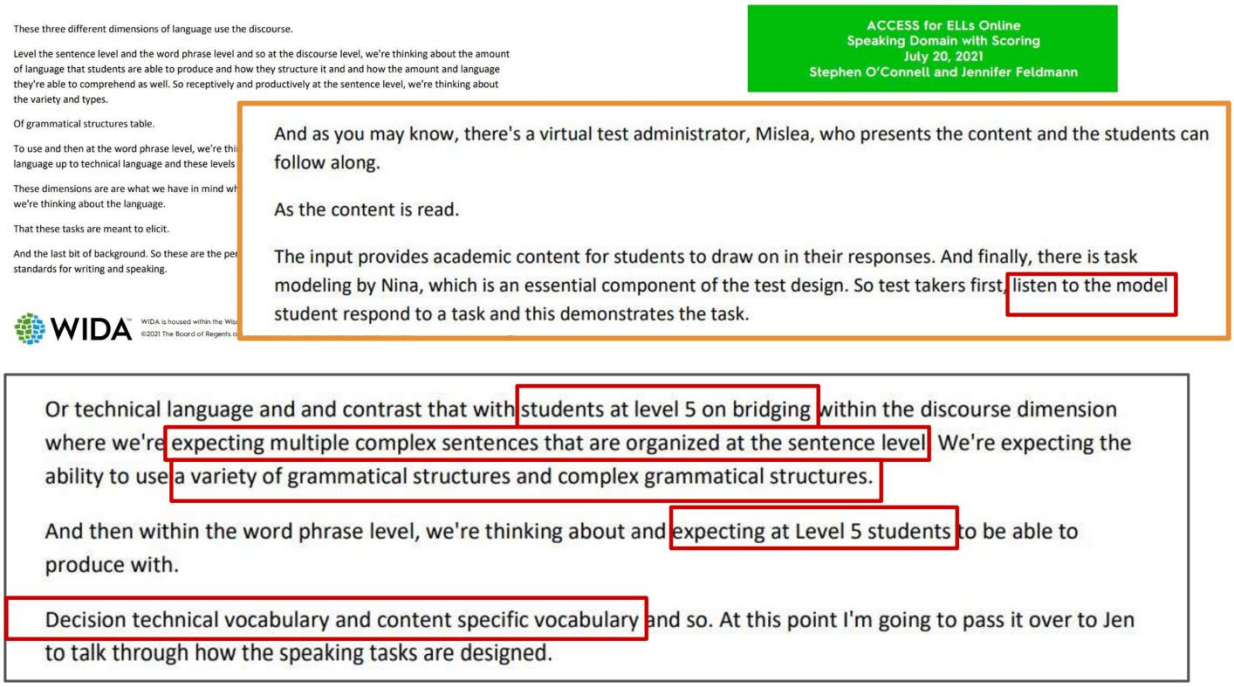


Figure 6 is a Table of Contents from WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework showing grade-level organization from Kindergarten through Grades 9–12, with specific focus on 'Annotated Language Samples' sections. The document structure includes Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, Functions and Features, and Proficiency Level Descriptors for each grade band.

Figure 6

WIDA Standards Framework Table of Contents

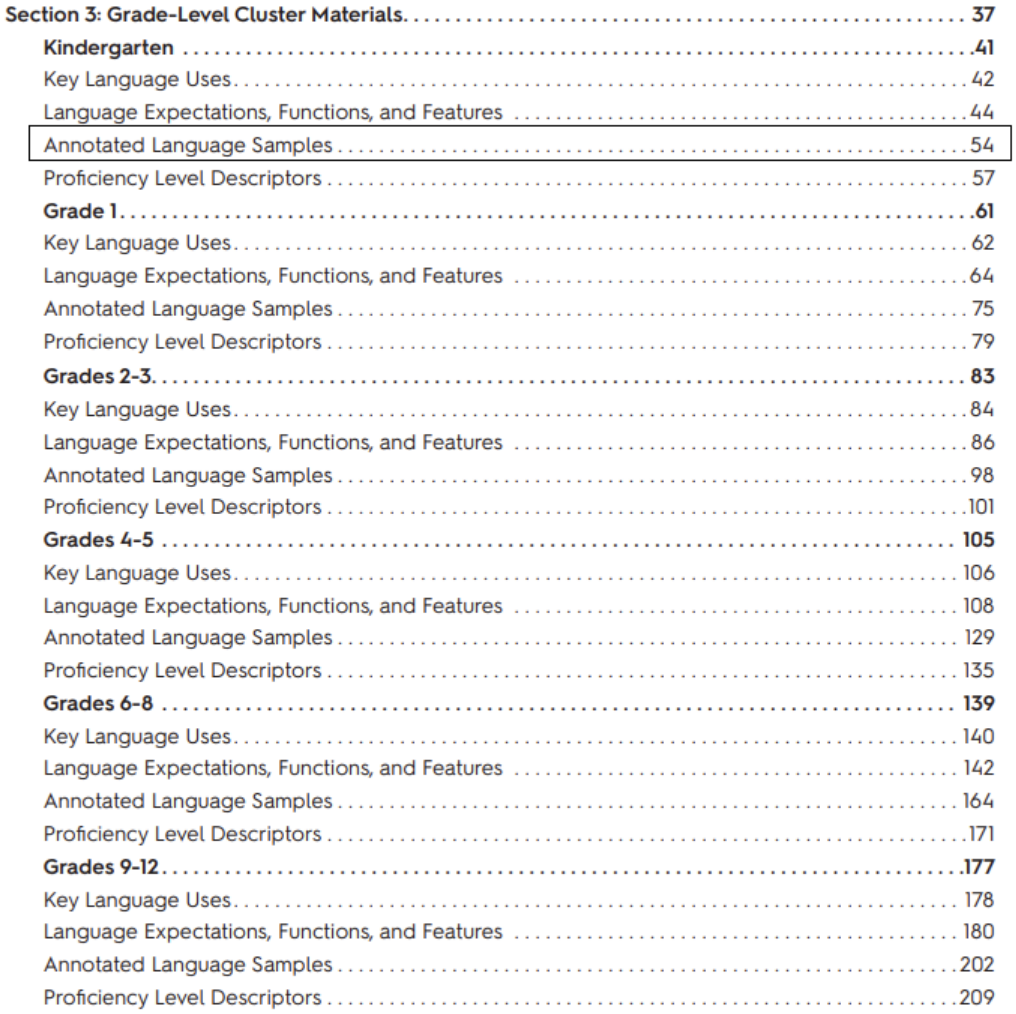


Figure 7 presents a graphic organizer titled “Tips for Intentional Listening & Noticing for Speaking Domain Tasks” that has a highlighted yellow box on the left listing strategies, and a set of scaffolds on the right. The diagram outlines steps such as restating questions, using academic sentence starters, and deploying topic-specific vocabulary to support multilingual learners’ speaking responses during intentional speaking interventions.

Figure 7

Tips for Intentional Listening & Noticing for Speaking Domain Tasks

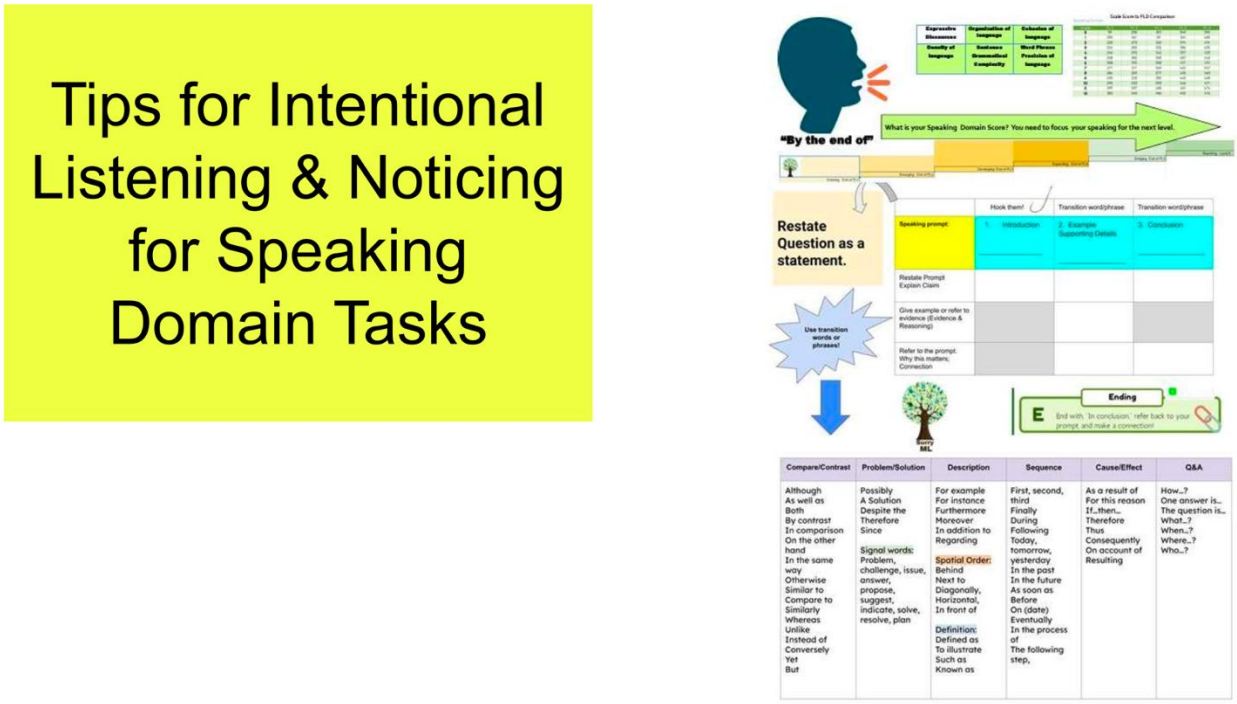
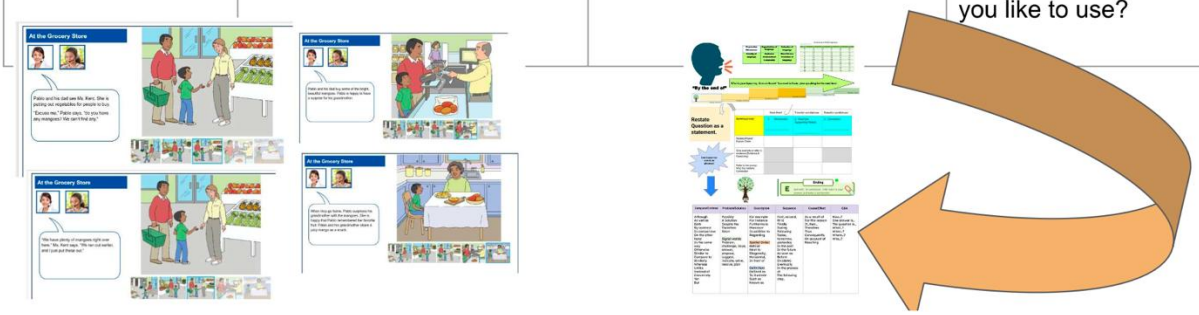


Figure 8 presents a table titled “Tips for Speaking Domain” showing four columns: Nina’s Model (listen for language use), Creating a Mental Model Process Grid (key questions like who, what, why), and Speaking Prompt Process Grid (restating questions, using specific vocabulary, sentence complexity). The table also illustrates strategies like intentional listening and viewing, using images to analyze and guide English responses, and applying transition words—designed to scaffold focused speaking practice for multilingual learners.

Figure 8

Tips for Speaking Domain

Tips for Speaking Domain	“Nina’s Model”	Create a Mental Model Process Grid	Speaking Prompt Process Grid
Intentional Listening	Listen for language use	Who, What, When, Where, Why, How? Significance?	Restate question; Specific vocabulary Sentence Grammatical Complexity
Intentional Viewing	Notice the pictures & analyze things that you know in English. Use pictures to guide your response.	What are you being asked to do? Narrate, Explain, Inform, Argue (Compare/Contrast)	Transition words/phrases (in conclusion); What are anchor phrases that you like to use?



Appendix D: Coding Scheme–ELD Student Interactive Workbook

To conduct a thematic analysis of a student workbook, I identified codes to categorize patterns and concepts. These codes represent recurring ideas, behaviors, or themes within the workbook's content used when analyzing a student workbook.

Table 15

List of the study's codes and definitions

Categories	Codes	Definitions
Learning and Cognitive Development Codes	1) Critical Thinking	Tasks that encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.
	2) Problem Solving	Exercises that focus on applying knowledge to new or complex situations.
	3) Memory Recall	Questions or activities that assess students' ability to recall information.
	4) Conceptual Understanding	Tasks designed to ensure students grasp core concepts and their applications.
	5) Application of Knowledge	Activities where students must apply learned concepts to real-life scenarios.
	6) Analysis	Activities that involve breaking down complex concepts into simpler components for better understanding.
	7) Synthesis	Exercises that ask students to combine knowledge from various sources or subjects.
Assessment and Evaluation Codes	8) Formative Assessment	Exercises or quizzes designed to assess student progress and provide feedback.
	9) Self-Assessment	Sections where students reflect on their own understanding, progress, or mistakes.
	10) Peer Review	Activities that involve students reviewing or collaborating with classmates.
	11) Quizzes/Tests	Standardized assessment tools such as multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, or problem-solving tasks.
	12) Feedback	Written or verbal feedback provided to students to guide their learning.
	13) Checkpoints	Sections that check students' understanding of material before progressing further.

Categories	Codes	Definitions
Engagement and Motivation Codes	14) Interactive Activities	Tasks that encourage hands-on involvement or require active student participation.
	15) Student Reflection	Prompts that encourage students to think about their learning process or personal connections to the content.
	16) Motivational Prompts	Positive reinforcement, inspirational quotes, or challenges designed to keep students motivated.
	17) Choice and Autonomy	Opportunities for students to choose their own tasks, topics, or ways of learning.
	18) Reward System	Recognition or rewards for completing tasks or achieving learning milestones.
	19) Active Participation	Activities designed to make students engage actively, like group work or discussions.
Instructional Methods Codes	20) Direct Instruction	Sections where the workbook provides explicit instructions or explanations.
	21) Guided Practice	Tasks that provide step-by-step instructions, helping students through processes.
	22) Independent Learning	Sections where students are expected to complete tasks on their own, with minimal guidance.
	23) Collaborative Learning	Activities that encourage teamwork or group problem-solving.
	24) Scaffolding	Support strategies such as hints, reminders, or gradual increase in task complexity.
	25) Visual Aids	Diagrams, charts, illustrations, and other visual aids that help in understanding concepts.
	26) Instructional Prompts	Cues or hints that guide students toward the correct answer or method.
Behavioral and Emotional Codes	27) Encouragement	Motivational language or supportive prompts that help foster a positive learning environment.
	28) Frustration/Challenge	Tasks that may be difficult for students, leading to frustration or cognitive strain.
	29) Confidence-Building	Activities designed to boost students' confidence in their abilities.
	30) Self-Efficacy	Sections that aim to enhance students' belief in their ability to succeed.

Categories	Codes	Definitions
	31) Stress/Pressure	Parts of the workbook that might create stress, like time limits or high-stakes assessments.
	32) Student Engagement	Measures the extent to which students are interested, curious, and excited about the material.
Content and Subject-Specific Codes	33) Mathematical Concepts	Codes for tasks that involve numerical calculations, problem-solving, or algebraic reasoning.
	34) Scientific Inquiry	Activities related to hypothesis testing, experimentation, and data analysis.
	35) Literacy/Reading Comprehension	Codes for tasks related to reading, interpreting texts, or developing writing skills.
	36) Creative Writing	Exercises that encourage students to write stories, poems, or other forms of creative expression.
	37) Historical Understanding	Activities that involve analyzing historical events, timelines, or sources.
	38) Social Studies	Exercises related to geography, cultural studies, or global issues.
	39) Art and Expression	Activities focusing on creativity, drawing, or visual arts.
	40) Language Skills	Tasks that involve grammar, vocabulary, and other language development aspects.
	41) Home language	Home language practice
Support and Resources Codes	41) Examples	Sections that provide examples to help students understand the task or concept.
	42) Hints/Clues	Aiding tips that guide students through difficult problems.
	43) Resource Links	References to external resources (books, websites, videos) that further explain concepts.
	44) Glossary	Definitions or explanations of key terms included within the workbook.
	45) Teacher's Notes	Sections intended for teachers to guide instruction, provide additional context, or highlight key teaching points.

Categories	Codes	Definitions
Learning Environment and Context Codes	46) Personalization	Opportunities for students to connect the material to their personal experiences or interests.
	47) Cultural Relevance	Content that is culturally inclusive, relevant, or sensitive to diverse student backgrounds.
	48) Classroom Application	Sections designed for classroom discussions, group activities, or collaboration with peers.
	49) Digital Integration	Activities that involve technology, such as interactive worksheets or links to online resources.

Appendix E: Rubric for Medusa ELD Student Interactive Notebook

Table 16

Rubric for Medusa ELD Student Interactive Notebook

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Not Evident
Metacognition	Thoughtful before/after reflection; specific growth noted	Both before/after checked; some reflection	Only one self-assessment; vague	No self-assessment
Background Knowledge	Detailed, relevant prior knowledge shared	Basic understanding shown	Minimal or off-topic response	No response
Station Rotations (1–3)	Complete, detailed responses; evidence of theme/myth analysis, partner named	All tasks attempted; some detail	Partial responses; missing partner	Not attempted
Oral Language (Chant/Rap)	Link provided; clear effort and creativity	Link provided; basic effort	No link or incomplete attempt	Not attempted
Poetry/Art Analysis	Insightful response; references to tone/mood/words	Basic response:;(90%) reference to poem	Minimal or unclear response	Not attempted
Media Comparison	Thoughtful analysis of comic/text; uses evidence	Basic comparison; Dependent on Language Level target—"working towards the next level" reasoning	Minimal or off-topic response	Not attempted

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Not Evident
Jeopardy Game	Partner named, scores filled, reflection on learning	Partner and scores filled	Incomplete or missing info	Not attempted
Collaborative Choice Board/Grid	All sections filled; evidence of teamwork and learning	Partner and scores filled	Incomplete or missing info	Not attempted
Mystical Hero CER Writing	Clear claim, multiple evidence, strong reasoning	Claim and some evidence/reasoning	Minimal evidence or unclear reasoning	Not attempted
Infographic	Creative, content-rich, visually organized	Basic infographic; covers key points	Incomplete or lacks detail	Not attempted

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