Equitable Learning Opportunities For English Language Learners in Mainstream Content Area Classrooms: A Professional Development Resource for Scaffolds and Supports at the Secondary Level

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EQUITABLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WIDA LEVELS ONE THROUGH THREE IN MAINSTREAM CONTENT AREA CLASSROOMS:
A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE FOR SCAFFOLDS AND SUPPORTS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Chapter Overview

Educational equity is a topic that is complex, political and can at times even be controversial. With the added pressure of servicing students who are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), many content area teachers within mainstream secondary classes lack the education in reaching these students at their specific English proficiency levels. The topic of educational equity will always be complex and diverse in nature, and it will continue to grow exponentially as students come into our school districts with a wealth of diverse multi linguistic needs and cultural backgrounds. As an ELL teacher, I collaborate across secondary content area classrooms to support the language needs of ELLs. By doing so, it puts me in a unique position to work directly with mainstream teachers in order to meet the linguistic needs of our students. This position has also made me well aware of the lack of education that secondary content area teachers have in regards to language learners.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the guiding question: how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with
equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms? This chapter will describe challenges that face many ELLs in mainstream secondary classrooms, clarify the relevance of the research question to me professionally, give an overview of the rationale behind this project and will conclude with a summary of the main points covered, as well as preview what is to come.

Professional Background

Imagine the following scenario: you have just accepted a new position within your school district. The school has offered you the position of “ELL teacher.” Previously, you were a primary general education teacher and are now getting ready to immerse yourself in teaching language learners at the secondary level in grades five through 12. You are servicing 46 students within those grades, twelve of which are level one proficiency, thirty that are level two or three, and four of which are level four. As you begin the new school year, the lack of support that these ELL students are receiving in their content area classrooms concerns you. As their ELL teacher, you quickly realize the significance of these numbers and how these students lack the language skills necessary in order to access the content standards within the mainstream classes. Your students are quickly falling behind and failing their content classes. You spend your forty-five minute period with them each day trying to scaffold the content and provide them with remedial lessons, most of which are occurring after school hours. Your students are calling you late into the evening worried about a homework assignment due the next day and you spend time explaining the directions in condensed language so that they are able to understand what is being asked of them. But even with that, it still does not solve the
issue of the curriculum being above their instructional level. It is evident that there is a serious need for ELL support within the secondary content area classrooms, so you begin to envision the creation of a school-wide resource of scaffolds and supports. You begin to wonder how you can educate content area teachers and help them become language teachers. You want to create a program that can help to ensure equitable learning opportunities for your students, while also supporting mainstream teachers within the process. What you are about to design and produce is an educational platform that builds on your expertise and experience working with ELLs.

The above situation is not hypothetical. It was an actual challenge presented to me as I began teaching in the 2019-2020 school year. As stated previously, I currently teach ELLs in a secondary school setting in a rural school district in Southern Minnesota, which is a Title One school district. The school district has long been seeing an increase of language learners, and as the numbers continue to rise, so does the fear I have of my students falling behind in credits and not being able to graduate. This is not due to their understanding of content, but mainly due to the level of complexity that language plays within those content area classrooms. ELLs bring a rich variety of language practices and proficiencies into each classroom, and those need to be addressed through differentiation. As a new ELL teacher, the task of scaffolding content and supporting each of my students in all of their classes was exhausting, both mentally and emotionally. This project sets forth a goal, one that incorporates collaboration, commitment and investment. It is crucial for an ELL teacher to work directly with content area teachers when working towards educational equity. To facilitate this and work towards equitable learning, mainstream
teachers need to learn to be more conscious of the language used in their teaching. The ELL teacher must work directly with these teachers, lending their language expertise, exploring research-based best practices and developing tools not only to support ELLs’ language experiences, but also enrich those experiences within mainstream secondary classes.

**Project Rationale**

This project stems from the lack of well established ELL supports and scaffolds at my current school of employment and the current mainstream challenges that I am now facing within this position. I have students who come to school every day overwhelmed by the vast majority of their classes. These are students who are up until late hours of the night working diligently on homework that has yet to be differentiated based on their English language proficiency. These students are mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted from receiving work that is unattainable for them at their current level. They are students who want to learn, but have not yet been given the support that they need in order to successfully access content. It is these experiences that have rooted a desire and a need to address these challenges and the lack of professional development in regards to language learners. As an ELL teacher, my goal is to make their language acquisition process as smooth as possible. I cannot physically be in all of their content area classrooms routinely; therefore, it is imperative that I facilitate the learning of best practices to meet the linguistic needs of my students. All of this is essential in order to continue to make ELL students feel motivated and engaged within the learning process, especially when presented with linguistic challenges they need to overcome.
Language teaching does not fall solely on ELL teachers, but rather, is a shared responsibility among all educators to meet students’ diverse linguistic needs. That being said, an ELL teacher is the expert on language development and research-based best practices that promotes language development within a school community. Being such, it is their responsibility to reiterate their expertise and understanding of language development to mainstream content area teachers who do not have such a background. Advocacy is a tremendous part of an ELL teacher's role, and instead of only empowering our students, it is vital that we empower other educators to grow as professionals and language teachers. This perspective is the core of this project. My goal is to design a web-based resource that mainstream secondary teachers can use to help develop their own understanding of research-based language development practices and continuously work towards providing these learners with equitable learning opportunities to better address their diverse academic and linguistic needs.

Summary

The guiding question of this project is, *how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms?* Within this chapter I have discussed my professional experiences regarding language teaching and the teaching beliefs that motivated the creation of this project. In Chapter Two, I will review the literature that supports a deeper understanding of scaffolds and supports pertaining to equitable learning opportunities in mainstream content area classrooms and present research-based best
practices that will act as the core foundation of the website. In Chapter Three, I will
describe the website project in detail and explain how the research and best practices
from Chapter Two will be presented on this platform. In Chapter Four, I will reflect upon
the learning process of creating this project.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this capstone project is to examine best practices regarding equitable learning experiences for English Language Learners (ELLs) and explore issues of educational equity, all of which is to be presented to mainstream content area teachers to provide them with professional development on the topic and applicable scaffolds and supports. The specific research question addressed by this capstone project is: how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms?

The goal of this chapter is to delve deeper into the research behind educational equity and focus specifically on English language learners whose overall WIDA proficiency levels are between one and three, and to discuss the professional development of mainstream content area teachers in the instruction of ELLs.

Drawing on research from the field, this chapter will examine key topics as they relate to educational equity within the instruction of ELLs. The first major section of this chapter will define the term equity and explore how misconceptions and beliefs towards
ELLs can affect their learning experiences. Second, this chapter will outline the education policies in place for ELLs in the United States (U.S.) from past to present. The third major section of this chapter will examine the second language acquisition theory, and highlight details as far as the differences between first and second language acquisition.

Section four describes WIDA performance indicators and Can-Do descriptors and how educators can integrate these into their planning. The last major section of this chapter will provide seven research-based strategies and scaffolds that mainstream content area teachers in grades nine through twelve can implement in their instruction in order to assure that they are maximizing their ELLs’ learning potential while also providing them with equitable learning experiences.

The professional development project following this research utilizes the key findings in order to provide content area teachers with a list of best practices for ELLs, background information on these practices and videos on how to implement them within content area classrooms, as well as videos on how they can integrate WIDA performance indicators and WIDA Can-Do descriptors before, during and after instruction so that they can maximize their access to equitable learning for ELLs.

**Educational Equity for ELLs**

English language learners are among the fastest-growing population of students throughout the nation, yet there is a lack of education for these students that builds on their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Tung, 2013). They are also among the lowest academically performing groups of students, causing the achievement gap to widen as these students progress throughout school. It is critical that school districts
address this gap and examine the instruction of ELLs in mainstream content area classrooms. In doing so, issues relating to educational equity must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, a teachers’ own misconceptions, beliefs or attitudes on ELLs’ achievement must also be taken into consideration when evaluating educational equity. It is often these misconceptions, beliefs or attitudes towards ELLs that influence instructional practices of mainstream content area teachers, ultimately weakening the effectiveness of these practices, which are intended to better educate and support these very populations (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

**Definition of equity.** Educational equity in its entirety means that all students, regardless of their race, culture, economic-status, background, or any other considerations/factors, should be receiving flexible and equitable access to resources that accommodate their diverse learning needs. The focus on educational equity is nothing new and has been a part of U.S. history, much of which will be discussed in the section on educational policies and laws. According to Gottlieb (2016), the National Equity Assistance Centers (EACs), which are funded by the United States government, offer assistance to schools in order to help ensure equity in education in the area of the following six goals that relate directly to educational equity:

1. **Goal 1: Equitable access and inclusion;**
2. **Goal 2: Equitable treatment;**
3. **Goal 3: Equitable distribution of resources;**
4. **Goal 4: Equitable opportunity to learn;**
Goal 5: Shared accountability; and

Goal 6: Comparably high academic achievement and other positive outcomes for all students on all achievement indicators (p. 2).

**The opportunity gap.** As the population of our schools continues to diversify, it is imperative that educators begin to question whether or not they are providing their ELLs with equitable learning experiences in order to meet their diverse linguistic needs. Along with this comes the challenge that many schools are faced with: figuring out how to effectively meet the needs of all students in order to guarantee their success is equitable. As stated by LaCour, York, Welner, Renee Valladares, Molner (2017), there is no single best practice that will close the opportunity gap among these students, ultimately illustrating the necessity of providing these students with equitable learning opportunities that will maximize their learning potential. Teacher misconceptions towards ELLs in the following subsection only adds to the already existing or pre-existing opportunity gap regarding ELLs.

**Teacher misconceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards ELLs.** Teachers’ misconceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards ELLs play a significant role in determining what happens in their classrooms. There are several common teacher misconceptions concerning language learners, which can lead to educational inequities. Future subsections will address these misconceptions in more depth.

One common teacher misconception towards ELLs is that they cannot attain rigorous content. As demonstrated by research (Torff, 2011), many teachers believe that because students are identified as ELLs, it is appropriate to employ a less rigorous
curriculum. By doing so, they are not providing these students with higher-order critical thinking skills. Misconceptions such as these limit ELLs’ growth and can negatively impact their educational outcomes (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Molle, 2013). Educators must be able to distinguish between the academic and linguistic demands of their curriculum to provide linguistic support that allow ELLs to obtain the same rigorous standards as other students.

Another misconception is the belief that not all teachers are language teachers. Mainstream teachers obtain a knowledge of pedagogical skills specific to their own content area focus, such as Social Studies, Science, Language Arts and Mathematics, and while they have ELLs in their classrooms, they do not view themselves as language teachers (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Within these content area classrooms, the language demands of the content are often overlooked, and it is that language that is vital in acquiring academic content. By neglecting these language demands, it has a direct impact on the language and content development of students.

A further teacher misconception that can lead to inequalities is equating second language acquisition with first language acquisition. (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Many educators believe that learning a second language does not differ from learning a first language. Although there are some similarities, there are also several important differences. When learners acquire a first language, they are often at a very young age and lack cognitive maturity or metalinguistic awareness (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 30), which is unlike a student who is acquiring English as a second language, who has these cognitive skills. Factors such as age, proficiency, first-language schooling,
socio-cultural context, and self-esteem can also impact the rate at which a student acquires a second language (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Harper & de Jong, 2004).

Another misconception is that all ELLs learn English the same exact way at the same rate (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Oftentimes educators see second language acquisition as a universal process, and much of the time notice that students flourish in social English while they struggle with academic English. For older secondary level students who are already literate in their first language and have a strong educational background in this language, the path is not always this way (Harper & de Jong, 2004). There are many developmental stages of second language learning and teachers need to become familiar with these in order to understand that not all ELLs will follow the same path in acquiring English as their second language.

The above section sought to examine the common teacher misconceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards ELLs, while seeking to explain the long-term effects these misconceptions can have on ELLs. The following section examines educational policies and laws that pertain to education equity and will explain the challenges and inequities faced by ELLs within the public education secondary setting.

**Education Policies and Laws for ELLs**

The U.S education system has served ELLs for a vast amount of time, but the ways in which their needs have been served, whether positively or negatively, have shifted drastically through the years. Legislation for ELLs has continued to advance; however, there is still a great deal of growth that needs to happen in order to help ensure
that these students are receiving education that is equitable for them by holding schools and educators accountable.

Language has been at the center of educational planning and policies throughout time, but as expressed in the above section, it is now becoming more prevalent in the education systems of the United States. As of 2011, there were over five million students in the United States public schools who are learning English as their second language, accounting for nearly ten percent of the overall public school enrollment in the United States (Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011). This number clearly illustrates that the linguistic needs of our ELL students are intensifying, prompting much needed change in national policy throughout the years. The following subsections will investigate laws in the U.S. that have been placed in the education realm relating to ELLs, and further reveal how they continue to shape how ELLs are being serviced within public schools.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act.** The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was first passed in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson with a goal of providing funding for students who were considered to be the ‘most needy’ (Menken, 2010). This marked the first federal mandate directed towards ELLs and low-income students, with key components focused on funding, policies, and procedures to support them (Wright, 2015). Prior to this law, there were no federal laws regarding language policies, and schools often ignored the needs of ELLs.

**Bilingual Education Act.** In 1968, during the time of the Civil Rights Movement, the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) was passed, which recognized that language can be a source of inequity for students in schools (Menken, 2010). This law required schools to
provide ELLs with language support services, which were available through grants, to ensure that they could access content while learning English at the same time. Although the BEA was a significant part of educational history for ELLs, it also never fully achieved its goals of educational equity as it failed to clearly identify the goals of the programs and identify whether it was meant to speed up the process of learning English or promote bilingualism (Escamilla, 2018).

**Lau vs. Nichols.** Reluctance to provide equitable education to ELLs proved to be a continuing issue among the states, prompting several lawsuits after the ESEA and the BEA. One of the lawsuits which was significantly impactful to ELL education was the Supreme Court case, Lau vs. Nichols (1974). Within this court case, the difference between equality and equity was demonstrated. It was ruled that by not providing supplemental language instruction to ELLs, an institution would be directly violating the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Wright, 2015). This court case was also significant because it promoted the Lau Remedies, which sought out school districts that were neglecting the needs of their ELLs.

**No Child Left Behind.** Adopted in 2001 by President George W. Bush, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) changed the outlook for ELLs in the U.S Public School System immensely. NCLB significantly differed from BEA, as it placed more of an emphasis on educational outcomes and accountability, specifically looking at whether or not students are making “adequate yearly progress” on standardized tests (Menken, 2010). NCLB had both positive and negative implications on ELLs. While this act gave public schools in the United States more funding for language programming and held
those schools more accountable to the success of their students, it also gave the daunting
task of standardized assessments, which made it difficult to separate language proficiency
from content knowledge (Menken, 2010.)

**Every Student Succeeds Act.** Continuing the progression of United States laws
centered around success for ELLs, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in
2015 by President Barack Obama, replaced NCLB. What made ESSA stand out was that
it was the very first act requiring that all students in America be taught to high academic
standards to prepare them for successful college and career experiences (U.S. Department
of Education, n.d). Within ESSA, public schools in the United States are expected and
held accountable to providing adjustments to programs to assure that students are gaining
explicit language instruction in addition to content instruction.

**Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act.** While the
previously mentioned policies and laws pertaining to the entire federal level, the Learning
English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act (LEAPS) is only an act that pertains
specifically to the state of Minnesota. Passed in 2014, this act elevated the need for
English learner support. It emphasized the importance of bilingualism and
multilingualism; provided a definition and accountability measures to support ELLs with
limited or formal education education (SLIFE); provided more specific funding for ELLs;
and highlighted cultural competency concerning statewide accountability measures
(Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). Undeniably, the LEAPS Act allows our state
to continuously support multilingual learners.
Discussion of the aforementioned laws and policies provided an overview of how our federal system has progressed throughout the years to better support the diverse linguistic needs of ELLs in the U.S. public education system and continues to do so. The next section will discuss research on second language acquisition and examine the language demands facing ELLs within content area classes at the secondary level. Second language acquisition (SLA) Theory will be presented, along with an explanation of the differences between social and academic English to reiterate the importance of each and the demands within content area classrooms.

**Second Language Acquisition**

There are many theories behind second language acquisition (SLA) and a variety of factors that lead up to successfully acquiring a second language. In general, linguistics refers to six major areas of language: pragmatics, syntax, semantics, morphology, phonetics, and phonology. Without focus on these, second language acquisition would not be possible, as all of them contribute to an ELL’s English proficiency level. It is especially evident in the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as assessed by the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 (2019). Not only are these linguistic components towards second language acquisition for language learners, it is also imperative that mainstream teachers have an understanding of SLA and the many factors that can affect the progression. As for ELLs, they also need to be able to produce language that allows them to communicate effectively with others. In the following subsections, the differences between academic language and social language will be explained, as they are both necessary to fully acquire a second language (Zwiers, 2014).
**Social English.** The terms social language and academic language are common when discussing second language acquisition theories, but offer distinctive features that set them apart. When language teachers refer to a child’s language, they typically separate the two forms. Social language is defined as the language that is required to build relationships, often more informal language (Zwiers, 2014). Social English generally is quicker to develop, typically only taking an EL student one to three years to master (Wright, 2015). This involves language that is used in everyday conversation, such as greetings and requests. Social language proficiency benefits ELLs as it assists them in communication and interaction on generalized topics. Many researchers, such as Zwiers (2014) and Wright (2015), would argue that academic language proficiency is of utmost importance for these students to be successful in school.

**Academic English.** While more demanding than social language, academic language has very distinctive features and contexts for which it is used. It is defined as the “specialized language, both oral and written, of academic settings that facilitates communication and thinking about disciplinary content” (Nagy & Townsend, 2012, p. 92). In short, it is the language that is used within classrooms, tests, assignments, and textbooks. It includes technical vocabulary as well as complex grammatical structures. For students to be successful in U.S. public schools, as well as in the future, they must fully acquire the use of academic language. According to Wright (2015), it can take five years or longer for ELLs to catch up to their proficient peers in academic language proficiency, and academic English is much more complex and challenging than conversational English, which makes it essential that it is developed and utilized in a
variety of ways within the mainstream content area classrooms. Although this is a
tremendous task, with the collaboration of mainstream teachers and English language
teachers who specialize in this area, ELLs can achieve this high-level skill.

Further information regarding strategies that support academic language growth
will be provided in the following section. The following section examines how educators
can support ELLs within mainstream classrooms, by explaining tools and resources that
are available to them.

**Supporting ELLs in the Mainstream**

There is a compelling amount of general education strategies that work well to
support ELLs when they are acquiring a second language, however they may not be
sufficient as these students continue to grow their linguistic knowledge. There is a
significant importance of direct language instruction for ELLs in mainstream settings
(Hansen-Thomas, 2008); however, due to scheduling and staffing complications, it is
nearly impossible for one to expect an ELL teacher to be able to co-teach in every
classroom, every day. As stated in the section above concerning teacher misconceptions,
it is imperative that all teachers have the mindset that they are not only teachers of their
specific content area, but language teachers as well. There are several tools and resources
available for mainstream teachers to aid them in understanding the diverse linguistic
backgrounds of their students such as understanding what a current proficiency level of
an ELL means, and research-based best practices for meeting these needs, which will be
explained in depth in the subsequent subsections.
World-class Instructional Design and Assessment. World Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) is an educational consortium that began in response with the NCLB in 2001, but was officially adopted in 2003 (WIDA, 2019). Since its inception, WIDA has grown to include 35 states and has sought to provide educators with language development resources to support the academic success of multilingual learners (WIDA, 2019). This consortium has a sole purpose to focus on youth who are linguistically and culturally diverse, all of whom bring a unique set of experiences to the forefront, which attributes to their can-do philosophy. Minnesota is a WIDA state, which is currently where I teach. This allows the ELL teachers in my district access to various resources and tools to help support language learners in all levels of English proficiency. In addition, WIDA mandates that the states in its consortium administer the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 Test, which measures an ELL’s English language proficiency, while focusing on the academic language features versus content language features (WIDA, 2019). This is typically administered between the months of January and March to students who qualify for ELL services.

Performance definitions. After taking the WIDA Access 2.0 test, in addition to an overall language proficiency score, students are given a performance score in four categories: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. These scores are rated on a scale of one through six, and each number relates to a different performance indicator: (1) Entering, (2) Beginning, (3) Developing, (4) Expanding, (5) Bridging, and (6) Reading. Performance definitions for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade can be found in
Appendix A, however more of an emphasis is placed on grades nine through twelve for the purpose of the project (WIDA, 2019).

Referring back to the misconception in an earlier subsection that all ELLs learn English the same way and at the same rate, it is critical that educators be able to use these performance definitions to help them visualize that students at different proficiency levels will not always progress at the same rate and nor will they demonstrate their understanding of content in the same exact manner. Using the performance indicators, teachers can instruct and assess students on the same content, but assess them in a way where they can demonstrate their understanding that aligns with their proficiency levels. As a teacher continues to utilize these performance indicators it will allow them to make intentional choices given a student's proficiency level. The teacher will begin to understand what the levels mean, thus providing them with more equitable learning experiences that allow them to reach their fullest potential.

**Can-do descriptors.** The WIDA consortium created what is referred to as “Can-Do Descriptors” that are task-based examples of what ELLs can do linguistically at their given level of language proficiency (Gottleib, 2016). The descriptors are based on the “key-uses of academic language-discuss, explain, argue and recount” (Gottleib, 2016, p. 229). These Can-Do Descriptors can serve as a tool to help language teachers and content area teachers plan differentiated classroom learning experiences and assessments in reference to language instruction. They can be used to help inform and guide instruction, however it is suggested not to rely on these descriptors so much that it limits the expectations of the ELL and what they are truly capable of. The WIDA Can-Do
Descriptors for kindergarten through twelfth grade can be found in Appendix B, however more of an emphasis is placed on grades nine through twelve for the purpose of the project.

This next section draws upon research that has been done regarding best practices that promote equitable learning experiences for ELLs. In this section, eight research-based strategies will be identified that mainstream content area teachers at the second level can utilize in their classrooms to assist ELLs who fall within WIDA levels one through three. These best practices will maximize an ELL’s learning potential and provide them with equitable learning experiences. Each research-based strategy will be defined, examined, and explained fully as it pertains to English language learners.

**Best Practices to Promote Equitable Learning for ELLs**

Using the resources and tools for ELLs explained in the above subsections, such as performance indicators and Can-Do Descriptors, mainstream content area teachers could work to integrate several ELL research-based best practices into daily lessons with the assistance of the ELL teacher. By doing so, they are providing scaffolds and supports to further assist ELLs in linguistic and academic development (De Jong, E., & Harper, C., 2005). In the following subsections, seven research-based best practices will be presented that can be used by content area teachers during instruction and assessment in the mainstream classroom to support ELLs. These strategies can be used in any discipline, as they will assist ELLs in mastering language and content simultaneously.

**Social scaffolding and cooperative learning.** There are several forms of scaffolding that can provide a teacher with effective ways to integrate language
instruction into their content area discipline. One of the most valuable forms is social scaffolding, a teacher uses social interaction to support and mediate learning (Pawan, 2006). According to Vygotsky (1978), scaffolding is defined as the social interaction between novice learners and expert learners, during which the experts engage in supportive behaviors and aim to create supportive environments for the novice level students to acquire the skills and knowledge taking place at higher competency levels. Content area teachers should work toward integrating this social form of scaffolding into their instruction daily. Oftentimes this is referred to as cooperative learning, meaning that the instruction is not teacher dominated. With cooperative learning, ELLs will have more opportunities to fully engage with the language. This can be done through one-on-one interaction, partner interaction, dyads, or small group interaction. Social scaffolding and cooperative learning assist ELLs who fall within WIDA proficiency levels one through three, in actively participating and developing academic language within the mainstream classroom for substantial reasons (Zwiers, J. & Crawford, M., 2011). First, social scaffolding and cooperative learning allow students to engage in authentic conversations with their peers, thus aiding to the development of second language acquisition. By integrating content into language instruction through these supports, it introduces an authentic academic challenge for learners through a demand for higher order thinking skills and allows them to negotiate meaning (Pawan, 2006). Second, social scaffolding and cooperative learning allow ELLs to be exposed to the target language structures while also learning content related concepts (Levykh, 2008). In using these supports, lower proficiency levels one through three are able to listen to the sociocultural aspects
and linguistic structures that are modeled by their peers at higher proficiency levels, such as rules of conversational turn-taking. Third, social scaffolding and cooperative learning stress the importance of oral discourse in academic English in second language acquisition.

**Explicit vocabulary instruction.** Vocabulary is an essential component of language learning and is critical to the success of learners, especially ELLs. Across all content area classrooms, vocabulary is a necessary component of student success and it relates directly to reading comprehension, thus highlighting the importance that learners need to receive explicit vocabulary instruction across subject areas (Nisbet & Tindall, 2015). Because ELLs are in the process of acquiring a second language, they are learning academic content and academic vocabulary together with developing their English proficiency. As demonstrated by Nisbet and Tindall (2015), to provide ELLs with explicit and language-rich vocabulary instruction, there is an instructional framework containing four key components that need to be followed.

- **Key Component 1:** Selecting an instructional strategy,
- **Key Component 2:** Introducing new vocabulary,
- **Key Component 3:** Creating a reference card, and
- **Key Component 4:** Engaging students in contextualized, meaningful interactions.

**Interactive word walls.** As shown in the previous section, ELLs need to be exposed to a language-rich environment to build on and expand their academic language. Vocabulary is a powerful tool that ELLs need to develop to express ideas, communicate with others, access prior knowledge, and learn new concepts (Jackson, Tripp & Cox,
One strategy that greatly supports this development is through the use of interactive word walls. Interactive word walls provide a visual presentation of materials. They serve as a visual scaffold that can be used as a reference throughout the learning process. As opposed to a traditional word wall, interactive word walls are student-centered and allow ELLs the use of a visual aid, which illustrates word meanings and deepens understanding by conceptually organizing words (Jackson et al., 2011). Because interactive walls are student-centered and student-created, students are able to become more self-sufficient during learning experiences, as they are able to find the necessary information by looking at the word wall versus asking the teacher. These characteristics of interactive word walls make vocabulary instruction more meaningful and explicit for ELLs in mainstream content area classes.

**Think alouds.** The practice of “thinking about one's thinking” while being actively engaged in the reading process is known as metacognition (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007). While reading is a covert process, one approach that can stimulate an ELLs metacognition while also improving comprehension is the think aloud strategy. With the purpose of helping ELLs develop the ability to monitor their own comprehension and apply the strategies to facilitate understanding, the think aloud strategy also activates monitoring of metacognition, which for some ELLs is a skill in which they have not yet become fluent (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007). Open-ended in nature, this strategy has numerous benefits for ELLs. Besides developing metacognition in these students, it also encourages them to make overt, conscious interpretive reactions (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007). Through the think aloud strategy, ELLs who fall within
WIDA levels one through three, listen to an expert, the teacher, model understanding as they are reading aloud, which assists them in developing these strategic reading skills that are crucial to all students' success in any content area classroom.

**Sentence frames.** Sentence frames are a more commonly used scaffold to support speaking and writing development in ELLs. In a study done by Donnelly and Roe (2011), it was found that sentence frames help improve overall academic language development mainly due to the fact that they give language learners practice using target vocabulary and given language features while also exposing them to correct sentence structure. Donnelly and Roe (2011) also found that in order to use sentence frames to their fullest potential, content area teachers must first analyze the vocabulary and language features that students are going to be expected to produce to support whole language development. Through the use of this scaffolded support, ELLs are able to produce more complex language than they would be able to independently given their current English proficiency levels.

**Graphic organizers.** According to Mede (2010), graphic organizers are a visual or graphic display of information that depicts the relationships between ideas within a learning task. There are many forms of graphic organizers that content area teachers can utilize, such as semantic maps, story maps, cognitive maps, thinking maps, etc. For WIDA levels one through three, graphic organizers are especially useful because they support students in the four domains of language learning (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) by allowing them to see how information fits together like a puzzle (Cooper, Kiger, Robinson & Slansky, 2012). It should be noted, however, that without proper
teacher instruction and modeling of how to use these graphic organizers, this will not become an effective learning tool (Mede, 2010). Ellis (as cited in Mede, 2010) clearly states three reasons why content area teachers should use graphic organizers within their instruction. First, use of graphic organizers allows ELLs to be more adept at remembering the content because it allows them to identify what is important about a given text. Second, the use of graphic organizers reduces the processing demands allowing teachers to educate ELLs on the content at a more complex level. Finally, graphic organizers encourage ELLs to become more strategic readers as it helps them recognize more patterns within a text (Mede, 2010).

**Translanguaging.** According to Rowe (2018), translanguaging refers to the way that emergent bilingual students communicate with others and make meaning through the mixing of students’ backgrounds. In a classroom environment that is rich in translanguaging, ELLs are provided with more authentic opportunities to use both their first and second language, ultimately providing them with more meaningful opportunities to relate their learning with their lives and interests. This can be done through connecting current curriculum to students’ lives, implementing engaging activities and opportunities for choice, and having multiple outcomes (Rowe, 2018). In recent studies done by Lee and Suarez (as cited by Rowe, 2018), students who are learning in an environment where translanguaging is accepted and promoted, they are more likely to be successful in learning the academic content as well as increasing positive views about their own identity. In short, content area teachers can utilize different translanguaging strategies and
promote them within their own classrooms in order to aid ELLs in achieving the academic language demands necessary of them.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of relevant research regarding issues and challenges of educational equity with the instruction of ELLs and expanded on the implications of teacher misconceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards ELLs, all of which may increase the opportunity gap. The following question was explored: how can we guarantee that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms? Key terms were outlined and background was provided on the history of educational laws and policies as they relate to ELLs, as well as an introduction to SLA, which reviewed the differences between first-language and second language acquisition, and explored social English versus academic English. Research-based strategies were presented that can be employed in any mainstream content area classroom to support ELLs who fall within WIDA levels one through three, so that their learning is being maximized throughout the day and they are being provided with equitable learning opportunities.

Chapter Three will outline the details of the research project that were developed from the findings of this paper. It will provide a context and framework followed by a rationale for the professional development project being developed to present the research and best practices mentioned earlier in this chapter. This project seeks to provide mainstream secondary educators with scaffolds and supports that they may have readily
available and easily implement within their content area lessons to provide equitable learning experiences for ELLs in their classroom.
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Chapter Overview

The central question of this project is, *how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms?* My goal is to create a website that can provide resources and tools to help ensure that mainstream teachers are providing the language learners within their classrooms with equitable learning opportunities and create an environment where all students, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, are maximizing their learning potential. This website is specifically focused on supporting secondary classroom teachers in grades nine through twelve within the specific context of our school environment as it has been previously defined.

In this chapter, I provide details of my project, including a description of the project format, which is a website. I expound on the context in which this project takes place and the target audience. These details are followed by the rationale for choosing a website format and an elaboration of the framework of the web-design that informed its content and layout, which was designed to meet the needs of the target audience. The
final section of this chapter provides the timeline for developing this website and methods used for assessing it.

**Project Overview and Purpose**

In the process of obtaining my Master’s in Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Hamline University and working as a full-time ELL teacher within a small rural school district in southern Minnesota, I have developed a new understanding of how to best support language learners at their specific proficiency levels. I have also been made well-aware of the lack of education of some mainstream teachers in regards to teaching ELLs, and the lack of support these students are receiving in mainstreamed classes in order to achieve academic and linguistic proficiency with content-heavy standards. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is significant importance of direct language instruction for ELLs in mainstream settings (Hansen-Thomas, 2008), and with some mainstream teachers lacking education on this topic, the learning may not be sufficient as these students continue to grow their linguistic knowledge.

A website is a way to effectively share expertise in a centralized manner and support teachers’ learning with a focus on equity. This website will address the core purpose of this project and focus on sharing essential resources, best practices, and strategies mainstream teachers can use within their classrooms to help ensure that we are maximizing ELLs learning potential, thus providing them with more equitable learning opportunities. These best practices are based on the literature review presented in Chapter Two. Not only can this website be used for self-directed learning, it can also be used
during professional development opportunities (PDOs) and co-teaching sessions. As described in Chapter Two, providing students with equitable learning opportunities is fundamental to maximizing their learning potential, as there is no single best practice that closes the opportunity gap among these students (Lacour, et. al., 2017).

**Choice of method.** A website was the chosen method for this project for a multitude of reasons, many of which were based on research for the literature review in Chapter Two. To be clear, there were no articles that specifically indicated a recommendation of providing a website for listing support strategies. However, my goal is to create a tool that can not only assist content area teachers with language learners, but also engage them in methods that more effectively promote equitable learning opportunities for these students. In order to do this, it was necessary to have a platform where research, tutorial videos, graphics, etc. could be posted and could be readily accessible by all and continue to grow as the research does. To ensure that educators are able to navigate the website and engage with the information, I follow the principles of good web-design, which the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2006), referenced in their book, *Research-based web design & usability guidelines.* These are presented within the framework section. The website format allows me to do just that. Not only is it flexible and capable of holding the magnitude of resources I have created, but it also has the potential to grow as research and best practices evolve.

Another driving force for choosing this method for the project is the context in which it will take place. Although the district is small, it is growing more linguistically diverse each year and the number of students qualifying for ELL services is rapidly
increasing. In order to best serve these students, I will help to ensure that mainstream teachers are aware and comfortable not just teaching these students, but also implementing scaffolds that will make content more accessible and provide them with more equitable learning opportunities. Before becoming an ELL teacher, I was an elementary classroom teacher and I attended several professional development series, which focused on language learners. Although the information gained at these workshops was beneficial, it failed to provide ready-to-implement scaffolds for ELL students. Given this, for the particular context in which this project will take place, it is vital that I utilize a website that will provide mainstream teachers with “ready-to-go” scaffolds and supports that adhere to a student’s particular language proficiency levels. In short, a professional website seemed to be the best way to help facilitate a more hands-on approach to providing mainstream teachers with strategies that can further support equitable learning opportunities and help ensure that we work together to maximize the learning potential of ELLs.

**Audience.** The primary audience for the website is secondary classroom teachers within a small rural school district in southern Minnesota. This high school has roughly fifty content area teachers ranging in specialty areas from English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and many elective courses. Although the website audience is limited in number, it is also public. A link will be added to the current school district website to allow viewers to visit and interact with the information provided. In developing this website for this specific audience, I thought about how I could provide teachers with professional development and ready to implement resources for their own
classroom. I also took into consideration how the audience could be engaged in meaningful discussions about language learners in our school and how to encourage its use for professional development.

**Description of the Project Format**

The website that will be created as a part of this project will be published alongside the St. Peter Public Schools webpage and will be made readily available to staff members within the district for the upcoming school year 2020-2021. The website’s home page will contain the title, “Equitable Learning: Supports and Scaffolds for Mainstream Teachers.” There will be five major components of this website: Section 1: What is it?, Section 2) Why is it important?, Section 3) Research-based Best Practices, Section 4) Getting Started, and Section 5) Feedback. Each of these sections will be described in-full in the following subsections.

**Section 1) What is it?** On the home page, there will be a tab titled, “What is Equitable Learning?” When a user clicks on this section tab, they will be directed to a page that defines equity vs. equality and equitable learning. Before expecting content area teachers to implement these strategies, it is vital for them to have an understanding of terms and the impact they have on language learners within the public school setting. On this page, these critical terms will be defined in a comparing and contrasting manner so that it is visually appealing to its viewers.

**Section 2) Why is it important?** The homepage will also contain a tab titled, “Why is it Important?” When a user clicks on this section tab, they will be directed to a
page that explains the significance of equitable learning within content area classrooms. As described in Chapter Two, language has been at the forefront of educational planning and policies over time, and there are several laws and legislation that revolve around educational equity, making it more prevalent to teachers nowadays, which directly applies to what I plan to accomplish within this section of the website. This will further be depicted using several infographics and factual data from our district based on students qualifying for ELL services.

**Section 3) Research-based best practices.** The literature review in Chapter Two discussed and elaborated upon many research-based supports and scaffolds for ELLs. On the homepage, when a user clicks on this section tab, the list of best practices obtained from the literature review will appear. Within this list, mainstream teachers may click on any strategy, which will then take them to a new page that further explains what the strategy is and how it can be implemented within a specific content area. It also includes video tutorials of the strategy being utilized and links to any pertinent handouts that a teacher may need to implement this best practice.

**Section 4) Getting started.** On the home page there will be a tab titled, “Getting Started.” Once a user clicks on this section tab, they will be directed to a page describing the steps that a mainstream teacher needs to take in order to provide students with equitable learning opportunities. For example, one step is to get to know your individual student’s English Language Proficiency (ELP) level. This area gives the reader a more well-defined idea of what a particular student can do based on the WIDA Can-Do Descriptors. It will explain how they can integrate WIDA performance indicators and
WIDA Can-Do Descriptors into their planning to provide ELLs with more equitable learning opportunities.

**Section 5) Feedback.** One major piece of this website will be evolving, just as research does. In order to continue developing this website and provide for more collaboration between the ELL teacher and mainstream teachers, feedback from users is critical. There will be a section on the homepage titled, “Feedback.” By clicking on this section tab, the user will be directed to a Google Form asking for feedback of their experience using the website and feedback on the most effective best-practice they have found thus far. My goal is to be able to add a reviews/questions section to the website eventually to foster a culture of learning among staff members and other educators.

**Framework**

I am a novice website designer. The task of designing a website can be quite complex in nature. I plan to seek the advice and guidance of our district’s technology coordinator so my website adheres to the district’s layout in web design. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2006), in their book titled, *Research-based web design & usability guidelines* there are several factors that contribute to quality web design and I will be following the guidelines ranked highest in relative importance. The following recommendations on relative importance have been noted and will be taken into consideration in the development of this project.

- **Provide useful context.** Content should be provided for viewers that is engaging, relevant, and appropriate given the targeted audience. Studies have shown that the most critical element of a website is its content;
proving more essential than visual design and nativization, meaning the ease of navigating through a webpage.

- **Understand and meet user expectations.** Users should be at the forefront of conversation when developing a website. The format of the site, especially regarding navigation, content, and organization, needs to meet their expectations. Studies have shown that the use of familiar formatting and navigation help make the experience easier for its users, as they hold expectations based on past experiences.

- **Set and state goals.** Before beginning the process of developing a website, one must identify and clearly articulate the primary goal of the site. The goal determines the audience, content, function, look, and feel. thus it is imperative that these are communicated and worked on.

- **Create a positive first impression.** The homepage is of utmost importance when developing a website. It is the first thing users will see, and it is important to convey the quality of the site here. Studies have shown that about half of the time, users only looked at a website’s homepage to find out its quality much like a first impression.

In addition to following these guidelines recommended by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2006), it is important to consider the overall user experience and how they will interact with the content. Understanding who the users are and how they will use the site brings forth the opportunity to design a platform that is
not just meeting the targeted audience’s expectations, but also providing for a more functional and perceptive experience.

**Timeline**

This project will be completed over two semesters, which include drafting and revising the first three chapters with feedback from an outside content reviewer and peer reviewer. Development of the website will be an ongoing process, which involves several changes and updates. This professional development resource will be introduced to teachers at a professional development session during opening workshops for the 2020-2021 school year in August. Prior to this, I will have shared the website with the superintendent, building administrators, and my ELL department team. This is to ensure that the site is running properly and that it is aligned with our district’s strategic plans for the upcoming school year.

**Assessment**

This professional development website will be assessed using two methods. First, as a broader measurement, the website will automatically track the number of viewers. This will provide an overall picture of how many educators are actually going to the website, but it will not give me information on the usability of the website. For a more specific assessment, there will be an online survey that requests feedback from viewers as to whether the website was helpful. This online survey will ask educators to share their experiences implementing the support methods on the website and ask which, if any, were most effective. By examining this data, I can then look at which supports were most
beneficial for educators and which were the least, leading to flexibility and changes in layout or content. My overarching goal is to use this professional website as a starting point to further develop and update for subsequent school years based on evolving research in the field of language learning.

Summary

Chapter Three provided a description of the chosen framework to ensure that the website is of high quality as well as the basic principles of website design which impacted this project. It further defined the audience of this project and the context in which the project takes place. Keeping the district's strategic plan in mind and utilizing the expertise of the district’s technology coordinator helped shape the site in a way that fully supported my purpose of addressing the guiding question: how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms?

In Chapter Four, I will reflect on the process of creating this online tool for my school community and the learning that resulted from this experience. Additionally, I will set goals to assure that the website is maintained and relevant so mainstream content area teachers and I can continue to learn and collaborate to provide more equitable learning opportunities for linguistically diverse students.
CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this capstone project was to explore the guiding question, how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms? As mentioned in chapter one, as an ELL I have observed so many missed opportunities within mainstream classrooms, especially at the secondary level, and seen firsthand the stress that it causes ELLs. These students quickly become disengaged and tend to fade into the background as a result, causing the opportunity gap to grow. Although these content area teachers have well intentions, they are uneducated in the support and scaffolding it takes to make learning more equitable for all students. As a result of these observations, I wanted to research ways in which mainstream teachers can maximize the learning potential of their ELLs. The goal of the project was to bring awareness to content area teachers in the realm of equitable learning and provide them ready-to-implement strategies and scaffolds that they can easily implement within their setting to provide ELLs with more equitable learning opportunities.
Major Learnings

My capstone project developed from my own personal experience as an ELL teacher at the secondary level. Many of the mainstream teachers lacked the background in teaching these diverse students, and in turn, I recognized that these students quickly fell behind in classes because they lacked the language skills necessary to access the content standards. I wanted to create a shift in thinking for these mainstream teachers in order to help ensure that ELLs are being provided with equitable learning opportunities and working towards reaching their fullest potential.

This project involved creating an educational website for mainstream content area teachers within my school district. The goals of this project were to provide background information for mainstream teachers on the significance of educational equity and provide instructional strategies to scaffold content in order to make it more accessible, so that these educators are better equipped to promote equitable learning opportunities for ELLs within their classroom setting. As shared in Chapter One, advocacy is a tremendous part of an ELL teacher’s role. Rather than solely empowering students, it is vital that we empower educators to grow as professionals and language teachers, which is at the core of this project.

Through the creation of this project, there have been many major learnings on a personal level that have occurred. The first major learning that occurred from this project related to the sheer volume of supports available for ELLs. As an ELL teacher, I am trained to provide my students with academic language development support in multiple content areas, but yet even with this educational background, the sheer volume of
research pertaining to scaffolding learning tasks for ELLs consumed me. It was intriguing yet overwhelming at the same time. It was intriguing because besides just reinforcing what I had already learned, it also gave me a plethora of new ideas for my teaching practices, but overwhelming in the sense that I continuously felt like I could never convey all of this insightful information through a single website and expect mainstream teachers to understand it. Through the research, it reinforced the ideology that in order to work towards ensuring educational equity among our students, continuous collaboration with mainstream teachers and the school community is vital.

The second major learning that occurred from this project was the importance of patience when working towards a specific goal. While researching and developing this website, there were countless times that I felt like I wasn’t including enough information to express the urgency of educational equity and the significant need to effectively support ELLs within the district. It took taking a step back and reflecting upon this process to realize that this website is what the district and the mainstream teachers that I work with currently need. This website aims to meet mainstream teachers where they are at and provide them with opportunities to engage in critical thinking, while building on what they already know. By incorporating too many supports and scaffolds for ELLs, it would feel tedious and would not allow them to feel like they are an integral part of this process. This process of completing this project made me realize that in order to truly foster a culture of collaboration and change, patience is key. Not only patience with the ever-evolving research, but patience with one another. In order to create this large-scale shift in helping to ensure educational equity, we must start at the beginning and slowly
build an understanding of what equity means for ELLs, what it looks like within the school community and how we can help to ensure it, all of which is done through patience.

The final major learning from this project is the impact of personal biases. This project and the research done has not only impacted my own teaching practices, but has also assisted in my understanding how my own personal beliefs and educational background can contribute to helping to ensure that equitable learning opportunities are taking place within instruction for my students. Being able to recognize our own personal biases, perceptions and experiences in regards to ELLs is a critical piece to the puzzle of understanding how they hinder the learning process for many linguistically diverse learners and stop us from promoting equity within classroom practices. Not only this, but it also pinpoints ways, even through well-intended efforts, that cause the opportunity gap among students to rise.

This journey of writing my capstone and the creation of my project has been daunting and complex in nature, as I have quickly realized that expecting mainstream teachers to implement these strategies and supports to make their classrooms more equitable for ELLs will require more than just this website. I have always felt that as an ELL teacher, in order for my teaching to be most effective, I need to be co-teaching with mainstream teachers. This model allows myself and the mainstream teacher to work together to support ELLs academic language development, each adding in our own expertise. Through the research and development of this project, it has only exemplified
this belief, and I look forward to researching more in regards to co-teaching and how to implement it effectively in our district throughout my teaching career.

**Revisiting the Literature**

Within Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature that was relevant to education equity for ELLs and educational policies and laws revolving around these students, acknowledged teacher misconceptions in regards to second language acquisition and outlined ready-to-implement instructional strategies for mainstream secondary teachers to utilize in order to help ensure educational equity within their setting in order to address the underlying research question, *how can we help ensure that English Language Learners (WIDA Levels 1-3) in grades nine through twelve are maximizing their learning potential and are being provided with equitable learning opportunities within the mainstream content area classrooms?*

During the development of this capstone project, the work of several researchers played an integral role. When drawing upon resources from the literature review, Menken (2010), Wright (2015), Escamilla (2018), Tung (2013), Gottlieb (2016) and LaCour, et. al. (2017) highlighted specifically on the definition of equity within the educational setting for ELLs and the role of educational policies and laws pertaining to them. Along with this research, the U.S Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Education gave pertinent information to bring equity to the forefront, and pinpoint where inequities may lie.

Common misconceptions and teacher beliefs towards second language acquisition were brought to the forefront through the work of Zwiers and Crawford (2011), Torff
recommendations to dispel these misconceptions regarding the backgrounds, abilities and
language needs of ELLs, although they are limited in their effectiveness if they do not
address these beliefs that educators hold regarding ELLs, ultimately hinder the
effectiveness of best practices to support these learners.

Ready-to-implement instructional strategies for mainstream secondary teachers,
which promote educational equity for ELLs were drawn from the following researchers:
McKeown and Gentilucci (2007), Donnelly and Roe (2011), Mede (2010), Cooper, Kiger,

**Implications and Limitations**

**Implications.** The implications of this capstone project are that educational equity
will be promoted. By providing mainstream content area teachers with research-based
strategies to better support the learning process for ELLs within their classrooms, the
teachers will be able to help to ensure that they are maximizing the learning potential of
these students and are providing them with equitable learning opportunities. The
intentions go beyond simply improving academic achievement of ELLs within the
setting, but rather this website will promote and develop a culture of equity among the
school community. A school community that enriches a child’s education while also
valuing equity is a place in which all students will succeed and reach their fullest
potential.
**Limitations.** Although the benefits of this project are numerous for educators, administrators, and students, there are limitations when it comes to the scope of the project. This project is a preliminary approach to implementing change to help ensure educational equity within the mainstream setting. Although this website is a starting point within this scope, teachers need support in order to utilize the strategies introduced. This would involve instructional coaching, additional professional development, and funding that is allocated in order to fully engage with a larger shift towards helping to ensure educational equity within the school district. These issues are crucial components because they would require not only mainstream teachers to “buy-in”, but also the administration and school board. Administration and school board members may not be willing to allow for the time and funding that implementing this large scale shift would require, which would hinder the effectiveness of this website. Continued professional development sessions, instructional coaching and funding would be needed in order to promote a deeper understanding of educational equity beyond just the need and benefits that these supports and scaffolds would provide. Additionally, there would need to be adjustments made in order to tailor these strategies to individual content areas and specific language needs with a classroom.

In addition to the project scope, another limitation of this project would be the evaluation of the effectiveness of this website. This project was specifically designed for the rural school district in which I am an ELL teacher. However, as discussed in the project timeline section of Chapter Three, this website was developed to be shared with teachers during the opening workshop of the upcoming school year. Due to this, this
project will not be introduced to teachers until the end of August 2020, thus it will not be utilized by the mainstream teachers within the district and the effectiveness of the website will not be able to be determined fully prior to submitting this capstone project.

What Now?

Throughout this capstone process, I have continuously collaborated and collected feedback and support from colleagues, including ELL teachers within my department, mainstream secondary teachers and administrators. This relationship has proven to be invaluable to the entire process of completing my project and has only strengthened both the interest and need for more equitable learning opportunities. Although this site will not be officially launched until the end of August 2020 for the upcoming school year, colleagues who I have shared the site with have commented on the relevancy of educational equity, not just for ELLs, but for all students. They have been eager to learn more about and engage in the instructional supports and scaffolds that are being provided to them on this website that I have created.

In the coming weeks before the 2020-2021 school year begins, I will meet with administration and school board members to present my website and further justify the importance of fostering a culture of equity within our buildings. After this, I will launch and present the website to both secondary schools within the district and invite them to begin to explore and ask questions in regards to educational equity and the instructional strategies for support and scaffolding provided to them. As the school year progresses, I will receive feedback from teachers on the validity and reliability of the website, and will adjust accordingly. Asking fellow colleagues to share their experiences implementing
these strategies will be of utmost importance, as well as the continuation of updated the site based on current research-based best practices that promote equitable learning opportunities for ELLs. While I feel that this project is a starting point in which we, as a district, can build off, there is so much work to be done in order to work towards ensuring equity for our ELLs within the mainstream setting. My hope is that by continuing this work, the district will work towards fostering a culture of equity where it not only tolerates ELLs within the mainstream, but it embraces everything that these students have to offer.

Throughout this journey, I have expanded my own understanding of educational equity and the significance of providing ELLs with more equitable learning opportunities to maximize their potential. This project has solidified my understanding of what equitable learning looks like within the mainstream setting and also allowed me to articulate the importance and need for mainstream teachers to be educated on instructional supports and scaffolds to support academic language development and allow these students to access content standards. Through researching, explaining and discussing this topic with others, I now have a deeper level of understanding of the equity issues within our district and have developed a way in which I can communicate and support mainstream educators in implementing research-based best practices for supporting ELLs in their classrooms. I hope that this website continues to push mainstream teachers to not just reflect upon their own teaching practices and personal biases towards ELLs, but truly understand the significance of taking time to increase
equitable learning practices within their classrooms to improve the learning of not only ELLs, but of all students that enter their room.

**Summary**

Chapter Four provided a reflection of the capstone project as a whole. First, the chapter provided a reflection on the major learnings that occurred during the process of completing this project. Second, it provided a review of the pertinent literature that was applicable and significant in the development of this project. Next, Chapter Four expanded on the implications and limitations as a result of this project. Finally, the chapter illustrated the significance of this project and future of the district in which I am employed, as a result of this project.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency for Grades K-12

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Reaching</td>
<td><em>specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level</em>&lt;br&gt;• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level&lt;br&gt;• oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Bridging</td>
<td><em>specialized or technical language of the content areas</em>&lt;br&gt;• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports&lt;br&gt;• oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Expanding</td>
<td><em>specific and some technical language of the content areas</em>&lt;br&gt;• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs&lt;br&gt;• oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Developing</td>
<td><em>general and some specific language of the content areas</em>&lt;br&gt;• expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs&lt;br&gt;• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Beginning</td>
<td><em>general language related to the content areas</em>&lt;br&gt;• phrases or short sentences&lt;br&gt;• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Entering</td>
<td><em>pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas</em>&lt;br&gt;• words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support&lt;br&gt;• oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX B

WIDA Can-Do Descriptors for Grades K-12

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## Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster PreK-K

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Entering</th>
<th>Level 2 Beginning</th>
<th>Level 3 Developing</th>
<th>Level 4 Expanding</th>
<th>Level 5 Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Match icons and symbols to corresponding pictures</td>
<td>• Match examples of the same form of print</td>
<td>• Use pictures to identify words</td>
<td>• Identify some high-frequency words in context</td>
<td>• Find school-related vocabulary items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify name in print</td>
<td>• Distinguish between same and different forms of print (e.g., single letters and symbols)</td>
<td>• Classify visuals according to labels or icons (e.g., animals vs. plants)</td>
<td>• Order a series of labeled pictures described orally to tell stories</td>
<td>• Differentiate between letters, words, and sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find matching words or pictures</td>
<td>• Demonstrate concepts of print (e.g., left to right movement, beginning/end, or top/bottom of page)</td>
<td>• Demonstrate concepts of print (e.g., title, author, illustrator)</td>
<td>• Match pictures to phrase/short sentences</td>
<td>• String words together to make short sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find labeled real-life classroom objects</td>
<td>• Match labeled pictures to those in illustrated scenes</td>
<td>• Sort labeled pictures by attribute (e.g., number, initial sound)</td>
<td>• Classify labeled pictures by two attributes (e.g., size and color)</td>
<td>• Indicate features of words, phrases, or sentences that are the same and different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Writing**       |                   |                    |                   |                  |
| • Draw pictures and scribble | • Connect oral language to print (e.g., language experience) | • Communicate using letters, symbols, and numbers in context | • Produce symbols and strings of letters associated with pictures | • Create content-based representations through pictures and words |
| • Circle or underline pictures, symbols, and numbers | • Reproduce letters, symbols, and numbers from models in context | • Make illustrated “notes” and cards with distinct letter combinations | • Draw pictures and use words to tell a story | • Make “story books” with drawings and words |
| • Trace figures and letters | • Copy icons of familiar environmental print | • Make connections between speech and writing | • Label familiar people and objects from models | • Produce words/phrases independently |
| • Make symbols, figures or letters from models and realia (e.g., straws, clay) | • Draw objects from models and label with letters | • Reproduce familiar words from labeled models or illustrations | • Produce familiar words/phrases from environmental print and illustrated text | • Relate everyday experiences using phrases/short sentences |

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Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 1-2
For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Entering</th>
<th>Level 2 Beginning</th>
<th>Level 3 Developing</th>
<th>Level 4 Expanding</th>
<th>Level 5 Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow modeled oral directions (e.g., &quot;Find a pencil!&quot;)</td>
<td>Match oral reading of stories to illustrations</td>
<td>Follow modeled multi-step oral directions</td>
<td>Compare/contrast objects according to physical attributes (e.g., size, shape, color)</td>
<td>Use context clues to gain meaning from grade-level text read orally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify pictures of everyday objects as usual orally (e.g., in books)</td>
<td>Carry out two- to three-step oral commands (e.g., &quot;Take out your science book, now turn to page 25.&quot;)</td>
<td>Sequence pictures of stories read aloud (e.g., beginning, middle, and end)</td>
<td>Find details in illustrated, narrative, or expository text read aloud</td>
<td>Apply ideas from oral discussions to new situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point to real-life objects reflective of content-related vocabulary or oral statements</td>
<td>Sequence a series of oral statements using real objects or pictures</td>
<td>Match people with jobs or objects with functions based on oral descriptions</td>
<td>Identify illustrated activities from oral descriptions</td>
<td>Interpret information from oral reading of narrative or expository text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mnemonic strategies or movement associated with statements (e.g., &quot;This is my left hand&quot;)</td>
<td>Locate objects described orally</td>
<td>Classify objects according to descriptive oral statements</td>
<td>Use academic vocabulary in class discussions</td>
<td>Identify ideas/concepts expressed with grade-level content-specific language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat simple words, phrases, and memorized chunks of language</td>
<td>Use first language to fill in gaps in oral English (code switch)</td>
<td>Ask questions of a social nature</td>
<td>Use academic vocabulary in class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to visually-supported (e.g., calendar) questions of academic content with one word or phrase</td>
<td>Repeat facts or statements</td>
<td>Express feelings (e.g., &quot;I'm happy because...&quot;)</td>
<td>Express and support ideas with examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and name everyday objects</td>
<td>Describe what people do from action pictures (e.g., jobs of community workers)</td>
<td>Retell simple stories from picture cues</td>
<td>Give oral presentations on content-based topics approaching grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participate in whole group chants and songs</td>
<td>Compare real-life objects (e.g., &quot;smaller,&quot; &quot;bigger&quot;)</td>
<td>Sort and explain grouping of objects (e.g., sink vs. float)</td>
<td>Initiate conversation with peers and teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **SPEAKING**     |                    |                    |                   |                  |
| Use short answers to yes/no questions | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Ask questions for social and academic purposes | Ask questions for social and academic purposes | Participate in class discussions on familiar social and academic topics |
|                  | Use complete utterances (e.g., "I have a cat") | Express feelings (e.g., "I'm happy because...") | Express feelings (e.g., "I'm happy because...") | Express and support ideas with examples |
|                  |                | Retell stories in narrative form with new details (e.g., jobs of community workers) | Retell stories with details | Give oral presentations on content-based topics approaching grade level |
|                  |                | Use first language to fill in gaps in oral English (code switch) | Sequence stories with transitions | Initiate conversation with peers and teachers |
|                  |                | Use first language to fill in gaps in oral English (code switch) | Ask questions for social and academic purposes | Participate in class discussions on familiar social and academic topics |
|                  |                | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Express feelings (e.g., "I'm happy because...") | Express and support ideas with examples |
|                  |                | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Retell simple stories from picture cues | Give oral presentations on content-based topics approaching grade level |
|                  |                | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Sort and explain grouping of objects (e.g., sink vs. float) | Initiate conversation with peers and teachers |
|                  |                | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Make predictions or hypotheses | Identify ideas/concepts expressed with grade-level content-specific language |
|                  |                | Use short answers to yes/no questions | Distinguish features of content-based phenomena (e.g., caterpillar, butterfly) | Use academic vocabulary in class discussions |

| **READING**      |                    |                    |                   |                  |
| Identify symbols, icons, and environmental print | Search for pictures associated with word patterns | Make two-to-one connections with prompting | Pin words in order to form sentences |
| Connect to visuals | Identify and interpret pre-taught labeled diagrams | Select titles to match a series of pictures | Identify basic elements of fictional stories (e.g., title, characters) |
| Match real-life familiar objects to labels | Match twice to print by pointing to icons, letters, or illustrated words | Sort illustrated content words into categories | Follow sentence-level directions |
| Follow directions using diagrams or pictures | Sort words into word families | Match phrases and sentences to pictures | Distinguish between general and specific language (e.g., flower vs. rose) in context |

| **WRITING**      |                    |                    |                   |                  |
| Provide information using graphic organizers | Generate lists of words/phrases from banks or walls | Write original sentences | Create a related series of sentences in response to prompts |
| Use first language (L1, when L1 is a medium of instruction) to help form words in English | Complete modeled sentence starters (e.g., "I like ___") | Create messages for social purposes (e.g., greet well cards) | Produce content-related sentences |
| Communicate through drawings | Describe people, places, or objects from illustrated examples and models | Compose journal entries about personal experiences | Compose stories |
| Label familiar objects or pictures | Engage in prewriting strategies (e.g., use of graphic organizers) | Use classroom resources (e.g., picture dictionaries) to compose sentences | Explain procedures or procedures using connected sentences |

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### Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 3-5

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Entering</th>
<th>Level 2: Beginning</th>
<th>Level 3: Developing</th>
<th>Level 4: Expanding</th>
<th>Level 5: Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point to stared pictures, words, or phrases</td>
<td>Categorize content-based pictures or objects from oral descriptions</td>
<td>Follow multi-step oral directions</td>
<td>Interpret oral information and apply to new situations</td>
<td>Carry out oral instructions containing grade-level, content-based language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow one-step oral directions (e.g., physically or through drawings)</td>
<td>Arrange pictures or objects per oral information</td>
<td>Identify illustrated main ideas from paragraph level oral discourse</td>
<td>Identify illustrated main ideas and supporting details from oral discourse</td>
<td>Construct models or use manipulatives to problem-solve based on oral discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify objects, figures, people from oral statements or questions (e.g., &quot;Which one is a rock?&quot;)</td>
<td>Follow two-step oral directions</td>
<td>Match literal meanings of oral descriptions or oral reading to illustrations</td>
<td>Infer from and act on oral information</td>
<td>Distinguish between literal and figurative language in oral discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match classroom oral language to daily routines</td>
<td>Draw in response to oral descriptions</td>
<td>Sequence pictures from oral stories, processes, or procedures</td>
<td>Role play the work of authors, mathematicians, scientists, historians from oral readings, videos, or multi-media</td>
<td>Form opinions of people, places, or ideas from oral scenarios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **SPARKING**      |                    |                     |                    |                   |
| Express basic needs or conditions | Ask simple, everyday questions (e.g., "Who is absent?") | Answer simple content-based questions | Answer opinion questions with supporting details | Justify/defend opinions or explanations with evidence |
| Name pre-taught objects, people, diagrams, or pictures | Researc content-based facts | Re/tell short stories or events | Discuss stories, issues, and concepts | Give content-based presentations using technical vocabulary |
| Recite words or phrases from pictures of everyday objects and oral modeling | Describe pictures, events, objects, or people using content-based words | Make predictions or hypotheses from discourse | Give content-based oral reports | Sequence steps in grade-level problem-solving |
| Answer yes/no and choice questions | Share basic social information with peers | Offer solutions to social conflict | Offer creative solutions to issues/problems | Explain in detail results of inquiry (e.g., scientific experiments) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Entering</th>
<th>Level 2: Beginning</th>
<th>Level 3: Developing</th>
<th>Level 4: Expanding</th>
<th>Level 5: Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>READING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match icons or diagrams with words/concepts</td>
<td>Identify facts and explicit messages from illustrated text</td>
<td>Interpret information from charts and graphs</td>
<td>Classify features of various genres of text (e.g., &quot;and they lived happily ever after&quot;—fairytale)</td>
<td>Summarize information from multiple related sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify cognates from first language in applicable context</td>
<td>Find changes to root words in context</td>
<td>Identify main ideas and some details</td>
<td>Match graphic organizers to different texts (e.g., compare/contrast with Venn diagram)</td>
<td>Answer analytical questions about grade-level text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sound/symbol/word relations</td>
<td>Identify elements of story grammar (e.g., characters, setting)</td>
<td>Sequence events in stories or content-based processes</td>
<td>Find details that support main ideas</td>
<td>Identify, explain and give examples of figures of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match illustrated words/ phrases in differing contexts (e.g., on the board, in a book)</td>
<td>Follow visually supported written directions (e.g., &quot;Draw a star in the sky&quot;)</td>
<td>Use context clues and illustrations to determine meaning of words/phrases</td>
<td>Differentiate between fact and opinion in narrative and expository text</td>
<td>Draw conclusions from explicit and implicit text at or near grade level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **WRITING**       |                    |                     |                    |                   |
| Label objects, pictures, or diagrams from word/phrase banks | Make lists from labels or with peers | Produce simple expository or narrative text | Take notes using graphic organizers | Produce extended responses of original text approaching grade level |
| Communicate ideas by drawing | Complete/produce sentences from word/phrase banks or walls | String related sentences together | Summarize content-based information | Apply content-based information to new contexts |
| Copy words, phrases, and short sentences | Fill in graphic organizers, charts, and tables | Compare/contrast content-based information | Author multiple forms of writing (e.g., exposition, narrative, persuasive) from models | Connect or integrate personal experiences with literature/content |
| Answer oral questions with single words | Make comparisons using real-life or visually-supported materials | Describe events, people, processes, procedures | Explain strategies or use of information in solving problems | Create grade-level stories or reports |

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## Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 6-8

**WIDA Consortium**

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

### Level 1: Entering
- Follow one-step oral commands/interactions
- Match social language to visual/graphic displays
- Identify objects, people, or places from oral statements/questions using gestures (e.g., pointing)
- Match instructional language with visual representation (e.g., "Use a sharpened pencil.")

### Level 2: Beginning
- Follow multi-step oral commands/interactions
- Classify/sort content-related visuals per oral descriptions
- Sequence visuals per oral directions
- Identify information on charts or tables based on oral statements

### Level 3: Developing
- Categorize content-based examples from oral directions
- Match main ideas of familiar text read aloud to visuals
- Use learning strategies described orally
- Identify everyday examples of content-based concepts described orally
- Associate oral language with different time frames (e.g., past, present, future)

### Level 4: Expanding
- Identify main ideas and details of oral discourse
- Complete content-related tasks or assignments based on oral discourse
- Apply learning strategies to new situations
- Role play, dramatic, or re-enact scenarios from oral reading
- Use oral information to accomplish grade-level tasks
- Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly
- Make inferences from grade-level text read aloud
- Discriminate among multiple genres read orally

### Level 5: Bridging
- Paraphrase and summarize ideas presented orally
- Defend a point of view
- Explain outcomes
- Explain and compare content-based concepts
- Connect ideas with supporting details/evidence
- Substitute opinions with reasons and evidence
- Use different registers inside and outside of class
- State big/main ideas with some supporting details
- Ask for clarifications (e.g., self-monitor)

### Level 6: Reading
- Associate letters with sounds and objects
- Match common-related object/picture to words
- Identify common symbols, signs, and words
- Recognize concepts of print
- Find single word responses to WH-questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") related to illustrated text
- Use picture dictionaries/illustrated glossaries
- Sequence illustrated text of fictional and non-fictional events
- Locate main ideas in a series of simple sentences
- Find information from text structure (e.g., titles, graphs, glossary)
- Follow text read aloud (e.g., types, teacher, paired-readings)
- Sort/group pre-taught words/phrase
- Use pre-taught vocabulary (e.g., word banks) to complete simple sentences
- Use L1 to support L2 (e.g., cognates)
- Use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries
- Identify topic sentences, main ideas, and details in paragraphs
- Identify multiple meanings of words in context (e.g., "cell," "table")
- Use context clues
- Make predictions based on illustrated text
- Identify frequently used articles and root words to make/extract meaning (e.g., "an", "a", "the"); "-er/-ing"
- Differentiate between fact and opinion
- Answer questions about explicit information in texts
- Use English dictionaries and glossaries
- Order paragraphs
- Identify figurative language (e.g., "dark as night")
- Interpret adapted classics or modified text
- Match cause to effect
- Identify specific language of different genres and informational texts
- Use an array of strategies (e.g., skim and scan for information)

### Level 7: Writing
- Draw context-related pictures
- Produce high frequency words
- Label pictures and graphs
- Create vocabulary/concept cards
- Generate lists from pre-taught words/phrases and word banks (e.g., create menu from list of food groups)
- Complete pattern sentences with original ideas
- Connect simple sentences
- Complete graphic organizers/forms with personal information
- Respond to yes/no, choice, and some WH-questions
- Produce short paragraphs with main ideas and some details (e.g., columns notes)
- Create compound sentences (e.g., with conjunctions)
- Explain steps in problem-solving
- Compare/contrast information, events, characters
- Give opinions, preferences, and reactions along with reasons
- Create multiple-paragraph essays
- Justify ideas
- Produce content-related reports
- Use details/examples to support ideas
- Use transition words to create cohesive passages
- Compose informal/conclusion
- Paraphrase or summarize text
- Take notes (e.g., for research)

### Level 8: Reading
- Differentiate and apply multiple meanings of words/phrases
- Apply strategies to new situations
- Infer meaning from modified grade-level text
- Critique material and support argument
- Sort grade-level text by genre

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## Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 9-12

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

### Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point to or show basic parts, components, features, characteristics, and properties of books, objects, or persons named orally</td>
<td>Match or classify oral descriptions to real-life experiences or visually-represented, content-related examples</td>
<td>Evaluate information in social and academic conversations</td>
<td>Distinguish between multiple meanings of oral words or phrases in social and academic contexts</td>
<td>Interpret cause and effect scenarios from oral discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match everyday oral information to pictures, diagrams, or photographs</td>
<td>Sort oral language statements according to time frames</td>
<td>Distinguish main ideas from supporting points in oral, content-related discourse</td>
<td>Analyze content-related tasks or assignments based on oral discourse</td>
<td>Make inferences from oral discourse containing satire, sarcasm, or humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group visuals by common traits named orally (e.g., “These are polygons.”)</td>
<td>Sequence visuals according to oral directions</td>
<td>Use learning strategies described orally</td>
<td>Identify and react to subtle differences in speech and register (e.g., hyperbole, satire, comedy)</td>
<td>Identify and react to subtle differences in speech and register (e.g., hyperbole, satire, comedy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify resources, places, products, figures from oral statements, and visuals</td>
<td>Answer yes/no or choice questions within context of lessons or personal experiences</td>
<td>Describe persons, places, events, or objects</td>
<td>Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly</td>
<td>Provide identifying information about self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide identifying information about self</td>
<td>Name everyday objects and pre-taught vocabulary</td>
<td>Ask Wh- questions to clarify meaning</td>
<td>Give multimedia oral presentations on grade-level material</td>
<td>Name everyday objects and pre-taught vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks of language</td>
<td>Provide identifying information about self</td>
<td>Give features of content-based material or (e.g., time periods)</td>
<td>Engage in debates on content-related issues using technical language</td>
<td>Provide identifying information about self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe persons, places, events, or objects</td>
<td>Characterize issues, situations, regions shown in illustrations</td>
<td>Characterize issues, situations, regions shown in illustrations</td>
<td>Explain metacognitive strategies for solving problems (e.g., “Tell me how you know it.”)</td>
<td>Characterize issues, situations, regions shown in illustrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer yes/no or choice questions within context of lessons or personal experiences</td>
<td>Describe persons, places, events, or objects</td>
<td>Suggest ways to resolve issues or pose solutions</td>
<td>Take a stance and use evidence to defend it</td>
<td>Give multimedia oral presentations on grade-level material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide identifying information about self</td>
<td>Ask Wh- questions to clarify meaning</td>
<td>Compare/contrast features, traits, characteristics using general and some specific language</td>
<td>Explain content-related issues and concepts</td>
<td>Engage in debates on content-related issues using technical language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name everyday objects and pre-taught vocabulary</td>
<td>Give features of content-based material or (e.g., time periods)</td>
<td>Sequence processes, cycles, procedures, or events</td>
<td>Compare and contrast points of view</td>
<td>Explain metacognitive strategies for solving problems (e.g., “Tell me how you know it.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks of language</td>
<td>Characterize issues, situations, regions shown in illustrations</td>
<td>Conduct interviews or gather information through oral interaction</td>
<td>Analyze and share pros and cons of choices</td>
<td>Use and respond to gossip, slang, and idiomatic expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe persons, places, events, or objects</td>
<td>Estimate, make predictions or pose hypotheses from models</td>
<td>Use speaking strategies (e.g., circumlocution)</td>
<td>Use and respond to gossip, slang, and idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>Use speaking strategies (e.g., circumlocution)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match visual representations to words/phrases</td>
<td>Match data or information with its source or genre (e.g., description of elements in to symbol on periodic table)</td>
<td>Apply multiple meanings of words/phrases to social and academic contexts</td>
<td>Compare/contrast authors’ points of view, characters, information, or events</td>
<td>Interpret grade-level literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read everyday signs, symbols, schedules, and school-related words/phrases</td>
<td>Classify or organize information presented in visuals or graphs</td>
<td>Identify topic sentences or multi ideas and details in paragraphs</td>
<td>Interpret visually- or graphically-supported information</td>
<td>Synthesize grade-level exposure text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to Wh- questions related to illustrated text</td>
<td>Follow multi-step instructions supported by visuals or data</td>
<td>Answer questions about explicit information in text</td>
<td>Infer meaning from text</td>
<td>Draw conclusions from different sources of informational text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use references (e.g., picture dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, technology)</td>
<td>Match sentence-level descriptions to visual representations</td>
<td>Differentiate between fact and opinion in text</td>
<td>Match cause to effect</td>
<td>Infer significance of data or information in grade-level material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label content-related diagrams, pictures from word/phrase banks</td>
<td>Make content-related lists of words, phrases, or expressions</td>
<td>Complete reports from templates</td>
<td>Summarize content-related notes from lectures or texts</td>
<td>Produce research reports from multiple sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide personal information on forms read orally</td>
<td>Take notes using graphic organizers or models</td>
<td>Compose short narrative and expository pieces</td>
<td>Compose narrative and expository text for a variety of purposes</td>
<td>Create original pieces that represent the use of a variety of genres and disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce short answer responses to oral questions with visual support</td>
<td>Formulate yes/no, choice and Wh- questions from models</td>
<td>Outline ideas and details using graphic organizers</td>
<td>Critique, peer-edit, and make recommendations on others’ writing from rubrics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply missing words in short sentences</td>
<td>Correspond for social purposes (e.g., memos, e-mails, notes)</td>
<td>Compare and evaluate the performance against criteria (e.g., rubrics)</td>
<td>Justify or define ideas and opinions</td>
<td>Explan, with details, phenomena, processes, procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images Retrieved August 11, 2020 from: https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors