BRIDGES

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Introduction

This report was drafted using the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's High-Quality Next Generation ESL Instructional Materials (HQIM-NGESL) review process and rubric. The whole review process and rubric supports evaluation of:

- Whether materials provide a full year's worth of dedicated ESL instruction, as determined by the review panel and given the Massachusetts definition of ESL,
- Whether ESL instructional materials are aligned to the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition (henceforth known as the ELD Framework) – and integrated with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, as determined by the review panel, and
- Quality of ESL instructional materials, as interpreted through the HQIM-NGESL rubric.

The full report features a summary of the results of a panel review of the materials. The review of the materials was done during the 2024-2026 convening of the HQIM-NGESL panel. The panel was comprised of Massachusetts district leaders, classroom educators, and representatives from higher education institutions. It is important to note that the report only summarizes the analysis of the Quality of the ESL instructional materials as interpreted through the HQIM-NGESL rubric. It does not guarantee the quality, scope, or thoroughness of the reviewed materials. It also does not endorse the use of the specific materials reviewed, but simply provides a summary of the information shared by the reviewing panel.

The HQIM-NGESL rubric is divided into two sections. Section A focuses on curricular structure and the coherence of the instructional materials for supporting a trajectory of learning for the year. Section B focuses on whether materials are student-centered and the intentional design of the materials for supporting multilingual learners. Each report:

- Opens with a brief description of the materials that is provided by the publisher or the district that submitted the materials for review,
- Includes a quick reference graphic of the ratings for each of the rubric criteria and a summary of the review of the materials, as described by the review panel, and
- Contains overall-level ratings for each of the rubric criteria, as determined by the review panel, and accompanied by descriptive strengths and challenges, and
- Information from the publisher, such as product specifications.

As you review the report, be sure to consider the following:

- The criteria in the rubric represent selected desired aspects of high quality in ESL materials. While comprehensive and useful for selecting, creating, and improving the quality of ESL instructional materials, the rubric is not, nor can it be, exhaustive. There may be additional criteria your evaluation team determines important to add, based on local needs, EL data, backgrounds, and educator

needs. Data may inform your creation of additional criteria and indicators in the evidence gathering process.

- The report can help teams determine whether they should adopt the ESL Instructional Materials, adopt the ESL Instructional Materials with supplemental guidance and materials to address gaps in quality, adopt materials and create a local plan to address gaps in quality, or to not adopt. HQIM-NGESL reports are only one component of a robust and transparent process to investigate and select high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for your localized context. Explore our IMplement MA website to learn more about DESE's inclusive four-phase process, resources, and opportunities to support strong selection of high-quality instructional materials that is grounded in a shared vision, informed by localized equity priorities, and supported by diverse stakeholders.

The Overall Bottom Line

Section A: Curricular Structure
Alignment to MA Definition of ESL – 3
Curricular Map – 3
Unit Language Goals – 4
Lesson Objectives – 4
Assessment – 4
Functional Approach – 3
Shared Responsibility – 4

Section B – Student-centered Instructional Materials
Asset-based Orientation – 4
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Critical Stance – 4
Oral Language Development – 4
Formative Assessment – 4
Scaffolds and Supports – 4
Universal Design and Accessibility - 3

4: Evidence is clear and comprehensive; clear connection to four indicators
3: Evidence is present; clear connection to three indicators
2: Evidence is present but insufficient; clear connection to two indicators
0: Evidence is not sufficiently present; connection to one or fewer indicators

Summary of the Bottom Line
The Bridges materials demonstrate substantial strengths in asset-based orientation, linguistically responsive practices, assessment systems, and formative evaluation. The program takes an asset-based orientation, actively incorporating students' diverse backgrounds through authentic activities like "What is your name story?" speaking assessments and encouraging students to share cultural resources in lessons. The curriculum's linguistically responsive approach is particularly strong, systematically supporting translanguaging through features like the Foundational Math Vocabulary Note Catcher that includes space for home language definitions and explicit protocols that encourage students to "respond in English, their native language, or a combination of both."

Assessment systems represent another strength in the materials, offering comprehensive evaluation tools including Beginning-of-Year, formative, performance, and End-of-Year assessments across multiple modalities. The materials integrate content and language objectives throughout lessons, with clear examples like Lesson 12's content objective to "Ask and answer questions" paired with specific language targets such as "Ask 'wh' questions" and "Use 'am', 'is' and 'are' to answer questions."

The program also promotes critical thinking through community-focused performance tasks, asking students to identify and propose solutions to local problems.

Educators using the materials may need to strengthen the alignment to grade level standards, especially for students in grades 9-10, to ensure that students are building towards the driving language demands inherent in the standards. Additionally, districts implementing these materials may need to provide professional development and systematic guidance for shared responsibility among educators, Additionally, while scaffolding is comprehensive, educators may benefit from additional guidance on gradually removing supports to promote student independence and on supporting English learners with disabilities.

The Next Generation ESL Curriculum Review Rubric

Section A: Curricular Structure

Alignment to Massachusetts Definition of ESL – 3
Materials demonstrate clear alignment with the Massachusetts definition of ESL, integrating language development with grade-level content and the ELD Framework

Strengths: The instructional materials demonstrate strong alignment with the Massachusetts definition of ESL through its comprehensive approach to simultaneous language and content development. The materials create rich, contextualized, and meaningful circumstances through thematic units such as "identity" and engaging lessons like the hijab emoji discussion. The Foundational Math unit on rounding relates directly to job salaries, providing real-world relevance. Both the Teacher Planning Guides and the Performance Assessments (for example Unit 3 Performance Assessment Overview) show clear attention to language development for academic, social, and instructional purposes. The instructional materials effectively position English language development within grade-level disciplinary learning by incorporating content standards and ELD Framework components, including Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, and Proficiency Level Descriptors.

Challenges: While the materials demonstrate alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL, the panel noted that alignment to grade-level standards was not as consistently present. Educators using these materials may need to augment the alignment of the materials to the standards to ensure that the materials provide opportunities for students (including Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) and newcomers with consistent prior schooling) to engage with grade-level disciplinary specific language.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strong foundational alignment with the Massachusetts definition of ESL through its integrated approach to language and content development, though educators using these materials could strengthen the alignment to grade-level standards more consistently across all units to fully meet the needs of students and to ensure that they gain portable language that can be transferred into a range of contexts.

Curricular Map – 3
Materials Provide a clear, year-long curricular map that demonstrates a coherent progression of language development aligned with grade-level content.

Strengths: The instructional materials provide clear evidence of spiraling instruction that coherently deepens knowledge and skills over time. The Teacher Planning Guides for Units 1-3 demonstrate a thoughtful progression, with conceptual knowledge building from "Our communities are a part of our identity" in Unit 1 to "If I share my ideas with my community, we can take action together" in Unit 3. Performance assessments reinforce this spiraling approach, and the curriculum includes benchmark assessments. For example, benchmark assessments for language for math (lesson 1 pre-assessment, lesson 29 post-assessment) and ELA/ELD (performance assessments, checklists, rubrics). The lesson outcomes clearly lead to unit outcomes and build toward annual benchmarks, showing strong structural coherence.

Challenges: The panel noted that while the units incorporate interdisciplinary elements such as "I am poem, climate narrative, food in my life," they do not fully target the grade-level disciplinary-specific language inherent in all of the WIDA ELD Standards. Additionally, the panel noted that based on the materials reviewed, there was inconsistent evidence of grade-level alignment, particularly for SLIFE students in grades 9 and 10.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in structural organization with effective spiraling instruction and clear assessment systems, though educators using these materials could strengthen comprehensive coverage of all WIDA ELD Standards and maintain consistent grade-level rigor throughout all units.

Unit Language Goals – 4
Materials present clearly defined unit-level language goals that integrate content standards with language development, providing a coherent focus of instruction over several weeks.

Strengths: The instructional materials present clearly defined unit-level language goals that effectively integrate content topics and themes with language development. The Curriculum Map clearly identifies language targets that drive instruction. The Unit 1 Overview demonstrates strong alignment with CCSS/MA ELA and WIDA standards with attention to ELP as well as across language domains. The Review Panel Reflection document provides compelling evidence of alignment to the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, specifically referencing Standards 1 (grades 4-12) and Standards 2, 4, and 5 (grades 6-8). The framework thoughtfully progresses from Unit 1's focus on Standard 2 and ELA functions to Units 2 and 3, which require students to engage with Standards 4 and 5 for science and social studies topics related to global and local communities.

Challenges: No significant challenges were identified for this criterion.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in unit language goals, with comprehensive evidence of well-defined, content-aligned objectives that provide coherent instructional focus over appropriate timeframes.

Lesson Objectives – 4
Materials provide clear, actionable lesson-level language objectives that directly support progress toward unit language goals and can be reasonably accomplished within a single lesson.

Strengths: The instructional materials provide clear, actionable lesson-level language objectives that directly support progress toward unit language goals. All ELD/ELA lessons include both content and language objectives, as demonstrated in sample lessons. The Foundational Math Objectives and Standards document outlines the content connections, objectives, student "I can" statements, and language objectives. The objectives are appropriately scoped for daily lessons, such as Lesson 1's content objective to "Introduce yourself" paired with language objectives to "Use gestures and greetings" and "Say each other's names." Lesson 12 shows progression with content objective "Ask and answer questions" and language objectives including "Ask 'wh' questions," "Use 'am', 'is' and 'are' to answer questions," and "Use words that tell whose."

Challenges: The panel noted that clear evidence of making lesson objectives visible to students was not consistently present. Educators using these materials may need to make learning goals more transparent to students.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in providing well-crafted and appropriately aligned lesson objectives, though educators using these materials could strengthen their practice by ensuring these objectives are more explicitly visible and accessible to students during instruction.

Assessment – 4
Materials include an assessment system that provides multiple opportunities to measure language growth, aligns with curriculum goals and standards, and informs long-term instructional planning.

Strengths: The assessment framework represents a particular strength of the Bridges materials, offering a comprehensive system with multiple assessment types and frequencies. The Assessment Overview Document lists a complete range including Beginning-of-Year (BOY), Unit Pre-Assessment, Unit Formative Assessments, Unit Post-Assessment, Unit Performance Assessment, and End-of-Year (EOY) assessments. The materials provide assessments across multiple modalities, including writing and speaking assessments that require both written and recorded oral responses. The Bridges Assessment Scoring and Data Tracking Tool addresses writing, listening, and speaking domains. Performance assessments are clearly outlined for each unit, and comprehensive pre- and post-assessments are provided, such as the Foundational Math Unit 1 assessments spanning from Lesson 1 to Lesson 29.

Challenges: No significant challenges were identified for this criterion.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in providing a well-developed assessment system with multiple opportunities to measure language growth across various modalities and frequencies, making assessment a strong feature of the curriculum.

Functional Approach – 3
Materials implement a purpose-driven approach to language development that explicitly links language forms and functions to communicative goals across academic disciplines.

Strengths: The instructional materials demonstrate a solid functional approach by explicitly connecting language forms and functions to communicative goals across academic disciplines. Teacher Planning Guides for Units 1-3 emphasize how language is used to achieve specific purposes in different contexts through their language foci. Lesson 32-Unit 3 provides strong evidence with its Argumentative Writing Graphic Organizer, slides, and Teacher Note-taking Chart that help students understand argumentative writing conventions. The Metalinguistic Awareness Guide supports students in analyzing how language resources communicate meaning for different purposes. The curriculum aligns with the Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners, integrating foundational literacy skills while maintaining focus on learning language and literacy for meaningful content engagement.

Challenges: The panel noted that at times the units and lessons lacked sufficient emphasis on academic writing, representing a missed opportunity for functional language development. The panel also noted that the materials may not consistently align to grade-level content standards, especially for students in grades 9-10, which may limit opportunities for students to fully implement language for specific purposes within grade-level disciplinary contexts.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in functional language principles and include supportive materials, though the materials could be strengthened by improving alignment to grade-level academic content standards, so educators using these materials may need to supplement with additional grade-level content to ensure consistent implementation of the functional approach, particularly for students in grades 9-10**.**

Shared Responsibility – 4
Materials promote shared expertise, responsibility, and accountability for students in the program.

Strengths: The Bridges materials demonstrate a strong and comprehensive commitment to shared responsibility by embedding structures, tools, and professional learning systems that promote collaboration among ESL educators, content-area teachers, instructional coaches, and district leaders. The materials provide explicit guidance and systems for co-planning, shared data analysis, and collaborative instructional decision-making. Evidence from the "District Shared Responsibilities – Bridges Newcomer Program" document highlights action steps such as norming on Bridges rubrics for speaking and writing, integrating Bridges curriculum protocols and WIDA rubrics into other content area classes, and utilizing curriculum-embedded assessments as part of student portfolios. The materials also include professional learning modules and office hours where coaches offer guidance on different ways to administer and record the assessments based on available tools and educator's comfort levels. These structures support collaborative assessment calibration and shared instructional practices across disciplines. Additionally, the materials provide a detailed data collection spreadsheet that gathers home language literacy level, curriculum embedded assessment scores, ACCESS and WIDA screener scores, and attendance, which can easily be shared with content area teachers to support collaborative planning. Shared drives and portfolio systems further support systematic communication among educators by organizing student work samples and language-development evidence in ways that can inform instructional planning across settings. The Bridges Newcomer Program Guidebook also provides explicit protocols and instructional strategies—such as Four Corners, time partners, and language frames—that can be implemented consistently across content classrooms, reinforcing a schoolwide approach to multilingual learner support.

Challenges: Although the materials strongly promote collaboration and shared accountability, much of this strength appears to stem from the broader Bridges implementation partnership and accompanying professional development model rather than from the instructional materials alone. Reviewers noted that the strong collaborative practices and shared responsibilities seemed to be integrated directly into the professional development and partnership between Bridges and the District, suggesting that successful implementation may involve coaching structures and district-level commitment. Questions were raised regarding sustainability after the initial partnership period, specifically whether districts would continue to receive sufficient support to maintain co-planning, co-assessment, and collaboration systems independently. Additionally, while the curriculum includes robust protocols for collaboration and data-sharing, many of these systems rely on leadership structures, protected collaboration time, and ongoing coaching support. The review also noted that

the implementation calls for school and district leaders to establish the conditions necessary for collaboration, including scheduling, norming practices, and systems for portfolio review.

Bottom Line: The Bridges materials demonstrate alignment to the shared responsibility criterion by providing comprehensive systems for collaboration, data-sharing, co-planning, and progress monitoring among ESL educators, content teachers, coaches, and school leaders. Its greatest strength lies in the integration of professional learning communities, collaborative assessment practices, shared student portfolios, and districtwide implementation supports that create a systemic approach to multilingual learner success. However, the effectiveness of these collaborative structures are grounded in the accompanying professional development partnership, leadership capacity, and district commitment to sustained implementation. Overall, Bridges offers a highly robust model for shared responsibility, particularly when implemented with strong organizational support and ongoing professional learning structures.

Section B: Student-Centered Instructional Materials

Asset-based Orientation – 4
Materials consistently promote an asset-based approach, actively incorporating and building upon students' diverse backgrounds, languages, cultures, experiences, knowledge, and interests to enhance language development and content learning.

Strengths: The instructional materials demonstrate exceptional commitment to an asset-based approach, actively incorporating and building upon students' diverse backgrounds, languages, cultures, and experiences. The materials include linguistically and culturally sustaining resources, with the Main Texts document showing authentic representation of students' diverse cultures and perspectives. Speaking assessment prompts such as "What is your name story?" actively encourage students to share their cultural and personal assets. Lesson 17 provides clear examples of incorporating students' diverse cultural, linguistic, communal, and social-emotional resources into learning activities. The materials feature a dedicated SEL unit covering "checking in, glow and grow, teamwork, perspectives, overcoming obstacles, respect." Essential questions like "What is my identity?" and performance tasks such as the Math Autobiography and Farm Project encourage students to bring their lived experiences into academic learning.

Challenges: No significant challenges were identified for this criterion.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in asset-based orientation, with comprehensive and authentic integration of students' diverse resources throughout learning activities and assessments.

Linguistically Responsive – 4
Materials consistently promote linguistically responsive practices, actively supporting the use of students' full linguistic resources while facilitating English language development across all domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

Strengths: The materials excel in linguistically responsive practices by actively supporting students' use of their full linguistic repertoires. Lessons explicitly encourage students to respond in English, their native language, or a combination of both. The Foundational Math Vocabulary Note Catcher includes space for home language definitions, directly supporting translanguaging. The Bridges-Math Introductory Guide emphasizes translanguaging as a core strategy, while the ELA-ELD Newcomer Introductory Guide provides detailed explanation of translanguaging as "when a multilingual person fluidly uses all of their languages/linguistic repertoire to understand and communicate about a concept." The "Translate the Essential Question" protocol is embedded as part of the Bridges Instructional Protocols. The Metalinguistic Awareness Guide provides activities that help students understand how languages work, developing their analytical understanding of language structures and functions.

Challenges: No significant challenges were identified for this criterion.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in linguistically responsive instruction, with systematic integration of translanguaging strategies and metalinguistic awareness activities that honor and build upon students' full linguistic repertoires.

Critical Stance – 4
Materials consistently foster a critical stance, encouraging students to use language as a tool for inquiry, analysis, and action on issues relevant to their lives and communities.

Strengths: The Bridges materials consistently foster a critical stance by encouraging students to use language as a tool for inquiry, analysis, and action on issues relevant to their lives and communities. Speaking assessments include powerful prompts such as "What is a problem in your community? Why is it a problem?" and "Think about a problem in our community. What is the best solution for this problem?" The Unit 3 Performance Assessment Overview explicitly states: "How can I share solutions with my community? Solving complex problems in our community requires research... Through evidence, we can argue for solutions... it is through argument that we can share viable solutions to influence the choices of people in our community." Assessment guidelines include identity-affirming prompts like "What is your name story?" that support students in communicating personal needs and affirming their identities. The materials encourage student inquiry, problem-posing, and communication about issues from multiple perspectives.

Challenges: While the materials show strong evidence for supporting student communication about identity, community problems, and solutions, the panel noted that there is limited clear connection to supporting students in generating their own themes, performance tasks, or assessments.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in promoting critical thinking and community engagement through language, though educators using these materials might strengthen opportunities for student-generated themes and increased learner autonomy in project development.

Oral Language Development – 4
Materials provide daily, structured opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful oral interactions that develop listening and speaking skills for social and academic purposes.

Strengths: The instructional materials provide comprehensive daily opportunities for meaningful oral interactions that develop listening and speaking skills for both social and academic purposes. Writing and Speaking Assessments include both written and recorded oral responses, while the BOY-EOY Assessment incorporates multiple opportunities for oral language development. The Bridge Assessment Guidelines Document includes numerous examples of assessments promoting oral language development across various contexts. The Bridges Instructional Protocols offer multiple strategies specifically designed to promote oral interaction, including "Let's Talk" and "Stand up, Hand up, Pair up" activities. These protocols provide structured opportunities for daily dialogue, discussion, and substantial interactions with peers and adults around essential questions and compelling topics.

Challenges: While evidence of oral language development opportunities is present throughout the materials, the panel noted that educators may need to strengthen the materials to ensure the sustained nature of instructional conversations and to ensure alignment to grade-level topics and themes (especially for students in grades 9-10) in order to foster truly substantial peer and adult interactions at the grade level. The materials show good scaffolding but could benefit from more opportunities to gradually remove supports to increase independence in oral communication.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in oral language development through systematic protocols and assessment opportunities, though educators using these materials could strengthen the depth and sustainability of academic conversations while providing clearer pathways to independence.

Formative Assessment - 4
Materials integrate formative assessment practices throughout instruction, providing tools and strategies for teachers and students to monitor learning, adjust teaching, and support language growth in real time.

Strengths: The instructional materials integrate comprehensive formative assessment practices throughout instruction with clear tools and strategies for monitoring learning and adjusting teaching. Each lesson systematically begins with a warm-up and concludes with an exit ticket and "glow and grow" reflection, providing consistent opportunities for teachers to assess student understanding. The Bridges Instructional Protocols document outlines a variety of formative assessment techniques addressing different language domains and proficiency levels. The Newcomer Introductory Guide explicitly states that "Assessment should be ongoing and regular" and references the use of checklists and rubrics as formative assessment tools. The Bridges Assessment Guidelines emphasize providing opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their learning through checklists organized by language domain, promoting learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness.

Challenges: No significant challenges were identified for this criterion.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in formative assessment with systematic, varied, and ongoing assessment practices that support both teacher decision-making and student self-reflection.

Scaffolds and Supports – 4
Materials provide a range of scaffolding strategies and supports that assist students in accessing grade-level content and developing language, with guidance on how to gradually remove supports as students gain proficiency.

Strengths: The curriculum provides an extensive range of scaffolding strategies and supports that assist students in accessing grade-level content while developing language skills. Teacher Planning Guides include multiple scaffolds such as sentence frames and glossaries integrated throughout lessons. The Bridges Instructional Protocols offer comprehensive guidance on various scaffolding techniques that teachers can implement in daily instruction. The materials include linguistic and content scaffolds such as word banks, strategic groupings, graphic organizers, models, and visual aids that are responsive to student strengths and needs. The scaffolding suggestions are built into lessons and focus on helping students make manageable progress toward intended goals and objectives, incorporating techniques that support higher-order thinking skills rather than simply task simplification.

Challenges: The panel noted inconsistent evidence of guidance on the gradual removal of scaffolds as students gain proficiency. While the materials provide extensive scaffolding in introductory units, it's unclear how supports are systematically reduced to promote student independence as they progress through the program. Districts using these materials may need to provide additional professional development on how scaffolding evolves with increasing rigor and student readiness, especially as students transfer their learning to a range of contexts such as math.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in providing comprehensive and well-integrated scaffolds and supports, though the materials could be strengthened by clearer guidance on the systematic reduction of supports to promote student independence, so educators using these materials may need additional guidance on scaffold removal as students progress.

Universal Design and Accessibility – 3
Materials provide varied means for accessing the content and demonstrating learning, helping teachers meet the diverse needs and abilities of a variety of students, including those with different abilities and those working above or below grade level.

Strengths: The materials provide multiple means for accessing content and demonstrating learning to meet diverse student needs and abilities. Lesson slides include various digital supports such as highlighting and recordings that can support students with different learning needs. The Bridges Assessment Guidelines show that assessments incorporate supports like graphic organizers, pictures, and graphics to support language production. Projects offer multiple means of assessment including both writing and speaking components, and performance tasks like the Unit 3 Performance Assessment Overview and Farm Project allow students to make decisions about how they express their ideas. The materials provide multimodal opportunities for engagement, communication, and learning demonstration.

Challenges: The panel noted a lack of evidence of specific and explicit guidance for supporting English learners with disabilities, particularly regarding IEP considerations. While the materials include many strategies that could benefit students with disabilities, there are no direct prompts or specific guidance for supporting students with disabilities. The materials could strengthen their inclusive design by more explicitly addressing the intersection of language learning and disability support needs, providing clearer guidance for educators working with students who have both language learning and disability support requirements.

Bottom Line: The materials demonstrate strength in providing universal design elements with multiple means of representation and expression, though the materials could be strengthened by more explicit guidance for supporting English learners with disabilities, so educators using these materials may need additional explicit guidance for supporting English learners with disabilities.