National Geographic: Impact

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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 2025-2026 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 – 2
Lesson Objectives – 3
Assessment – 3
Functional Approach – 3
Shared Responsibility – 1

Section B – Student-centered Instructional Materials
Asset-based Orientation – 3
Linguistically Responsive – 1
Critical Stance – 4
Oral Language Development – 3
Formative Assessment – 2
Scaffolds and Supports – 3
Universal Design and Accessibility - 2

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 Impact materials present a highly engaging and student-centered approach to ESL instruction, particularly for middle school learners. Across multiple domains, the materials demonstrate strong integration of thematic learning, authentic communication, oral language practice, and critical thinking opportunities. Students are consistently encouraged to engage in meaningful discussions, collaborative projects, and real-world problem solving that promote language development in relevant and motivating contexts. The materials also reflect strengths in formative and summative assessment practices, multimodal learning opportunities, scaffolding strategies, and culturally responsive themes that support student engagement and identity development. The materials also foster inquiry, creativity, communication, and student agency through project-based learning and discussion-rich instruction.

At the same time, the review identified several areas that districts, schools, and educators may need to enhance or supplement to ensure successful implementation as a core ESL curriculum aligned to Massachusetts expectations. Most notably, explicit alignment to Massachusetts ESL standards, WIDA ELD standards, grade-level disciplinary content, and Key Language Uses are inconsistent or difficult to identify

throughout the materials. The materials also provide limited support for multilingualism, translanguaging practices, and the use of students' home languages as instructional assets. In addition, reviewers found limited evidence of collaborative structures for ESL and content-area educators, accessibility supports for students with disabilities, and guidance for teachers on interpreting assessment data and strategically differentiating instruction.

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 materials demonstrate several strong connections to the Massachusetts definition of ESL by integrating language development with meaningful content and contextualized learning experiences. Impact embeds academic and social language development throughout thematic, age-appropriate units connected to middle school content. Evidence from the Lesson Planner Level 2 highlights clear connections to missions, sustainability goals, real life connections, genre connection, connections to speaking, reading, writing, grammar and includes both language and content objectives within each unit. Students engage in Academic Writing projects and collaborative discussions that incorporate Key Language Uses (KLUs), such as explaining ideas during group discussions in the “Exploring the Sea” activity. The materials also provide opportunities for student choice, allowing students to connect learning to issues and topics that matter to them, which supports authentic language development in meaningful contexts.

Challenges: While the materials develop language within disciplinary specific content topics and themes, explicit alignment to grade-level standards and WIDA expectations is inconsistent and at times difficult to identify. Reviewers found limited evidence of direct connections to content standards and practices. The curriculum is aligned primarily to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages rather than Massachusetts standards or WIDA standards, potentially requiring significant district-level adaptation. KLUs are embedded but not explicitly stated and therefore educators using the materials may need to clearly articulate language expectations. Reviewers also found limited evidence of integration of language for math and noted that the intended grade-level alignment was unclear.

Bottom Line: The materials provide rich, thematic language-learning experiences that effectively integrate academic and social language development, especially for middle school learners. However, educators using these materials may need to supplement the units and lessons to ensure alignment to the Massachusetts standards, WIDA expectations, and grade-level disciplinary content.

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 include a coherent year-long structure with pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, and unit overviews that demonstrate progression of language skills over time. Evidence from the pacing guides and “In This Unit” sections shows that vocabulary, grammar, speaking, reading, and writing goals are sequenced intentionally across units. Reviewers noted that the language functions do spiral somewhat through various domains throughout the units, such as compare-and-contrast moving from speaking goals in one unit to writing goals in another. The curricular map also includes timely pacing guides and clear thematic organization, helping teachers understand unit progression and instructional focus.

Challenges: Despite the overall structure, at times, the materials do not clearly articulate the relationship between lesson outcomes, unit outcomes, and annual benchmarks. Reviewers observed that lesson outcomes and unit outcomes are at times the same and not distinct, making it difficult to see coherent growth across time. The curriculum also lacks clear evidence of alignment to all WIDA ELD Standards, particularly Language for Mathematics. Additionally, reviewers struggled to determine specific grade-level alignment, which potentially limits clarity around grade-level expectations.

Bottom Line: The curriculum offers a well-organized sequence of thematic units and pacing supports that promote gradual language development across domains. However, educators using these materials may need to craft clearer differentiation between lesson and unit goals, stronger alignment to WIDA standards, and more explicit grade-level expectations to strengthen the curricular coherence.

Unit Language Goals – 2
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 provide identifiable content and language objectives throughout the units, helping establish instructional focus over multiple weeks. Reviewers noted that language goals are introduced at the beginning of each unit and all subsequent activities relate to the language goals while student growth is measured. Scope and sequence documents outline goals for different language domains, and writing projects include specific genre focuses that connect to unit themes. Videos at the beginning of each unit also help introduce themes and discussion goals in accessible ways.

Challenges: Although language objectives are present, reviewers consistently noted that unit-level language goals are not clearly or explicitly articulated. The curriculum often lists objectives without framing them as overarching language goals aligned to WIDA Key Language Uses. Reviewers noted that educators may need to explicitly articulate the unit-level language goals and that the criteria for language expectations" were missing from many of the units. In many cases, objectives connect to themes rather than content standards, and distinctions between lesson objectives and broader unit goals are unclear at times.

Bottom Line: The instructional materials include thematic and language-focused objectives throughout the units, but schools and districts using these materials may need to clearly articulate the unit-level language goals and explicit WIDA alignment to ensure instructional coherence across classrooms.

Lesson Objectives – 3
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: Lesson-level objectives are embedded throughout the teacher materials and generally support unit-level learning. The Teacher Lesson Planner includes "Language/Learning objectives" for all lessons, targeted vocabulary, and "Wrap Up" activities that revisit lesson objectives and support student reflection. Students also engage in self-assessment through "Now I Can" sections and peer feedback opportunities. Writing lessons and culminating projects reinforce genre-specific language use and provide opportunities for students to apply learning across language domains.

Challenges: Lesson objectives are primarily found in teacher materials and are not consistently visible within student-facing resources. Reviewers also noted that some objectives describe tasks rather than measurable outcomes, making assessment of mastery less clear. Additionally, because unit goals are not always explicitly language-based, it can be difficult to see how individual lessons contribute to broader language development. The panelists also noted that teachers are not consistently prompted to revisit objectives with students throughout instruction.

Bottom Line: The curriculum provides lesson objectives within teacher resources and includes opportunities for reflection and self-assessment. However, educators using these materials may need to ensure stronger visibility for students and clearer alignment between lesson objectives and broader language outcomes for instructional clarity and coherence.

Assessment – 3
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 instructional materials include a robust and varied assessment system with diagnostic, interim, summative, and project-based assessments across multiple language domains. Evidence includes placement tests, Gains tests, unit tests, writing rubrics, project assessments, and “Assessment for Learning” checkpoints. Reviewers highlighted that assessments measure speaking, listening, reading and writing and that students can demonstrate learning through a variety of formats, including projects and performance tasks. Guidance documents for administering placement and Gains tests further support long-term instructional planning.

Challenges: Although speaking opportunities are embedded throughout lessons, reviewers found fewer formal mechanisms for assessing oral language growth. The materials include many collaborative speaking activities, but these are not consistently connected to assessment structures. Reviewers also identified missed opportunities for students to record and self-assess oral language production. While assessments are varied, explicit guidance for interpreting assessment results and adjusting instruction is somewhat limited.

Bottom Line: The curriculum provides a comprehensive assessment system with measures across language domains and multiple assessment formats. However, schools and districts may need to provide additional professional development and guidance on oral language assessment practices and on using assessment data to better support ongoing language growth.

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 materials emphasize purposeful language use in authentic contexts. Grammar, vocabulary, and writing lessons are connected to communicative purposes and thematic content. Reviewers noted that at times the materials explore the 'why' behind language instruction and incorporate instruction across word, sentence, and discourse dimensions. Writing lessons explicitly teach genres and purposes for communication, while vocabulary instruction explores nuanced language use in context. Students engage with a range of themes, such as self-expression through clothing and music, that help connect language choices to communicative goals.

Challenges: Despite these strengths, opportunities for deeper analysis of mentor texts and disciplinary language patterns are somewhat limited. Reviewers found insufficient evidence of opportunities for students to analyze how language works across genres and contexts. Mathematics connections were also largely absent. While the curriculum addresses discourse, sentence, and word-level instruction, reviewers noted that these dimensions were not always explicitly connected or consistently scaffolded for teachers.

Bottom Line: The instructional materials connect language instruction to meaningful communicative purposes and provide explicit instruction across multiple language dimensions. However, educators may need to provide opportunities for deeper disciplinary analysis and stronger support for mentor-text study to strengthen the functional approach to language development within the materials.

Shared Responsibility – 1
Materials promote shared expertise, responsibility, and accountability for students in the program.

Strengths: The panel noted that the materials provide some professional development resources, classroom observation tools, and assessment systems that could support collaborative practices among educators. Teacher resources include professional development videos and observational tools that may facilitate instructional reflection and consistency.

Challenges: Reviewers found very limited evidence of structures that explicitly promote collaboration between ESL teachers and content-area educators. The panelists did not find evidence in the materials of guidance for co-planning, analyzing student work collaboratively, or integrating language and content expertise across teaching teams. Although resources exist for teachers individually, there is little indication of a systematic approach to collaborative instructional planning or shared accountability for multilingual learners.

Bottom Line: While the materials include useful teacher resources and professional learning tools, it lacks explicit structures and guidance to support meaningful collaboration between ESL and content-area educators.

Section B: Student-Centered Instructional Materials

Asset-based Orientation – 3
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 incorporate diverse cultural perspectives and provide many opportunities for student choice and identity expression. Students engage in activities that connect learning to personal experiences, such as discussing holidays from their home countries or creating culturally relevant projects. Reviewers highlighted that the curriculum includes a variety of different cultures and components of them demonstrated and explored and noted strong opportunities for student autonomy and discussion. Projects and collaborative activities allow students to connect learning to their own backgrounds and experiences.

Challenges: Although cultural representation is present in the materials, opportunities to leverage students' linguistic resources are limited. Reviewers repeatedly noted the absence of multilingualism and translanguaging practices. While students are encouraged to share experiences and opinions, there are few explicit opportunities to use home languages or develop multilingual identities within instruction. Additionally, there is limited guidance for teachers on gathering and integrating students' funds of knowledge into instructional planning.

Bottom Line: The curriculum incorporates diverse cultures and student choice, promoting engagement and identity development. However, schools and districts using these materials may need to provide additional professional development and guidance on leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires and supporting multilingualism as an instructional asset.

Linguistically Responsive – 1
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 instructional materials include explicit instruction in vocabulary, grammar, and writing that could support metalinguistic awareness. Students analyze language structures, syntax, and genres, helping them understand how English works across contexts. Writing and grammar sections provide clear explanations about when and how to use language forms appropriately.

Challenges: The panelists noted that the instructional materials provide little evidence of translanguaging, home-language support, or cross-linguistic connections. Reviewers noted that the materials did not encourage students to use their home languages in activities or lessons. Additionally, teachers are not guided to support home-language development alongside English acquisition, and explicit instruction about language transfer between languages is absent.

Bottom Line: The instructional materials support English language awareness through explicit language instruction, but the panelists noted that opportunities to meaningfully leverage students' home languages or multilingual resources to support language development are inconsistent.

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 instructional materials support inquiry, critical thinking, and student agency. “Make an Impact” projects encourage students to investigate real-world issues such as environmental sustainability, social awareness, and global challenges. Students engage in discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and projects requiring them to take positions on important topics. Reviewers highlighted strong emphasis on the “4Cs” (creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration), as well as life skills like self-awareness and responsible decision-making.

Challenges: Reviewers identified very few challenges in this area.

Bottom Line: The curriculum provides opportunities for fostering inquiry, agency, critical thinking, and student engagement with real-world issues.

Oral Language Development – 3
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 embed opportunities for oral interaction through pair work, small-group discussions, speaking sections, and essential-question discussions. Each unit includes specific speaking objectives, sentence frames, and oral discussion activities connected to reading and writing tasks. Students frequently exchange ideas, defend opinions, and participate in collaborative dialogue throughout lessons.

Challenges: Although oral interaction opportunities are frequent, reviewers noted inconsistent support for sustained academic conversations and limited use of structured discourse supports such as conversation stems. There was also no evidence of translanguaging or encouragement for students to use their full linguistic repertoires during discussions.

Bottom Line: The materials provide daily opportunities for oral interaction and speaking practice, but educators using these materials may need to provide more consistent supports for sustained academic discourse and multilingual participation to strengthen oral language development.

Formative Assessment - 2
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 embed many opportunities for formative assessment through partner discussions, writing tasks, “Assessment for Learning” checkpoints, “Now I Can” self-assessments, and project rubrics. Educators can gather evidence of student understanding through group work, charts, reading comprehension checks, and collaborative activities. Differentiation supports and teacher tips are also embedded within lessons.

Challenges: Despite frequent opportunities for monitoring learning, the materials provide limited explicit guidance for interpreting student performance and adjusting instruction. Reviewers noted that peer assessment and structured feedback systems were not consistently visible. Opportunities for speaking assessment and actionable teacher feedback were also inconsistent or minimally present.

Bottom Line: The curriculum includes many embedded formative assessment opportunities, but districts and schools using these materials may need to provide clearer guidance for feedback, interpretation, and instructional adjustment to maximize their effectiveness.

Scaffolds and Supports – 3
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 instructional materials include a wide range of scaffolds such as sentence frames, graphic organizers, visuals, repetition, modeled writing, differentiated activities, and strategic grouping suggestions. “Differentiate” sections appear throughout lessons, and scaffolds support grammar, writing, and comprehension tasks. Writing instruction is carefully modeled, gradually moving students toward independent production.

Challenges: While scaffolds are plentiful, reviewers found less evidence of guidance for gradually removing supports as students gain proficiency. Some differentiation suggestions were relatively basic and did not always reflect evidence-based instructional practices. Guidance for teachers on how to strategically scaffold learning was somewhat limited.

Bottom Line: The materials provide numerous scaffolds and supports that help students access language and content; however, districts and schools may need to provide professional development and guidance on fading supports and differentiating instruction strategically to strengthen implementation.

Universal Design and Accessibility – 2
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 instructional materials incorporate multimodal learning opportunities through videos, visuals, interactive eBooks, projects, audio supports, and digital tools. Students can demonstrate learning in multiple ways, and many activities provide opportunities for choice and multimodal expression. Teacher resources also include videos on multimodality and mixed-ability classrooms. Some digital accessibility features, such as closed captioning and speech-to-text, are available.

Challenges: Explicit supports for students with disabilities and students with IEPs were difficult to identify. Read-aloud supports and individualized accessibility guidance were limited or inconsistent.

Bottom Line: The materials incorporate several multimodal and flexible learning features that align with UDL principles, but explicit accessibility supports and guidance for students with disabilities were limited.