National Geographic: Pathways

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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
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Lesson Objectives – 3
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Section B – Student-centered Instructional Materials
Asset-based Orientation – 2
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Oral Language Development – 3
Formative Assessment – 3
Scaffolds and Supports – 4
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 Pathways materials demonstrate several strengths as a comprehensive ESL instructional program, particularly in its integration of language development within authentic, globally relevant content. The materials provide strong oral language development opportunities, robust scaffolding and supports, coherent curricular sequencing, and a well-developed functional approach to language instruction that connects vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and writing to meaningful communicative tasks. Across the materials reviewed, students engage with rich thematic units, authentic global issues, and multimodal learning experiences that support communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. The materials also reflect intentional instructional design through embedded formative assessment practices, structured speaking and writing tasks, and a wide range of visual, audio, and graphic supports that help make rigorous academic content accessible to multilingual learners.

At the same time, the review identified several areas that districts, schools, and educators using the materials may need to supplement or enhance in order to fully align the program with Massachusetts NGESL expectations and the WIDA ELD Framework. The materials demonstrate limited attention to linguistically responsive instruction,

shared responsibility between ESL and content educators, and supports for leveraging students' home languages and full linguistic repertoires as instructional assets. Additionally, guidance for supporting dually identified students and embedding accessibility accommodations may need enhancement. Overall, Pathways offers a strong foundation for language instruction through engaging content, oral language development, and scaffolded learning experiences; however, districts adopting the program may need to provide professional development, collaborative structures, and instructional supports to strengthen alignment to Massachusetts frameworks, linguistically responsive practices, and inclusive instructional implementation for multilingual learners.

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: Pathways demonstrates evidence of alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL, integrating language development with grade-level disciplinary content. For example, Level 1 teaches vocabulary (e.g., capture, ceremony, emotion, visual) within authentic content about photography and visual storytelling, while Level 4 embeds 15 content-specific vocabulary words within an environmental science reading on the Anthropocene- in both cases, language is not taught in isolation but tied to meaningful disciplinary specific contexts. The Teacher's Book confirms this is by design, describing the program as combining highly visual, real-world content with rigorous language instruction to develop academic skills. The reviewers also noted that the materials attend to academic and social/instructional language purposes. For example, Level 1 Critical Thinking activities prompt students to recognize cultural differences, addressing social and academic language simultaneously, while Level 4's program overview explicitly names academic language skills (reading, writing, critical thinking, vocabulary, grammar) alongside collaboration and communication.

Challenges: The panel noted that although there is evidence of alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL, this alignment is inconsistent among the levels. The panel noted that the Level 1 materials incorporate the ELD Framework elements more explicitly, while Level 4 lacks explicit reference to WIDA, the Massachusetts ELD Framework, Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, or Proficiency Level Descriptors in teacher-facing materials. While the materials highlight alignment to CEFR standards and 21st Century Skills, reviewers noted an inability to find grade-level or grade-level cluster designations anywhere in the materials. This lack of explicit grade-level framing hindered fully evaluating alignment to the Massachusetts definition, which requires language development positioned in service of grade-level disciplinary learning.

Bottom Line: Pathways demonstrates some alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL, with language and content developed simultaneously within rich, contextualized circumstances across both levels. However, the absence of explicit WIDA and Massachusetts ELD Framework references, particularly at Level 4, and the lack of clear grade-level designations impact full alignment to the definition of ESL in Massachusetts. Districts and schools adopting Pathways may need to provide supplementary guidance

and professional development to ensure alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL.

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: Pathways provides coherent, year-long curricular maps across 10 units, with evidence of spiraling instruction and a clear progression of language skills. Level 1's Table of Contents (pp. xviii-xxii) shows a thematic progression from personal and social topics in Units 1-2 through cultural, civic, and environmental themes in Units 3-10, with writing skills spiraling from sentence writing in Unit 1 through narrative, comparison, and opinion writing in Units 8-10. Level 4 shows a parallel architecture with explicit writing skill sequencing: essay organization (Unit 1), problem-solution essays (Unit 2), thesis support (Unit 3), paraphrasing (Unit 5), research writing (Unit 7), and essay review (Unit 10). Both of these levels also demonstrate a lesson-to-unit-to-annual-benchmark progression: Level 1 confirms that Final Tasks synthesize language, skills, and content, while Level 4's pacing guide provides flexibility for 30-90 hour courses with confirmed spiraling of vocabulary, grammar, and critical thinking skills across all units. Level 1 also demonstrates systematic attention to four of the five WIDA ELD Standards Statements across content areas, and the Foundational Level scope includes the same integration of the standards. Critical thinking skills present in each unit provide an additional connection to Key Language Uses.

Challenges: The panelists noted an absence of explicit development for the language for math. Reviewers noted that while connections to ELA, science, social studies, and other disciplines are present, language for mathematics is missing from the scope and sequence, leaving one of the five WIDA ELD Standards Statements unaddressed. Additionally, the panel noted inconsistencies in the level of WIDA ELD standards integration- noting, for example, that Level 4's scope and sequence does not explicitly identify Key Language Uses, Language Expectations by proficiency level, or WIDA Standards integration, potentially limiting its utility as a planning tool for Massachusetts ESL educators.

Bottom Line: Pathways provides a foundational curricular map with spiraling instruction, coherent unit sequencing, and evidence of lesson-to-benchmark progression at both levels. Educators using these materials may need to supplement in order to address the absence of language for math development and Level 4's absence of explicit WIDA and Massachusetts ELD Framework.

Unit Language Goals – 3
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: Pathways presents unit-level language goals that are generally identifiable, content-aligned, and appropriately scoped for multi-week instruction. In the Foundations Reading and Writing level, unit language goals appear at the beginning of each unit and students self-assess whether they met the goals by the end. Level 1 lists explicit language objectives at unit open (e.g., 'recognize word meanings from context,' 'evaluate using criteria,' 'identify relationships between ideas,' 'write an opinion paragraph'), and aligns goals to thematic content such as 'How We Communicate' while incorporating WIDA Framework elements (phrasal verbs as Language Expectations; explaining/presenting as a Key Language Use). Level 4's program overview confirms that objectives clearly list the goals of each section of the Student's Book, with the Table of Contents naming language goals (Reading Skills, Language for Writing, Writing Skills, Vocabulary Extension) for every unit. The Level 4 'Language for Writing' box frames every grammar point in terms of its communicative function within the unit's writing task, with vocabulary explicitly recycled across units.

Challenges: The panel noted inconsistency in the language goals and, in several cases, insufficient depth. Reviewers noted that some goals are vague (for example, 'use key vocabulary from this unit') while others read more as lesson-level grammar points than overarching unit language goals. Level 4 frames goals using programmatic language (CEFR, academic word lists) rather than ELD Framework language, and evidence of explicit connection to WIDA standards is absent. The panel also noted possible disconnects between stated goals and the cognitive demand of the activities and learning experiences, with goals that feel more like mini vocabulary or grammar objectives than substantive unit-level language goals that guide multi-week content-driven instruction. The inconsistency across proficiency levels, with Level 1 being notably stronger than Level 4, creates an uneven experience for educators trying to plan coherent instruction.

Bottom Line: Unit language goals are present and show evidence of content alignment, particularly at Level 1, but their clarity is inconsistent across levels. The panel noted a tendency for goals to function more as lesson-level grammar or vocabulary targets than true unit-level language goals. Educators using these materials may need to supplement Pathways with explicitly articulated unit-level language goals framed in Massachusetts ELD Framework language to ensure coherent, framework-aligned language instruction.

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 objectives in Pathways are generally clear, actionable, and appropriately scoped for daily instruction across both levels. Level 1 includes daily objectives such as 'Students will activate prior knowledge about the languages people use to communicate' and 'understand the meaning of academic and content words, use phrasal verbs.' Level 4's program overview confirms this is a program-wide design feature, stating that objectives clearly list the goals of each section and that formative assessment activities align directly to the objectives at the beginning of each section. The materials include mechanisms for monitoring and assessing progress toward daily objectives: Level 1's Wrap Up Formative Assessment sections prompt specific monitoring questions (e.g., 'Can students understand the main ideas and details?'). The end-of-lesson self-assessment features and review structures embedded in each lesson also provide evidence of student self-monitoring. Additionally, Level 4 includes formative assessment boxes appear in every lesson section.

Challenges: A notable inconsistency across levels undermines the overall rating for this criterion. In Level 1 Listening and Speaking and Reading and Writing units, a wrap-up section explicitly prompts teachers to ask whether students can independently transfer their learning, supporting Indicator 3 (making objectives visible and comprehensible to students). This feature is notably absent from Level 4, where the panel could not find evidence of explicit guidance for making objectives visible and comprehensible to students during instruction, and student-facing self-monitoring tools tied to daily objectives are absent from lesson sections. At times the reviewers noted difficulty locating lesson-level language objectives specifically, with some materials framing unit openings as lesson agendas ('In this unit you will... read this, watch this, then write this') rather than true language learning objectives.

Bottom Line: Lesson objectives are inconsistently present throughout the materials. While they are a relative strength at Level 1, where objectives are clear, actionable, and accompanied by monitoring tools and wrap-up self-assessment structures. Level 4 is weaker in this area, lacking explicit guidance for sharing objectives with students and missing lesson-embedded student self-monitoring tools. Schools and districts using these materials may need to provide additional professional development on making lesson objectives visible to students and on how to use the available objectives meaningfully within daily instruction.

Assessment – 2
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: Pathways includes a multi-layered assessment system with evidence of multiple assessment types and frequencies. Level 1 provides formative assessment (embedded exercises and Formative Assessment boxes), unit-level summative assessment (Review pages with self-assessment), and program-level assessments via the Spark platform (one test per unit, two review tests). Level 4's program overview confirms a parallel multi-level system including placement assessment (NGL Online Placement Test), formative assessment, summative assessment (Assessment Suite), and self-assessment (Self-Assess chart in every unit). The materials include assessments that enable students to demonstrate learning across multiple language modalities: Level 1 addresses listening (comprehension exercises), speaking (explanation and discussion tasks), reading (vocabulary in context, main ideas), and writing (sentence through paragraph production). The end-of-unit reading/writing and listening/speaking tasks provide meaningful opportunities for summative demonstration of learning. Each activity also includes a specific formative assessment checklist in the Teacher's Edition, prompting teachers with concrete questions to collect evidence of student learning.

Challenges: Reviewers were unable to locate diagnostic assessments or interim/quarterly assessments outside of unit-level tools. Writing rubrics are housed in the Spark platform rather than directly embedded in student-facing materials, making them harder for teachers to use consistently and for students to access as learning tools. The balance across language domains is uneven, speaking and listening are prominent, but Level 1 writing tasks are limited to sentence and paragraph level, and the assessment depth looks significantly different across the levels. Reviewers also noted that many assessments focus on memorization and repetition, staying at lower levels of critical thinking rather than measuring language proficiency across the full continuum. Evidence of systematic peer assessment built into all units was not found.

Bottom Line: Pathways offers a functional multi-level assessment system with notable strengths in formative assessment and self-assessment. Educators using these materials may need to supplement with additional diagnostic and interim assessments and increase the depth of writing assessments. Schools and districts using these materials may need to provide additional professional development to address inconsistencies of assessments across language domains and to ensure that educators are trained to access and use the Spark-based rubrics consistently.

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 functional approach to language instruction is a strength of Pathways, particularly in the Reading and Writing series. The materials explicitly address all three dimensions of language within meaningful disciplinary contexts. Level 1 addresses discourse (explaining processes, opinion paragraph structure), sentence (present perfect, stative vs. causative verbs), and word/phrase (phrasal verbs, adjective formation, vis/vid roots) within communication technology and photography contexts. Level 4's 'Language for Writing' box frames every grammar point by its communicative function — for example, 'Using Cohesive Devices,' 'Using Relative Clauses,' and 'Writing Sentences with Initial Phrases' across units. Level 1 explicitly teaches genre conventions (e.g., 'An opinion paragraph...the topic sentence states your opinion...supporting ideas give reasons...Details can include facts, examples, or explanations') and prompts analysis of narrative purpose. In the Reading/Writing Level 3 unit on social relationships, students are provided vocabulary in sentences and paragraph frames, along with a 'language for making comparisons' section that shows students language for similarities (both, likewise) and differences (unlike, on the other hand) — providing evidence of functional, contextualized language instruction.

Challenges: While the functional approach is present across the materials, reviewers noted some inconsistency in the depth of implementation, particularly between Level 1 and Level 4. Level 1 is explicit about all three dimensions of language and consistently addresses them together, while Level 4 places more emphasis on language for writing and grammar, with less consistent integration of all three dimensions within single lessons. Discourse-level activities in some units appear with heavy scaffolding but limited writing, with students primarily filling in blanks rather than producing connected discourse in some lessons and units. Reviewers also noted that practices tend to be more heavily concentrated at the word and sentence level, with discourse-level work less consistently developed. Genre-specific language patterns are also not systematically named using ELD framework language which may hinder clarity about the functions being targeted.

Bottom Line: The functional approach is a strength of Pathways, particularly in the Reading and Writing series, where connections across word, sentence, and discourse levels are well developed. Level 1 more consistently implements all four indicators, while Level 4 shows some inconsistencies in simultaneous attention to all three language dimensions and in systematic naming of genre-specific language patterns using ELD framework language. Districts and schools using these materials may need to provide additional professional development on discourse-level language instruction and cross-disciplinary application of functional language concepts.

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

Strengths: The reviewers noted that the Spark platform's Course Gradebook could support data-sharing between ESL and content educators. Additionally, some of the rich content connections to real-world disciplines — telecommunications, photography, environmental science, cultural practices — offer natural opportunities for collaboration with content educators. Each lesson also includes engaging photos and background-building activities (e.g., asking students what countries they know in Southeast Asia, using photos to clarify vocabulary) that could serve as discussion anchors in cross-disciplinary planning conversations. However, none of these features is accompanied by any explicit prompting, protocol, or guidance for collaboration between language and content educators.

Challenges: The panel did not find evidence of shared responsibility structures within the Pathways materials. The panelists could not find evidence of tools, protocols, or guidance for ESL-content educator collaboration, co-planning, or joint data analysis. There are no co-teaching structures, no shared student performance data protocols, no guidance for content educators to access EL language performance data, and no systematic approach to monitoring EL progress collaboratively.

Bottom Line: Schools and district using Pathways may need to build their own collaborative structures, protocols, and data-sharing practices to foster shared responsibility and ownership of EL language development.

Section B: Student-Centered Instructional Materials

Asset-based Orientation – 2
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: Pathways demonstrates meaningful global and cultural representation that forms the foundation of an asset-based orientation, particularly at Level 1. Content is grounded in real-world, authentic experiences of diverse communities. Level 1 explicitly positions students as cultural experts through prompts such as 'What are libraries like where you come from?' and 'Reflect on and discuss how people behave in the same situation in your culture' (L/S Unit 10, pp. 193, 195). Level 4's program overview states that representative content allows students to see themselves in the material, and the L&S Unit 9 anchor figure Tanitoluwa Adewumi, a Nigerian immigrant chess prodigy, authentically represents a multilingual student as a model of expertise. Both levels feature authentic global images and content spanning Africa, Latin America, South Asia, the Middle East, and East Asia, with Level 4 confirming global and cultural awareness as a deliberate design priority. A 'World of Languages' infographic in Level 1 explicitly validates multilingualism as a resource.

Challenges: Despite the richness of cultural representation, the panel noted that the materials do not incorporate use of home language and there is no systematic teacher guidance for gathering students' funds of knowledge to inform and enrich instruction. The diversity in materials is represented but not explicitly called out to teachers as something to leverage as an instructional asset. Level 4, in particular, presents global awareness as a thematic orientation rather than as a deliberate strategy for leveraging students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as foundations for academic learning. Opportunities for students to bring their own identities into the learning are present but not consistently or explicitly connected to language learning goals, and there are no protocols for teachers to systematically gather and integrate student background knowledge.

Bottom Line: Pathways provides authentic, globally representative content that supports an asset-based orientation, particularly at Level 1 where students are more explicitly positioned as cultural experts. However, the materials do not integrate use of home languages, teacher guidance for gathering students' funds of knowledge is absent, and cultural diversity is represented rather than strategically leveraged as a learning foundation. Educators using these materials may need to consider additional ways to draw out and build upon students' cultural and linguistic assets during instruction.

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: Pathways offers some limited evidence of metalinguistic awareness development through English-focused features. Level 1's pronunciation section on consonant clusters and vocabulary extension on vis/vid roots provide some opportunity for students to examine how language works. Level 4 more systematically addresses morphology through Vocabulary Extension pages that introduce useful collocations, different word forms, and common prefixes, suffixes, and word roots across all 10 units providing multilingual learners with tools for understanding English language systems. Grammar activities for structures such as the verb 'to be' and pronunciation activities targeting the ending -s also contribute to some metalinguistic awareness, even if these features do not explicitly connect to students' home languages. Level 4 provides a more systematic morphological instruction than some of the other levels.

Challenges: The panelists noted a lack of explicit evidence of translanguaging strategies, bilingual glossaries, explicit language transfer instruction, home language development strategies, or any structured comparison between home languages and English. The panelists did not determine evidence in the materials that affirm students identities as multilingual or that they bring tremendous language resources to the classroom. There are no prompts for students to use home languages as resources for learning, no structural comparisons between language systems, and nothing addressing sound-level language transfer.

Bottom Line: While some metalinguistic awareness activities are present particularly in Level 4's morphology-focused vocabulary extension pages the materials lack evidence of leveraging students' home languages as learning resources, providing translanguaging opportunities, or providing guidance on language transfer. Districts and schools using the materials may need to provide additional professional development and supplementary resources to build linguistically responsive instructional practices that honor and activate students' full linguistic repertoires.

Critical Stance – 2
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 provide some opportunities for student inquiry, agency, and critical engagement with real-world issues. Level 1 presents equity-adjacent questions, including a prompt about global library internet access ('There are 2.8 million libraries in the world; however, only 378,455 have Internet access- Do you think this is a problem?') and Final Task options that allow student choice in demonstrating learning. Level 4's critical thinking framework explicitly names skills such as Recognizing Claims and Counterclaims (Unit 1), Evaluating Sources (Unit 5), and Analyzing Point of View (Unit 7), supporting inquiry across the year. Learning experiences in the materials engage students with real-world issues from multiple perspectives: Level 1 presents snow leopard conservation and the Kibber village insurance program with multiple stakeholder perspectives, while Level 4 is aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goals including no poverty, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and climate action. In the Reading/Writing series, students across levels analyze texts for purpose and then connect analysis to their own writing- a design that builds critical language use. All units in Reading and Writing include opportunities for students to analyze and connect to authentic global content.

Challenges: While inquiry and multi-perspective analysis are present, the panelists noted inconsistent and lacking evidence of learning experiences that explicitly support students in questioning inequities that affect their own local communities or taking action on issues important to them. In Level 4, critical thinking is framed primarily as an academic competency for college and test readiness (IELTS, TOEFL) rather than as a tool for identity affirmation or community action. The approach across levels is more descriptive and analytical than action-oriented. Reviewers noted that most units reviewed focused on science, history, or social science topics that were described or analyzed rather than connected to local inquiry or community action. Language for making local connections and taking action is consistently missing. Missed opportunities were also noted, such as the animal behavior unit in Reading/Writing Level 3 that could have extended into exploring the impact of human behavior on animals and communities.

Bottom Line: Pathways include some opportunities to foster critical stance, student inquiry, multi-perspective analysis, and engagement with global equity issues. However, the panelists noted limited evidence of fostering transformative critical language use and inconsistent supports for students to connect global issues to their local communities, affirm their own identities through language, or take action on inequities. Educators using these materials may need to supplement Pathways with tasks and discussions that explicitly connect global topics to local community inquiry and action.

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: Oral language development is a consistent and well-developed strength of Pathways, particularly in the dedicated Listening and Speaking volumes at both levels. Each unit begins with discussion questions around photo descriptions and thematic connections, and students practice vocabulary aloud with partners throughout every unit before completing final oral tasks. Level 1 embeds oral interactions throughout every lesson through structured activities such as 'Work with a group and compare your lists' and 'Ask and answer questions with a partner,' as well as role-play conversations about real-world topics. Level 4's program overview confirms the L&S volume is designed around academic listening and speaking, with discussion as a vehicle for collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Level 1's Speaking Skill explicitly connects oral language to communicative function (explaining processes, checking understanding), and Level 1's Reading/Writing strand has students describe photographs using target vocabulary before writing bridging oral and written language. Level 4's 4Cs framework positions communication as a core program goal. The materials also provide structured speaking assessments and opportunities for extended oral performance tasks.

Challenges: Despite oral language development being a strength, reviewers identified a lack of encouragement or explicit prompting for students to use home languages as resources during oral discussions, and translanguaging as a speaking strategy is entirely absent. Reviewers noted a lack of explicit guidance for leveraging students' full linguistic repertoires during oral activities. Additionally, while the L&S volumes at both levels are strong, the Reading and Writing volumes do not consistently prompt leveraging students' linguistic assets during oral interactions, creating an imbalance across the program's strands.

Bottom Line: Oral language development is a strength of Pathways, with systematic daily dialogue opportunities, structured speaking activities, and meaningful connections between oral and written language modalities. The panelists noted an absence of any guidance for leveraging students' home languages and full linguistic repertoires during oral interactions. Educators using these materials may need to supplement with explicit translanguaging strategies and teacher moves for activating students' multilingual resources during speaking and listening activities.

Formative Assessment - 3
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: Formative assessment is embedded throughout Pathways with clear, actionable guidance for teachers throughout the materials. Level 1 includes Formative Assessment boxes in every lesson section with 'Can students...?' checklists and specific monitoring strategies such as 'Monitor while students speak, making note of successful uses.' Level 4 confirms this is a program-wide feature: formative assessment activities appear in the Teacher's Book and align directly to the objectives at the beginning of each section. The materials provide student self-assessment and peer assessment tools. Level 1 includes explicit peer evaluation rubrics ('Reflect on your partner's explanation...Did your partner explain each part clearly?') and end-of-unit self-assessment checklists ('How well can you...?' with re-assessment prompts). Level 4 demonstrates self-assessment is built into every unit's Review section. The end-of-unit review where students score themselves as 'very well,' 'ok,' or 'I need to improve' against unit goals provides a meaningful student-facing self-monitoring structure.

Challenges: While formative assessment is a strength, there are some inconsistencies throughout the materials. Level 4's variety of student-facing formative techniques is more limited, primarily relying on discussion and written exercises, and peer assessment is not systematically built into all units. Explicit student-facing feedback tools tied to language objectives are not consistently present across Level 4 lesson sections. There was also limited and inconsistent evidence of strategies for providing actionable feedback to students on their language use and progress. The panelists noted a tendency at times towards lower-order thinking in some formative tasks, with activities focused on memorization and repetition rather than higher-level application and transfer.

Bottom Line: Formative assessment is a relative strength of Pathways, with comprehensive embedded practices in the materials. The program's Formative Assessment boxes, self-assessment charts, and peer evaluation rubrics provide a solid foundation for monitoring student learning. Schools and districts using the materials may need to provide additional professional development and guidance on varied student-facing formative techniques, more consistent peer assessment structures across all units, and more explicit guidance for providing actionable feedback on language use and progress toward objectives.

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: Scaffolds and supports are identified as a strength of Pathways, with particularly strong implementation at Level 1. The Foundations Listening and Speaking Unit 2 exemplifies the breadth of scaffolding available: vocabulary matching exercises, main-idea listening activities with word scaffolds for comprehension, graphic organizers for sorting and categorizing, pronunciation audio scaffolds, critical thinking activities with vocabulary supports, visuals, and sentence starters. Level 1 provides sentence frames ('First, you need to...Then you...'), vocabulary banks, visual timelines, graphic organizers, and writing models. Level 4's program overview describes multiple built-in scaffolding features including vocabulary preparation before every reading, five-stage writing scaffolds (Brainstorming, Planning, First Draft, Revising and Editing, Final Draft), and teacher tips for multilevel classes. Both levels incorporate scaffolding that supports higher-order thinking rather than merely simplifying tasks: Level 1's Critical Thinking section scaffolds analysis and evaluation of photographs using specific criteria (composition, moment, lighting), while Level 4 uses model writing examples intentionally differentiated from the actual writing task to scaffold independence.

Challenges: While scaffolds and supports are abundant, particularly at Level 1, reviewers noted that Level 4's scaffolding is less consistent across activities, with some lessons heavily scaffolded and others less so. The 'multilevel class' tips in Level 4 appear to be brief and informal rather than systematic proficiency-level differentiation, and graphic organizers and visual scaffolds are not consistently provided across all skill activities at that level. Reviewers also noted that practice in some units are more heavily concentrated at the word and sentence level, with discourse-level scaffolds appearing inconsistently.

Bottom Line: Scaffolds and supports represent a strength of the materials, with a rich and varied toolkit that is consistently embedded into Level 1 instruction across linguistic, visual, audio, and graphic modalities. Level 4 is somewhat less consistent in its scaffolding application across all proficiency levels and skill types. Professional development on intentional scaffold selection and proficiency-level differentiation may strengthen implementation in schools and districts.

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: Pathways incorporates multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression consistent with UDL principles, particularly through the Spark digital platform. The materials provide individual, pair, and group work structures; audio, visual, text, and graphic modalities; and speaking, writing, listening, and visual analysis tasks. Level 4's program overview describes multimodal design as deliberate, highlighting stimulating infographics for explaining complex processes, charts and graphs for numerical information, maps for locations, and graphic organizers for showing relationships between ideas. The Spark platform offers audio, streaming video, and online interactive practice including interactive drop-down activities. An audio recording feature that plays text aloud is available, and writing can be typed directly in the digital student book. The variety of interactive structures from individual tasks to partner and group activities provides multiple pathways for demonstrating learning and engaging with content.

Challenges: Despite the multimodal strengths of the platform, the panelists noted a lack of explicit guidance on supporting English Learners with disabilities or accommodating IEPs. Reviewers could not find a place for students to record their own speaking on the platform, and no speech-to-text features for writing were identified, potentially limiting accessibility for students who may rely on these tools. The panel noted a lack of evidence of differentiated materials by English proficiency level, noting that all students receive the same content regardless of proficiency. No explicit prompts for educators to attend to individual needs of ELs with disabilities appear throughout the materials.

Bottom Line: Pathways offers multimodal learning opportunities through both print and digital platforms, providing a foundation for UDL-aligned instruction. However, the absence of explicit IEP guidance, accommodation strategies to support students with a range of disabilities, and key digital accessibility features (text-to-speech, speech-to-text, speech recording) may hinder the accessibility of the materials. Districts and schools using these materials may need to provide targeted guidance for supporting ELs with disabilities and professional development on supporting dually identified students.