# Waltham Public Schools: Middle School ESL Materials

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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 – 4
Curricular Map – 4
Unit Language Goals – 3
Lesson Objectives – 4
Assessment – 3
Functional Approach – 4
Shared Responsibility – 3

**Section B – Student-centered Instructional Materials**
Asset-based Orientation – 3
Linguistically Responsive – 2
Critical Stance – 3
Oral Language Development – 2
Formative Assessment – 3
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
1: Evidence is not sufficiently present; connection to one or fewer indicators

**Summary of the Bottom Line**
The Waltham Middle School materials demonstrate a strong and thoughtfully designed approach to integrating language development with meaningful academic content, particularly within Unit 3. Across multiple indicators, reviewers highlighted the curriculum's coherent alignment to the Massachusetts definition of ESL, its clear integration of WIDA Key Language Uses and language dimensions, and its emphasis on authentic disciplinary learning through the global water crisis and Model UN simulation. The materials established a functional approach to language instruction, included robust scaffolding systems, embedded formative assessment practices, and integrated language development in real-world communication tasks. The materials also reflect opportunities to foster student agency, collaboration, and critical thinking through inquiry-based learning experiences that position students as active participants in analyzing and addressing global issues.

The panel identified several areas for continued refinement and expansion. While oral language routines, linguistically responsive practices, and asset-based opportunities are present, reviewers noted that these elements are not yet consistently embedded across all lessons or fully developed across the broader set of materials. The panel also

emphasized the need for stronger visibility of scaffolding, assessment guidance, and lesson objectives within student-facing materials, as well as more explicit systems for collaboration between ESL and content-area teachers. Additional recommendations included expanding translanguaging opportunities, strengthening connections between global issues and students' local communities, and making Universal Design for Learning principles more explicit throughout the materials.

# The Next Generation ESL Curriculum Review Rubric

## Section A: Curricular Structure

**Alignment to Massachusetts Definition of ESL – 4**
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 and unit reviewed demonstrates strong alignment with the Massachusetts definition of ESL. The materials simultaneously develop both language and content, as evidenced by the unit's explicit grounding in History/Social Studies content standards (6-8.RCA-H.8, 6-8.WCA.9, 6-8.SLCA.1) alongside WIDA Key Language Uses, Language Expectations, and Proficiency Level Descriptors. Language is taught within a rich, meaningful, contextualized topic, the global water crisis and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6, ensuring that language instruction serves authentic disciplinary purposes. All three WIDA language dimensions (word/phrase, sentence, discourse) are addressed within this content context, including technical vocabulary such as "scarcity" and "infrastructure," dependent clauses for cause/effect, and organizational patterns for country profiles. Social and instructional language (WIDA Standard 1) is explicitly addressed through the Language of Collaboration strand in Lesson 4, which features polite questions using modals, inclusive conversation using "we/us," and structured talk moves.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that some aspects of the definition, such as oral language development, are not as prominently featured as literacy throughout the materials, though the UN simulation "language of collaboration" strand does support oral language development. Additionally although speaking skills were outlined in the curriculum map they were more difficult to locate explicitly within individual lessons. Language objectives, while present, could benefit from being more clearly stated at the lesson level to improve teacher clarity and consistency in implementation.

**Bottom Line:** The materials meet all four alignment indicators strongly within Unit 3, with clear connections between language and content development, alignment to WIDA frameworks, and rich contextualized instruction. The panel reached a consensus rating of 4, based upon the materials shared but did note that the materials are still in development and that in order to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**Curricular Map – 4**
Materials Provide a clear, year-long curricular map that demonstrates a coherent progression of language development aligned with grade-level content.

**Strengths:** The Grade 7 Curriculum Map outlines a coherent year-long sequence across five units, with clear WIDA Key Language Uses assigned to each unit (Narrate/Inform in Fall 1–2; Inform/Argue/Explain in Winter; Explain in Spring). Cross-curricular connections span ELA, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Language forms spiral intentionally: dependent clauses are introduced in Unit 1 for narrative sequencing, expanded in Unit 2 for elaboration, and deepened in Unit 3 for cause/effect and location. Summative assessment benchmarks including ESL Writing Benchmarks in narrative, argumentative, and explanatory modes are aligned to instructional units alongside ACCESS testing, demonstrating infrastructure for monitoring annual progress. Unit-level language goals are tied to WIDA Key Language Uses and Language Expectations and scaffolded across a realistic timeframe.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that scaffolding supports are not clearly visible in the curricular map itself, though they do appear within the deeper levels of the instructional materials. The panel noted that the map and materials submitted were still in development- particularly noting that many materials for units other than Unit 3 were not fully accessible during the review. There was also uncertainty about whether social and instructional language purposes were consistently addressed across all units based on what could be reviewed.

**Bottom Line:** The curricular map demonstrates coherent year-long planning with spiraling language forms, coverage of all four WIDA Key Language Uses, and aligned summative assessments. The consensus rating was 4, with a note that the map's scaffolding visibility and completeness across all units should be strengthened for district-wide clarity. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that in order to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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:** Unit language goals in Unit 3 are explicitly organized around three WIDA Key Language Uses, Inform, Argue, and Explain, each with specific language functions (e.g., Inform: describe country facts, define a problem; Argue: state and defend a position, propose solutions; Explain: describe cause and effect). Goals are directly aligned to History/Social Studies content standards and a Model UN simulation, providing a clear disciplinary anchor. The unit is scoped across approximately 26–28 class periods, allowing sufficient time for students to explore, practice, and apply target language across the Inform → Explain → Argue trajectory. The unit plan documents explicit connections to grade-level standards and WIDA standard statements.

**Challenges:** Reviewers expressed that the language function statements visible on the curricular map are not fully developed into comprehensive unit language goals, noting they are not fully fleshed out. Reviewers also expressed difficulty in assessing whether language goals are consistently developed across other units, since only Unit 3 materials were fully accessible during the review. Panelists recommended that goals be more explicitly broken out across skill domains (e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening) at the unit level, and that professional development on understanding the organization of unit-level goals might support implementation in classrooms across the district.

**Bottom Line:** Unit 3 demonstrates three of the four indicators clearly, with explicit Key Language Uses, disciplinary content alignment, and sufficient instructional time. Educators using these materials may need to more comprehensively articulated language goals across domains. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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 Unit 3 are clearly articulated, actionable, and scoped appropriately for a single class period. Examples include Lesson 7: "Use information from the previous lesson's research to write a country profile with a variety of sentence patterns," and Lesson 10: "Use information from the previous lesson's research to explain why access to clean water is an important issue for your country." Teacher guidance explicitly instructs that lesson objectives and target language features should be posted in a consistent place and previewed/revisited throughout each lesson. Self-assessment is embedded through exit tickets, self-check checklists, and conference forms- including Lesson 14's confidence rating exit ticket across five speaking areas and the Conference Form's Before/After self-rating.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that while objectives are written in student-friendly language, they are primarily located in the unit planning document rather than being prominent in student-facing materials, requiring teachers to make them more visible. Monitoring of objectives could be made more explicit, as self-assessment is present but not uniformly within every lesson. The review was also limited to Unit 3, leaving uncertainty about whether lesson objectives are consistently developed across all five units in the materials.

**Bottom Line:** Lesson objectives in Unit 3 are clearly articulated, appropriately scoped, tied to unit language goals, and supported by self-assessment tools. Educators using these materials may need to make objectives more visible in student-facing materials and ensure consistency across all units. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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 assessment system in Unit 3 is multi-layered and supports assessment across multiple modalities. The summative assessment includes a CER position paper (writing), a multimedia screencast performance (speaking/listening), and the Model UN simulation (structured academic discourse). The ESL2 Conference Form functions as a formative/interim tool with Before and After self-ratings across all three language dimensions, with Glows/Grows feedback and student goal-setting. Daily exit tickets provide frequent, low-stakes formative checks, varying by modality including cloze exercises, signal word highlighting, confidence ratings, and sentence completion, and teacher guidance explicitly states they should be read and responded to between classes. Writing benchmarks appear throughout the curriculum map, with speaking conferences and rubrics planned three times per year.

**Challenges:** Panelists noted that a diagnostic assessment for the ESL materials is not clearly present in the materials, with the review suggesting that iReady testing may be used but not referenced directly within the curriculum map. The formative assessment system, while strong in Unit 3, is implied rather than explicitly named in the curriculum map. Reviewers also noted that the do now and exit ticket formats are predominantly written, representing a missed opportunity to integrate oral language assessment routines more systematically. Guidance on what teachers should do when students struggle with a task is also not clearly articulated.

**Bottom Line:** The assessment system is comprehensive within Unit 3, featuring a rich summative performance task across multiple modalities, a structured conference form, and varied daily exit tickets. The consensus rating of 3 reflects strong evidence across three of four indicators, with a recommendation to add a diagnostic assessment component and to more explicitly address assessment guidance within the broader curriculum map. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**Functional Approach – 4**
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 is identified as a clear strength of these materials. Language forms are consistently framed in relation to communicative purpose across all lessons. Students learn different signal word categories (give examples, cause-effect, possibility, urgency) and are prompted to select among options based on intended meaning, directly linking form to communicative goal. All three dimensions of language are addressed within the Social Studies disciplinary context: word/phrase (technical vocabulary, phrasal verbs), sentence (dependent clauses, modals, -ing verbs), and discourse (organizational patterns for country profiles; cohesion through pronouns and demonstratives). Common language patterns of disciplinary genres are explicitly identified including organizational patterns for informational writing, conventions of CER argument structure, and UN register (e.g., "honorable chairperson," "delegates," "yield our time"). Lesson 4 explicitly teaches language as choices for collaboration, with sentence stems such as "What if we" and "Maybe we could."

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that Unit 3 only demonstrates ELA and Social Studies content connections, and that the other content areas (Math, Science) appear to be addressed in other units of the curriculum. Since only Unit 3 was fully accessible during the review, the panel could not fully assess the functional approach across the complete year-long set of instructional materials. Some reviewers also noted that the remaining materials beyond Unit 3 appeared to still be in development.

**Bottom Line:** Within unit 3, language is consistently framed as purposeful choice, taught across all three dimensions, and analyzed as genre conventions. The panelists were unable to determine if the focus on functional approach to language development carried into other units that focused on the additional WIDA standards. The panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**Shared Responsibility – 3**
Materials promote shared expertise, responsibility, and accountability for students in the program.

**Strengths:** Collaboration between ESL and content educators is built into the design of the curriculum. The unit was explicitly developed in consultation with the 6–12 Social Studies director and is designed to support students to develop the key language and key academic practices embedded in the grade-level Model UN simulation in Social Studies classes- demonstrating intentional cross-departmental collaboration in curriculum design. The curriculum map includes shared professional tasks such as LASW (Looking at Student Work), Writing Conference cycles, ACCESS preparation and goal-setting, ELSP cycles, and IEP review, suggesting a systematic approach to collaborative monitoring of English Learner progress. There are several meaningful connections between SS and ESL around shared global issues such as access to clean water, and activities incorporate opportunities for students to develop Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills.

**Challenges:** While collaboration is present at the design level, the submitted unit materials do not include specific tools or structured processes for ongoing collaborative planning between ESL and content teachers, data-sharing protocols, or systematic progress monitoring tools for use across roles. Panelists were uncertain about what specific expectations exist for content teachers regarding shared responsibility. Reviewers noted that providing more structured collaboration tools, such as co-planning templates or data-sharing forms, would strengthen this dimension and support consistent implementation.

**Bottom Line:** Shared responsibility is present and meaningfully embedded at the curriculum design level, with documented collaboration between ESL and Social Studies and professional learning structures in the curriculum map. Schools using these materials may benefit from additional explicit tools and processes that support ongoing collaborative planning and data sharing between ESL and content teachers. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

## 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 unit incorporates several meaningful opportunities for students to draw on their cultural and linguistic assets. Lesson 3 assigns a family interview in which students speak with an adult about their country, identity, and languages — connecting to the unit's focus on facts and perspectives. Lesson 15 centers student cultural and family identity, with students creating a class slideshow slide about their cultural identity and being explicitly invited to draw on personal and family strengths as a source of speaking confidence, using the MLK "Mountaintop" speech as a model. Country assignments allow students to research places that may reflect their own or classmates' backgrounds, using global and diverse contexts. The unit's focus on cognates throughout Lessons 5–6 serves as an asset-based word-learning strategy, drawing on students' Spanish, French, and Portuguese language resources.

**Challenges:** Reviewers identified some missed opportunities for more consistent integration of student assets throughout the unit. The family interview is introduced in Lesson 3 and debriefed in Lesson 15, but reviewers noted it is unclear how the interview connects back within the intervening lessons, specifically questioning whether students share their findings after Lesson 3 or whether the work simply moves on to informational writing. The panel noted a lack of evidence of a systematic or comprehensive approach to gathering and integrating students' funds of knowledge, interests, and experiences across the unit; the practice is present but not embedded consistently throughout.

**Bottom Line:** The unit includes several authentic and meaningful asset-based activities, such as the family interview, cognate strategy, and country choice. Educators using these materials may need to embed a more explicit and ongoing approach to integrating student funds of knowledge across all lessons in the unit and throughout the materials. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that in order to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**Linguistically Responsive – 2**
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 unit demonstrates evidence of linguistically responsive practice primarily through three strategies that are woven throughout: context clues, word detective strategies, and cognate instruction. Lesson 5 explicitly addresses language transfer by teaching students to identify shared words across English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, and teacher guidance notes the use of an online translator to verify potential cognates; positioning home language as a legitimate learning resource. The Word Detective framework (cognates, word parts, context clues, reference tools) develops metalinguistic awareness by prompting students to analyze how language works across multiple lessons. Teacher guidance on Close Captioning explicitly states a rationale for using English rather than home-language captions, reflecting a deliberate, considered stance on language choices.

**Challenges:** Reviewers consistently noted that the materials are heavily English-focused, with limited opportunities for students to use their home languages as genuine resources for learning beyond the cognate strategy at the word level. The panel did not find evidence of systematic translanguaging opportunities and noted that the cognate strategy leverages home languages primarily as an instrumental scaffold for English vocabulary development rather than supporting biliteracy development. Home language development alongside English is not systematically addressed. The panelists noted they could not find clear encouragement for students to use their home language in speaking or listening contexts and felt that cross-linguistic connections could be extended far beyond cognates.

**Bottom Line:** The materials demonstrate meaningful linguistically responsive elements through the Word Detective framework, cognate instruction, and metalinguistic awareness development. Educators using these materials may need to consider additional ways to embed opportunities for translanguaging, cross-linguistic transfer at the sentence and discourse level, and ongoing home language development.

**Critical Stance – 3**
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 unit is grounded in a real-world issue of global equity (access to clean water) and positions students as agents who can analyze injustice and propose solutions. The culminating Model UN simulation requires students to act as country delegates, argue positions, negotiate, and vote, directly exercising communicative agency on an issue of global significance. Lesson 15 explicitly invites students to examine and affirm their own cultural and family identities as sources of strength and courage, using the MLK "Mountaintop" speech as a model for speaking from lived experience. The unit presents multiple country perspectives on the water crisis, requires students to identify common ground and unique assets across countries during the summit, and structures collaborative negotiation through the Common Ground/Unique Assets Notecatcher thus supporting inquiry from multiple perspectives.

**Challenges:** While the global social justice lens of the water crisis provides a strong foundation for critical engagement, reviewers noted limited evidence of explicitly encouraging students to question or act upon inequities in their own local communities. The opportunities for fostering critical stance remain focused on global contexts and do not consistently prompt students to connect the water crisis or issues of equity to their own lived experiences or local communities.

**Bottom Line:** The unit provides opportunities to promote student agency, identity affirmation, and inquiry around diverse perspectives are all embedded purposefully throughout the unit. Educators using these materials may need to consider additional opportunities to explicitly connect global justice themes to students' own community experiences and local inequities. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**Oral Language Development – 2**
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 unit includes several structured oral language routines that appear across multiple lessons. Every lesson begins with a Think-Write-Pair-Share Do Now, and the unit includes Vocabulary Roundtable, fish-bowl role plays, partner research debriefs, and the Model UN simulation as structured opportunities for oral language development. The Language of Collaboration strand in Lesson 4 provides explicit instruction and an observation checklist for grade-level academic discourse moves, including polite questioning, validating, adding on, restating, and facilitating inclusion. Oral language is also systematically connected to reading and writing across lessons: students research in writing, discuss orally, draft in writing, then speak their position papers in the multimedia performance and Model UN simulation, modeling the full cycle of language modalities.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that oral language is not consistently or systematically embedded across all lessons, with only some of the lessons having clearly identified oral language routines which raised questions about what opportunities are provided for oral language development in the other lessons. The unit has a heavy focus on reading and writing, and the panel questioned whether the existing oral language structures are sufficient for English Learners who need daily, structured speaking practice. Reviewers also noted that the lesson descriptions do not clearly outline specific protocols or structured activities to promote student-to-student interaction or academic discourse, and that educators may miss additional oracy opportunities without explicit guidance.

**Bottom Line:** The unit contains meaningful oral language structures, including the Language of Collaboration strand and the Model UN simulation, and the panel noted these strengths. Educators using these materials may need to consider ways to consistently embedded, daily practice with explicit oral language moves more frequent and visible across all lessons. Additionally, the panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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 across Unit 3. Each lesson includes both a Do Now and an exit ticket, and teacher guidance explicitly states that exit tickets should be read and responded to during or between classes to provide timely feedback on target language features. Exit ticket formats vary in format (e.g. cloze exercises, signal word highlighting, confidence ratings, sentence completion) making them responsive to assessing language development across domains. Student self-check tools are integrated within writing lessons, such as Lesson 10's checklist of required topics and signal word categories with checkboxes and Lesson 7's self-check for required profile components. The Language of Collaboration observation checklist provides a structured real-time peer/teacher formative tool during oral activities, tracking individual student use of target talk moves with space for specific evidence.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that formative assessments are primarily written-response formats, representing a missed opportunity to incorporate oral language formative routines more consistently. The curriculum map does not explicitly address formative assessment, and there is no clear section for teachers to reference regarding how to interpret formative data to adjust instruction. Guidance on what to do when a student struggles with a task is not articulated. The panelists also noted that while self-assessment tools are present, they could be further refined to foster more self-directed learning and that peer assessment is less developed.

**Bottom Line:** The formative assessment system within Unit 3 is well-developed, with varied daily exit tickets, embedded self-assessment tools, and a real-time observation checklist — meeting three of four indicators. Educators using these materials may need to consider ways to expand oral formative assessment routines and ensure formative assessment is more visibly addressed within the curriculum map. Additionally, schools using these materials may need to provide additional professional development and explicit teacher guidance for interpreting and responding to formative data. The panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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:** Scaffolds in Unit 3 are varied, evidence-based, and well-integrated throughout the lessons. A robust toolkit is present including sentence frames with signal word categories (give examples, cause-effect, possibility, urgency), word banks and co-constructed anchor charts, graphic organizer note catchers for research, teacher sample writing models, cloze transcripts for videos, and color-coded highlighting for different language features. Scaffolding is sequenced to build toward independence: students move from whole-class modeling through partner and small group practice to independent application, and the unit moves from scaffolded writing with sentence starters to independently delivered opening statements in the Model UN simulation. The panel noted that the evidence indicates that scaffolds maintain cognitive demand. For example, note catchers prompt students to identify and evaluate evidence rather than copy text, and the Model UN negotiation requires real-time application of language to solve novel problems.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that scaffolding suggestions are not always explicitly built into individual lesson designs in a way that makes them clearly visible to teachers, potentially leading to inconsistencies around when to use or fade specific supports. Guidance and professional development around scaffolding may be needed- particularly for helping teachers understand when scaffolds may not be needed to avoid over-scaffolding.

**Bottom Line:** The unit's scaffolding system is a strength, with a varied, evidence-based toolkit that maintains high cognitive demand and sequences supports toward independence. Schools using these materials may need to make scaffolding suggestions more explicitly embedded within individual lessons and to provide teacher guidance on when and how to fade supports as students gain proficiency. The panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.

**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:** Multiple means of representation are systematically embedded throughout Unit 3: videos with English close captioning, print transcripts, teacher read-alouds, echo/choral/partner reading, visual anchor charts, and note catchers ensure content is accessible through auditory, visual, and text-based channels. Multiple means of action and expression are built into the summative assessment, with students able to demonstrate learning through a written position paper, a recorded multimedia screencast, and oral participation in the Model UN simulation. Teacher guidance explicitly addresses ELs with IEP accommodations, noting that Text to Speech and Speech to Text supports can be implemented via Google Read/Write, Book Creator, or other ed tech tools, and that teachers should consider whether print or digital text formats best serve individual students.

**Challenges:** Reviewers noted that while strong supports are present, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are not explicitly framed as a UDL design framework in teacher guidance meaning that the practices are evident but not deliberately named or structured for teachers. IEPs are referenced in the curriculum map, but there is limited evidence of differentiated instruction within individual lesson descriptions for Multilingual Learners with Disabilities.

**Bottom Line:** The unit demonstrates some accessibility through multiple representation modes, multimodal expression options in the summative assessment, and explicit IEP guidance. Reviewers recommended making UDL and accessibility moves explicit throughout the unit and noted that providing more targeted differentiation strategies could help ensure all students' needs are effectively met. The panelists noted that the materials are still in development and that to fully evaluate the materials more units and lessons would need to be evaluated.