TCM Teacher Created Materials



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LANGUAGE™ ESSENTIALS

Assessment Preparation Program Based on Respected Research and Literature

Introduction

Language Essentials is a research-based, supplemental language resource designed to help multilingual learners build the skills, strategies, and confidence they need to demonstrate their English language abilities on language proficiency tests. The program provides systematic practice across all four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and gives educators practical instructional guidance for supporting students at a range of proficiency levels.

More than a test preparation tool, *Language Essentials* supports functional language development across content areas, combining instruction and practice to help students build academic language and reclassify. Students become familiar with the kinds of task formats, question types, and language demands they may encounter on language proficiency assessments, while educators receive clear, softly scripted guidance for modeling responses, addressing common challenges, and providing constructive feedback.



Language Essentials

Language Essentials for the 21st Century

Language Essentials for Arizona

Language Essentials for California

Language Essentials for Texas

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The Logic Model

This logic model illustrates how the *Language Essentials* series is designed to help districts achieve measurable language development outcomes for English learners. The goal of this table is to visualize how implementing *Language Essentials* can support and contribute to achieving district goals through structured instructional inputs and test-aligned activities.

Figure 1—Logic Model

Problem Statement: There is a need for targeted, research-aligned preparation to support English learners in meeting the linguistic and cognitive demands of language tests. Without explicit, domain-specific instruction and exposure to test-aligned task types, too many students remain below proficiency thresholds—limiting access to reclassification, academic advancement, and broader educational equity.

Outcome/Goal: To increase English learners' readiness for language tests by strengthening their academic language proficiency, reducing test-related barriers, and supporting reclassification through scaffolded, standards-aligned instruction.

Theory of Action

Educators are committed to improving language proficiency test outcomes.	Districts provide educators with access to the appropriate *Language Essentials* series.	Educators implement structured test-aligned instruction.	K–8 students engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing practice using content-area language prompts.	K–8 students will be prepared for language prompts and demonstrate improved language production.	Students will become confident communicators within the four language domains.

Logic Model

Assumptions	Resources/Inputs	Activities	Outputs/Metrics	Outcomes	Impact
• Schools recognize the importance of structured preparation. • Educators can deliver test-aligned instruction. • Reclassification is a meaningful equity milestone for English learners.	• *Best Practices* guide with test-aligned strategies • *Teacher's Guide* • *Student Books* • Digital audio & ebooks • Read-aloud texts • English learner standards	• Structured task-type practice across four language domains • Explicit instruction on academic language use • Use of common item formats • Scaffolds and models for student support	• Students experience varied tested task types. • Teachers deliver targeted ELD instruction. • Students engage in listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks.	• Improved familiarity with language test format and expectations • Increased use of academic language in class • Reduced test anxiety and better student confidence	• Higher proficiency performance • Increased reclassification rates • Greater access to advanced coursework • Enhanced student engagement and achievement

Guiding Principles

The design of *Language Essentials* reflects both practical language proficiency test preparation and a broader commitment to meaningful language development, equity, and student confidence. At its core, the product is grounded in five foundational principles. Together, these principles ensure that preparation for language proficiency assessments does not become an isolated test-taking experience but rather an embedded and empowering part of every multilingual learner's language journey.

- ★ **Language is the foundation of academic success.**
  Academic English is essential for success across all content areas. *Language Essentials* gives students frequent, structured opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing while applying language in meaningful school-based and content-area contexts.

- ★ **Effective assessment preparation supports—not replaces—strong language instruction.**
  The activities within these series strengthen students' English language development by providing repeated, scaffolded exposure to the kinds of task formats, question types, and language demands students may encounter on language proficiency assessments. Students build skills through guided, partner, and independent practice rather than through isolated test rehearsal.

- ★ **Students thrive when assessment is transparent and familiar.**
  Anxiety and uncertainty are reduced when students understand what they may be asked to do. *Language Essentials* helps demystify language proficiency assessments by giving students practice with listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks in a supportive setting before they are expected to perform independently.

- ★ **This resource honors the full linguistic repertoire of multilingual learners.**
  Students' home languages, cultural backgrounds, prior schooling, and personal experiences are assets that support English language development. *Language Essentials* builds on these strengths across content areas.

- ★ **Educators play a central role in students' language success.**
  Educators need more than student practice pages; they need clear guidance for modeling, prompting, observing, and responding to students' language. The *Language Essentials* Teacher's Guide provides scripted support, sentence frames, task-specific guidance, and feedback opportunities so educators can help students understand expectations, address common challenges, and build confidence across proficiency levels.

The Foundations of Language Development

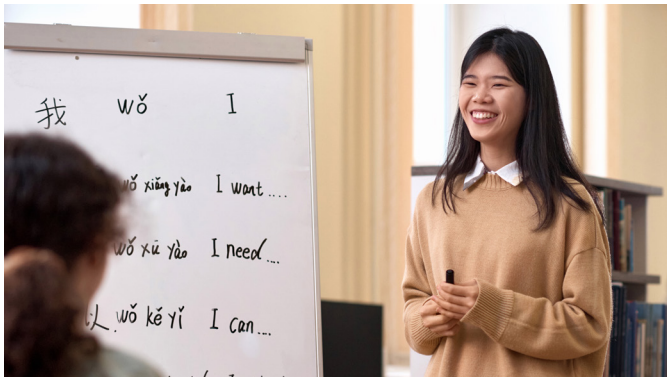
Language development is a complex, dynamic process influenced by cognitive, social, cultural, and instructional factors. For multilingual learners, acquiring English requires more than exposure to the language. Students need intentional, structured, and meaningful opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write in academic contexts.

Students enter the classroom with rich linguistic and cultural knowledge. Many have already developed strong communication skills in one or more home languages and bring a wide range of experiences, vocabulary, and problem-solving strategies to school. These assets provide an important foundation for English language development and should be recognized as strengths in the classroom.

However, learning English for academic purposes involves more than everyday conversation. Students must learn to understand and produce oral and written responses, use content-area vocabulary, interpret visuals and text features, organize ideas clearly, explain reasoning, and support opinions. These demands can make English language development a multiyear journey, especially for students with varied levels of prior schooling or limited access to rich academic language models.

Language Essentials supports this developmental process by:

- ➜ Giving students spiraling opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write with peer discussion and teacher-supported practice.
- ➜ Encouraging authentic language output through key language functions, including narrating, informing, explaining, and arguing.
- ➜ Reinforcing academic language across content areas, including language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and social/instructional contexts.
- ➜ Using visual, oral, and written supports to help students understand task expectations and communicate their ideas with increasing clarity.
- ➜ Offering teacher guidance, sentence frames, rubrics, and feedback opportunities that help students strengthen their responses over time.



Essential Language Proficiency Knowledge

Understanding the structure and scoring of language proficiency tests is essential for ensuring that students are prepared to demonstrate their language proficiency accurately (California Department of Education 2023). Across the United States and beyond, diverse language proficiency exams evaluate the English skills of students whose primary language is not English. The summative versions of the assessments are administered annually to measure student progress in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

One of the most critical components for educators is interpreting **rubrics** (Saguilan 2026). These rubrics determine student scores on performance tasks and evaluate students across multiple dimensions, such as:

- ➜ **Language Use and Vocabulary:** Are responses precise, contextually appropriate, and varied?
- ➜ **Organization and Cohesion:** Do students connect ideas in a logical and clear manner?
- ➜ **Comprehensibility and Fluency:** Can students be understood without excessive hesitation or grammatical interference?

To support accurate scoring and instruction, the *Language Essentials* series helps teachers internalize these criteria by integrating scoring language into teacher-facing guidance. For example, speaking prompts include model responses and guidance on how students can expand or revise their answers to improve fluency, content, and vocabulary.

Additionally, the program identifies **common performance barriers**, such as underdeveloped academic vocabulary or lack of practice with formal sentence structures, and provides scaffolds to help teachers guide students toward stronger responses. This demystifies what "well developed" looks like and ensures that formative feedback is aligned with common expectations of language rubrics.



The Importance of Language Proficiency Tests

For multilingual learners, language proficiency tests are more than annual assessments. They are one important measure used to determine whether students are ready to exit English language support services and participate more fully in the full range of academic opportunities available at school. When students can accurately demonstrate their English language abilities, educators and families gain clearer information about students' progress, instructional needs, and readiness for reclassification.

Reclassification is a meaningful milestone. Students who reclassify are often able to access a broader selection of courses, electives, enrichment opportunities, and advanced academic pathways. When students remain classified as English learners for too long—especially beyond the elementary grades—they have fewer opportunities to take courses that match their interests, strengths, and long-term goals. This can affect engagement, confidence, and access to grade-level learning experiences (Menken et al. 2012).

According to recent data from the U.S. Department of Education, only about 18–20% of ELs attain English proficiency in a given year, implying that roughly 80% or more remain below full proficiency and are concentrated in the lower-to-middle proficiency levels of state ELP assessments (National Center for Education Statistics 2024).

Students may not always show their true language abilities if they are unfamiliar with test formats, task expectations, or the academic language used in assessment prompts. Visibility around the stakes involved, scoring rubrics, and common task types help reduce those barriers. By giving students strategic language practice across content areas, *Language Essentials* helps students build the skills, confidence, and familiarity they need to demonstrate what they can do in English and continue moving toward reclassification.



What Is on Language Proficiency Tests?

English language exams monitor proficiency through tasks that reflect real classroom expectations in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The exams are administered annually to all identified English learners. They are aligned to English Language Development standards and frameworks. Each domain includes multiple task types that measure students' abilities to understand and use English in various academic contexts.

While the number and format of tasks vary slightly by grade level, each domain consistently emphasizes academic language, language functions, and comprehension across different levels of linguistic complexity.

Listening Tasks

Listening tasks measure how well students understand spoken English in academic and social settings. Students may be asked to:

- ➜ Identify key details from a short fictional story.
- ➜ Follow a brief classroom conversation.
- ➜ Respond to oral presentations by summarizing or answering questions.

For example, students may hear a fictional narrative accompanied by visuals and then answer comprehension questions focused on characters' actions and the sequence of events.

Speaking Tasks

Speaking tasks assess students' ability to express ideas clearly and appropriately using oral English. These tasks include:

- ➜ Describing a scene or picture.
- ➜ Supporting an opinion.
- ➜ Retelling a narrative with key details.

Responses are scored using domain-specific rubrics that emphasize completeness, vocabulary use, fluency, and organization. For instance, students may describe a classroom image and respond to open-ended prompts with complete sentences.

Reading Tasks

Reading tasks evaluate students' ability to comprehend written English. Students interact with:

- ➜ Short informational and literary passages.
- ➜ Student-written texts.
- ➜ Visual supports, such as charts or illustrations.

They may be asked to choose a sentence that matches a picture, determine the main idea, or analyze details from a text.

Writing Tasks

Writing tasks ask students to construct written responses that demonstrate command of language forms and functions. Tasks include:

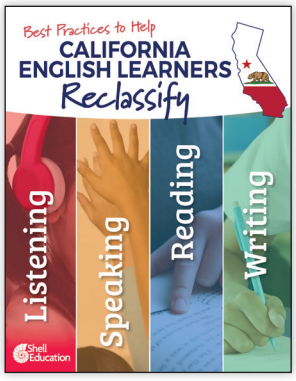
- ➜ Writing about a personal experience.
- ➜ Composing a paragraph based on academic information.
- ➜ Justifying an opinion in writing.

Students are expected to communicate ideas with increasing clarity, using appropriate vocabulary, language forms, and organization for their grade and proficiency level.

Each domain presents multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate progress through increasingly challenging prompts. By integrating practice with task types, the *Language Essentials* series builds familiarity, confidence, and skill across a range of tested constructs—ensuring students are prepared to not just take the test but to succeed on it.



Research to Practice



Every level of *Language Essentials for California* includes a copy of *Best Practices to Help California English Learners Reclassify*, which helps clarify all aspects of the ELPAC by:

- Demystifying the ELPAC through clear test structure explanations.
- Providing teachers with a deep understanding of the ELPAC's four language domains and scoring rubrics, ensuring instructional alignment with test expectations.
- Guiding teachers in interpreting ELPAC rubrics.
- Offering unpacked scoring criteria and student sample responses to help educators internalize what constitutes a high-level performance and provide aligned feedback.
- Building knowledge of academic language demands by highlighting the linguistic forms, functions, and vocabulary required for each task type.

Preparing Students for Language Proficiency Tests

Preparation for language exams should never feel like “teaching to the test.” Instead, it should serve as an opportunity to strengthen students’ academic language, boost their confidence, and clarify expectations in a structured, supportive environment. When implemented intentionally, test preparation accelerates language development and supports students on the path toward reclassification—a critical milestone that opens the door to advanced coursework, full access to the core curriculum, and long-term academic success.

Instructional Strategies for Language Test Success

Research underscores the importance of structured, interactive, and scaffolded instruction in helping English learners demonstrate what they know (Avila and Breña-Naranjo 2023; Permatasari et al. 2024). *Language Essentials* is designed to help educators integrate these strategies into daily instruction in meaningful ways. The series supports test readiness through the following strategies:

- ➜ Explicit instruction on task types and response formats.
- ➜ Modeling and sentence frames that support student responses in speaking and writing.
- ➜ Partner and group work to promote oral language development.
- ➜ Frequent exposure to academic vocabulary across all content areas.
- ➜ Guided, supported practice for each task type before students attempt independent work.
- ➜ Visual and auditory supports to strengthen reading and listening comprehension.
- ➜ Built-in feedback prompts that help teachers provide timely corrections and clarifications.

These strategies reduce cognitive load during assessments, allowing students to focus on clearly and confidently showcasing their language skills.

Built-In Supports for Diverse Learners

Every student comes to exams with a different language profile. Long-term English Learners, students with interrupted formal education, and newcomers all require slightly different approaches. *Language Essentials* addresses this through:

- ➜ Differentiated guidance for teachers on common barriers and effective responses.
- ➜ Culturally sustaining content and relatable visuals.
- ➜ Scaffolds that gradually fade, allowing students to gain independence.
- ➜ Opportunities to review, rehearse, and revise oral and written responses as well as multiple-choice options.

These design features are not only instructional supports—they are equity tools that help ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Pacing and Preparation Structure



	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Task Type Practice					
Week 1	Read-Aloud Activity *Bunny's Magic Day*	Listen to a Story	Listen to a Story *(cont.)*	Talk About a Scene	Read-Along Story with Scaffolding
Week 2	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding *(cont.)*	Listen to a Short Exchange	Support an Opinion	Read-Along Word with Scaffolding
Week 3	Read-Aloud Activity *Your World: Shoes*	Read-Along Information	Label a Picture—Word with Scaffolding	Listen to an Oral Presentation	Summarize an Academic Presentation
Week 4	Summarize an Academic Presentation *(cont.)*	Label a Picture—Word with Scaffolding	Support an Opinion	Support an Opinion *(cont.)*	Listen to a Short Exchange
Week 5	Retell a Narrative	Retell a Narrative *(cont.)*	Read-Along Word with Scaffolding	Read-Along Word with Scaffolding *(cont.)*	Talk About a Scene
Week 6	Talk About a Scene *(cont.)*	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding *(cont.)*	Retell a Narrative	Retell a Narrative *(cont.)*
Test Practice					
Week 7	Listen to a Short Exchange	Listen to a Short Exchange	Listen to a Short Exchange *(cont.)*	Listen to a Story	Listen to a Story *(cont.)*
Week 8	Listen to an Oral Presentation	Listen to an Oral Presentation *(cont.)*	Talk About a Scene	Talk About a Scene	Talk About a Scene *(cont.)*
Week 9	Support an Opinion	Retell a Narrative	Retell a Narrative	Summarize an Academic Presentation	Summarize an Academic Presentation *(cont.)*
Week 10	Read-Along Word with Scaffolding	Read-Along Word with Scaffolding	Read-Along Story with Scaffolding	Read-Along Story with Scaffolding *(cont.)*	Read-Along Information
Week 11	Label a Picture—Word with Scaffolding	Label a Picture—Word with Scaffolding	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding	Write a Story Together with Scaffolding *(cont.)*

Task Practice

Task	Suggested Pacing
Read-Aloud Activity: *The Pandas Next Door*	2 days
Read and Respond	1 day
Listen to a Conversation	1 day
Talk About a Presentation	3 days
Write About a Picture	1 day
Write About an Experience	2 days
Read-Aloud Activity: *Our School Garden*	2 days
Read About Mathematics	1 day
Listen to a Conversation	1 day
Talk About Mathematics	3 days
Write About a Picture	1 day
Write About an Experience	2 days
Read and Respond	2 days
Listen to a Conversation	1 day
Talk About a Presentation	2 days
Write About a Picture	1 day
Write About a Social Activity	2 days

Test Practice

Task	Suggested Pacing
Listen to a Conversation *A* or Listen to a Conversation *B/C*	1 day
Listen to a Conversation *A* or Listen to a Conversation *B/C*	1 day
Talk About Social Studies *A* or Talk About Social Studies *B/C*	2 days
Talk About Science *A* or Talk About Science *B/C*	2 days
Read a Biography *A* or Read a Biography *B/C*	1 day
Read About Science *A* or Read About Science *B/C*	1 day
Write About a Picture *A* and Write About Social Studies *A* or Write About Social Studies *B/C*	2 days
Write About a Picture *A* and Write About Science *A* or Write About Science *B/C*	2 days

The *Language Essentials* series includes flexible pacing plans that align with most ELD instructional blocks and can be adapted to support:

- ➜ 20-minute daily prep over two to three months.
- ➜ Intensive test bootcamps during designated intervention periods.
- ➜ Ongoing integration into designated ELD time.

The first half of the student book focuses on task-specific practice while the second half offers test-like practice sessions to build stamina and familiarity.

Educators can use the embedded pacing calendar or adapt it to meet school site needs. Digital resources, such as audio, read-along ebooks, and fillable PDFs, further support varied implementation models.

Reducing Test Anxiety and Building Confidence

Language testing can provoke anxiety—especially for students unfamiliar with formal academic tasks. This program helps mitigate those effects by:

- ➜ Allowing students to preview and practice tasks before the actual test.
- ➜ Embedding encouraging language and supportive prompts.
- ➜ Ensuring students feel successful during rehearsal, which boosts confidence on test day.
- ➜ Modeling self-monitoring strategies, such as rereading and restating answers.

The tone throughout the materials is warm, student-centered, and aligned with the goal of building long-term communication skills—not just test performance.

Pathways to Reclassification

The ultimate goal of preparation is reclassification. Students who demonstrate proficiency on language proficiency exams may be eligible for reclassification, provided they meet additional criteria such as teacher evaluation and academic performance. *Language Essentials* supports this pathway by:

- ➜ Increasing the number of students who attain an English proficient designation.
- ➜ Strengthening the academic language needed to meet grade-level standards.
- ➜ Providing documentation of student performance and progress that can support teacher evaluations and family consultations.
- ➜ Reducing the number of students designated as long-term English learners by targeting skill gaps early.

When students reclassify, they gain access to new opportunities: electives, advanced coursework, enrichment programs, and full participation in the mainstream curriculum. For districts, improved reclassification rates also signal stronger ELD programming and contribute to positive performance on English learner progress indicators.



Building Proficiency

Language Essentials is intentionally designed to build proficiency across all four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each component of the program is aligned with the skills, tasks, and cognitive demands of summative language proficiency exams. But more than that, *Language Essentials* supports real-world language development, helping students express themselves with greater clarity, confidence, and accuracy—during the test and beyond.

Below is a domain-by-domain breakdown of how the product supports students in mastering the linguistic skills and strategies they need to perform well and make measurable progress toward reclassification.

Listening

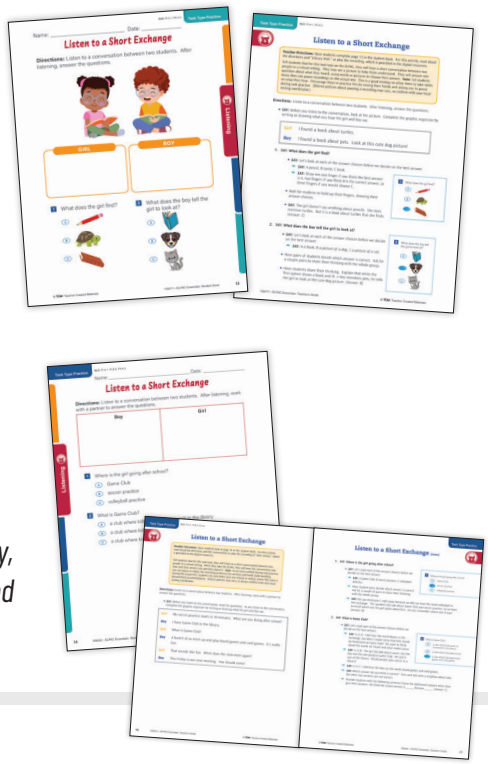
Listening tasks require students to extract meaning from oral texts, including stories, presentations, and conversations. These tasks build receptive language skills and test students' ability to follow sequences, infer meaning, and identify key ideas.

Research to Practice

Audio-based practice mirrors test conditions using age-appropriate, engaging content.

- Prelistening discussion prompts activate background knowledge to increase comprehension.
- Guided listening tasks help students learn how to focus on details and anticipate questions.
- Visuals paired with listening items provide context and support understanding.
- Follow-up questions promote discussion, retelling, and analysis—deepening both listening and speaking skills.

Result: Students build stamina, improve comprehension accuracy, and increase listening confidence, which reduces test anxiety and enhances performance in both listening and speaking domains.



Speaking

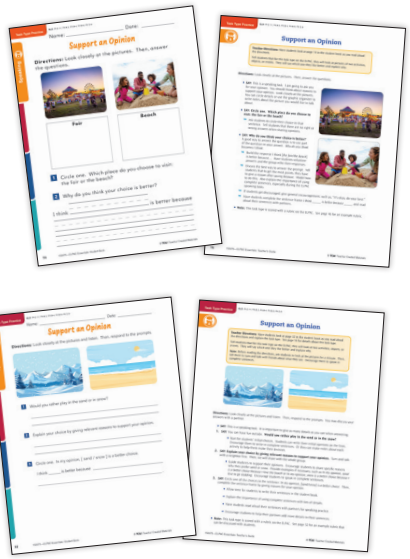
Speaking is one of the most complex domains, requiring students to organize their thoughts, use appropriate academic language, and speak fluently in response to prompts. Language exams assess everything from picture descriptions to personal narratives and the ability to support opinions.

Tier 1 Evidence

Integrate oral and written English language instruction into daily teaching.

Research to Practice

- Scripted prompts and sentence frames guide students in forming complete, coherent responses.
- Multiple opportunities exist to rehearse speaking tasks, including retelling narratives, justifying opinions, or explaining steps in a process.
- Sample responses and modeled speaking provide benchmarks for fluency and vocabulary usage.
- Peer discussion tasks build oral fluency and lower the affective filter through collaborative practice.
- Score sheets and rubrics help teachers provide targeted, rubric-aligned feedback.



Result: Students become more comfortable thinking aloud, supporting opinions, and using structured academic language in oral responses —all key elements of a proficient score.

Reading

The reading domain measures students' ability to comprehend literary and informational texts, identify central ideas, and analyze language use. Students are expected to demonstrate close reading skills and a growing command of academic vocabulary.

Tier 2 Evidence

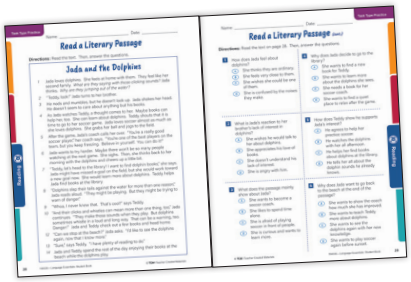
Ensure students read connected texts to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

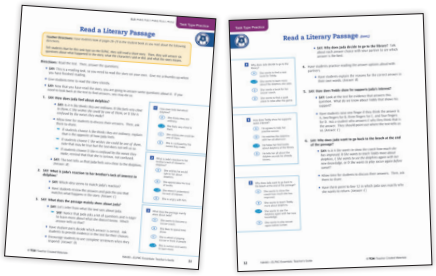
Research to Practice

- Academic vocabulary is introduced and practiced during each reading task.
- Texts and question formats reflect those found on the test to ensure familiarity and reduce cognitive friction.
- Reading comprehension strategies (e.g., finding key details, comparing and contrasting) are built into teacher guidance and student prompts.
- Text-dependent questions encourage close reading and promote deeper engagement with text structure and meaning.
- Integrated visuals and scaffolds make reading accessible for students at varying proficiency levels.



Result: Students improve their ability to extract meaning from grade-level texts, respond to multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and demonstrate growth in both general and content-specific vocabulary.





Writing

The writing domain includes both narrative and academic writing tasks. Students are expected to communicate using discipline-appropriate vocabulary and, most importantly, organize ideas clearly and logically.

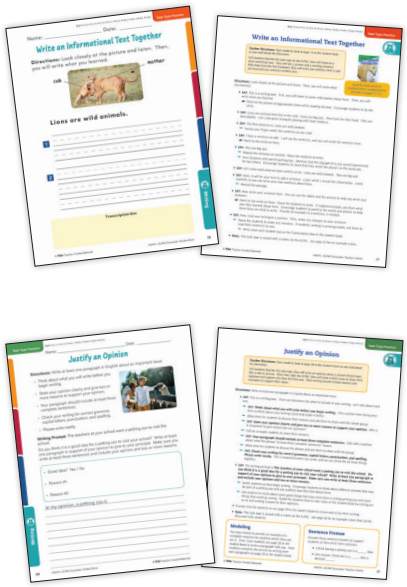
Tier 1 Evidence

Teach students to analyze ideas and write and recognize words.

Research to Practice

- Step-by-step writing scaffolds help students generate ideas, organize their responses, and revise for clarity.
- Graphic organizers and writing frames support structure and coherence in student writing.
- Sample paragraphs and guided modeling make academic writing more approachable.
- Editing checklists promote self-monitoring of grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary use.
- Sentence-level supports (e.g., transitions, sentence stems) help students move from phrase-based to fluent writing.

Result: Students learn to produce writing that meets rubric expectations for development, cohesion, and language accuracy—essential for reaching reclassification benchmarks.



Cross-Domain Integration

Beyond supporting each domain in isolation, the program also reinforces cross-domain connections:

- ➜ Read-aloud books provide background knowledge and context for tasks across listening, reading, writing, and speaking domains.
- ➜ Thematic vocabulary is reused and revisited across domains to reinforce learning.
- ➜ Domain-specific strategies (e.g., oral rehearsal before writing) help students internalize and transfer language skills across tasks.

Each feature of the program is designed to support authentic language use, foster metacognition, and equip students with strategies they can use independently on test day—and far beyond it.

Conclusion

The path to reclassification is one of the most important journeys an English learner can take. It represents far more than a score—it is a gateway to opportunity, access, and full participation in academic life at school. Yet for too many students, this path is slowed by uncertainty, inconsistent support, and a lack of targeted, test-aligned practice.

Language Essentials was built to change that. It provides students with a structured and supportive environment in which they can learn the language of exams—while also strengthening the skills they need to succeed in every subject. With explicit modeling, engaging practice, and flexible implementation options, the program demystifies the test for both students and educators.

For teachers, it is a trusted guide for delivering instruction that is aligned, purposeful, and grounded in research. For students, it is a scaffolded pathway toward confidence, clarity, and growth. For administrators, it is a strategic investment in improving reclassification rates, advancing equity, and raising the bar for English learner achievement.

The stakes are high. But the potential is higher.

By preparing students not only to take their language proficiency test but to succeed on it, this program ensures that multilingual learners can fully demonstrate their knowledge, chart a path to reclassification, and thrive in classrooms that honor and develop their full linguistic potential.



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