WIDA FOCUS ON

Writing with a Purpose

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Introduction

We use language for a variety of purposes every day. Opportunities for language use include listening to the news, ordering coffee at a drive-thru, engaging in conversations with our coworkers and friends, and sending a quick text to connect with our loved ones. Interactions like these have predictable structures and familiar language choices, and language use is easy when we know the "rules" of those situations.

For example, when ordering coffee at a drive-thru, we typically start with "Hi," order coffee "small dark roast, please," followed by "thank you" and a quick good bye. If we deviate from those norms, we sound like we do not belong. When we enter communities new to us, we need to learn the rules of those communities and how their members use language to accomplish different things.

Students, likewise, use language for their own purposes in and outside of school. When students move through different school spaces (such as health or Physical Education classrooms, science labs, study groups, or lunch rooms), they may be expected to use language in ways that are not familiar. English learners (ELs) are operating in these unfamiliar situations all the time.

This Focus Bulletin explores some ideas of how teachers can support ELs so they can use language for various purposes in the area of English Language Arts (ELA). This bulletin addresses the following questions:

1. How can teachers foster their students' engagement with writing?
2. What expectations do the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA emphasize in writing?
3. What are some approaches for addressing the expectations of the ELA standards in writing, as students
   a. share personal experiences through narratives, and
   b. defend their points of view through arguments?

How Do Teachers Foster Their Students' Engagement with Writing?

In this bulletin, we highlight key practices for fostering engagement with writing, fully acknowledging that teachers have many approaches available to them and that it is beyond the scope of this bulletin to address all of them. The key practices we highlight in this bulletin are as follows:

1. **Teachers create environments in which students have opportunities to connect writing with their own lives.** They draw on their students' home, community, and school experiences to develop as writers.

2. **Teachers create opportunities for students to "own literacy."** To them, "keeping ownership and student agency at the top of the academic agenda is really important" (Au, personal communication). Owning literacy means that students see the power of language and literacy as tools to achieve their own purposes as they engage with the world.

3. **Teachers have a "can do" attitude toward their students' developing writing practices,** even though their students' writing may contain grammatical errors.

4. **Teachers work on building student writing potential by explicitly drawing student attention to language choices hidden in "good writing."** For example, they draw attention to how the language choices in writing a personal narrative are different from language used in writing arguments as required by the CCSS for ELA, and they make those differences visible to their learners.

> "…language is learned, not because we want to talk or read or write about language, **but because we want to talk and read and write about the world.**.. especially for children, language is the medium of our interpersonal relationships, the medium of our mental life, the medium of learning about the world" (Cazden, 1977, p. 42)

> Larger purposes of writing
> - for the purposes of **personal fulfillment,**
> - for capturing and **sharing your human experiences** with others,
> - for **participating in the public discourse** around a public issue.
>
> Kathy Au

What Expectations Do the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts Emphasize in Writing?

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSSA.ELA) hold high expectations for what students do in writing, such as:

Students will

1. Write **arguments** to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1).

2. Write **informative/explanatory texts** to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2).

3. Write **narratives** to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3).

While the CCSS for ELA are clear about which text types students are expected to write (e.g., *arguments, informative/explanatory, narratives)*, what is not clear is what language choices are needed to write good arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives. We will explore some possible approaches to address the language expectations implicit in various text types required by CCSS in ELA. We will also connect these approaches with two of the WIDA Key Uses of academic language, Recount and Argue, which are described in the next section.

What are Some Approaches to Addressing the Expectations of the English Language Arts Standards in Writing?

Teachers use many different approaches when they teach English Language Arts to English Learners. Some approaches focus on accuracy of grammar and teach writing through discrete grammar skills, emphasizing correct tense usage or punctuation. In the CCSS for ELA, the focus is not only on correct grammar usage, but also on effective communication for different purposes. This focus on sophisticated and strategic language choices calls for an approach to teaching language that emphasizes language use. One such approach is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory, developed by Halliday and others (e.g., Christie & Martin, 1997; Halliday, 1978, 1994; Martin, 1993). This theory describes typical ways in which students are expected to use language in and across academic contexts and for various purposes.

Keeping this theory in mind, WIDA has identified four ways of using language (known as Key Uses of academic language). Figure 1 shows these Key Uses. The WIDA Key Uses correspond to the Anchor Standards in CCSS for ELA; this is shown in Table 1.
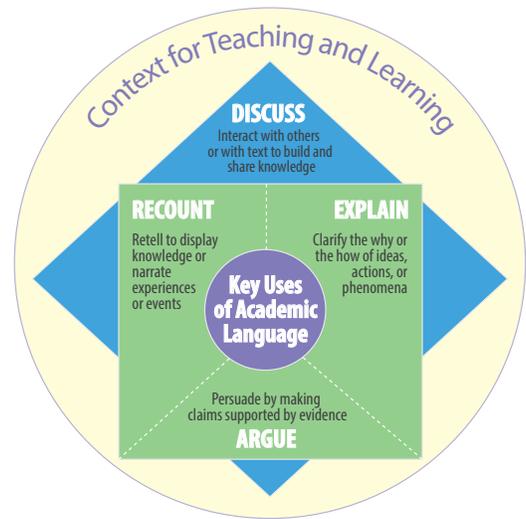
Figure 1. Key Uses of Academic Language

Table 1. WIDA Key Uses of Academic Language with Corresponding ELA Anchor Standards

Key Use	ELA Anchor Standards
Recount—To display knowledge or narrate experiences or events.	Anchor Standard for Writing CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3 *Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.*
Explain—To clarify the "why" or the "how" of ideas, actions, or phenomena.	Anchor Standard for Writing CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2 *Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.*
Argue—To persuade by making claims supported by evidence.	Anchor Standard for Writing CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 *Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.*
Discuss—To interact with others to build meaning, contribute ideas, and share knowledge.	Anchor Standard for Speaking and Listening CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 *Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*

In the next section, we highlight the use of two of the Key Uses, **Recount** and **Argue**. In this section, we walk into two classrooms to examine how to teach language in ways that foster students' agency and engagement with writing.

Both classroom teachers use various levels of scaffolding throughout the year to support students to be successful writers, including macro- and micro-scaffolding (Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011). **Macro-scaffolding** involves planning a series of units or lessons throughout the year that build on each other incrementally in such a way that students need less and less support as they move toward the writing of more complex tasks. **Micro-scaffolding** occurs at the lesson level, by structuring activities to move students toward more independence within a lesson. For students to become successful writers, they need to develop and solidify their ideas, analyze how authors use language in mentor texts and co-construct an approach together before they engage in independent writing. Following this scaffolding process gives students a chance to take ownership of their learning as the scaffolds are gradually dismantled when students no longer need them (Byrnes, 1998). We see examples of those two levels of scaffolding in these two example classrooms:

- A 4th grade EL teacher, Ms. Sorensen, whose students are sharing personal experiences through narratives

- A middle school EL teacher, Mr. Creapo, whose eighth graders are defending their position on racism in the past and present.

Macro- and Micro-Scaffolding Towards Writing of Personal Narratives

1. Develop ideas around a topic of choice (e.g., by using student first language, viewing, talking, and reading, going on fieldtrips).

2. Model how authors use language by analyzing mentor texts (which match the desired genre of the final product).

3. Develop working templates to support the reading and writing of the genre.

4. Co-construct texts together as a whole class and in small groups.

5. Allow students to write collaboratively on a topic.

6. Engage students in independent writing using various supports, if needed (e.g., class-created graphic organizers, working templates, or other supports from previous lessons).

How do Teachers Support ELs' Writing as They Share Personal Experiences Through Narratives?

Ms. Sorenson's students have been working on writing for a variety of purposes and across various disciplines. They wrote information reports on how Minnesota got its name and drew textual evidence from texts written by people indigenous to Minnesota. The next step is to write personal narratives as part of a larger trans-disciplinary unit. They start by reflecting on personal experiences and making a class gallery illustrating these experiences. Students share different experiences they have had, such as making a friend on the playground, going to an older brother's basketball game, helping Grandma make supper, going to a cousin's wedding, or being bored and going over to a friend's house. During this process, students learn that even seemingly insignificant experiences can be worth capturing and sharing with others. They realize that the reason for writing personal narratives is bigger than just good sentences, punctuation, and spelling: It is to capture and share their personal experiences using language strategically.

After students establish a purpose for writing and develop ideas around which experiences they want to write about, Ms. Sorenson shares a variety of texts that model personal narratives. She reads a couple of texts and draws students' attention to how personal narratives are organized and how authors use language to capture

and share personal experiences. They develop a working template to capture the organization of personal narratives with language choices. Their template reflects that most personal narratives start with an orientation telling the reader what the story will be about, followed by a series of events leading to a conclusion. Students notice that some narratives include dialogue, and open up with a catchy hook or a line of a dialogue or a question. The purpose of reading these mentor texts is to learn the structures of narratives and to identify how authors share their own experiences and what language authors use to achieve that purpose. During this time, students use graphic organizers to keep track of their learning of how narratives are structured as well as how authors use various language choices to create an orientation, to sequence events, and to draw a conclusion.

After students become familiar with organizational structures of narratives, Ms. Sorenson and the students co-construct a class narrative. Figure 2 shows common characteristics of narrative texts. During this phase, students choose a common experience they all participated in, and Ms. Sorenson writes down what the students are saying, guiding them to make effective language choices and pointing out the organizational structures such as orientation,

Figure 2. Narratives: Key Uses—Recount

Narratives: Key Use—Recount

Purposes and Types of Narratives

There are different types of narratives. Some are fictional, such as fairy tales, mysteries, science fiction stories, adventure stories, myths and fables, legends, and the like (Derewianka, 1999). Others are nonfiction, such as autobiographies, and biographies in which someone's life is recounted. Other types of narratives are personal narratives, which allow the writer to capture and share one's human experiences with others, providing a tool to create community (Au, personal communication; Brisk, 2015).

Instructional implications: How can I broaden the repertoire of different types of narratives? (e.g., do we tend to write more fictional narratives, such as fairy tales, and not as many biographies?) How can I help students connect writing of personal narratives to larger purposes? How can I validate students' personal experiences so that they can get excited about capturing and sharing them with others?

Organizational Structures of Narratives

Narratives may begin with an orientation that provides the reader/listener with the background necessary to understand the topic. The orientation presents information about who was involved, where it happened, when it happened and continues with a series of events ordered in chronological sequences. If the recount is more story based, the organizational structure is commonly called a **story map** (orientation, complication, resolution). Narrative structures differ among cultures, and students from other cultures will likely follow the norms of their cultures when writing personal narratives (Brisk, 2015).

Instructional implications: How can I expose my students to a full range of narrative types? How can I provide students with knowledge of structures of different types of narratives as scaffolds for writing?

Typical Language Features Narratives May Include

Discourse Dimension
- Ideas that follow a timeline (although events may not always occur in strict chronological sequence)
- Time connectives (later in the afternoon, the day before), although sometimes these may remain implicit

Sentence Dimension
- Past tenses to refer to past time
- Short punchy sentences or fragments to create special effects (e.g., It hurts. A lot! And then… Bump. Bump. Bump! Ouch! Yikes!)

Word/Phrase Dimension
- Adjectives (e.g., long and boring night), metaphors and similes (e.g., as slow as a turtle), prepositional phrases (e.g., in the middle of the night) to create detailed descriptions to help readers visualize the story
- A variety of saying verbs (e.g., grumbled, whispered, shouted), thinking verbs (e.g., considered, pondered, understood), doing verbs (e.g., bumped into, played)
- Personal pronouns to refer to people in the story

Instructional implications: How can I provide students with knowledge of structures of different types of narratives as scaffolds for writing?

Figure 3. Sample Writing

The Party

"Wake up sleepy head," my mom **whispered**.

"Huh?" I **mumbled**

"We're going to a party!" my mom **told** me.

"But I don't want to." I **grumbled**.

My mom **made a sad dog face.**

"Fine," I **told** her.

My sisters, Mom and Dad, I went in the car. It was **boring as a watching a turtle walking across a field.** *Bump, Bump, Bump.* The car was going up and down. The curvy road was bumpy.

Then, I realized "It's a wedding!" I **shouted**.

"Why do we need to come here?" I **asked** myself.

Everybody had fun except me. I was feeling **sad and lonely as a squirrel on its own.** Then, I saw my best friends and cousins.

I asked them, "Do you guys want to play?"

"Sure," they **responded**.

We played tag, Hide-N-Seek, and Freeze Tag. In the end, I learned to have fun at other places and to try new things.

Notice how the student

Created an effective hook with a quote.

Used effective techniques such as metaphors and similes.

Created a clear event sequence without overusing sequence words.

Used a variety of saying verbs throughout (whispered, mumbled, grumbled, shouted, asked, responded, told).

Provided a resolution and a concluding statement.

sequence of events, a conclusion, and the language features. During this phase, the teacher provides more scaffolding by pointing out a variety of temporal connectives (e.g., *soon after, later that day, in the afternoon, at the end of the trip)*, use of past tenses to recount past experiences (e.g., *were looking for, had found, waited*) as well as a variety of cohesive devices, such as synonyms to refer to the students (e.g., *students, children, fourth graders, kids)*. Other supports include an outline to follow the organizational pattern of personal narratives, word banks with transition words, and word walls with saying, thinking, and feeling verbs.

The final step is independent writing. The goal of the independent writing is not to recreate existing texts and follow templates, but to create original texts. Some students choose a partner to write with and others are ready to write alone. During the independent writing, students are able to use their graphic organizers, mentor texts, word banks, and organizational frames as supports. Some students might rely heavily on the templates and word banks during the independent writing, while others will not need them, depending on their levels of English language development. With appropriate supports and fully developed ideas, students should be able to produce their own texts.

Figure 3 shows a sample of a student writing analyzed through the language choices this student made when describing his personal experiences.

How Key Uses Are Impacting My Practice

"By focusing on the Key Uses, I am becoming a more effective language teacher. I can teach language for larger purposes – which is my responsibility as an ELD teacher."

"The mindshift is happening for me, as an ELD teacher. If my students are going to communicate more powerfully, they need to know what a good argument looks like. I am fine-tuning my instruction to support my ELs better."

"My students are learning that different language choices belong in different pieces of writing. Emotive language does not belong in the language of science, but it's important for arguments."

Mr. Creapo, Denver Public Schools

How Can Teachers Support ELs' Writing as They Defend Their Points of View Through Arguments?

Mr. Creapo is a middle school ELD teacher in Hill Campus of Arts and Sciences in Denver Public Schools. His students are mainly Latino from Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador and other countries. They are all English learners. For the past several weeks, they have been researching the state of race relations in the United States. This issue is very near to their hearts for many reasons, one of them having to do with the current election season. Students bring issues they hear on the news into their classroom to discuss, and Mr. Creapo taps into his adolescents' inner sense of social justice to use as the foundation for meaningful writing of arguments. This process situates writing within the larger purpose of literacy for citizenship, a tool for participation in the public discourse on the issue of race relations in the United States. Mr. Creapo and his students have been working toward these ELA standards:

> Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence C) Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. D) Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy. W. 8.1)

The learning target for this unit is the following:

> I can write arguments with clear reasons and relevant evidence. I can argue for my opinion in writing using emotive, objective, and evaluative language.

The final assignment is an editorial written to convince students to take action to expose racism in the past and present, starting within the school. The students use a specific process for developing an argument. They start by sharing personal experiences they have had with being discriminated against for their skin color and language. Then they watch a documentary about racism and segregation in Denver Public Schools and engage in oral discussions. Next, students become familiar with the genre of editorials by reading a range of editorials and identifying some structures of editorials and language features. Figure 4 shows common characteristics of arguments with structural components and language features organized by discourse, sentence, and word dimensions.

Here's what they find: Editorials include **personal experiences** using *evaluative language* leading to **claims** supported by references to statistics and research using *objective language;* **experiences of other people** using *emotive language;* and, **conclusions,** sometimes calling for action.

Then they co-construct an argument together as a class, with students providing the language, and the teacher guiding

Notice how the teacher scaffolds the writing process of arguments at unit and lesson levels:

1. Develop ideas around a topic of significance to students (e.g., by viewing, talking, and reading, sharing personal experiences, interviewing other students)

2. Model how authors use language by analyzing mentor texts (which match the desired genre of the final product)

3. Co-construct texts together as a whole class and in small groups before asking students to produce independent writing

Evaluative, Emotive, and Objective Language in Arguments

Recognizing how authors use evaluative, emotive, and objective language in arguments can be a tool to uncover how authors advance their perspective. This awareness is necessary to engage students in a critical analysis of what they hear and read. It will empower them to take a critical stance toward knowledge and information by recognizing author's bias, problematizing mainstream knowledge, and critiquing different views (Gibbons, 2009).

Evaluative language: important, significant, necessary, impressive.
Purpose: to persuade the reader to see things in the same way as the author

Emotive language: catastrophic, magnitude, heart-wrenching
Purpose: to get hold of the readers' emotions

Objective language: research states…, studies confirm… instead of I think…
Purpose: to create a logical appeal by presenting facts using research or statistics

Figure 4. Arguments: Key Uses—Argue

Arguments: Key Use—Argue

Purposes and Types of Arguments

The purpose of arguments in English Language Arts is to persuade the audience to a position, point of view or interpretation, via letters to the editor, or in political speeches, for example (Butt et al., 2000, Derewianka, 1990). Arguments include a process of making a claim and using evidence to support or refute that claim. One of the larger purposes for writing arguments for students is for citizenship: to participate in the public discourse on a larger issue.

Instructional implications: How can I provide students with opportunities to examine arguments in media? How can I help students connect writing of arguments to larger purposes? How can I tap into students' inner sense of justice as fuel for defending points of view they are passionate about?

Organizational structures of arguments

Generally, arguments begin with a statement of position that provides some background information about the issue in question. The remainder of the text provides the argument (point of view), evidence, and examples to strengthen the claim. An argument ends by summing up the position and/or calling to action. Sometimes a writer includes both sides of the argument. In that case, the conclusion includes recommendations favoring one side.

Instructional implications: How can I provide students with knowledge of structures of different types of arguments as scaffolds for writing?

Typical Language Features Arguments May Include

Discourse Dimension
- Connectives to sequence claims (e.g., first, second, third, finally, in conclusion, to summarize, therefore) to present counter-claims (e.g., however, nevertheless, on the other hand) to show relationships of similarity or difference (similarly, moreover, nevertheless, despite this, on the other hand)
- Summary statements used to pull ideas together

Sentence Dimension
- A variety of tenses may be used depending on the purpose (past tense to summarize past, present tenses to state the present, if-then clauses to state real or imagined effects)
- Modality to present arguments or claims as possibilities rather than facts (it is likely that, it may be that)

Word/Phrase Level Dimension
- Topic-specific vocabulary (racism, segregation, racial divide, hatred) to speak with authority
- Evaluative language indicating writer's personal belief or stance (e.g., it is extremely unlikely)
- Emotive language to create emotional appeal (e.g., devastating, heart-wrenching)
- Language referring to research or statistics to create logical appeal (e.g., research studies have found that… Twenty percent of students reported that…)
- Language to create moral appeal (e.g., it is our duty to…)
- Language choices to connect with the audience (e.g., peers vs. adolescents)
- Modal verbs to call to action (we must act now, we should not stop…)

Instructional implications: How can I make these language features more explicit to my ELs? What activities should I consider to help my ELs choose language specific to audience?

the language choices to create a strong claim, and provide evidence and reasoning. Students edit and rewrite together to scaffold the writing process through a think-aloud and modeling. Following the co-construction phase, the students write their pieces independently. Students are given a choice to use the templates and other supports they developed earlier as supports during writing, including the piece they co-constructed together. Some students choose to use a scaffolding framework for argument, like the example shown in Figure 5, which is adapted from Gibbons, 2009.

Figure 5. Scaffolding Framework for Argument with Counterarguments

Title:
Say what this argument is about, and give your opinion. Claim: Racism is the issue that causes many problems. Many people argue that… However, in my opinion…
Give your reasons for your opinion (your arguments). There are a number of reasons why this is the case (why you believe that). First … In addition … Moreover … Finally …
(optional, if counterarguments are provided) Now give other people's reasons for disagreeing with your opinion (counterarguments). On the other hand… In addition… It has also been suggested that…
Give your conclusion. Remind the reader of your view and summarize your reasons. However, overall it can be argued that… because…

While students had been accustomed to using a five-paragraph format for other essays, they were faced with the question: Is that format the most appropriate? By reviewing a range of different editorials, they learn that journalists make choices about format based on the audience, the genre, and the purpose.

Figure 6 shows an editorial from one student from Mr. Creapo's class. The student writing was shortened for the purposes of this publication. A brief analysis is provided as a starting point to analyze student writing of an editorial. The structure of writing follows the scaffolding framework students used in writing an argument.

Figure 6. Racism and Stereotypes

Student Writing Sample	Teacher Analysis
There has been racism going on back in the days in U.S and still goes on today. For example, slavery, segregation, and KKK. All of these things are the main ones of segregation and racism. **Many people argue that** racism caused was the thing of the past. **However, in my opinion,** racism still continues today.	*Statement of position or claim. A preview of examples is provided.*
There are a number of reasons why racism still happens today. **First,** Donald Trump says he is not racist but then he says things like "When I'm president I am building a wall so no more Mexican immigrants don't come to the U.S because they bring guns drugs and other things." That quote was very racist and that can cause lots of problems when he becomes president. **In addition, there are still a lot of stereotypes.** For example, they say all black people like chicken and watermelon, or all white people like Starbucks, all Asians like rice, and lots of stuff. **Moreover,** as students shared in our class, racism happens to them because of their language or their skin color. **Finally,** all the shooting by cops of black people now started a movement Black Lives Matter!	*Introductory statement is provided to state what's coming.* *Reasons to support claim are stated here.* *Connectives are used to create cohesion: first, in addition, moreover, finally…* *In arguments, it's important not just to have the right language choices and cohesion, but the strong reasoning to support one's claim. Here's the reasoning supports the claim*
With regard to racism there has to be a solution to this. I have been thinking about a couple of solutions. The solutions I had in mind is that to teach students better at a younger age. I say that for students because they should be taught right and at a younger age so they don't grow up to judge a book by its cover. They also should get together and work together and do the same thing as MLK did and protest. If Donald Trump becomes president, hopefully he doesn't. **Now there is more integration than segregation so if we improve or stay like this we are all good.**	*Solutions are offered.* *By ending on a positive note, we are pretending that racism is not a big problem anymore. There is a danger in thinking that way and teachers should engage students in discussing the danger of optimism.*

Supporting Development of Student Writing Through Feedback

Teachers can support students' writing through a collaborative feedback sharing process, also known as conferencing. The purpose of conferencing is not to provide an evaluation of the final product, but to use feedback as a learning tool for both teacher and student. Providing feedback on student writing can feel overwhelming. English learners are faced with a challenge to communicate their ideas in a language that's new to them. Learning how English works, in addition to learning how to organize their ideas, brings a double challenge. It is important that the teachers support the writing process through macro- and micro-scaffolding approaches illustrated in the vignettes. When conferencing with students, it may be easy for a teacher to focus the feedback on grammar errors, poor spelling, and lack of punctuation. However, providing feedback through the lens of what is not there is not a useful approach. Instead, we recommend looking at what students can do and building on that. It can also help teachers view language features through the lens of which language choices are needed for which particular purposes. The guiding questions in Table 2, at the end of this Focus Bulletin, were built on Gibbons (2009) *Question Framework for Assessing Writing* (p. 122) and the WIDA Features of Academic Language (www.wida.us).

How to Use the Guiding Questions Framework

The guiding questions framework shown in Table 2 consists of six categories for supporting the development of writing. Each category has guiding questions. The sections below correspond to the six categories in the framework. When using this framework, follow these recommendations:

- Consider these six categories as ideas for what to consider when assessing student writing through various pieces that students write over the course of the year. Over time, as the students write other pieces, teacher comments build up into a comprehensive portfolio of students' strengths and will reveal areas to focus on as they are developing as writers through the years of schooling.

> … it is more useful to view children's writing as "developmental approximations rather than errors" and children as "active meaning makers who use writing as a way of making sense of and constructing their own social world" (Fang, 1998, p. 342).

- Start with Ideas and Purpose, not with Sentence Grammar. The rationale for this order is that it will provide an opportunity to identify student strengths and whether the ideas have been fully developed.

- Develop student-friendly questions based on this framework in a language that students can understand and use in guiding their own writing (see Gibbons, 2009).

1. IDEAS AND PURPOSE

Start by looking at ideas, because language follows ideas. Students should learn that language serves their purposes to communicate ideas. If the ideas are not fully developed, what good is perfect grammar? Students can have perfect grammar, but without fully developed ideas, they won't achieve their purpose for writing as a method for making meaning of the world.

2. ORGANIZATION

Looking at the organization of text gives students an opportunity to use what they have learned from mentor texts and their organization. Feedback around organization can give students an opportunity to organize texts for specific genres or text types. Students should learn that different texts follow different structures. For example, students might produce a personal narrative but the assignment called for an argument. The structures of those two assignments are different because they serve different purposes.

3. COHESION

Cohesion refers to the flow of the text. Sometimes we tell students that their writing doesn't "flow," but that does not provide much useful information to the students. What does "flow" mean? When writing personal narratives, do the events described follow a timeline? Or when writing arguments, does the writer help the reader understand connections between arguments and evidence? Different cohesive devices are used to create cohesion in personal narratives and arguments. Feedback on how to create cohesion in various pieces of writing should not come as a surprise to students, if they have already identified those devices (such as connectives of sequence or relationships) in mentor texts.

> If the ideas are not fully developed, what good is it to have perfect grammar? Students can have perfect grammar, but without fully developed ideas, they won't achieve their purpose for writing as a method for making meaning of the world.

4. LANGUAGE RICHNESS

When giving feedback on language richness in a personal narrative, again, keep in mind that the language of personal narratives is different from what makes language rich in arguments. Personal narratives will consist of various descriptive words to paint a vivid picture of the setting—something arguments do not typically have. In personal narratives, rich language is needed to provide details about the setting, people involved, and their experiences. In arguments, rich language varies based on whether the author is trying to create an emotional appeal though the use of emotive language or other methods.

5. SENTENCE GRAMMAR

Commenting on sentence grammar is probably in most teachers' comfort zone. When providing feedback in this area, look for opportunities to comment on what the student is doing well and on which patterns the student may need more support. How can you support the student in using a variety of tenses? In personal narratives, past tenses are used more to recount personal experiences, while arguments, claims and evidence are written in present tense. Again, students will have observed sentence grammar when they worked with mentor texts and created templates to document how other authors used language in personal narratives and in arguments. Punctuation can also be addressed in sentence grammar.

6. VOCABULARY

Feedback in the area of vocabulary should also match the text type of genre. A variety of thinking, feeling, and saying verbs are important in personal narratives. Arguments need words that convey various types of appeals (ethical, logical, or moral). Also, the topic-specific vocabulary can help students sound more authoritative and to enact their hard-achieved expertise when defending their points of view.

Table 2. Guiding Questions for Teachers to Use When Providing Student Feedback* (Adapted from Gibbons, 2009)

Typical Organizational Structures and Linguistic Features of Personal Narratives	Guiding Questions Framework for Teachers to Use When Providing Student Feedback

KEY USE: RECOUNT
 	
Text Type/Genre: Personal narrative e.g., *Helping in the Family Garden*
 	
Purpose: Capture and share student own experiences with others
 	
Typical Organization
1. Orientation
2. Events
3. Conclusion
 	
TYPICAL LANGUAGE FEATURES
Discourse Dimension
• Ideas follow a timeline (although events may not always occur in strict chronological sequence)
• Time connectives *(later, the day before)*, although sometimes these may remain implicit
Sentence Dimension
• Past tenses to refer to past time
Word/Phrase Dimension
• Action or doing verbs *(arrive, go, run, fight, stop);* thinking/feeling verbs *(think, feel, hear, wonder);* saying verbs *(said, replied, shouted, whispered)*
• Descriptive adjectives *(one humongous zucchini)*
• Pronouns to refer to people or things
	1. IDEAS AND PURPOSE
	
	  a) Can the reader follow the narrative? What language strategies does the author use to communicate the purpose of the narrative to the reader (e.g., *introduction with a question, conclusion with a moral or a message, implicit message)*?
	
	2. ORGANIZATION
	
	  a) Does the writing follow the structure of the narrative? (orientation, events, conclusion) or are any stages missing (e.g., *orientation is missing*)
	
	3. COHESION
	
	  a) Do the events described follow a timeline (discourse dimension)?
	  b) What language choices does the author use to help the reader understand the time relationships (e.g., *connectives, phrases, headings, pagination,*)? (discourse dimension)
	  c) Is there appropriate variety in the use of connectives (discourse dimension)?
	
	4. LANGUAGE RICHNESS
	
	  a) Does the author provide sufficient detail in the descriptions of setting, characters, and character experiences, feelings, actions?
	
	5. SENTENCE GRAMMAR
	
	  a) What patterns do you see in language the author uses correctly and language errors that the author makes (sentence dimension) (e.g., *subject-verb agreement, use of tenses, correct word order, pronouns having clear referent)*?
	
	6. VOCABULARY
	
	  a) Is appropriate vocabulary used to match the topic (word dimension)? Is there appropriate variety in the words and phrases the author uses (word dimension)? (e.g., *range of "saying" verbs in a narrative text*)?

* Do not attend to every category in each piece of writing. Consider these ideas when developing student writing over the course of the year. Over time, as the student writes other pieces, your comments will build up into a comprehensive portfolio of students' strengths and will reveal areas to focus on as they are developing as writers through the years of schooling.

Typical Organizational Structures and Linguistic Features of Arguments	Guiding Questions for Teachers to Use When Providing Student Feedback*

## KEY USE: ARGUE 	
 	
Text Type/Genre: Argument e.g., *Racism is the issue of the present as much as it is the issue of the past*
 	
Purpose: Defend one's position, often using one or more of the three appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)
 	
Typical Organization
1. Statement of position (claim)
2. Series of arguments that bolster the claim, each with supporting evidence and reasoning that explains how the evidence supports the claim
3. May include counterarguments (pros and cons)
4. Reaffirmation of writer's position and may include recommendations favoring one side (if multiple sides are presented)
5. May include call to action
Discourse Dimension
• Connectives to sequence claims (e.g., *first, second, third, finally, in conclusion, to summarize, therefore*) to present counterclaims (e.g., *however, nevertheless, on the other hand)* to show relationships of similarity or difference *(similarly, moreover, nevertheless, despite this, on the other hand)*.
• Summary statements used to pull ideas together
Sentence Dimension
• A variety of tenses may be used depending on the purpose (past tense to summarize past, present tenses to state the present, if-then clauses to state real or imagined effects, and so on)
• Modality to present arguments or claims as possibilities rather than facts *(it is likely that, it may be that)*
Word/Phrase Level Dimension
• Topic-specific vocabulary *(racism, segregation, racial divide, hatred)* to speak with authority and clarity
• Evaluative vocabulary indicating writer's personal belief or stance (e.g., *it is <u>extremely</u> unlikely)*
• Emotive language to create emotional appeal (e.g. *devastating, brutal killing, heart-wrenching)*
• Language referring to research or statistics to create logical appeal
• Language to create moral appeal (e.g., *it is our duty to…)*
	## 1. IDEAS AND PURPOSE
	
	  a) Can the reader identify the claim? Can the reader anticipate what the argument will be about (e.g., *is there a preview of arguments)?*
	  b) Are the ideas developed around the claim?
	
	## 2. ORGANIZATION
	
	  a) Does the writing follow the structure of the argument? (e.g., *claim, preview of arguments, supporting evidence, reaffirmation of writer's position, conclusion/call to action)*
	
	## 3. COHESION
	
	  a) What language choices does the author use to help the reader understand connections between arguments and evidence? (discourse dimension)
	  b) What connectives does the author use to sequence claims, to present counter-claims, to connect claim with evidence, to show relationships of similarity and difference? (discourse dimension)?
	
	## 4. LANGUAGE RICHNESS
	
	  b) What language choices does the author use to create emotional/logical or moral appeal? (Word/phrase level)
	  c) What language choices does the author use to connect with their audience (word/phrase/sentence level)?
	
	## 5. SENTENCE GRAMMAR
	
	  b) What patterns do you see in language the author uses correctly and language errors that the author makes (sentence dimension) (e.g., *subject-verb agreement, use of tenses, correct word order, pronouns having clear referent)?*
	
	## 6. VOCABULARY
	
	  b) Is appropriate vocabulary used to sound authoritative (word dimension)?

*Do not attend to every category in each piece of writing. Consider these ideas when developing student writing over the course of the year. Overtime, as the student writes other pieces, your comments will build up into a comprehensive portfolio of students' strengths and will reveal areas to focus on as they are developing as writers through the years of schooling.

Future Publications on Key Uses

While the purpose of this Focus Bulletin was to illustrate Personal Narratives and Arguments in English Language Arts, we hope to develop future Focus Bulletins describing other Key Uses in other disciplines.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

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