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Connecting Content and Language

What Is Academic Language?

Academic language includes the vocabulary, functions and forms of language, and the fluency to demonstrate thinking and learning across the curriculum. “(It) refers to the specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse/textual, and functional skills associated with academic instruction and mastery of academic material and tasks” (Saunders, Goldenberg, and Marcelletti 2010, 49–50). Academic language has been used in educational conversations as a vehicle for supporting academic achievement. We hear educators say academic language is important across the curriculum; students need to develop academic language to be successful; every lesson should include academic language; *all* students need academic language. We can talk about it at a conceptual level as something that holds great importance in pedagogy and curricula and though true, these statements do not provide the guidance teachers need to plan with and facilitate academic language development. How can we understand it in a concrete way to operationalize what is meant by academic language development? In its simplest form, we can begin the conversation by helping teachers understand that academic language is about connecting content to language. It is selecting what we are going to teach (processing content) and the vehicle through which students can access the information (acquiring language) and share what they have learned (producing language). Processing and producing language to learn content and discuss what you’ve learned develops academic language.

This resource helps teachers engage in the conversation of the *what* and the *how* of academic language. It looks at language from a holistic perspective—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—that is integrated in complex ways as students access information and share their thinking. Academic language makes learning possible. It opens lines of communication as students engage in discussions and dialogue around their thinking and learning. It takes the ability to *listen* to a spoken message and decipher meaning from multiple perspectives and alternating points of view. It involves the ability to decode and process written language in its many representations to access information when *reading*. It allows students to create *written* examples of their thinking and *articulate* (speak) their ideas to many audiences and for a variety of purposes.

Throughout the school day, students listen to messages, read information, create written texts, and share their thinking. Whether in science, social studies, art, music, physical education, language arts, or math, students are constantly using their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The work of supporting students to do just that—use language across the curriculum—is the work of academic language development.

Connecting Content and Language *(cont.)*

Academic language development is the process by which students learn and express their thinking. Teachers of academic language development must find opportunities to explicitly and implicitly support students with this goal throughout the day. The strategies presented in this resource are intended to support teachers in developing students' academic language. Though the strategies are presented effectively in developing particular domains of academic language development—academic vocabulary, comprehensible input, comprehensible output, listening and reading comprehension, and academic writing—no single set of strategies works in isolation. Language is complex and incorporates multiple domains at a time; however, the strategies have been organized into categories to demonstrate their strength for a particular element of academic language development.

Academic language development and academic language are not synonymous. Academic language can be defined as the *what* in academic language development. It includes the function, forms, academic and content vocabulary, and fluency necessary to access and share ideas. Academic language development is the process through which students learn academic language. It is a complex process that includes identifying academic language, comprehensible input, comprehensible output, listening and reading comprehension, and academic writing. These elements can support students in developing academic language as they connect content and language throughout the day.

Forms and Functions of Language

The Common Core speaking and listening standards state, “To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner” (2010, 22). For students to successfully engage in these rigorous academic discussions, they need to develop academic language. Teachers will need to explicitly model language used for a variety of purposes for students to acquire language through successful “listening” opportunities, as outlined in the standards. For example, anchor standards ask students to be able to interpret information presented orally and through other media, engage in conversations with diverse partners, and orally share their thinking, demonstrating command of formal English (SL.2, SL.1, SL.6). To support students, teachers will need to have a clear understanding of the language demands of academic tasks.

Connecting Content and Language *(cont.)*

Defining academic language in concrete terms includes understanding what the purpose is for using language in any given exchange and the forms needed to meet those purposes. “The context for any piece of language is characterized by three features: what is being discussed (or written) about; the relationship between the speaker and listener (or writer and reader); and whether the language is spoken or written” (Halliday and Hansan 1985, as cited in Gibbons 2009, 47). Here we focus on identifying what is being discussed or written about as it relates to the context in which it is being shared.

Language *functions* can be defined as the purpose for using language. Why are we using language? Is it to compare, describe, justify, or persuade? When students are asked to produce language, they are given a task—a purpose for using language. They are asked to think in particular ways that set this purpose. For example, if students were asked to interpret the meaning of a text orally, the function, or purpose for using language in this case is interpretation. Identifying the thinking involved in a task helps determine the language function students will need to share their thinking.

Functions of language are directly connected to language *forms*. The forms of language, also referred to as frames of language, are the structures used to fulfill a function. For example, the language function may be interpretation. Forms may include:

- I think this means _____.
- I understand this to mean _____.
- I infer that _____.
- Based on _____, I deduce _____.
- If I read between the lines, I think _____.

As thinking skills become more complex, so do the functions of language needed to express one’s thinking (Beltran, Mora-Flores, and Sarmiento 2013). We start to see a combination of simple functions of language to achieve more complex thinking. For example, interpreting is a higher-level thinking skill. It requires students to be able to comprehend and process the details of a text, think about multiple perspectives, deduce meaning, and ultimately provide their own interpretation of the information. The language function is just as complex. Students will need to use forms of language that describe, question, deduce, and infer in order to articulate an interpretation. The use of forms and functions of language in content-area instruction is prevalent. All content areas require students to process the information in different ways. Connecting language and forms and functions to the thinking around the content will develop academic language.

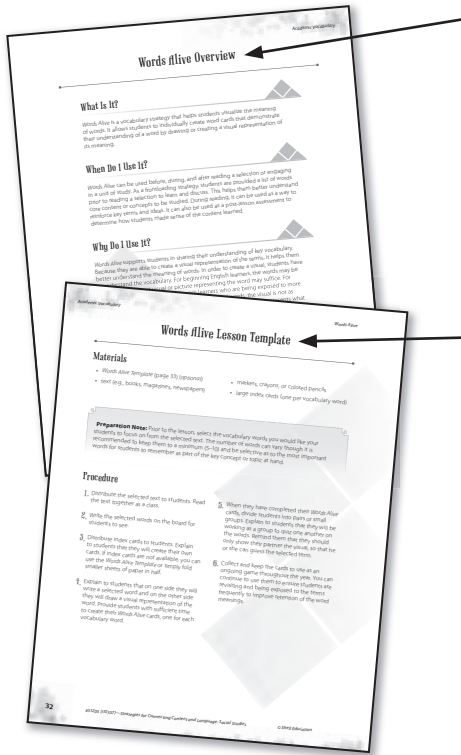
How to Use This Book

The strategies in this resource were designed to support you as the content-area teacher to enhance language-development opportunities in your classroom. It provides strategies that support key elements for developing academic language across the curriculum, including academic vocabulary, comprehensible input, comprehensible output, listening and reading comprehension, and academic writing. Also included within each lesson are ideas for differentiation in your classroom. All students are academic-language learners. They continue to engage with and acquire language that supports their access to information and share their thinking of complex tasks and content.

The strategies were created to help you see how they can enhance your lessons in ways that make them language intentional and language rich. The purpose is to give you a range of ideas and strategies to use when delivering social studies content to students and for providing them with opportunities to share their thinking and learning. The strategies are a bridge connecting the language to the content, thus the strategies are full of oral- and written-language exchanges. Students will be talking, moving, and listening to one another, while capturing new ideas and language along the way. Approaching your social studies planning from a language perspective will help students access the information and develop academic language in preparation for meeting content standards. Students will learn content and develop language to enrich their overall learning experience.

This resource is one of a series of four that provides ideas for planning lessons across the four core content areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Each notebook provides specific lessons that tailor the strategies to an intended grade range as well as a content-area standard and speaking and listening standard. Each strategy presented in this notebook uses social studies content to demonstrate how easily and effectively you can support students' academic language development.

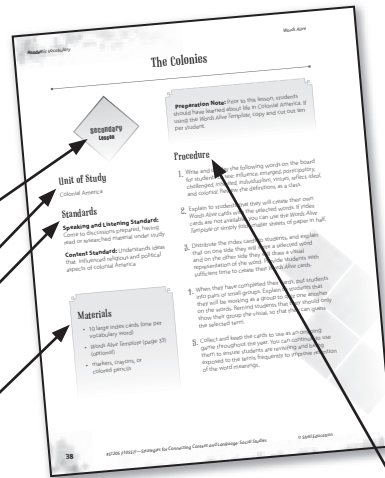
How to Use This Book *(cont.)*



Each strategy begins with an **overview** page. This page explains the strategy and provides information about when and why to use it.

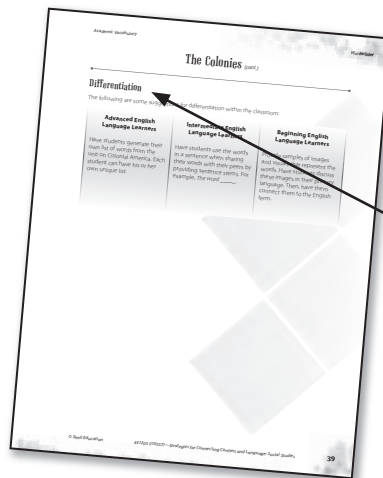
The **lesson template** provides a general outline of how to implement the strategy. This framework can be used to create lessons using other standards beyond what is provided in the model lessons.

For each strategy, a model lesson is provided for grades K–2, 3–5, and secondary. Each model lesson begins by identifying the intended **grade range**, suggested **unit of study**, and the appropriate **standards** addressed in the lesson. Each lesson includes both a speaking and listening standard, as well as a content standard.



The **materials** section lists the necessary supplies that should be gathered prior to delivering the lesson.

The **procedure** section provides a step-by-step plan to successfully conduct the lesson with students.



The **differentiation** section of the lesson provides suggestions for differentiating instruction based on students' language proficiency level.

Listening and Reading Comprehension Strategies Overview

When working with English language learners, we must think about creating a language-rich environment. The term *language-rich environment* is more commonly used in literature on the first-language acquisition of infants. Children who come from homes full of meaningful conversations begin school with a rich vocabulary and strong oral discourse, which prepares them for developing traditional literacy skills in school. English language learners begin school and find themselves once again learning a new language. They will rely on language-rich experiences to support their second language acquisition as they did in learning a first language. They need to hear language used for a variety of purposes, engage in conversations with different partners, and see language. Learning is not accomplished by simply receiving information, but via intelligent inquiry and thought through talk and dialogue (Stabb 1986; Chen and Mora-Flores 2006; Gibbons 2009).

Listening- and reading-comprehension strategies support students when they encounter unfamiliar words or text. We teach students how to make meaning from difficult words or texts, initially at a recall level, leading to a level of critical and creative thinking. “The purpose of specifically teaching critical thinking . . . is to improve the thinking skill of students and thus better prepare them to succeed in the world” (Shafersman 1991, under “Purpose and Rationale of Teaching Critical Thinking”).

Students are exposed to information all day, every day. Information is presented from multiple perspectives and through a variety of sources. The challenge, however, is to teach students to know what to do with the information to which they have access. To help students reach this level of listening and reading comprehension, we must help them access sources of information, draw meaning when listening or reading, and learn to think and read deeply within and across additional sources of information.

Learning is not accomplished by simply receiving information, but via intelligent inquiry and thought through talk and dialogue.

The listening and reading comprehension strategies in this section include:

- Reading Outward
- See-Say-Script
- Critical Thinking Bulletin

Reading Outward Overview

What Is It?



Reading Outward is a reading comprehension strategy that guides students to process a piece of text from the inside out. They look closely at the main ideas of the text and then relate it to broader concepts or themes connected to the real world. Extending the meaning of the text to the outside world makes the reading experience meaningful. Students begin to understand that reading is a meaning-making process used every day, in diverse context, not just for school.

When Do I Use It?



Reading Outward can be used after students have read a text. Once they have had a chance to process the basic thinking about the text, often called basic recall, or the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the text read, they can be guided to think more deeply about what they have read.

Why Do I Use It?



Students are asked to look within the text to uncover layers of meaning, searching for main ideas or themes. They can then think about how the deeper meaning of the text relates to concepts, ideas, or experiences they are familiar with or which can be presented from the real world. Students see that what they read in school helps them understand life beyond the classroom. This provides real purpose and relevance to the reading experience.

Reading Outward Lesson Template

Materials

- narrative or informational text selection
- *Reading Outward Organizer* (page 220)

Procedure

1. Select a text to read with students. After reading, have a discussion with the class about the text. This is an open discussion about their interpretation of the text at an introductory level.
2. Distribute copies of the *Reading Outward Organizer* to students. Have students record their notes of what was previously discussed about the text in the “Information from the Text” section.
3. Have students think more deeply about the text by asking the following questions:
 - What is the text really about?
 - What is the main point the author is trying to make/share?
 - What is the main idea?
 - What is the theme of the text?
4. Allow students time to record their ideas onto the “Main Idea/Theme” section of their graphic organizer.
5. Based on the responses in step 3, follow up with questions that take students outside the text to make real-world connections. The following are some suggestions:
 - Where in the world have you seen an example of this?
 - Can you think of something related to ____?
 - What else does it make you think about?
6. Have students record their ideas onto the “Reading Outward” section of their graphic organizer.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading Outward Organizer

Directions: Read the selected story. Then, fill out the graphic organizer below.

Text: _____

Author: _____

➔ **Reading Inward** ⬅

Information from the Text	Main Idea/Theme

⬅ **Reading Outward** ➔

Relate:	Real-World Example:

To the Market, We Go

Grades
K–2
Lesson

Unit of Study

Communities Past and Present

Standards

Speaking and Listening Standard:

Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media

Content Standard: Understands family life in a community of the past and life in a community of the present

Materials

- *Reading Outward Organizer* (page 220)
- *Markets around the World* (pages 223–224)
- chart paper

Procedure

1. Ask students to brainstorm what kinds of things they find at the grocery store or market. Record and display their ideas.
2. Explain to students that markets can be found throughout the world. Depending on where they are located, you can find different types of items for sale.
3. Distribute copies of *Markets around the World*. Do a picture walk, and encourage students to share what they believe is happening in the text.
4. Read the text to students. Stop to clarify vocabulary or any new concepts.
5. After reading, have a discussion with the class about the text. This is an open discussion about their interpretation of the text at an introductory level. Distribute copies of the *Reading Outward Organizer* to students (for younger students, you may choose to complete the organizer as a class on the board or on chart paper).
6. Model for students how to complete the graphic organizer as a class. Explain how to record general information on the left side of the organizer, and information about the main idea of the text on the right side. Have students record ideas from what was previously discussed about the text in the “Information from the Text” section.
7. Have students think more deeply about the text by asking the following questions:
 - What is the text really about?
 - What is the main point that the author is trying to make/share?
 - What does the text make you think about?
 - What other ideas or concepts are similar to what we learned from the text?
8. Allow students to record their ideas onto the “Main Idea/Theme” section of their graphic organizer.

To the Market, We Go *(cont.)*

9. Based on the responses in step 5, follow up with questions that take students outside the text to make real-world connections. The following are some suggestions:
- Can you think of something related to...?
 - What else does it make you think about?
10. Have students record their ideas onto the “Reading Outward” section of their graphic organizer.

Differentiation

The following are some suggestions for differentiation within the classroom:

Advanced English Language Learners

Have students complete the graphic organizer on their own first then share their ideas with the whole class to create the class chart.

Intermediate English Language Learners

Have students orally share their graphic organizer with a partner.

Beginning English Language Learners

Provide students with language frames to answer questions. For example, *The text makes me think about ____.*
It is related to ____.

Markets around the World

Around the world, people go to market to buy what they need and sell what they make, grow, or catch. These markets are not like the grocery stores or supermarkets you know. Just about everything you can imagine is bought and sold there!

Asia

China and Thailand are home to famous markets. Vietnam also has many markets, including a floating one. Fresh fish are sold from tanks. Fruits and vegetables like dragon fruit and soy beans are also sold.

Women often carry what they buy on their head!



Markets around the World *(cont.)*

The Middle East

Middle Eastern markets are filled with many useful herbs and spices and many good things to eat and use. People can shop for meats, melons, and strawberries. They can also shop for brass and copper trays and teapots. They can buy rice, beans, and fish. They can even buy yogurt and honey.



To Market, To Market

People buy and sell goods all over the world. The next time you visit a market, think about how many people around the world may be shopping in their markets at the exact same moment, just like you.



Fighting for Freedom

Grades
3–5
Lesson

Unit of Study

Slavery

Standards

Speaking and Listening: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally

Content Standard: Understands aspects of the abolition movement in the 18th and 19th centuries

Materials

- *Reading Outward Organizer* (page 220)
- *Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad* (pages 227–228)

Procedure

1. Explain to students that they will be learning about people who fought to help free slaves in the South.
2. Distribute copies of *Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad*, and read the selected text to students. Tell students to pay close attention to the details in the text because they will be asked to connect those details to real life after the reading is finished.
3. After reading, have a discussion with the class about the text. This is an open discussion about their interpretation of the text at an introductory level. Distribute copies of the *Reading Outward Organizer* to students.
4. Model for students how to complete the graphic organizer as a class. Have students record ideas from what was previously discussed about the text in the “Information from the Text” section.
5. Have students think more deeply about the text by asking the following questions:
 - What was the Underground Railroad?
 - What is the main point the author is trying to make/share?
 - What is the main idea?
6. Allow students time to record their ideas onto the “Main Idea/Theme” section of the graphic organizer.

Fighting for Freedom *(cont.)*

7. Based on the responses in step 6, follow up with questions that take students outside the text to make real-world connections. The following are some suggestions:
- Where in the world have we seen an example of this?
 - Can you think of something related to...?
 - What else does it make you think about?
8. Have students record their ideas onto the “Reading Outward” section of their graphic organizer.

Differentiation

The following are some suggestions for differentiation within the classroom:

Advanced English Language Learners

Have students complete the graphic organizer on their own first then share their ideas with the whole class to create the class chart.

Intermediate English Language Learners

Have students orally share their graphic organizer with a partner.

Beginning English Language Learners

Provide students with language frames to answer questions. For example, *This text makes me think about _____. The main idea of this text is _____.*

Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad

By 1800, people in the northern and middle states were not using slaves anymore. However, the people in the South refused to end slavery. Many people thought that the Southerners should be forced to stop slavery. These people were called abolitionists. They wanted all the slaves set free.

The abolitionists thought that slave trading and slave auctions were the worst parts of slavery. After a lot of debate, a law was passed. After 1807, no new slaves could come from Africa.

Meanwhile, some slaves tried to escape from their owners. Most were caught and punished. Some were even killed. Escaping was easier once the abolitionists started to help. They made an escape route. It went from the South to the North and Canada. Its name was the Underground Railroad. This was not a railroad with trains. This was a “railroad” with many stops along the way to freedom. It was “underground” since it was kept secret. The slaves who went on this railroad were passengers. A conductor was a person who led groups on the railroad. One famous conductor was Harriet Tubman. She was a slave who ran away. After that, she helped other slaves run away.



Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad *(cont.)*

When a slave wanted to escape, an abolitionist would contact the person. The slave would be told where to go for the first stop. At each stop, the escaping slave was told where to go next. Slaves had to hide in swamps, cellars, and barns. Often, slave catchers were chasing them.

Some abolitionists just gave helpful information. Others hid slaves in their homes. They fed and clothed them. A few acted as conductors. Each of these people risked his or her life to help slaves gain their freedom.

During the 1800s, many new states joined the Union. The abolitionists in the North did not want them to allow slavery. The people in the South said that each state should decide for itself. The Southerners did not want the “free” states to have more representatives in Congress. If that happened, Congress might outlaw slavery completely. The conflict between the North and the South grew. By 1860, Southerners were tired of arguing. The South decided to leave the Union.

