LE▲D THE W▲Y TO LITER▲CY

Preparing English Learners for Success with Academic Writing

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Kate Kinsella, Ed.D. is the author of the ELD program *English 3D* and architect of the teacher-mediated instructional component of *READ 180 Universal.* Her evidence-based instructional routines, and interactive academic language and writing development enrich both programs. Dr. Kinsella provides professional development and consultancy nationally for state agencies and districts to strengthen curriculum and instruction for English learners and youths from under-resourced households. She has received multiple awards for her advocacy and contributions to English learner achievement. She has recently been awarded three U.S. Department of Education grants with an aim of improving communication and literacy skills of all students who are academic English learners. Dr. Kinsella's publications and trainings are informed by research and abundant time working directly with students and coaching fellow K-12 educators.
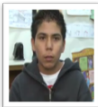

Academic English Learners
Describe their Academic Challenges

What aspects of their academic experience posed the greatest challenges for these high school bound academic English learners?

The #1 Source of EL Curricular Angst:
Formal English Writing Assignments

My most challenging class was English. Especially the essays, the writing homework that were given.

The most challenging class was English. The writing homework was the hardest, the essays.

Language Arts is most difficult. We had to do a lot of reports and research. Doing the research and writing was so hard. I couldn't find the … things.

Academic English Learners Operate from a Constrained Vocabulary Base

"Doing my research, I couldn't find the … things."

Everyday Nouns	Precise Academic Nouns
stuff	sources
things	citations
information	references
ideas	evidence
	data
	facts

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Writing Emphases in College-Career Readiness Initiatives

*"For students, **writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims**, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt…*
***They have to become adept at** gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, **reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner"** (i.e. academic register).*

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

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Register: A Linguistic Definition

The words, syntax, style, and grammar used by speakers and writers in a particular verbal interaction context or in a particular type of writing:

- Writing a text message to invite a friend to a party
- Writing an email message to a teacher requesting an extension on a research report
- Asking a coach for permission to miss practice
- Asking a manager at an internship to clarify expectations for a task

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Informative Essay: Formal Writing Prompt

- California has recently experienced the largest and most destructive wildfires in the state's history. **What has fueled such large and aggressive blazes across the state of California?**

- Write an informative essay that provides significant details regarding the various causes, drawing from and clearly citing unit text sources.

- Use academic register, including topic-focused and high-utility academic words from unit vocabulary.

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Informative Essay in Academic Register with Highlighted Cause-Effect Vocabulary

Excerpt: <u>Causes</u> of California's 2018 Wildfires

California's record-breaking wildfires in 2018 are a <u>direct result</u> of several <u>critical factors</u>.

First, California is still feeling the <u>impacts</u> of a five-year drought that ended in 2017. The state had <u>less</u> rainfall and snowfall than usual for a lengthy period. According to Scholastic News (Oct. 1, 2018), the long dry spell <u>left</u> rivers and lakes dry and "killed 129 million trees." Dead trees, dried grasses and bushes <u>set the stage for</u> the year's explosion of wildfires' across the state. With so much dry fuel in forests and canyons, lightening or a spark from a lawnmower, truck, cigarette or campfire <u>could easily start</u> a blaze.

Another <u>major factor</u> has been the low level of moisture in the air, combined with extremely hot temperatures.

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ALL Students are AEL:
Academic English Learners

- Academic English is not a natural language that we acquire through extensive listening and social interaction.

- Academic English-- including vocabulary, syntax, grammar and register distinctions-- must be explicitly and systematically **taught**, not just **caught**.

10

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College and Career Readiness:
Scholarly Interaction Demands

- **Gr. 3-8 SL1:** Prepare for and participate in a range of conversations and collaborations (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) with varied partners on grade (3-8) topics, texts, and issues, <u>building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly</u>.

Productive Group Work

11

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Language for Academic Interactions:
Building upon Ideas

- My idea builds upon *(Name's).*
- I would like to add that __.
- Building upon *(Name's) i*dea*,* I think that __.
- I see where you are coming from, but I also think that __.
- I appreciate *(your, Name's)* perspective, but I would add that __.
- That is a point well taken, but I would additionally point out that __.

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Demands of an Academic Register

What challenges do recent immigrants face?

Informal Verbal Response
> *Jobs.   The language.   Learning English.*

Formal Constructed Verbal Response
> *One challenge that recent immigrants face is learning an entirely new language.*

Formal, Brief Constructed Written Response
> *One challenge that recent immigrants face is learning an entirely new language. English communication and literacy skills are critical for adult immigrants if they want to have jobs that pay well or attend college.*

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A Response Frame and Precise Word Banks to Promote Use of Academic Register

- **What challenges do recent immigrants face?**

- *One challenge that recent immigrants face is _* **(verb + ing)** *learning a new language.*

  - **Precise Word Banks**:

VERBS	NOUNS
finding	language
understanding	culture
communicating	job
learning	salary
earning	school

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Instructional Advantages of Academic Response Frames

A well-crafted response frame enables a **teacher** to 1) **construct** a model response, 2) **deconstruct** the response, and enables an English learner to 3) **reconstruct** a competent academic response.

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Writing Prompt: Beginning of Year Pre-Test

- Evaluate your current study place and determine whether you should make any changes to create a more productive work environment in order to complete your most demanding homework assignments.

- Write an opinion paragraph, including a clearly-stated topic sentence, transitions, specific reasons, concrete details, and a concluding statement.

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Common Direction Words in Writing Prompts

Common Direction Words in Academic Writing Prompts	
ANALYZE	Break the subject (an object, event, or concept) down into parts, and explain the various parts.
ARGUE	State a claim on an issue and support it with reasons and evidence from sources while also countering possible statements or arguments from individuals who have different positions.
COMPARE	Show how two things are similar and different; include details or examples.
CONTRAST	Show how two things are different; include details or examples.
CRITIQUE	Point out both the good and bad points of something.
DEFINE	Give an accurate meaning of a term with enough detail to show that you really understand it.

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DISCUSS	Give a complete and detailed answer, including important characteristics and main points.
EVALUATE	Give your opinion of the value of the subject; discuss its good and bad points, strengths and weaknesses.
EXPLAIN	Give the meaning of something; give facts and details that make the idea easy to understand.
ILLUSTRATE	Give the meaning of something; give facts and details that make the idea easy to understand.
INTERPRET	Explain the meaning of a text, statement, photo, graphic aid; discuss the results or the effects of something.
JUSTIFY	Give convincing reasons and evidence from sources to support a claim, decision, action, or event.
PERSUADE	Give convincing reasons in order to get someone to do or believe something; appeal to the reader's feelings and mind.
RESPOND	State your overall reaction to the content, then support your individual opinions or claims with specific reasons and relevant examples, making sure to refer back to supporting texts.

Writing Sample - Long-Term English Learner
Brief Constructed Response to Prompt

Well actually I study in my livingroom almost sometime. Because I don't usually doing my homeworks. Every time when I picked up my pen to work on my homeworks. I got disturb from my little bros., and sister. They come into the livingroom and chasin each other aroun. Man I was like sitting in hell with a demon. In my living room I had a table. Which it is about 6 ft. by 3, a lamp, dictionary, pens and school stuffs. I had a 27 inch TV in front of me.

9th grade (7 years in U.S., ELP Level 3 for 5 years)

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Writing Sample - Long-Term English Learner
What do we notice about this student's writing skills and English language use?

- Imprecise vocabulary use: *school stuffs*

- Inconsistent and inaccurate use of present tense to describe habitual actions: *I study; I had a desk*

- Errors with:
  - Adverbs of frequency: *almost sometime*
  - Count/non-count nouns: *homeworks; stuffs*
  - Verb phrases: *I got disturb from*
  - Sentence fragments: *Because I don't do my homeworks.*
  - Conversational register: *Well actually; Man I was like*

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Approaches to Improving Student Writing with Negligible Gains

- Peer revision and editing without oversight

- Worksheets on grammar and mechanics

- Multiple rewrites without targeted feedback

- Daily quick-writes on random topics

- Graphic organizers as a sole writing scaffold

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Daily Bell-Ringer Writing Prompts
Fail to Promote Academic Writing Proficiency

- **Monday:** Your Spring Break: What Rocked?
- **Tuesday:** Chrome Books: Love Them or Leave Them
- **Wednesday:** Who is your favorite action hero?
- **Thursday:** Write a paragraph with our ten vocabulary words.
- **Friday:** What do you enjoy or dread about poetry units?

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Common Pre-Writing Organizer
Lacking Language Guidance

– Negative | **+ Positive**

- food smells
- school stuff: pens, paper
- noisy little brother & sister
- Study Place: Living Room
- big table
- tv always on
- bright light

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Writing Model: Opinion Paragraph
Evaluation of Current Study Environment

My Most Productive Study Environment

I prefer to complete my most demanding homework right after classes in the school library for several reasons. The main reason is that my family has a two bedroom apartment for five people, and I share a bedroom with two younger siblings. It is almost impossible to find a quiet, calm place at home to concentrate and complete my difficult assignments like English essays and science chapters. My mother needs the kitchen to prepare and serve meals, and my little sisters like to play games and watch television in the living room. In addition, the small bedroom we share barely has room for our beds and dresser but no writing table. Because our apartment is so crowded and noisy, I usually find a quiet private table in the back corner of the library by the nonfiction section to spread out my books, laptop and supplies. Very few people walk by, and the librarian is available if I have a question about a writing prompt or a good source for evidence. I stay away from the computer stations because students are often working on projects and talking loudly. Their conversations and jokes distract me from my textbook reading and writing. As long as I stay in the quiet nonfiction section of the library away from the collaboration station, the school library will remain my most productive study environment.

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p.9

Syntax Support:
Evaluating Your Study Environment

- I (regularly, typically) complete my most demanding homework assignments (in, at) ___
- I prefer to study in this location because ___
- One challenge I face working (in, at) ___ is ___
- Common distractions I deal with include ___ and ___
- To create a productive study environment, I should ___
- A positive change I could make would be to ___

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Vocabulary Support: Precise Word Bank
Evaluating Your Study Environment

Topic Words

environment
concentrate, concentration
resources, materials
distract, distraction
avoid
improve, improvement
challenge, challenging
productive, unproductive

High-Utility Words

strength
weakness
positive
negative
advantage
disadvantage
numerous
several

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Evidence-Based Writing Instruction:
Imperatives for English Learners

▪Students cannot be expected to effectively express in writing what they cannot articulate (i.e. You can't write what you can't say).

▪Writing frequently without related language instruction doesn't produce competent writers.

▪English learners and reticent readers require a consistent process, effective models and linguistic tools for competent academic verbal and written communication across the subject areas.

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Academic Language Instruction:
An Evidence-Based Instructional Principle

<u>When English learners are faced with a new and challenging academic task</u>, ranging from independently reading an informational text to collaborating on a text-dependent response or making a formal presentation, <u>the content must initially be familiar and relatively easy</u> so students can devote their attention to the procedural and linguistic demands of the task.

Gersten, R., & Baker, S. (June 2000). What we know about effective instructional practices for English-language learners. *Exceptional Children, 66/4*, 454-470.

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Sample Writing Prompts that Emphasize
Multilingual Learner Assets and Experiences

- ▪ What are the possible benefits of being multilingual?
- ▪ What activities do you enjoy doing in your native language?
- ▪ What do you do to stay connected with family and friends?
- ▪ What is your favorite holiday and how is it celebrated in your family and culture?
- ▪ How did you obtain your given name or nickname?
- ▪ What do you like about your given name or nickname?
- ▪ Describe a childhood event when you did something to make your family proud of your behavior or accomplishment.
- ▪ Who is someone in your community that you respect a great deal?

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Scaffolded Writing Support ~ Phases

- **Unpack the Writing Prompt**
- **Structure Discussion with Language Supports**
- **Set Expectations for Academic Writing:**
  - Introduce the Writing Type
  - Analyze a Writing Model (Read 3x, Mark, Discuss)
  - Review a focused scoring guide
- **Teach Grammar/Conventions for Assignment**
- **Guide Drafting and Monitor Peer Feedback**

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Unpack the Writing Prompt: Clarify Vocabulary and Expectations

hurting, making it bad

PROMPT: Is texting ruining students' writing skills?

says, tells   opinion, idea

Write an opinion paragraph that states your claim

and supports it with reasons and evidence. Draw

what you know   what you have done

from background knowledge and experience.

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Structure Related Discussion with Academic Language Supports

Precise Verbs		Precise Adverbs
require	change harm	carefully
depend on	shift hurt	comfortably
express	forget improve	easily
communicate	omit help	creatively

EXCHANGE IDEAS
Use the response frames to exchange ideas with your partner. Prepare for the class discussion by completing two sentences. Listen attentively and complete the chart.

1. In my opinion, texting harms students' writing skills because they _____
   (present tense verb: forget)

2. In my experience, texting does not harm students' writing skills because we _____
   (present tense verb: understand)

Ideas ~ Partner Discussion   Ideas ~ Class Discussion

(Texting and Writing Skills)

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Opinion Paragraph: Essential Elements
A Cornerstone of College-Career Writing

Opinion Paragraph

Academic Writing Type

*An **opinion paragraph** states a claim and supports it with logical reasons and relevant evidence from the texts.*

A. The **introductory sentence** clearly states the writer's claim about the issue.

B. **Detail sentences** support the claim with reasons and evidence from the text or the writer's experience.

- **Transition words or phrases** connect opinions, reasons, and evidence.

C. The **concluding sentence** restates the writer's claim about the issue.

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p.13

Accessible Initial Writing Prompt and Model: Opinion Paragraph (Non Text-Dependent)

| Prompt | Is texting ruining students' writing skills? Write an opinion paragraph that states your claim and supports it with reasons and evidence. Draw from background knowledge and experience. |

Texting is Not Harmful

After learning about texting and students' writing skills, I believe that texting is not ruining students' writing. One reason is that students know when it is appropriate to use textisms, and when they need to use correct spelling and grammar. For example, I always use emojis and GIFs when I send messages to my friends, but I do not use them for my homework or class assignments. Another major reason that I do not believe that texting is ruining writing is that many students use technology with software for writing like GoogleDocs and Microsoft Word. If I use a textism, the computer will point it out as a mistake for me to edit. So even if I use texting language in a draft, I can correct it. For these reasons, I conclude that students' writing is not harmed by texting.

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Rate and Score
Use the following scoring guide to rate an opinion paragraph.

Columns: Insufficient, Attempted, Sufficient, Outstanding

Content and Organization	Rating Scale
1. An appropriate **title** introduces the paragraph	1 2 3 4
2. A **topic sentence** clearly states the claim or opinion	1 2 3 4
3. Appropriate **transitions** connect opinions, reasons and evidence	1 2 3 4
4. **Detail sentences** provide **reasons** that support the claim	1 2 3 4
5. **Detail sentences** provide **evidence** from sources to support the claim (e.g., texts, websites, experiences, background knowledge)	1 2 3 4
6. **Precise topic words** are included	1 2 3 4
7. **High-utility academic words** are included	1 2 3 4
8. The **concluding statement** restates the claim using new wording and leaves the reader with a final thought to consider	1 2 3 4

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p.13

Analyze Writing Model: Read 3x Fluently, Mark, & Discuss Text Elements

Mark and Discuss Opinion Paragraph Text Elements

Mark the opinion paragraph text elements. Then discuss them with your partner.

1. Put brackets around the writer's claim within the topic sentence.
   The writer's claim is _____.
2. Draw a box around transition words or phrases that introduce a reason or example.
   (One, Another) transition that introduces (a reason, an example) is _____.
3. Underline and label two reasons that support the writer's claim with the letter R.
   (One, Another) reason that supports the writer's claim is _____.
4. Underline and label two pieces of evidence that support the writer's claim with the letter E. *(One, Another) piece of evidence that supports the writer's claim is _____.*
5. Star two precise topic words. Check two high-utility academic words.
   An example of a (precise topic word, high-utility academic word) is _____.
6. Put parentheses around the writer's restated claim within the concluding sentence.
   The writer's restated claim is _____.

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p.13

Opinion Paragraph Model with Text Marking

| Prompt | Is texting ruining students' writing skills? Write an opinion paragraph that states your claim and supports it with reasons and evidence. Draw from background knowledge and experience. |

Texting is Not Harmful

After learning about texting and students' writing skills, I believe that texting is not ruining students' writing. One reason is that students know when it is appropriate to use textisms, and when they need to use correct spelling and grammar. For example, I always use emojis and GIFs when I send messages to my friends, but I do not use them for my homework or class assignments. Another major reason that I do not believe that texting is ruining writing is that many students use technology with software for writing like GoogleDocs and Microsoft Word. If I use a textism, the computer will point it out as a mistake for me to edit. So even if I use texting language in a draft, I can correct it. For these reasons, I conclude that students' writing is not harmed by texting.

R1 E R2 E

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8. The **concluding statement** restates the claim using new wording and leaves the	1 2 3 4

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p.14

Analytic Scoring Guide: Opinion Paragraph
An Accessible and Effective Teaching Tool

Opinion Paragraph − +

Rate and Score
Use the following scoring guide to rate an opinion paragraph.

Columns: Insufficient, Attempted, Sufficient, Outstanding

Content and Organization	Rating Scale	1	2	3	4	
1. An appropriate **title** introduces the paragraph		1	2	3	4	
2. A **topic sentence** clearly states the claim or opinion		1	2	3	4	x2
3. Appropriate **transitions** connect opinions, reasons and evidence		1	2	3	4	x2
4. **Detail sentences** provide **reasons** that support the claim		1	2	3	4	
5. **Detail sentences** provide **evidence** from sources to support the claim (e.g., texts, websites, experiences, background knowledge)		1	2	3	4	
6. **Precise topic words** are included		1	2	3	4	
7. **High-utility academic words** are included		1	2	3	4	x2
8. The **concluding statement** restates the claim using new wording and leaves the reader with a final thought to consider		1	2	3	4	

Content and Organization Points: 41/44

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Grammar and Mechanics	Rating Scale
1. Each sentence is complete	1 2 3 4
2. All words are spelled correctly	1 2 3 4
3. Commas separate transitions from the rest of the sentence	1 2 3 4
4. Subjects and verbs agree	1 2 3 4
5. Verb tenses are used correctly	1 2 3 4
6. Pronouns referring to people, places and things are appropriate	1 2 3 4

Rate and Score

Use the following scoring guide to rate an opinion paragraph.

d Organization Rating Scale	Insufficient	Attempted	Sufficient	Outstanding
1. An appropriate **title** introduces the paragraph	1	2	3	4
2. A **topic sentence** clearly states the claim or opinion	1	2	3	4
3. Appropriate **transitions** connect opinions, reasons and evidence	1	2	3	4
4. **Detail sentences** provide **reasons** that support the claim	1	2	3	4
5. **Detail sentences** provide **evidence** from sources to support the claim (e.g., texts, websites, experiences, background knowledge)	1	2	3	4
6. **Precise topic words** are included	1	2	3	4
7. **High-utility academic words** are included	1	2	3	4
8. The **concluding statement** restates the claim using new wording and leaves the reader with a final thought to consider	1	2	3	4

p.14

Analy... ...Octobe... ...agraph
Editing Goals (Established Post-Instruction)

Grammar and Mechanics Rating Scale	1	2	3	4
1. Each sentence is complete	1	2	3	**4**
2. All words are spelled correctly	1	2	3	**4**
3. Commas separate transitions from the rest of the sentence	1	2	3	**4**
4. Subjects and verbs agree	1	2	3	**4**
5. Verb tenses are used correctly	1	2	3	**4**
6. Pronouns referring to people, places and things are appropriate	1	2	3	**4**

Grammar and Mechanics Points: **24**

Total Points: **65** / **68** = **A**

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Vocabulary Support: Precise Word Back
Generated from Writing Model(s)

Topic Words	High-Utility Words
texting, textism	believe
students, friends	example
writing skills	appropriate
harm, harmful, harmed, ruin	mistake
spelling, grammar, language	correct
emoji, GIF, message	major
technology, software	reason
homework, assignments	conclude
draft, edit	

38

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Gradual Release of Responsibility
in Explicit Language and Writing Instruction

I do

We do

You do

Curricula and instruction often move directly from …
"I do it" to "You do it" or "I told you to do it" to "You do it"!

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Writing Instruction Priorities

- Introduce the writing type with a clear definition and student-friendly scoring guide.
- Provide accessible models to help students grasp the essential elements.
- Allow students to write about familiar topics before requiring text-dependent tasks.
- Pre-teach relevant vocabulary, syntax and grammar, for the writing type and topic.
- Build fluency with a writing type through routine, brief teacher-mediated tasks.

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41

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The End

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