Introduction: 7th Grade Expeditionary Learning Units for English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners:

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Introduction

The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) is committed to ensuring the academic success of its English language learners (ELLs)/multilingual learners (MLLs) who are a large and growing segment of the student population.[1] As such, it is essential that MLL/ELLs meet the same grade-level standards and expectations as their English-proficient peers. To help MLL/ELLs achieve these results, it is very important to have materials and methods that more fully support them in acquiring grade-level knowledge and skills. Effective methods for enabling MLL/ELLs to meet grade-level standards build on approaches that are effective for all students, but they also provide additional support for MLL/ELLs, because they are learning content in a second language.

The American Institutes for Research specialists developed two units from the ground up that support ELLs/MLLs in understanding and writing about the texts in two Expeditionary Learning Units--*Grade 7: Module 4a: Unit 1–This Is Your Brain Plugged In* and *Grade 7* and *Module 4b: Unit 1–Water is Life.* The stand-alone units developed by AIR model how MLL/ELLs can be helped to understand and write about lessons focused on two complex topics--brain development[2] and water sustainability.[3]

The URL's the Expeditionary Units are as follows:

Grade 7: Module 4a: Unit 1–This Is Your Brain Plugged In and *Grade 7*
https://www.engageny.org/resource/grade-7-ela-module-4a-unit-1-lesson-1

Grade 7: Module 4a: Unit 1–This Is Your Brain Plugged In and *Grade 7*
https://www.engageny.org/resource/grade-7-ela-module-4b

Each stand-alone AIR unit, comprised of 10 lessons, draws on the same goals, standards, grade-level texts, and general pedagogical techniques as the Grade 7 Expeditionary Learning units developed for NYSED. Each lesson is intended for a 50-minute-class period. However, teachers are encouraged to adapt the lessons to the pace that is most appropriate for the MLL/ELLs in their classes. They are also encouraged to modify these lessons to provide less support to students with higher English proficiency levels, and to provide similar supports in other ELA lessons for ELLs.

Organization of the Units

Each unit includes a teacher guide and student materials. The teacher guide provides guidance for presenting each lesson and answer keys for the questions in the student guide. The student

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[1] *Blueprint for English Language Learner Success:* http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/bilingual-ed/nysblueprintforellsuccess.2016.pdf
[2] Grade 7 Module 4A: Development of the Adolescent Brain
[3] Grade 7 Module 4B: Water is Life

materials are closely aligned with the teacher guide but do not include background for teachers, instructions for teachers, and answers. They include instructions for students, along with the texts, questions, and activities.

A key goal of the lessons is to provide students with scaffolded opportunities to work independently or collaboratively with their peers. All too often, lessons for MLLs/ELLs are predominately composed of teacher talk, with little opportunity for students to engage in productive independent or peer work, although such work is crucial for academic language development. To differentiate instruction for these students, we have provided word banks and sentence frames in many lesson activities (there are additional word banks in Unit A because of the difficulty of the topic) for students at entering and emerging levels of proficiency. These scaffolds may be modified or removed for students at higher levels of proficiency. For example, for MLLs/ELLs at Transitioning levels of proficiency, sentence starters might be helpful. For Expanding MLL/ELLs there might be no frames or starters. All MLL/ELLs would have access to a glossary. We leave it to those implementing the lessons to determine the level of scaffolding needed to support the ELLs in their classrooms.

The lessons include multiple instructional routines, many of which, like vocabulary instruction and *Thinking Logs* (interactive reading), are repeated throughout the units. These routines are described briefly below.

Learning Targets

By previewing student learning targets, teachers make students aware of the knowledge and skills they are expected to master during the lesson. Learning targets, always in the form, "I can…", are student-friendly versions of the New York State Next Generation ELA Learning Standards, which reflect the knowledge and skills that all students, including ELLs/MLLs, need for success in college and the workplace.

Table 1 is a complete list of the learning targets presented in the two units, and their alignment with the Next Generation ELA Learning Standards. Note that there are two learning targets per lesson to avoid overwhelming students, but each of the lessons addresses an array of the standards listed in Table 1. Words in bold indicate difficult words that are glossed for students in the lessons.

Table 1. Alignment of student learning targets with New York State Next Generation ELA Learning Standards

Student Learning Target(s)	NYS Next Generation ELA Standard
I can **determine** the **main** ideas and **supporting details** in the **article** [*title*].	7R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; summarize a text. (RI&RL)
I can **analyze** the **interaction** between *x* and *y* in [*title*].	7R3: In informational texts, analyze how individuals, events, and ideas are introduced, relate to each other, and are developed.

Student Learning Target(s)	NYS Next Generation ELA Standard
I can **determine** the meaning of unknown **technical** words. I can **determine** the meaning of words and phrases in text. I can **determine** the meaning of **figurative** and **technical** language in [*title*]. I can **analyze** the **impact** of word choice on meaning.	7R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings.
I can **explain** how the different **aspects** of a presentation **contribute** to my understanding. I can **analyze** how a major **section** of [*title*] **contributes** to the **development** of ideas.	7R5: In informational texts, analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the sections contribute to the whole and to the development of themes and central ideas.
I can **compare and contrast** written and **digital** presentations of ideas.	7R7: Compare and contrast a written text with audio, filmed, staged, or digital versions in order to analyze the effects of techniques unique to each media and each format's portrayal of a subject.
I can **evaluate** an **argument**'s use of **evidence** and **reasoning** in [*title*]. I can **evaluate** the **development** of the **argument** in [*title*].	7R8: Trace and evaluate the development of an argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient and recognizing when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
I can make **connections** among **multiple** texts.	7R9: Use established criteria in order to evaluate the quality of texts. Make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, and personal experiences.

Student Learning Target(s)	NYS Next Generation ELA Standard
I can **analyze** the basic **structure** of a **complex** sentence.	7L3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
I can use a **variety** of **strategies** to figure out the meaning of new vocabulary.	7L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
I can **analyze** the **main** ideas and **supporting details presented** in in a video clip.	7SL2: Analyze the central ideas and supporting details presented in diverse formats (e.g., including visual, quantitative, and oral) and explain how the ideas clarify

Student Learning Target(s)	NYS Next Generation ELA Standard
I can **articulate** how ideas **presented** in the text **clarify** the **issue** of x.	and/or contribute to a topic, text, or issue under study.
I can write an **argument** in **support of** ideas from [*title*].	7W1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
I can gather **evidence** from **multiple** texts to support my **analysis**.	7W7: Gather relevant information from multiple sources.

Acquiring and Using Vocabulary

Part of what makes the grade-level texts presented in these units challenging for ELLS/MLLSs is the large number of new or difficult words they will encounter. The lessons support ELLs'/MLLs' vocabulary acquisition in three primary ways:

- **Extended instruction**: Many of the lessons include one to three vocabulary cards in the Teacher Resources section of the lesson that the teacher can use to pre-teach highly complex or abstract words. The vocabulary cards include images to illustrate each word, a definition and explanation of the word, and peer discussion activities to give students an opportunity to practice it.

- **Embedded instruction:** Students learn additional vocabulary with the support of teachers defining words in context (using gestures, visuals, or short definitions), and through extensive glossaries found in the appendix of each lesson. Teachers should familiarize students with the glossary and encourage them to use their lesson glossaries for new words.

- **Word-learning strategies**: Word learning strategies in the lessons include a vocabulary play in Unit A and a lesson about figurative language. Teachers might also consider teaching additional word learning strategies, like using context clues or morphology to decipher new words.

Words selected for inclusion in vocabulary cards or in the glossaries are words identified in the related Expeditionary Learning lessons (starred in the teacher versions of the glossaries), high frequency academic words from the *Academic Word List* (in italics in the teacher glossaries),[4] and other words important for understanding key passages in the texts.

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[4] The Academic Word List is an empirically derived list of 579 word families that are core to expository academic texts. The list does not include the most frequent 2,000 English words or content-specific words, making it a generalizable list of important academic words. (See https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/index.htm.)

Thinking Logs

It is essential that students read, comprehend, and engage with the texts that are the basis of all lessons in both units. The thinking logs give students an opportunity to read the texts in smaller chunks and answer both guiding and supplementary questions (with sentence frames and starters as needed) that will guide them to understanding what they read. Teachers ask a guiding question for each text to challenge students to grapple with a core concept or abstract idea addressed in the text. Supplementary questions are 'right there' questions that ask students about details (who, what, where, when, why) and word meanings.

Summarizing the Text

In Unit A, students complete a Neurologist's Notebook, and in Unit B they complete a Water Note-Catcher in each lesson. These activities give students an opportunity to summarize what they have read, either by identifying the text's main ideas and supporting details, or by tracing an argument presented in the text. It will be important for students to complete these activities each day, because they serve as resources for the larger writing activity at the end of each unit.

Developing Language: Functional Analysis

The texts presented in the two Units are challenging not only because of their difficult vocabulary, but also because they often feature complex sentence structures. In order to advance their comprehension skills, students need to learn to tease apart these complex sentences and derive meaning from them.

Functional analysis helps students accomplish this task by having them first identify the two elements present in every complete English sentence: who (or what) has done a thing (the *actor*), and what they did (the *action* or *state*).[5] Transitive and ditransitive sentences will also include a *recipient* or *object* of the action. If students can figure out these three elements of any sentence, they will have a basic sense of what the sentence is about. The rest of the sentence is generally made up of descriptive details, which may be more or less important to understanding the main point.

The functional analysis activities in these units generally feature a sentence that communicates a major idea from the reading. The sentences were selected to represent a variety of sentence types, with a focus on sentences that appear difficult on the surface, but that can actually be broken into their major functional components with ease.

Exit Tickets

The majority of the lessons conclude with an exit ticket—a short activity intended to help students summarize and reflect on what they learned, including their own reactions to a given topic.

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[5] Note that passive constructions also include these features, although the surface structures of these sentences are more complicated.

Writing

Writing should occur throughout each lesson. Most activities include short writing exercises to answer questions, develop language skills, and summarize texts. However, students also need longer writing tasks to develop their writing skills. The final lessons of each unit include preparation for a longer essay, featuring graphic organizers and paragraph frames to help them construct their essays.

The lessons support students in discussing their ideas (in their home language or in English) with a partner before they begin writing. While not scripted, we encourage teachers to engage in writing conferences with the students (in small groups or one-on-one) to help them learn or improve specific writing techniques. Students should be given opportunities to edit their writing to improve their grammar and to share their writing with others.

Drawing on ELL's/MLL's Home Language Knowledge and Skills and Differentiating Instruction for ELLs/MLLs

There are two themes that are also important to note. The first is the importance of capitalizing on ELL's/MLL's home language knowledge and skills. Scaffolds in these lessons that help students draw on home language knowledge and skills include questions and activities that help ELLs/MLLs make connections between their home languages and culture and English and routines that pair ELLs/MLLs who are at emerging levels of language proficiency with bilingual partners so that discussions can occur in students' home language and in English. We encourage teachers to make home language dictionaries available to students and provide translated texts if they are available that students can read prior to reading the English texts.   The second theme is the importance of differentiating instruction based on ELL's/MLL's language proficiency level. As noted in the previous section, ELLs/MLLs at the entering and emerging levels of proficiency have access to sentence frames and word banks to help them respond to text-dependent questions posed throughout the lessons while ELLs/MLLs at the transitioning levels of proficiency may have access to sentence starters. The intent is that scaffolds are gradually reduced as students become more proficient in English.

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