



# Scaffolding Multilingual Learners' Access to Wisconsin Social Studies Inquiry Through the WIDA ELD Standards

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**Language & Culture**  
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# Introduction

In this unit, we illustrate how to integrate the WIDA ELD Standards, the national College, Career, and Civic Framework for States' Social Studies Standards (C3 Framework) as well as the Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies. This unit was based on the example of the Global Trade Inquiry submitted to C3 Teachers.org and can be found here <https://c3teachers.org/inquiries/global-trade/>. Ms. Folberg made this rigorous learning accessible to her English Learners by making language of inquiry visible using the WIDA Standards. We believe this unit can be used as an exemplar unit illustrating the synergy of these three powerful frameworks.

*"This inquiry leads students through an investigation of economic systems by focusing on the context of trade among world communities. Trading is one of the oldest forms of economic interaction among humans, yet it is also among the most complex. In examining the reasons for international trade and the exports of world communities, students should be able to develop an argument supported by evidence to answer the compelling question "Why do countries need each other?" (<https://c3teachers.org/inquiries/global-trade/>).*

This is a pretty ambitious unit for any third grader, but how can English learners meaningfully participate in this rigorous learning, while also developing their language skills? What follows below is a description of how it can be done.

## Classroom Context

Twenty-two third graders in Stoner Prairie Elementary School in Ms. Nesheim's classroom are engaged in an inquiry about global trade. In this multilingual classroom, two teachers co-teach together, and Ms. Folberg is the language teacher making the language of social studies arguments visible. Multilingual students represent various levels of English language proficiency ranging from newcomers to level 4 on ACCESS. They represent



several languages and cultural backgrounds, such as a Pashto newcomer from Afghanistan, several Spanish speakers from Mexico, and two Albanian students.

The class is pursuing global trade inquiry through an essential question and supporting questions to explore the topic further, like:

### Compelling Question:

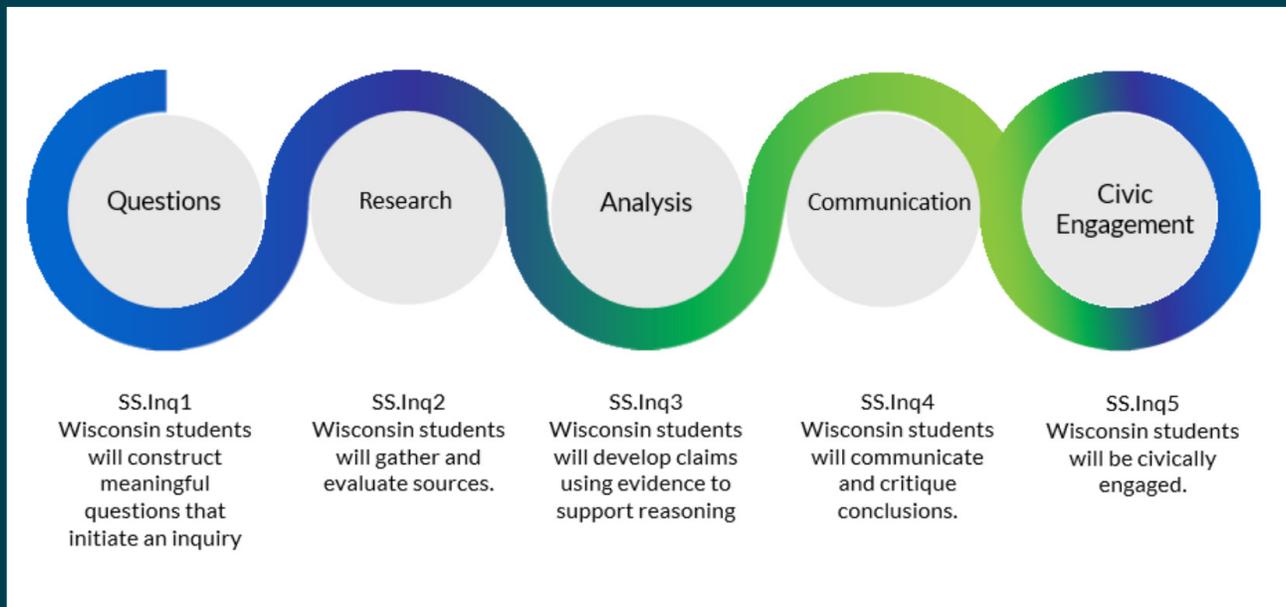
- Why do countries need each other?

### Supporting Questions for Topics:

- What do countries export?
- Why do countries import and export goods?
- What factors influence trade?

First, let's define inquiry. According to the Wisconsin Social Studies Standards, inquiry is "a systematic investigation with five distinct parts: questioning, research, analysis, communication of results, and civic engagement" (Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies, 2018, p. 11). Inquiry is both a process and a practice that consists of the following steps (Figure 1).





**Figure 1**  
Wisconsin Social Studies Inquiry Standards

The inquiry process starts with formulating meaningful questions that are worthy of inquiry and cannot be easily answered. The next step is research by gathering and evaluating sources, followed by developing claims using evidentiary reasoning. This process concludes with communicating and critiquing conclusions and taking action through civic engagement (Figure 2).

Good inquiries may often (not always) require perspectives to be drawn from multiple social studies disciplines, which are behavioral sciences, economics, geography, history, and political science (Wisconsin Social Studies Standards, 2018). In the case of our unit on global trade, the disciplines of economics and geography are interrelated and interdependent and are both needed to answer the central question of *Why do countries need each other? because the question deals with both geographic location of countries and their products as well as trade.* The unit meets the following standards (Table 1).

## Social Studies Inquiry Practices and Processes

Wisconsin Multilingual Students will...

1. Construct meaningful questions that initiate an inquiry.
  2. Gather and evaluate sources.
  3. Develop claims using evidence to support reasoning.
  4. Communicate and critique conclusions.
  5. Be civically engaged.
- (Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies, 2018, p. 9)

**Figure 2**  
Social Studies Inquiry Practices and Processes



## Unit: Global Trade

Essential/Compelling Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do countries need each other?</li> </ul>
Supporting Questions for Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the connections between economy and geography in global trade?</li> <li>• Why do countries import and export goods?</li> <li>• How is climate connected to the country's most valuable exports?</li> <li>• What factors influence trade?</li> <li>• What is our responsibility in supporting fair trade?</li> </ul>
Enduring Understandings	Students will understand the interdependence of countries during trade and interdependence of climate and countries' goods.
Social Studies Standards & Indicators	<p>Inquiry:</p> <p>SS.Inq1.b.i Develop a list of questions that support the research through discussion and investigation to guide inquiry.</p> <p>SS.Inq2.a.i Gather a variety of resources into categories to guide the inquiry.</p> <p>SS.Inq3.a.i Create a thesis statement based on evidence found in sources to make a claim.</p> <p>SS.Inq3.b.i Select appropriate evidence from sources to support a claim.</p> <p>Economics:</p> <p>SS.Econ4.a.3 Trace the chain of supply for a needed product (e.g., food, shelter).</p> <p>Geography:</p> <p>SS.Geog1.b.i Identify purposes of and differences among maps, globes, aerial photographs, charts, and satellite images</p> <p>SS.Geog1.a.4-5 Summarize how location (absolute and relative) affects people, places, and environment.</p> <p>SS.Geog1.c.4-5 Create and label a map (paper or digital) of the local community, state, tribal lands, and country, including both physical (e.g., oceans and continents) and human (e.g., roads, buildings) characteristics.</p>
Corresponding WIDA ELD Standards	<p><b>ELD-SS.2-3.Explain.Interpretive</b></p> <p>Interpret social studies explanations by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining types of sources for answering compelling and supporting questions about phenomena or events</li> <li>• Analyzing sources for event sequences and/or causes/effects</li> <li>• Evaluating disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling or supporting question</li> </ul> <p><b>ELD-SS.2-3.Explain.Expressive</b></p> <p>Construct social studies explanations that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce phenomena or events</li> <li>• Describe components, order, causes, or cycles</li> <li>• Generalize possible reasons for a development or event</li> </ul> <p><b>ELD-SS.2-3.Argue.Interpretive</b></p> <p>Interpret social studies arguments by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying topic and purpose (argue in favor or against a position, present a balanced interpretation, challenge perspective)</li> <li>• Analyzing relevant information from one or two sources to develop claims in response to compelling questions</li> <li>• Evaluating source credibility based on distinctions between fact and opinion</li> </ul> <p><b>ELD-SS.2-3.Argue.Expressive</b></p> <p>Construct social studies arguments that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce topic</li> <li>• Select relevant information to support claims with evidence from one or more sources</li> <li>• Show relationships between claim, evidence, and reasoning</li> </ul>

**Table 1**  
Global Trade Unit with WIDA ELD and Social Studies Standards



Ms. Folberg adapted the C3 unit following the Wisconsin Standards Inquiry Process from Figure 1 in order to meet the needs of her language learners better. Table 2 is a snapshot of her teaching and learning organized by Questions, Research, Analyze, Communication, and Civic Action. Table 2 includes the following components: a detailed description of the instructional sequence, which was intentionally and carefully planned, as well as thinking routines, talk protocols, and other ways of scaffolding student learning of content and language. Each step in the inquiry is also assessed through formative assessment and is clearly described in Table 2. Finally, all the resources that were used in the unit are hyperlinked in the final row. We hope this table makes the pedagogy of inquiry visible to you and your students.

**Table 2**  
Ms. Folberg’s Unit Organized Following Wisconsin Social Studies Inquiry Process

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Research</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Civic Engagement</b>
<i>Students construct meaningful questions that initiate an inquiry.</i>	<i>Students gather and evaluate sources (maps, websites, videos).</i>	<i>Students develop claims using evidence to support their reasoning.</i>	<i>Students communicate and critique conclusions.</i>	<i>Students take civic action and become civically engaged.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher connects to students’ prior knowledge of products/ goods. Students read labels on the products and share their observations (Avocados come from Mexico. Coffee comes from Costa Rica.).</li> <li>• Teacher introduces the topic of global trade and guides students to formulate the focus and supporting questions that will guide their inquiry:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>Why do countries need each other?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>What do countries export?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Where do products come from and why?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>How is the climate connected to the resources, products, and goods of that country?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher guides students in the exploration of some products countries export, ranging from natural resources to capital goods.</li> <li>• Students choose three products and look at maps to list the countries that produce and export them.</li> <li>• Teacher introduces key concepts: climate zones, trade, export/import, goods, services.</li> <li>• Students do a think-pair-share to answer these questions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>What products are important to you?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Where do they come from?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Are they imported?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Are they domestically produced?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher makes connections for students between geography and economy, encouraging students to ask “how” and “why” questions to understand more deeply, and makes more connections between geographic location, climate, and trade and introduces new concepts and vocabulary: want, need, supply, demand.</li> <li>• Teacher connects climate zones to the produce that grows there to the population density. Students compare one of those countries to the climate zones map in the following questions.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>What do you notice about the climate in that country?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>How do you think the climate might be connected to the country’s most valuable exports?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>What do you wonder?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher guides students in making claims to answer the main inquiry question: Why do countries need each other?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For students to be able to communicate their knowledge from research, the teacher leads her students in deconstructing and annotating a mentor text showing how to communicate claims supported by sufficient and specific evidence.</li> <li>• Teacher teaches students how to use connectives to combine simple sentences to make a claim supported by evidence.</li> <li>• Students present their arguments to understand why countries need to import goods. Reasons include needs and wants, cost, supply and demand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by selecting one or more of the goods mentioned in the featured sources as items that the US imports from other countries and inviting local restaurant and/or grocery store managers to class to talk about how and why they are involved in that form of trade.</li> <li>• Teacher introduces students to a local chocolate shop and connects all that global learning to a local store.</li> <li>• Students learn about responsible farming and fair trade. Students discuss questions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>Is it best to buy products made in the USA to help American workers?</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Why don’t workers get paid fair wages for their work?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Questions	Research	Analysis	Communication	Civic Engagement
<p><b>Scaffolding and Learning Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to prior knowledge and personal experiences.</li> <li>• Videos to make abstract concepts of trade and shipment of goods concrete.</li> <li>• Use of questions to activate prior knowledge and build a bridge to the new.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaffolding and Learning Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting to students’ lives and the products that are important to them-- student choice of what product to trace.</li> <li>• Think-Pair-Share</li> <li>• Use of SeeSaw to record their learning orally.</li> <li>• Teaching key concepts and associated vocabulary after having built some experience and exposure to the topic (not before)</li> <li>• Explicit teaching of how and what types of maps to use to learn about the country’s products (political maps).</li> <li>• Explicit teaching of continent versus country.</li> <li>• Students choose products and sources according to their interests, experience, and learning styles.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaffolding and Learning Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit teaching of world climate zones maps</li> <li>• Explicitly teaching key concepts needed for this question.</li> <li>• Explicit teaching of language using the <a href="#">WIDA Standards Language Functions and Features</a> (connectors, relating verbs, expanded noun groups).</li> <li>• Students take notes using the <a href="#">See/Think/Wonder chart</a></li> <li>• Use of 3D Virtual Globe to illustrate abstract concepts.</li> <li>• Accountable Talk.</li> <li>• Norms for class conversations.</li> <li>• Teacher recording of a read-aloud.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaffolding and Learning Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deconstruction of the text to make language of “specific evidence” visible. Using a non-example with vague language (“stuff” and “they”) to show students it’s hard to understand what exactly is happening here.</li> <li>• Teacher and students generate claims to show a variety of ways to make a claim using Language Functions and Features.</li> <li>• Teacher recasts students’ spoken-like language into written-like.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Theme/Rheme chart</a> to show how to add specificity to our claims and evidence.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Language anchor chart</a> with connectives and expanded noun groups needed for claim, evidence, reasoning.</li> <li>• Students revise their own writing based on the modeled revisions that include more specific vocabulary, evidence, and connectors. They highlight their revisions so they can explicitly see what makes the writing clearer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scaffolding and Learning Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to real life and real experiences</li> <li>• Reviewing big ideas and connecting them to real life will help students connect the dots between all the separate learning activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Formative Performance Task:</b> Students are able to formulate questions worthy of inquiry.</p>	<p><b>Formative Performance Task:</b> Choose 3 products and list the countries that produce and export them.</p>	<p><b>Formative Performance Task:</b> List three reasons why countries import goods.</p>	<p><b>Summative Performance Task:</b> Students write their arguments supported with evidence.</p>	<p><b>Summative Performance Task:</b> Students talk to their parents about choices to make when purchasing groceries and clothing.</p>
<p><b>Sources and Resources:</b> The Right Question <a href="https://rightquestion.org/">https://rightquestion.org/</a></p> <p><a href="#">This map shows which export makes your country the most money</a> <a href="#">Global Ship Traffic Seen From Space</a></p>	<p><b>Sources and Resources:</b> <a href="https://mapmaker.nationalgeographic.org/">https://mapmaker.nationalgeographic.org/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/classroom-resources/mapping/">https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/classroom-resources/mapping/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.nationalgeographic.org/mapmaker-interactive/">https://www.nationalgeographic.org/mapmaker-interactive/</a></p>	<p><b>Sources and Resources:</b> <a href="https://www.nationalgeographic.org/idea/getting-started-google-earth/Virtual-Globe">https://www.nationalgeographic.org/idea/getting-started-google-earth/Virtual-Globe</a>: <a href="https://earth3dmap.com/political-map-of-the-world/">https://earth3dmap.com/political-map-of-the-world/</a> On Valentine’s Day, Many of the Flowers Come from Colombia (Newsela) It’s a Hard Fight to End Child Labor Abuse on West Africa’s Cocoa Farms (Newsela)</p>	<p><b>Sources and Resources:</b> <a href="https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/the-trading-game/">https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/the-trading-game/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.shmoop.com/international-trade/resources.html">https://www.shmoop.com/international-trade/resources.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.juniorachievement.org/documents/20009/1187251/Middle10.pdf">https://www.juniorachievement.org/documents/20009/1187251/Middle10.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>Sources and Resources:</b> <a href="https://gailambrosius.com/How-Chocolate-is-Made">https://gailambrosius.com/How-Chocolate-is-Made</a></p>



**Language Expectations:** Multilingual learners will...

**ELD-SS.2-3.Explain.Interpretive**

Interpret social studies explanations by

- Determining types of sources for answering compelling and supporting questions about phenomena or events
- Analyzing sources for event sequences and/or causes/effects
- Evaluating disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling or supporting question

**ELD-SS.2-3.Explain.Expressive**

Construct social studies explanations that

- Introduce phenomena or events
- Describe components, order, causes, or cycles
- Generalize possible reasons for a development or event

**Language Functions and Sample Language Features**

**Introduce phenomena or events through...**

- Language to speak to the reader directly and draw them in (*Did you know?*)
- Prepositional phrases of time, place to contextualize phenomena or events
- Relating verbs (*be, have*) to define phenomena or events (*Deserts are the driest places on earth*)
- Pronouns and renaming to reference ideas and people across the text (*explorers=Spaniards=they*)
- Single nouns to represent abstract concepts (*habitat, pollution*)

**Describe components, order, causes, or cycles through...**

- Connectors to establish relationships among ideas: sequence examples (*first, another*); time markers (*after an earthquake, millions of years later*); causality (*because, so that*)
- Prepositional phrases to add spatial and directional details (*The river flows down the mountain.*)
- Expanded noun groups that include adjectives to answer questions about how many, and what something is like (*seven continents, longest river*)
- Past tense verbs to describe events
- Adverbials to place event in time (*last year, a long time ago, everyday*)

**Generalize possible reasons for a development or event through...**

- Declarative statements to evaluate and interpret events (*The fish are dying because people throw trash in the ocean.*)
- Verbs and adjectives to judge behavior or moral character (*wasting, destroying, bad*)
- Verbs to highlight agents and recipients
- Evaluative language to summarize event (*best, important, dangerous, sad*)

**Figure 3.**

WIDA Standards Grades 2-3, Language for Social Studies Explain. p. 96



**Teaching**

<p>What do you <b>see</b>?</p> 	<p>What do you <b>think</b>?</p> 	<p>What do you <b>wonder</b>?</p> 
<p>I see that Ivory Coast exports cocoa beans.</p>	<p>I think that Ivory Coast has a tropical climate that is good for growing cocoa beans.</p>	<p>Who imports the cocoa beans from Ivory Coast? Why do countries import goods?</p>

■ Relating verbs (*be, have*) to define phenomena or events (*Deserts are the driest places on earth*)

**Describe components, order, causes, or cycles through...**

■ Connectors to establish relationships among ideas: sequence examples (*first, another*); time markers (*after an earthquake, millions of years later*); causality (*because, so that*)




**Figure 4.** See-Think-Wonder Chart. Slide from Ms. Folberg’s Presentation Showing How Language Functions and Features Connect to the Social Studies Learning

<p><b>Make a claim supported by evidence about a factor that has influenced trade in the 21st century.</b></p>			
<p><b>Connectors to join ideas together when providing evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because</li> <li>• So</li> <li>• If</li> <li>• Since</li> </ul>	<p><b>Expanded noun groups to add details about the countries and their produce</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countries with tropical climates</li> <li>• Countries with warm humid climates</li> </ul>	<p><b>Prepositional phrases to tell about where produce comes from</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Ivory Coast</li> <li>• From Costa Rica</li> <li>• In the countries with warm climates</li> </ul>	<p><b>Verbs to talk about trade between countries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Import</li> <li>• Export</li> <li>• Come (from)</li> <li>• Produce</li> <li>• Trade</li> <li>• Sell</li> <li>• Buy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countries need each other <b>because</b> no country can produce everything it needs or wants.</li> <li>• <b>If</b> a country has a tropical climate, it is good for growing cocoa beans.</li> <li>• <b>Because</b> not all countries have a tropical climate, they cannot grow cocoa beans.</li> <li>• <b>When</b> a country has too much of something, they trade with other countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tropical climate</b> is good for growing <b>cocoa beans</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Warm and humid climates</b> are good for growing <b>delicious avocados</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Countries with tropical climates</b> can give us <b>cocoa beans</b>.</li> <li>• Our grocery store carries <b>locally grown coffee from Costa Rica</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The United States <b>imports</b> cocoa beans from many countries with tropical climate.</li> <li>• The United States <b>exports</b> soy beans, corn, and wheat.</li> <li>• Countries with tropical climates <b>produce</b> cocoa beans.</li> </ul>

**Figure 5.** Language Anchor Chart with Language Features for Claim and Evidence.



**Figure 6.**

Theme and Rheme (Give and New)

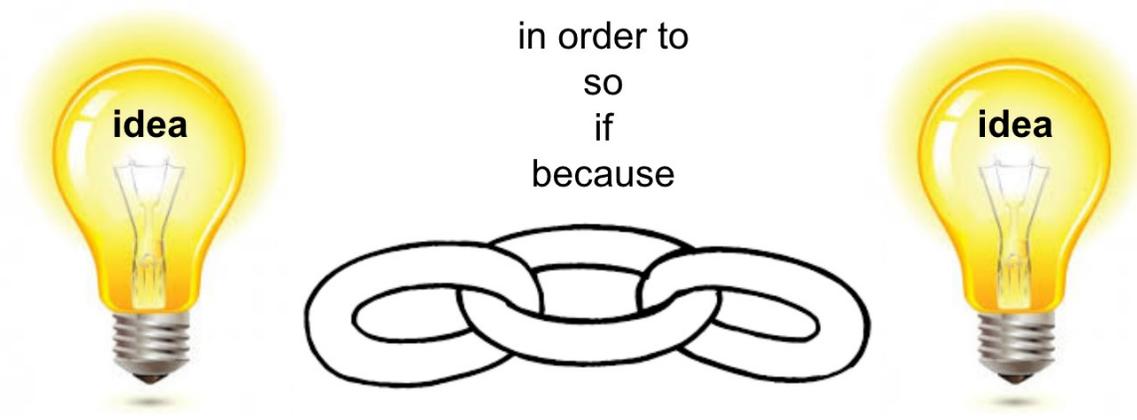
Theme/Rheme or Given/New is a way to describe the pattern of sentences and how they are connected across text. In the WIDA Standards, it's called Give/New. Ms. Folberg uses Theme and Rheme. Theme is a chunk of text before the verb and the rheme is the additional new information. Identifying theme and rheme helps teach students how to create cohesion among ideas in their writing. For example, see how the second sentence is connected to the third. The blue language "Ivory Coast and Costa Rica" becomes "those countries." This pattern is important to teach students to create cohesive texts when they write to make a claim why countries need each other.

Theme/Given	Rheme/New
Countries	need each other to get goods they can't produce in their climate.
For example, the United States	imports cacao from the Ivory Coast and Costa Rica,
because those countries	have rainforests that are the perfect temperature and rain for growing cacao bushes.

**Figure 7.**

A teacher slide with a visual to show how conjunctions work to combine sentences.

Whenever you want to connect ideas, you can use connective words to join two sentences together into one big sentence.



The diagram illustrates the concept of connecting ideas. It features two glowing lightbulbs, each labeled "idea". A chain of three links connects the two lightbulbs. Above the chain, the words "in order to", "so", "if", and "because" are listed, representing connective words used to join two sentences into one.

In this piece, we illustrated the synergy between the C3 Framework, the WIDA ELD Standards and the Wisconsin Social Studies Standards. We also showed the power of collaboration between two teachers to make inquiry accessible to all learners, especially multilingual learners.



# References:

1. WIDA ELD Standards, 2020 Edition <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf>
2. Wisconsin Social Studies Standards [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/standards/New%20pdfs/2018\\_WI\\_Social\\_Studies\\_Standards.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/standards/New%20pdfs/2018_WI_Social_Studies_Standards.pdf)
3. Global Trade Unit, 3rd Grade, C3 Teachers <https://c3teachers.org/inquiries/global-trade/>

## About the Authors:



**Ruslana Westerlund, Ed.D.**, is a Ukrainian-born educational consultant at CESA 2 specializing in using the WIDA Standards for equity through rigorous and culturally relevant teaching, providing access to disciplinary genres for all students, and designing equitable instructional practices for English Learners. She is driven by the vision to transform schools where all teachers are equipped with the knowledge to meet the needs of English Learners at both systems and classroom levels. Her unique area of expertise and research is writing in the disciplines through an apprenticeship pedagogy called the Teaching and Learning Cycle.



**Elizabeth Folberg** is a National Board Certified teacher of English Learners. She holds a BA in French and an M.A. in Teaching Second Languages and Cultures from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Currently, she teaches grades 3-5 in the Verona Area School District and has been teaching K-5 English Learners since 2004. Prior to that she worked as a middle and high school French teacher in Central Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio. She has served as a mentor, instructional coach, and has led professional development sessions. As a WIDA Fellow, she has collaborated with WIDA staff on standards implementation.

