

# **Designing GenAI prompts with purpose for mentor text creation**

Meghan Love, Priscila J.B.M. Costa, & Luciana C. de Oliveira

*This article demonstrates how a Google Sheets-based prompt generator can support teachers in using GenAI to create intentional, genre-aligned mentor texts for multilingual learners. Drawing on the WIDA 2020 ELD Standards Framework and genre-based pedagogy, the article includes elementary classroom examples that model how teachers can use structured prompts to generate mentor texts aligned to language and content goals.*

*Keywords: artificial intelligence, generative artificial intelligence, multilingual learners, WIDA, functional approach, language features, language functions, elementary*

The transformative potential of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in multilingual learner (ML) settings is related to pedagogical decisions of users. GenAI tools can be an effective classroom asset only through the intentional design of teacher-led inputs. Moving away from the idea of prompting as a spontaneous or trial-and-error task, prompt engineering is a disciplined instructional act (dos Santos, 2025). This approach demands that educators bridge the gap between technological capability and student needs by meticulously considering the classroom context, the specific parameters of the request, such as tone and audience, and the targeted learning outcomes. This article puts these ideas into practice to propose intentional and purposeful uses of GenAI in ML education.

## **Scaffolding prompt design through a planning tool**

Effective use of GenAI in ML classrooms depends not on the technology itself, but on the quality and intentionality of the prompts that teachers design (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025; dos Santos, 2025). Rather than viewing prompts as ad hoc or improvised inputs, prompt engineering should be an instructional practice that is grounded in the instructional context, the key characteristics of the request (including design, intended audience, and thematic focus) and the purpose of the prompt, or what the teacher aims to achieve through the generated text (dos Santos, 2025; dos Santos et al., 2025).

Central to this work is the Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts, developed by de Oliveira and dos Santos (2025), which outlines a set of guiding questions teachers can use to design prompts that yield instructionally aligned mentor texts for multilingual learners (MLs). The chart is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory that views language as a functional tool to convey messages in specific social contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). By aligning with both SFL and the WIDA (2020) English language development standards framework, the chart helps teachers convert complex language functions, such as explanation or

argumentation, into precise GenAI prompt input. This approach reflects an understanding of genre and language to guide teachers in designing prompts that support meaning-making in instructional contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The chart prioritizes key instructional decisions, such as instructional context, genre family, topic, language features, and instructional purpose, before any interaction with GenAI occurs. Because GenAI relies on clear parameters to produce high-quality output, SFL's emphasis on genre families and register ensures that AI-generated mentor texts mirror the most prominent linguistic features students will need to develop for disciplinary success. In doing so, it aligns teachers' work with the WIDA ELD standards framework components and sample planning questions, which are grounded in content-based language learning and frame language and content as integrated components of instruction through explicit attention to language functions, language expectations, and proficiency levels in lesson and unit planning (Shafer Willner, 2025; WIDA, 2020). Through the lens of the SFL theoretical framework, the prompt generator introduced in this article acts as a bridge, turning theoretical linguistic principles into automated instructional support for teachers of MLs.

The Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025) provides a strong planning framework for classroom teachers. We take the chart to further apply it to daily planning routines, based on our elementary classroom teaching experiences. We developed a Google Sheets-based prompt generator that transforms the chart's guiding questions into an automated, teacher-friendly workflow. In this tool, each guiding question from the Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts is embedded as a column header in a Google Sheet (see Figure 1). Teachers respond to each question in a single row, entering information such as their instructional role, grade level, instructional setting, content topic, genre family, desired word count, targeted language features, and instructional purposes. A formula then automatically synthesizes these responses into a complete, coherent prompt that can be copied and pasted directly into a GenAI platform.

This prompt structure builds on the Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts described by de Oliveira and dos Santos (2025), which we adapted in a Google Sheet for use as an automated prompt generator. Please save a copy of the [Prompt Creation Reference Google Sheet](#) to be able to edit this tool.

I am a **[teacher role]** teaching **[grade level]** in the **[instructional setting]**. My class is learning about **[topic]**. Generate a text in the genre family **[genre family]**. The text needs to provide **[information type]** about **[content focus]**. The text should be no more than **[word count]** words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family **[genre family]** include: **[language features]**. Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: **[instructional purpose]**. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts									
<b>Author</b> Who is writing the prompt?			<b>Request</b> What are the main characteristics of the prompt?				<b>Purpose</b> What is the prompt for?		<b>Prompt Structure</b>
<b>Background Info</b>			<b>Key Language Use</b>	<b>Example Genre</b>	<b>Language Features</b>			<b>Purposes</b>	
<b>Example:</b> - area of work: education - job position: teacher - location: U.S. - content area: ESOL - grade level: 1st			<b>Example:</b> - genre family: narrate - topic: helping my community	<b>Example:</b> - example genre: recount - number of words: up to 120	<b>Example: (WIDA ELD-LA.1.Narrate.Expressive)</b> - words, title, statements, or common story expressions to introduce context - simple statements to introduce the problem - noun groups to state who or what the story is about - prepositional phrases to specify location and time. - develop story events through simple statement to provide closure - connectors to sequence time, and events - pronouns, renaming, and synonyms to reference a character or idea across the text			<b>Example:</b> - to tell an event where the community needed help - to describe problem and solution - to describe the people and their actions, and - to share how the characters felt throughout the events. - Add a central lesson about helping our communities.	I am a [teacher role] teaching [grade level] in the [instructional setting]. My class is learning about [topic]. Generate a text in the genre family [genre family]. The text needs to provide [information type] about [content focus]. The text should be no more than [word count] words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family [genre family] include: [language features]. Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: [instructional purpose]. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.
<b>What is your role?</b>	<b>What grade level(s) do you teach?</b>	<b>What instructional setting best describes this lesson?</b>	<b>What is the topic?</b>	<b>What is the genre family (key language use)?</b>	<b>What type of example genre do you want?</b>	<b>Maximum word count</b>	<b>What are the language features you want?</b>	<b>What are the purposes of this mentor text?</b>	<b>Generated Prompt To Be Used with GenAI</b>
									I am a teaching in . My class is learning about . Generate a text in the genre family . The text needs to provide about . The text should be no more than words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family include: . Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: . Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

Figure 1. Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts Google Sheet

This automation does not replace teacher expertise; rather, it amplifies instructional decision-making by ensuring that each pedagogical choice is explicitly represented in the prompt. By scaffolding prompt writing into manageable steps, this tool reduces the cognitive load associated with prompt construction, enabling teachers to focus more fully on refining instructional intent while supporting ethical engagement with GenAI and improving the quality of AI-generated responses (dos Santos, 2025).

The design of the prompt generator also aligns closely with Fitzpatrick’s PREPare framework for effective AI prompting, which emphasizes Prompt, Role, Explicit instructions, Parameters, and Evaluation (Fitzpatrick, 2023). This emphasis on structured, principled prompt design is supported by research on large language models demonstrating that more precise tasks and directives lead to more effective and aligned model outputs (Liu et al., 2026). Notably, the Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts already incorporates several core PREPare components – Prompt, Role, Explicit instructions, and Parameters – through its emphasis on the teacher’s role, task characteristics, and instructional purpose in prompt design (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025; dos Santos, 2025). The Google Sheets-based prompt generator builds on this foundation by making these elements actionable within a planning tool and by extending the framework to include an explicit Evaluation step.

**Prompt** is articulated through the instructional task description and text expectations.

**Role** is specified by positioning the teacher and the instructional context.

**Explicit instructions** are embedded in the genre family, content focus, and selected language features.

**Parameters** are established through word count and genre constraints.

**Evaluation** is incorporated through the addition of an ARE step (Ask questions, Rate, Emotions), implemented by prompting the GenAI system to request additional information before text generation (e.g., “Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task”).

By embedding PREPare principles directly into the structure of the spreadsheet, the tool supports teachers, particularly those new to GenAI, in producing consistent, high-quality prompts while maintaining instructional intentionality without requiring extensive technical knowledge.

## Leveraging prompt design prior to GenAI use

The Google Sheets tool is designed to be used before teachers interact with any GenAI platform. This workflow reflects a key insight: prompts function most effectively when they are deliberately planned and structured before interaction with GenAI, rather than generated spontaneously in the moment (dos Santos, 2025). Teachers are encouraged to revisit and revise

their responses within the spreadsheet, particularly the genre family, language features, and instructional purpose, prior to copying the generated prompt. The generated prompt remains fully editable, allowing teachers to make final adjustments before using it with a GenAI platform. This step serves as a built-in reflection point. Teachers may ask:

- Are these the language features I want to be made prominent in the mentor text to support the intended Key Language Use?
- Do the selected language features reflect the language I want students to notice, discuss, and practice through the mentor text?
- Does the instructional purpose align with the language function students are expected to practice?
- Is the word count sufficient for a mentor text?

Engaging in this reflection process reinforces the irreplaceable role of the educator as an active reviewer, particularly in verifying content accuracy, ensuring instructional relevance, and continually refining interactions with AI tools (Shafer Willner, 2025). By treating the spreadsheet as a planning space rather than a mere technical tool, teachers engage in intentional prompt engineering that remains grounded in pedagogy.

Unstructured use of AI risks reproducing generic texts that fail to meet multilingual learners' linguistic and cultural needs (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025). The Google Sheets-based prompt generator offers a systematic alternative that centers on teacher planning. When used in conjunction with intentional language feature selection and professional judgment, this approach enables teachers to generate mentor texts that are aligned to the content and also linguistically purposeful and instructionally targeted for multilingual learners. At the same time, it guides educators in prompt engineering, building confidence in using GenAI to create mentor texts and allowing teachers to devote more time to meaningful, collaborative instructional planning (dos Santos, 2025; Shafer Willner, 2025).

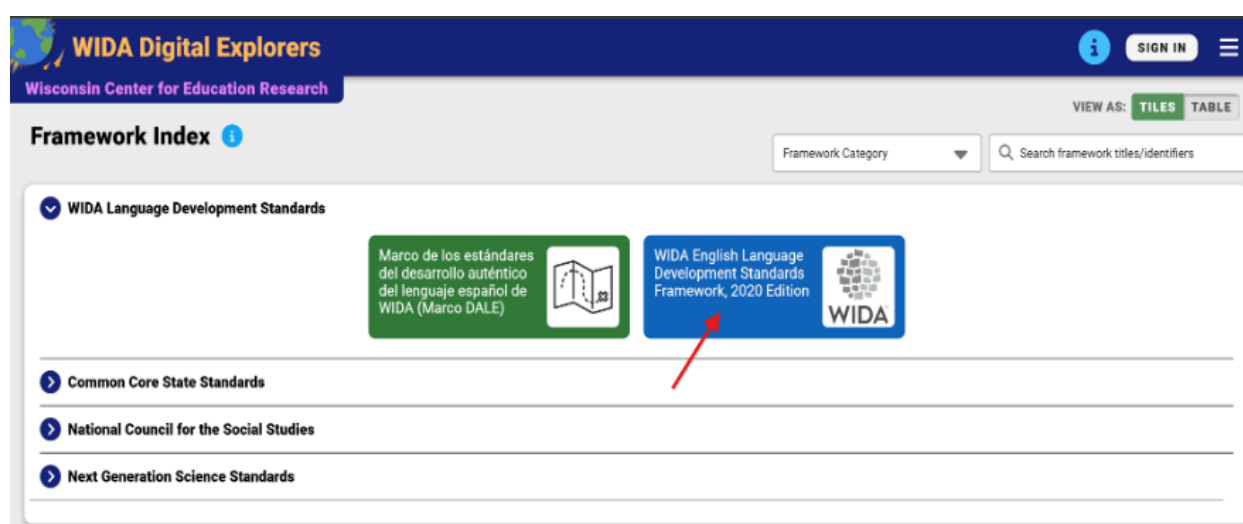
Additionally, the Google Sheets-based tool allows teachers to maintain a centralized, organized record of their prompts, which can be edited, reused, and adapted over time to support the creation of new mentor texts. Through this process, teachers have the opportunity to refine their use of GenAI tools while also deepening their instructional expertise by repeatedly engaging with decisions related to genre, language features, and instructional purpose (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025).

## **Decisions related to genre families and language features**

As part of the prompt design process, the user must make informed decisions related to the genre family and language features relevant to the language lesson. WIDA (2020) provides that information. From an SFL perspective, the standards include not only the communicative skills students must develop, but also language patterns essential for the interpretation and expression

of concepts in the content areas of English language arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and for social and academic purposes. We recommend that every ML teacher familiarize themselves with how the standards are written. That information will serve to complete the request and purpose sections of the Google Sheets-based tool presented in this article.

To access the standards and the respective Key Language Use (KLU) and language features to fill out in the Google Sheet, we recommend the [WIDA Digital Explorers](#), an interactive online interface in the Satchel Commons platform hosted by Common Good Learning Tools (2025) and operated by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Upon entering the Satchel, users select the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition under the WIDA Language Development Standards drop-down menu, as shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2. WIDA Digital Explorers home page*

The right side of Figure 3 provides essential metadata, including citations and official source links, to support the implementation of the WIDA 2020 framework in the classroom. On the left, users will find three primary dropdown menus designed to filter and display specific data:

- Language expectations by WIDA ELD Standard statements and grade-level cluster, which organizes goals by subject area and grade levels.
- Language expectations by Key Language Use and Communication Mode, which focuses on the functional genre families to narrate, inform, explain, and argue.
- Proficiency level descriptors by grade level cluster and communication modes, which define what students can do at various stages of language development.

For prompt creation, the first dropdown item is the most practical: *Language Expectations by WIDA ELD Standard Statements and Grade-Level Cluster*. Figure 3 shows that step.

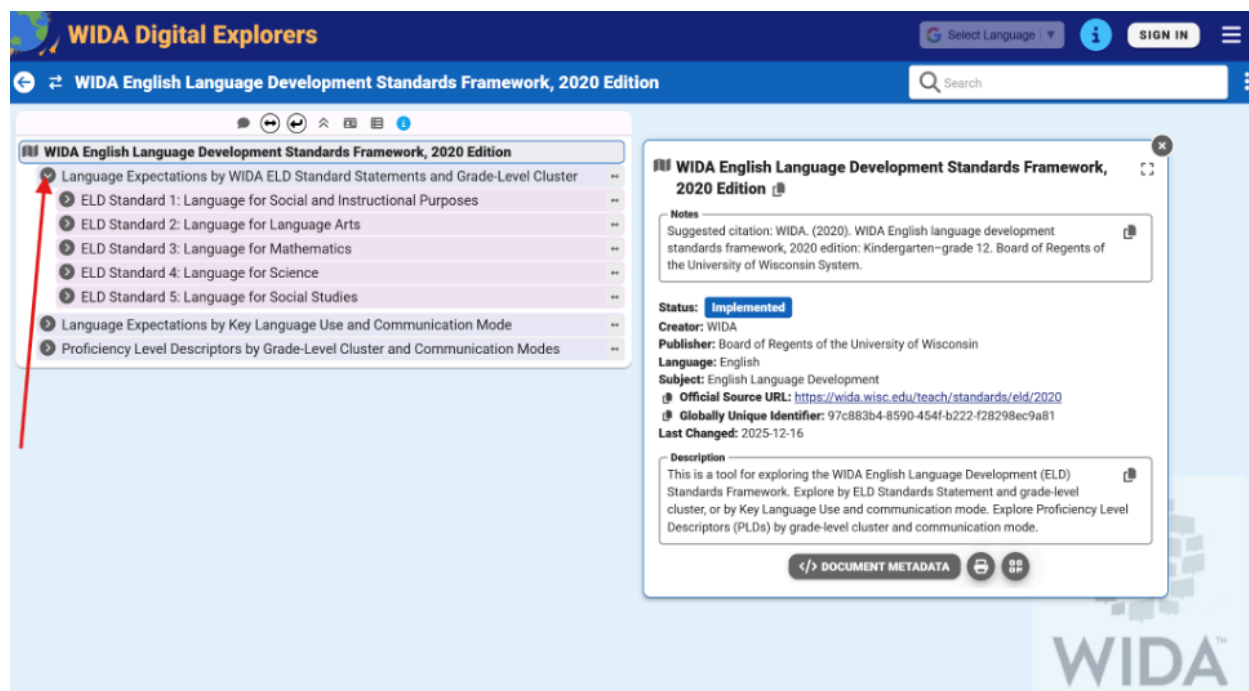


Figure 3. WIDA Digital Explorer: standards filter selection

In the sample demonstrated in the next section, we selected the following items shown in Figure 4 to fill out the Google Sheet cells and create a prompt for a kindergarten mentor text:

1. ELD Standard 2: Language for Language Arts
2. Kindergarten
3. ELD-LA.K. Narrate.Expressive
  - Write “narrate” in the cell under “What is the genre family (Key Language Use [KLU]).”
4. Language functions and associated language features
  - Select the appropriate language functions aligned with the topic and genre
  - Copy and paste them into the cell under “What are the language features you want?”

Note that the language functions are first listed in bullet points. They will inform the language learning objectives for the lesson. Below that section, each bullet point is broken down into language features. The teacher may choose all the language features associated with a single language function, as shown above in Figure 4, or choose features associated with various functions, as shown below in Figure 5. Selecting the appropriate language features is crucial in prompt creation because these are the language constructions that Gen-AI tools will incorporate into the mentor text. They will support the language lesson as students see those constructions and practice reading, writing, and communicating their understanding of the disciplinary content.

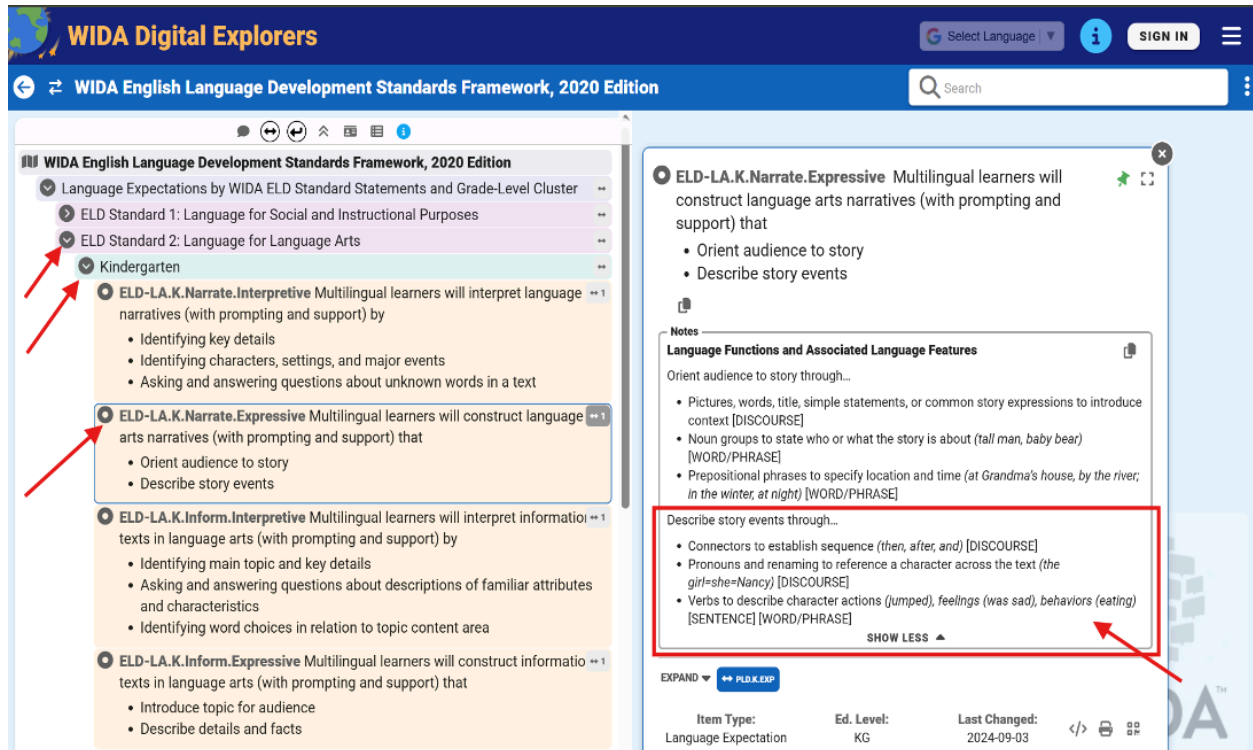


Figure 4. WIDA Digital Explorers: Standards, language functions, and language features selection

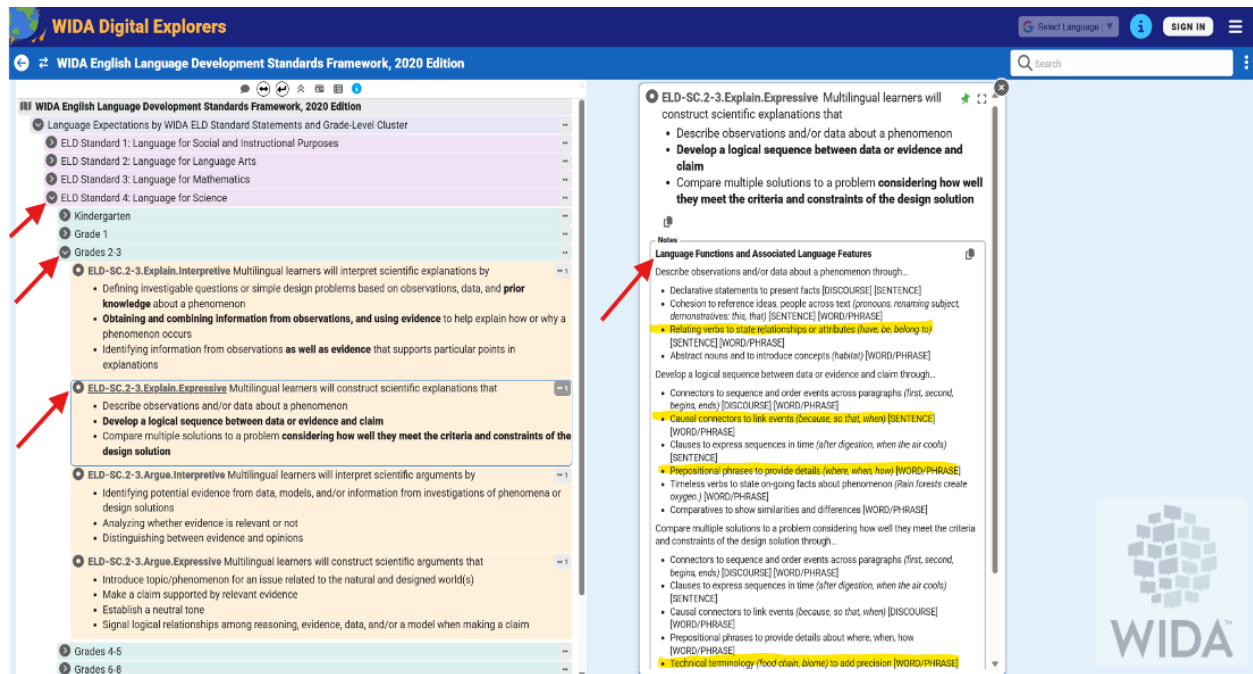


Figure 5. WIDA Digital Explorer: Selecting language features of multiple language functions

## Sample mentor texts generated through structured prompt design

This section provides two examples of structured prompt design, with step-by-step instructions on how to use the Google Sheets-based prompt generator. The first sample focuses on a mentor text for a 2nd-grade science lesson, and the second sample does the same for a kindergarten language arts lesson.

The first sample is a resource for a 2nd-grade ESOL teacher to teach a lesson about canyons. The language learning objective is aligned with the Explain KLU. For the first step, a prompt was created using a Google Sheets-based generator. That prompt was then entered into Gemini to produce the mentor text. Figures 6 and 7 show the process and product, respectively.

Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts									
Author Who is writing the prompt?		Request What are the main characteristics of the prompt?					Purpose What is the prompt for?	Prompt Structure	
Background Info			Key Language Use	Example Genre	Language Features			Purposes	
What is your role?	What grade level(s) do you teach?	What instructional setting best describes this lesson?	What is the topic?	What is the genre family (key language use)?	What type of example genre do you want?	Maximum word count	What are the language features you want?	What are the purposes of this mentor text?	Generated Prompt To Be Used with GenAI
ESOL teacher	2nd grade	South Carolina	landforms : canyons	explain	explanations	250	(WIDA ELD-SC.2-3.Explain.Expressive) relating verbs to state relationships or attributes (have, be, belong to); causal connectors to link events (because, so that, when); prepositional phrases to provide details about where, when, how; technical terminology (food chain, biome) to add precision	to explain a phenomenon that involves an element of causality, to explain how canyons are formed and to describe how the Earth's surface is constantly changing	I am a ESOL teacher teaching 2nd grade in South Carolina. My class is learning about explanations. Generate a text in the genre family explain. The text needs to provide explanations about landforms: canyons. The text should be no more than 250 words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family explain include: (WIDA ELD-SC.2-3.Explain.Expressive) relating verbs to state relationships or attributes (have, be, belong to); causal connectors to link events (because, so that, when); prepositional phrases to provide details about where, when, how; technical terminology (food chain, biome) to add precision. Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: to explain a phenomenon that involves an element of causality, to explain how canyons are formed and to describe how the Earth's surface is constantly changing. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

Figure 6. Sample Google Sheets-based prompt generator for a 2nd Grade Science Explain mentor text

Gemini

Mentor Text for Landforms Explanation ▾

I am a ESOL teacher teaching 2nd grade in South Carolina. My class is learning about explanations. Generate a text in the genre family explain. The text needs to provide explanations about landforms: canyons. The text should be no more than 250 words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family explain include: (WIDA ELD-SC.2-3.Explain.Expressive) relating verbs to state relationships or attributes (have, be, belong to); causal connectors to link events (because, so that, when); prepositional phrases to provide details about where, when, how; technical terminology (food chain, biome) to add precision. Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: to explain a phenomenon that involves an element of causality, to explain how canyons are formed and to describe how the Earth's surface is constantly changing. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

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### How Canyons Are Made

The Earth's surface **is** never the same **because** it is always changing. One of the most famous shapes on our planet **is** the **canyon**. A canyon **is** a deep, narrow valley with very steep walls made of solid rock. 🌐 🌐 🌐

Canyons are formed **when** water flows **over the land** for a very long time. Most canyons **have** a river running **at the bottom**. As the river moves **through the landscape**, the water rubs **against the Earth**. It carries away small pieces of sand and stone. This process **is** called **erosion**.

[Image showing water erosion carving a canyon]

The moving water is powerful **so that** it can cut **through even the hardest layers** of rock. The river acts like a giant saw, carving deeper and deeper **into the ground**. Over millions of years, the rushing water changes the flat land into a giant gap. 🌐 🌐

Canyons **belong to** a group of **landforms** that show us how the Earth's surface is constantly being reshaped. Even though the rock looks still, the river is always working to change the world **under our feet**.

**Figure 7.** Sample Gemini (Google, 2026) output from the 2nd-grade science mentor text prompt

The second sample shows the creation of a resource for a kindergarten ELA lesson aligned with the KLU for narrative genres on the topic of the first day of school. The Google Sheets-based prompt generator produced a prompt (Figure 8) that was entered into the GenAI platform ChatGPT and resulted in the mentor text shown in Figure 9.

Prompt Creation Reference Chart for Mentor Texts									
Author Who is writing the prompt?			Request What are the main characteristics of the prompt?					Purpose What is the prompt for?	Prompt Structure
Background Info			Key Language Use	Example Genre	Language Features			Purposes	
What is your role?	What grade level(s) do you teach?	What instructional setting best describes this lesson?	What is the topic?	What is the genre family (key language use)?	What type of example genre do you want?	Maximum word count	What are the language features you want?	What are the purposes of this mentor text?	Generated Prompt To Be Used with GenAI
ESOL teacher	Kindergarten	the U.S.	first day of school	narrate	narratives: recounts	90	(WIDA ELD-LA.K.Narrate.Expressive) verbs to describe character actions (jumped), feelings (was sad), behaviors (eating), connectors to establish sequence (then, after, and), typically first person pronouns (I, we), pronouns and renaming to reference a character across the text (the girl=she=Nancy)	to tell what happened during the first day of school, to describe what activities you did, to describe the people you saw and what they did, and to share how you felt throughout the day	I am a ESOL teacher teaching Kindergarten in the U.S.. My class is learning about narratives: recounts. Generate a text in the genre family narrate. The text needs to provide narratives: recounts about first day of school. The text should be no more than 90 words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family narrate include: (WIDA ELD-LA.K.Narrate.Expressive) verbs to describe character actions (jumped), feelings (was sad), behaviors (eating), connectors to establish sequence (then, after, and), typically first person pronouns (I, we), pronouns and renaming to reference a character across the text (the girl=she=Nancy). Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: to tell what happened during the first day of school, to describe what activities you did, to describe the people you saw and what they did, and to share how you felt throughout the day. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

Figure 8. Sample Google Sheets-based prompt generator for a kindergarten Language Arts Narrate mentor text

ChatGPT 5.2 ▾

I am a ESOL teacher teaching Kindergarten in the U.S.. My class is learning about narratives: recounts. Generate a text in the genre family narrate. The text needs to provide narratives: recounts about first day of school. The text should be no more than 90 words and will serve as a mentor text for my students. Its language features associated with the genre family narrate include: (WIDA ELD-LA.K.Narrate.Expressive) verbs to describe character actions (jumped), feelings (was sad), behaviors (eating), connectors to establish sequence (then, after, and), typically first person pronouns (I, we), pronouns and renaming to reference a character across the text (the girl=she=Nancy). Generate this text bearing in mind these purposes: to tell what happened during the first day of school, to describe what activities you did, to describe the people you saw and what they did, and to share how you felt throughout the day. Before launching the prompt, ask me questions about any additional information you may need to complete this task.

**First Day of School**

On my first day of school, I felt nervous and a little shy. I saw a girl named Sophia, and she smiled at me. The girl lined up with the class and walked to our room. Then we sat on the rug, sang songs, and listened to the teacher. At lunch, we ate pizza together, and I felt sad because I missed my mom. After lunch, we went to recess. I jumped, ran, and laughed. At the end of the day, I felt happy, brave, and proud.

Figure 9. Sample ChatGPT 5.2 (OpenAI, 2026) output from the kindergarten mentor text prompt

Across both the kindergarten narrative and second-grade explanation examples, the mentor texts reflect the parameters specified in the Google Sheets-based prompt generator by aligning to the targeted genre, adhering to the intended instructional context, and intentionally incorporating the identified language features. In each case, these design choices support the stated instructional purposes and result in mentor texts that are developmentally appropriate, linguistically purposeful, and accessible for multilingual learners at different grade levels.

## Conclusion

This article provides a systematic way for teachers to generate mentor texts that are just right for their students' language learning outcomes. We focus on teachers' pedagogical decisions to show that the success of GenAI in the classroom is a byproduct of human intentionality. As we have explored, prompt engineering is a disciplined instructional act (dos Santos, 2025) that requires a deep understanding of how language, context, and audience intersect.

Beyond individual pedagogical practices, this tool serves for collaborative professional development. Team leaders, Multilingual Learner Program directors, school administrators, and instructional coaches can utilize this systematic prompt-generation approach to facilitate professional learning sessions where grade-level teams collectively analyze the linguistic demands of upcoming units to co-construct prompts. By integrating this method into collaborative planning cycles, educators can move away from individual experimentation with GenAI and toward a shared, evidence-based practice leveraging AI tools effectively. When school leaders prioritize this form of structured professional learning, they take GenAI from its novelty status, which still intimidates many teachers, and turn it into a sustainable, collective asset that ensures instructional equity for multilingual learners across classrooms.

Bridging the gap between technological capability and the unique needs of MLs necessitates a structured, purposeful approach. By integrating the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics with deliberate prompt design, educators can ensure that GenAI serves as a catalyst for meaningful meaning-making. This framework empowers teachers to make AI a reliable, high-leverage asset that directly supports the diverse linguistic trajectories of their students.

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