

# Using Graphic Organizers to Promote Students' Academic Language Production

In the content-based English classroom, students study difficult concepts. Oftentimes, however, there is little opportunity for students to talk or write about these concepts. Instead, students sit passively in their seats.

## **This presentation will:**

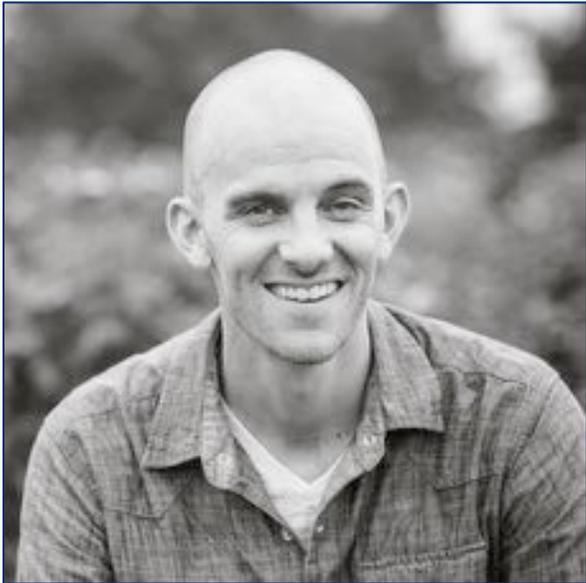
- introduce the graphic organizer as a tool to help students understand difficult concepts and produce related, meaningful academic English
- explore how to effectively integrate graphic organizers into their instruction as part of student-centered speaking and writing activities
- examine strategies that help students become more engaged and capable of effectively speaking and writing about content-area concepts



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



# Eric Wenninger



Eric Wenninger is a language education consultant specializing in content-based English instructional techniques. He served two years as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow in Vietnam, where he taught professional English skills to government officials and mentored English teachers.

Eric received his Master of Education degree in Second Languages and Cultures Education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. His professional interests include working with multi-level classes, designing and delivering content-based English instruction, and blending technology with teaching.



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# Using Graphic Organizers to Promote Students' Academic Language Production



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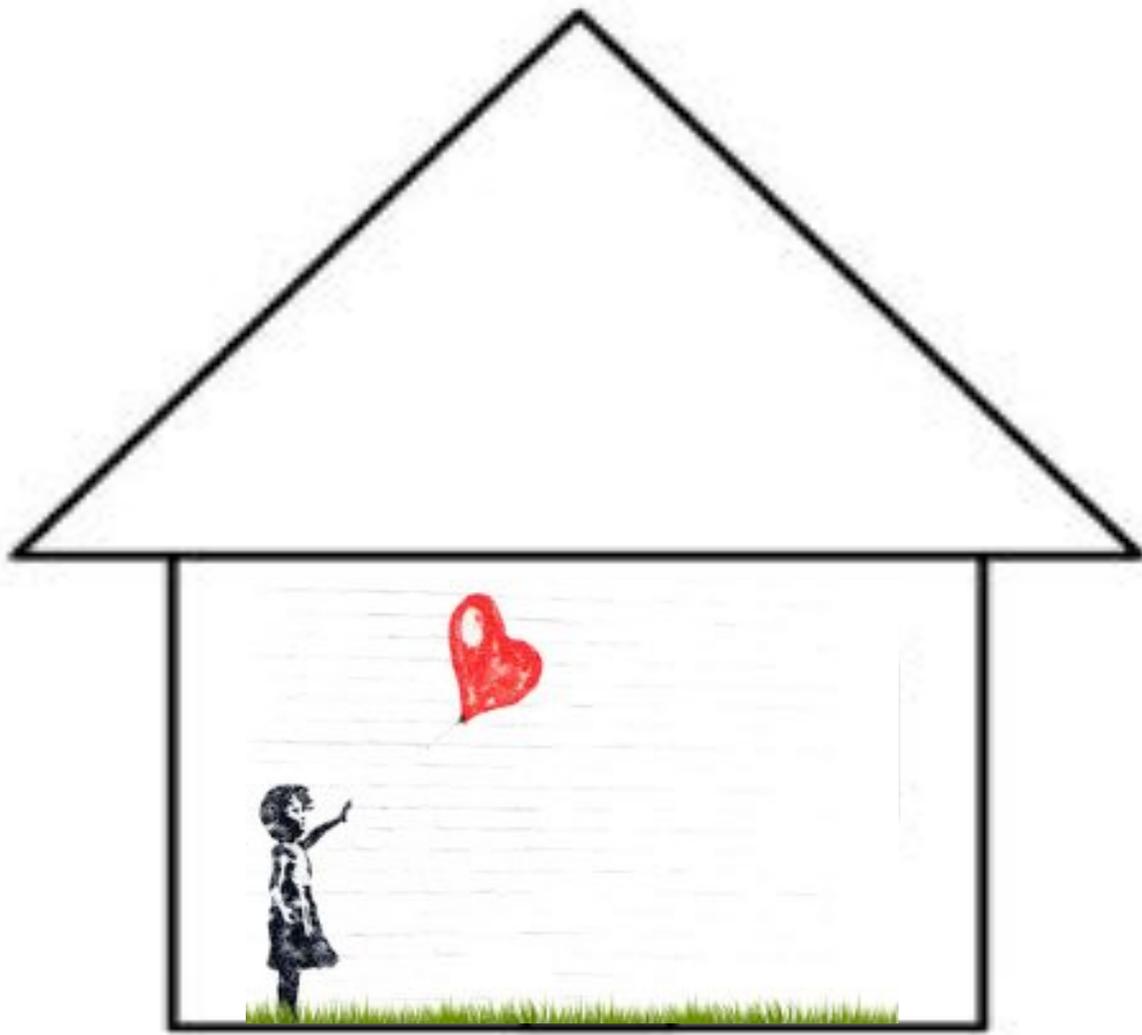
# Audience Questions

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1. How do you ***help your students*** understand difficult concepts and vocabulary in your classroom?
2. What percentage of your class time is devoted to students ***actively practicing*** speaking or writing?

*“**Street art** is a form of artwork that is displayed in a community on its surrounding buildings, streets, trains, and other publicly viewed surfaces. Many instances...make a public statement about the society that the artist lives within. The work has moved from the beginnings of graffiti and vandalism to new modes where artists work to bring messages, or just simple beauty, to an audience.”*

*-[Wikipedia](#)*



# Street Art

- Displayed on a community surface
- Publicly viewed
- Make a public statement

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**Visuals Support Us**

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# Essential Question

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How do we get students to speak and write about challenging academic topics in a non-native language?

## ANSWER

Make it *visual* and provide *opportunities for practice*.

# Session Overview



1. We will discuss challenges that go along with students learning ***academic language*** in a content-based English classroom.
2. We will discuss how teachers can use ***graphic organizers*** to ***scaffold their instruction*** of English learners.
3. We will discuss ***speaking and writing activities*** that teachers can use with ***graphic organizers*** to help students ***produce academic language*** in the classroom.

# Academic Language – *High* Cognitive Demand



Explain a demonstration



Defend an argument

Context-  
*Embedded*

Context-  
*Reduced*

**SCAFFOLDING**



Face-to-face conversation



Phone conversation

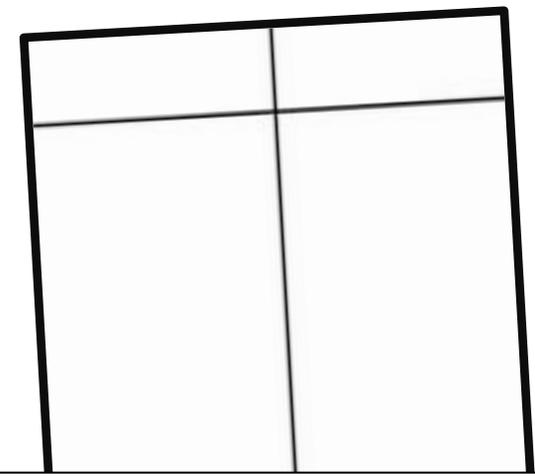
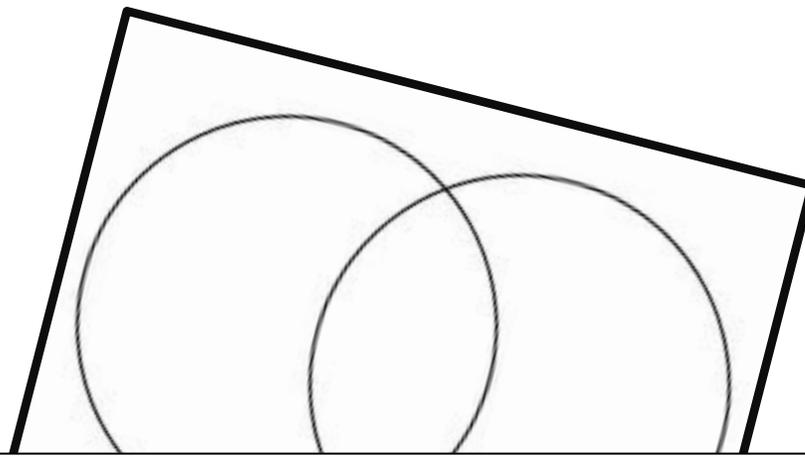
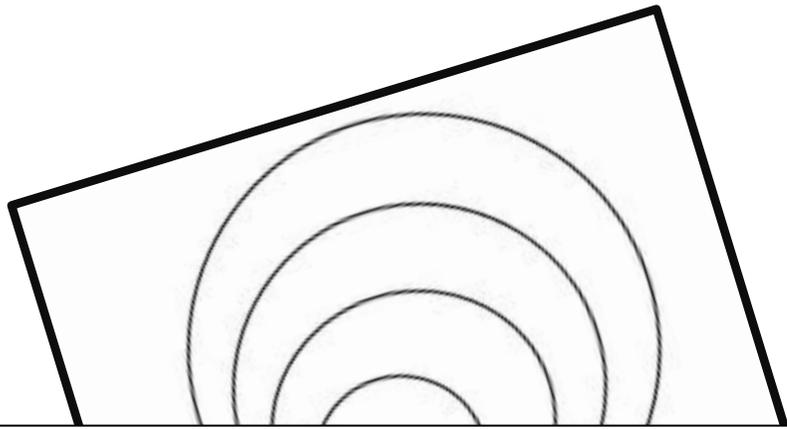
# Social Language – *Low* Cognitive Demand

*Cummins (1979)*

# Graphic Organizers

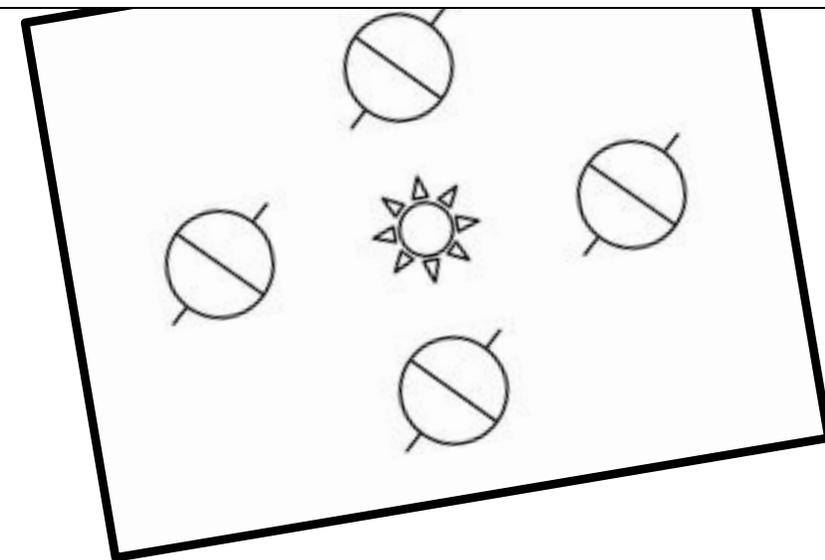
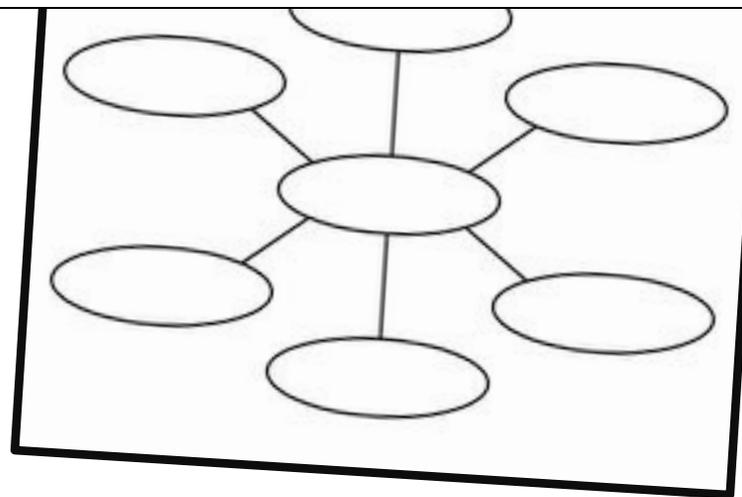
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*“A graphic organizer is a **visual aid** that helps language learners understand important **ideas** and their **relationship** to one another. It can also help students learn **key academic vocabulary** and **grammar** so that they can **engage** with each other about **content area topics**.”*



Which graphic organizers have you used in class? Why?

Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	



# Graphic Organizers Are Flexible

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**Ability levels** – from beginner to advanced

**Content areas** – all learning environments

**Language skills** – reading, writing, listening, and speaking

**Lesson phases** – from introducing content topics and skills to assessing them



## Scaffolding

- Begin with the ***end in mind***
- Write ***content*** and ***language objectives***

ALL teacher →  
1. Planning phase

MOSTLY teacher →

2. Input phase

ALL teacher →

1. Planning phase



## Scaffolding

- Give students a *lecture*
- Show students a *video* (TED Talk or YouTube)
- Have students do a *reading*
- **MODEL**

MOSTLY students →  
3. Guided practice phase

MOSTLY teacher →  
2. Input phase

ALL teacher →  
1. Planning phase



## Scaffolding

Students must DO something!

- **Guided** practice and application
- **Independent** practice and application

ALL students →  
4. Output phase

MOSTLY students →  
3. Guided practice phase

MOSTLY teacher →  
2. Input phase

ALL teacher →  
1. Planning phase



## Scaffolding

- Students ***produce*** something
- Student ***work is assessed*** in some way

An aerial photograph of a dense urban neighborhood, likely San Francisco, showing a variety of colorful, multi-story buildings. The buildings are packed closely together, with different colors like blue, yellow, and white. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down on the rooftops and upper floors of the buildings. A semi-transparent white banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "THEMATIC UNITS" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

# THEMATIC UNITS

# FOCUS #1 – THEMATIC UNITS

END GOAL: *Students can differentiate between places/activities in their neighborhood and in their community.*

## Content Objectives

1. Identify **places** in their **neighborhood**.
2. Identify **places** in their **community**.
3. Describe **activities** they do in their neighborhood and community.

## Language Objectives

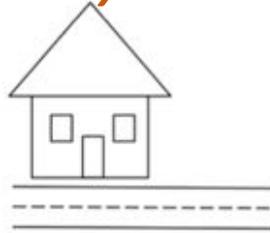
1. Use neighborhood and community vocabulary (**verbs** and **nouns**).
2. Differentiate between **first person** and **third person**.
3. Compare themselves with a classmate.

*My \_\_\_\_\_*

*My community*

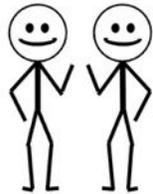
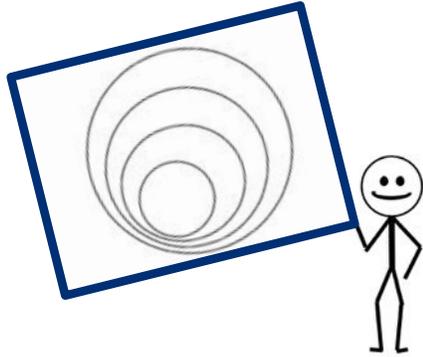
*My neighborhood*

*My house*



*My street*

# Think-Pair-Share



1. What do you *have* in your *neighborhood*?
2. Where do you *go* in your *community*?

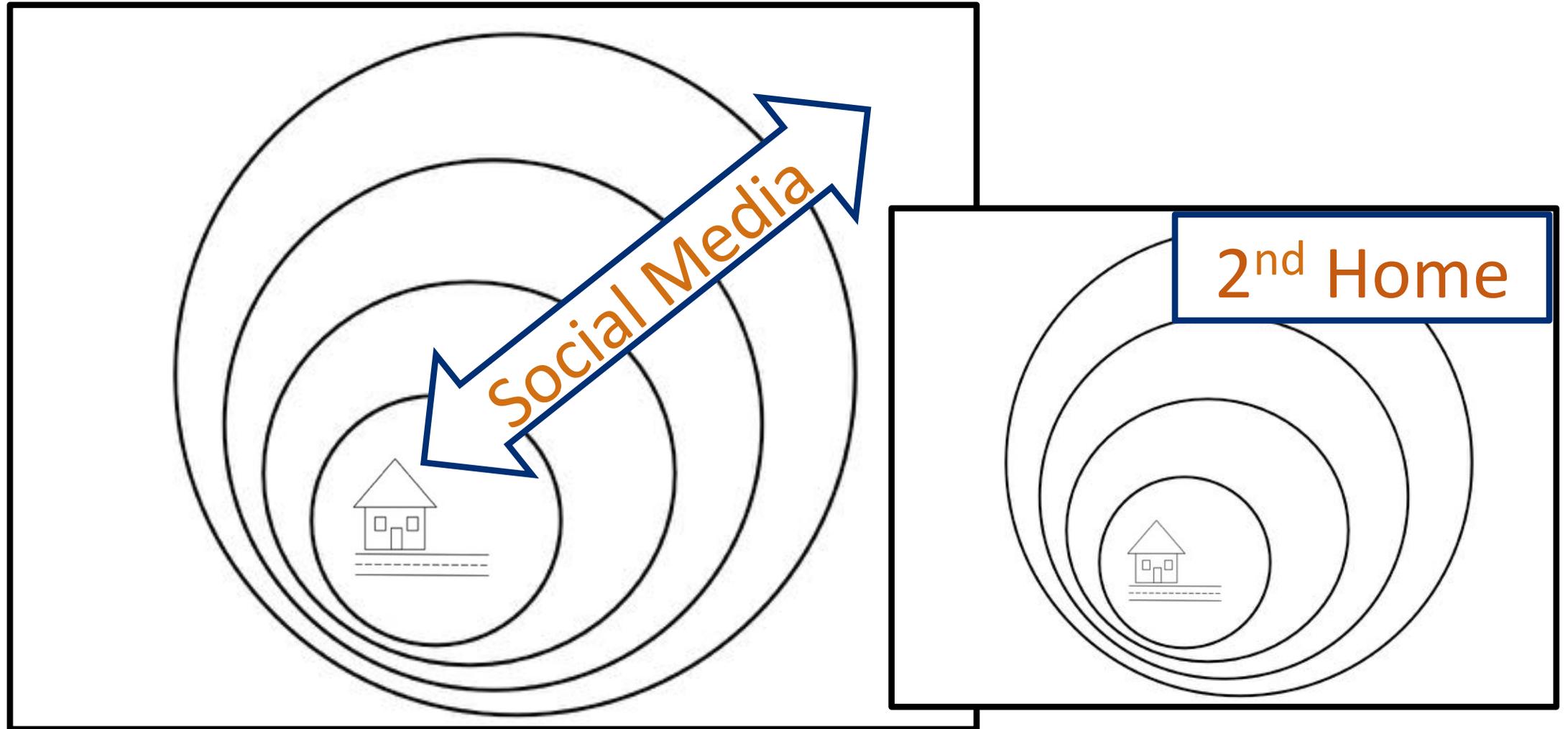
# Class Mingle

Name	Neighborhood	Community
<i>Eric</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>an airport</i></li><li>• <i>school</i></li><li>• <i>park</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>grocery store</i></li><li>• <i>my work</i></li></ul>
<i>Angela</i>		
<i>Mai</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>a gas station</i></li><li>• <i>grocery store</i></li><li>• <i>restaurant</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>volunteer center</i></li><li>• <i>school</i></li></ul>
<i>Fazliddin</i>		

## ***Writing Extension***

*In my neighborhood, I have a park and a school. **Mai** has a gas station and a restaurant.*

# Limitations





# CONTENT AREAS

# Focus #2 – CONTENT AREAS

END GOAL: *Students can use scientific language to explain why people on the Earth experience seasons.*

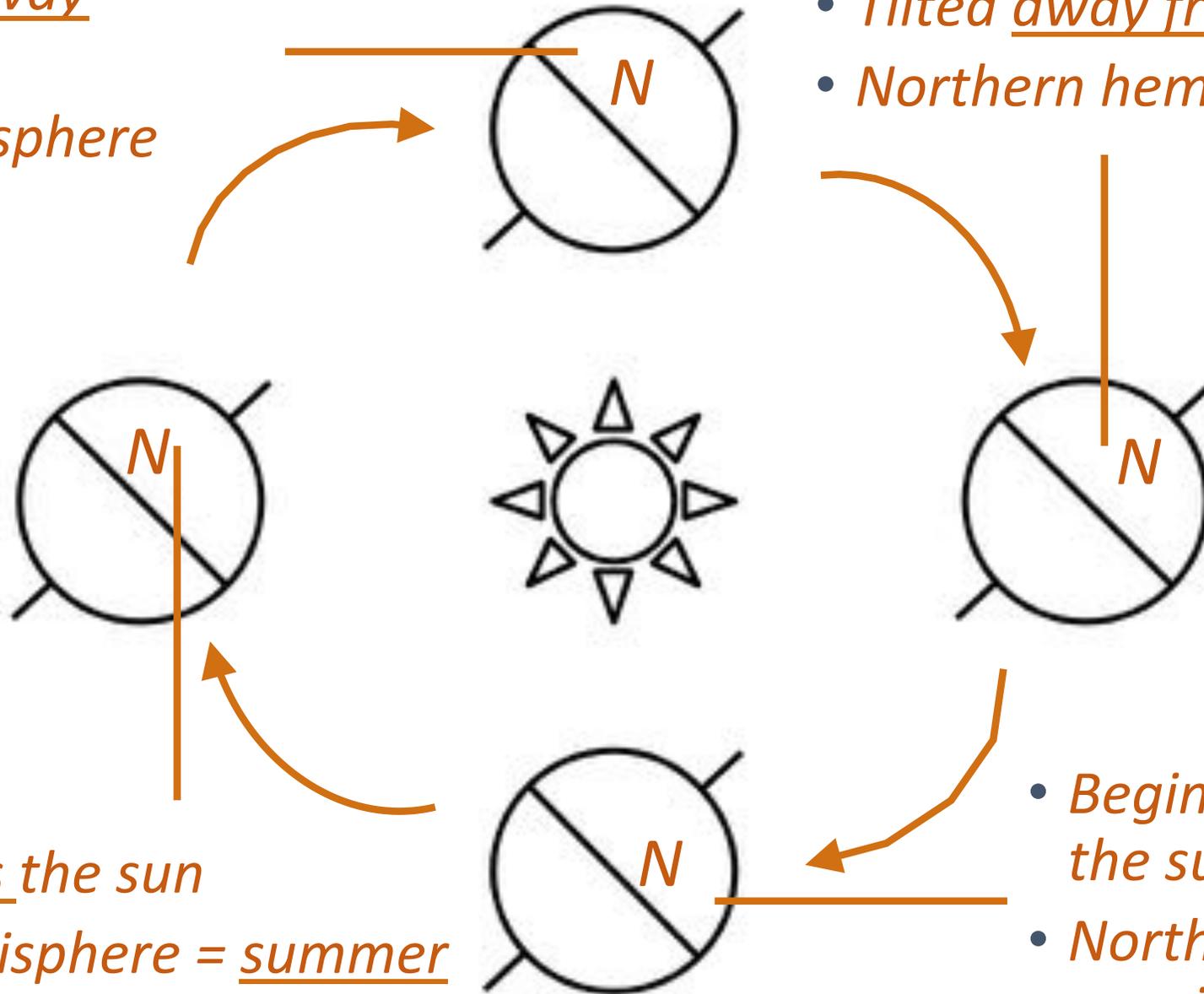
## Content Objectives

1. Demonstrate that the Earth is **tilted** and **revolves** around the sun.
2. Explain **Earth's position** relative to the **season experienced** in the northern and southern hemispheres.

## Language Objectives

1. Use **scientific vocabulary** related to Earth's position (axis, tilted, hemisphere, etc.)
2. Use **prepositions** to explain Earth's position (towards, away from)

- *Begins to tilt away from the sun*
- *Northern hemisphere = fall*

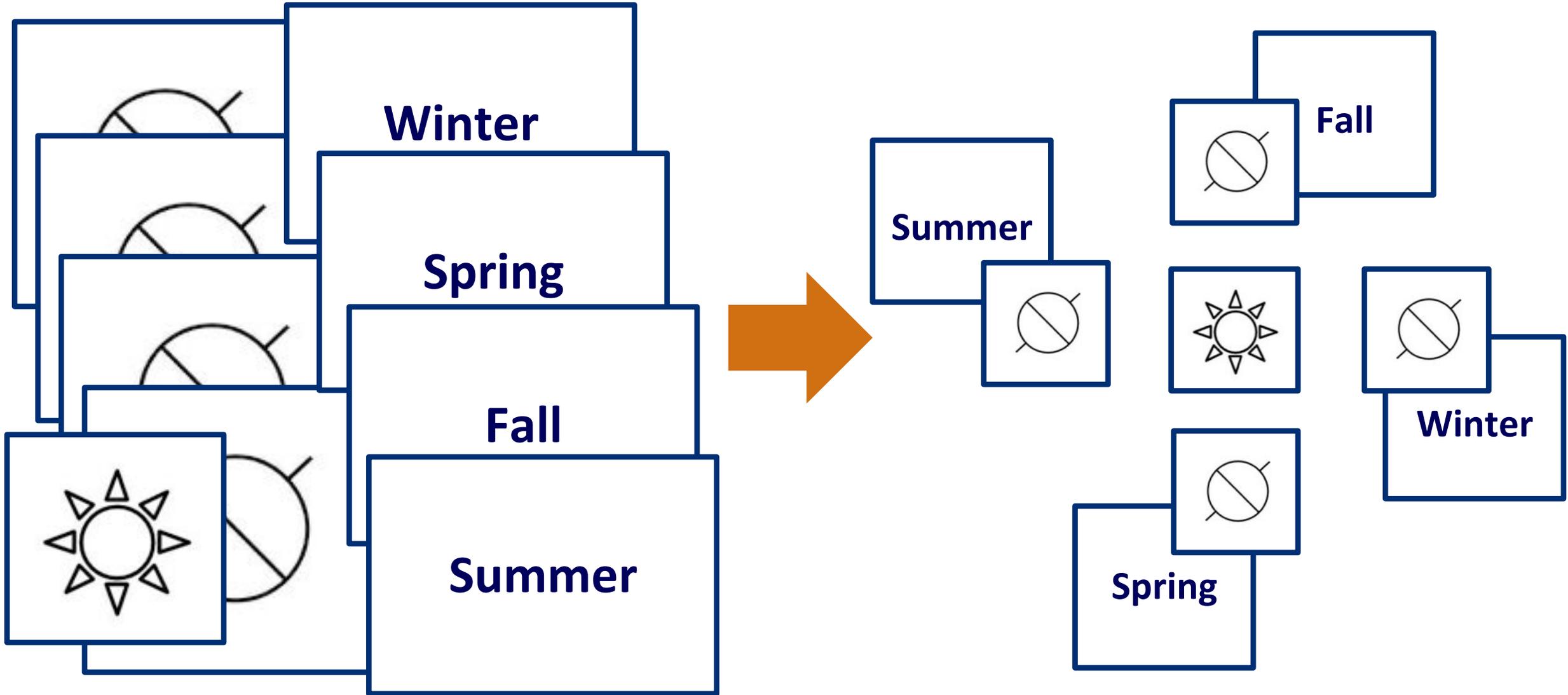


- *Tilted away from the sun*
- *Northern hemisphere = winter*

- *Tilted towards the sun*
- *Northern hemisphere = summer*

- *Begins to tilt towards the sun*
- *Northern hemisphere = spring*

# Sorting

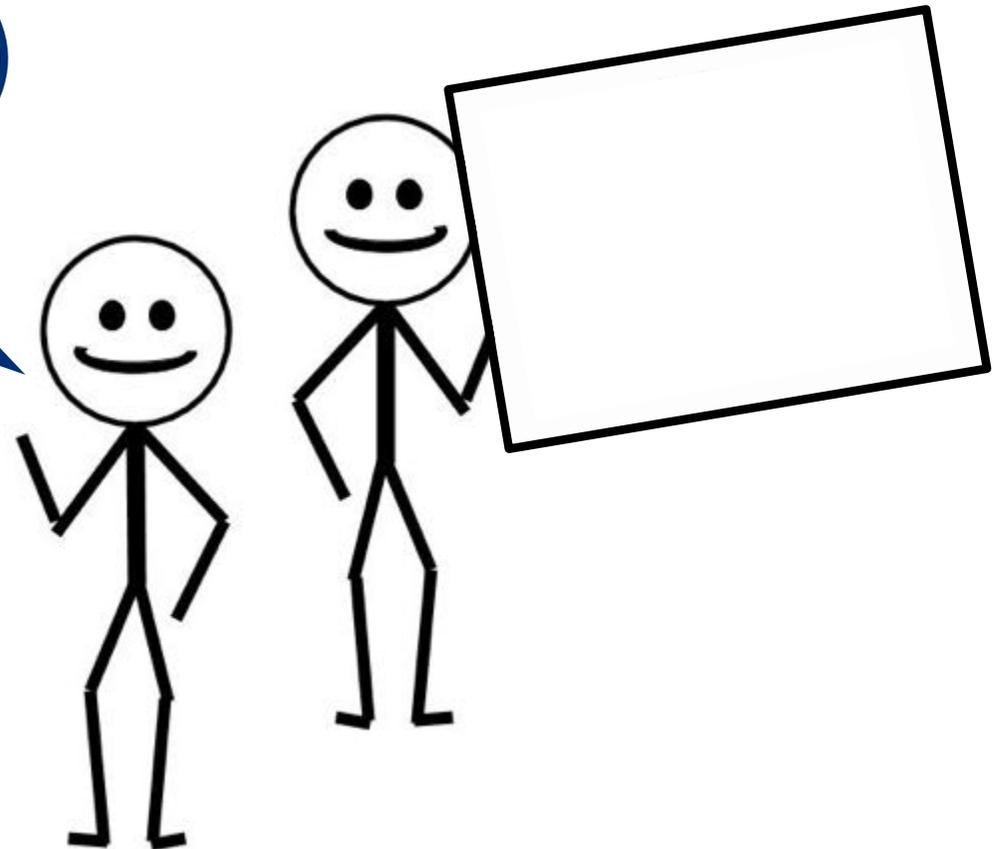


# Look/No Look

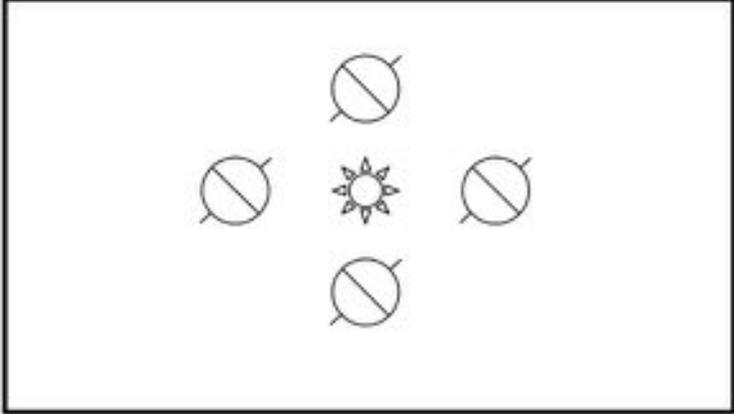
*When the Earth's axis is tilted away from the sun, then we have winter...*

## Talking Frames

*When \_\_\_\_\_ the sun,  
then \_\_\_\_\_*



# Journal Writing



*When the Earth's axis is tilted towards the sun, it is summer in the northern hemisphere.*

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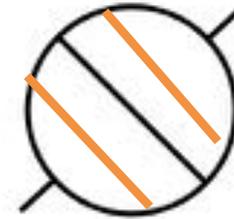
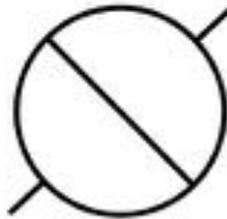
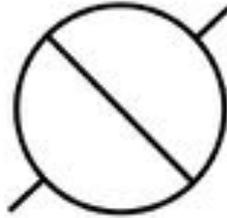
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- Students draw the diagram and label it.
- Students explain the diagram in the space below.

# Limitations

Inaccuracies



Degree of complexity



HIGHER ED

# Focus #3 – HIGHER ED

END GOAL: *Students can defend and argument with evidence and reasoning in an organized way.*

## Content Objectives

1. Take a **position** on an argument.
2. Defend their position through providing **evidence** and **reasoning**.
3. Refute **counterclaims**.

## Language Objectives

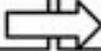
1. Provide **coherent organization** of ideas.
2. Use appropriate **transition words**.
3. Speak **diplomatically**.



VANDALISM

## Group 1



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation: 
Closing Statement:	

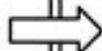
# Graffiti



ART

## Group 2



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation: 
Closing Statement:	

**Claim:** *Street art is positive for communities*

**Reason 1:** *Educates people on important issues*

**Reason 2:** *Makes spaces more attractive*

**Evidence:**  
*Often contains a social message*

**Evidence:**  
*Instead of dull walls, you get beautiful paintings*

**Counterclaim:**  
*Property values will go down*

**Refutation:**  
*Actually brings in more tourism*

**Closing Statement:**  
*Street art is positive for communities*





**VANDALISM**

**Debate**



**ART**

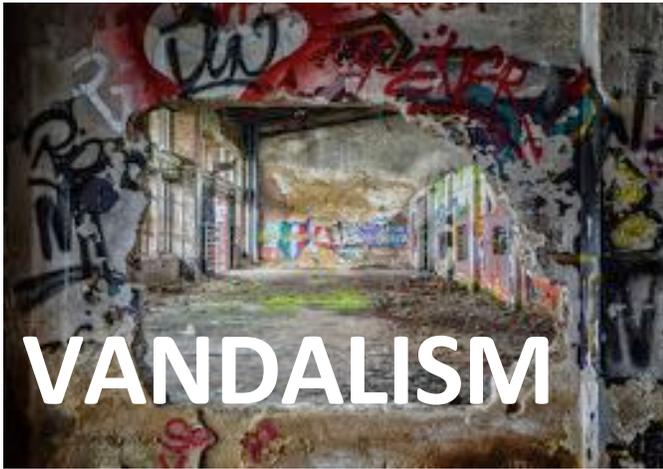
## Steps

1. Presents claim in opening statement
3. States reasons and evidence
6. Gives counter
8. Gives closing statement

## Steps

2. Presents claim in opening statement
4. Gives counter
5. States reasons and evidence
7. Gives closing statement

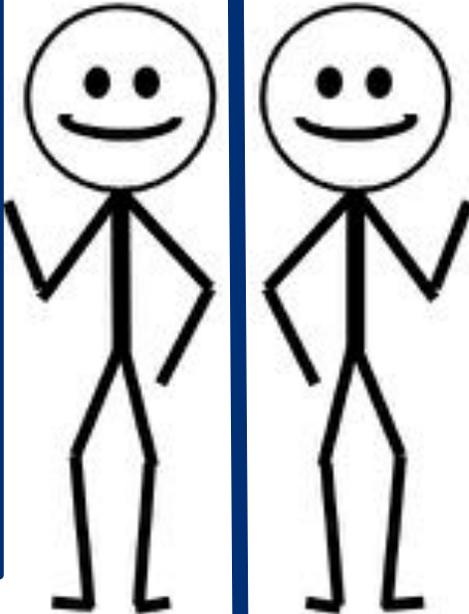




**Debate**



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	



Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

# Argumentative Writing

Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Refutation:
Closing Statement:	

## Options

- Students can turn their debate position into a persuasive essay.
- Students can take a position on a new topic.

# Limitations

3<sup>rd</sup> option

Claim:	
Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Evidence:	Evidence:
Counterclaim:	Reference:
Closing Statement:	

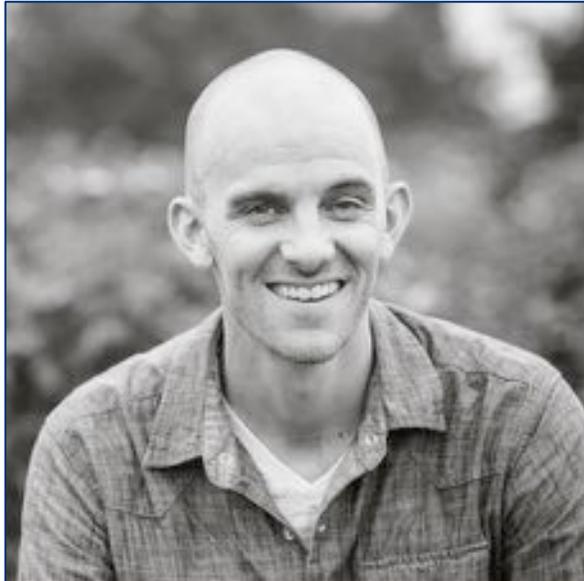


# Review

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- Start with an ***end goal*** and ***find/design graphic organizers*** that help your students get there
- Incorporate graphic organizers ***throughout your lessons*** as a ***scaffold*** for ***all language skills***
- Give your students ***time to practice speaking*** and ***writing*** in class.

# Thank you!



Questions?

*Twitter - @erwenninger*

# References

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- Gonzalez, Jennifer (2018). [\*To Learn, Students Need to DO Something\*](#). Cult of Pedagogy
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- Wise, Mark and Cooper, Carol (2019). [\*Increasing the Value of Graphic Organizers\*](#). Edutopia

# Thank you!

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