It is suggested that this presentation be viewed with school leadership and staff as a tool for assessing your school’s level of parent and community involvement. Please realize that the term “parent” is inclusive of any family member who has responsibility for a child’s education.
After completing this module, participants should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is academic language?
- Why is it important?
- What instructional practices can we engage in to teach and promote it?
As noted during the introduction, definitions of academic language vary in their complexity and scope. Defined broadly, academic language is the language used by teachers and students in academic settings and for academic purposes to help students acquire and use knowledge. Academic language, in other words, is the language of classroom instruction and is needed to provide students’ with the knowledge and skills needed to access content presented in textbooks, websites, and other instructional materials. According to the Strategic Education Research Partnership, for example, academic language includes the words and syntactic structures that students are likely to encounter in textbooks and on tests, but not in everyday spoken English. Examples of these words and syntactic structures will be provided later in this presentation.
Academic language has also been defined as the language of academic disciplines, of texts and literature, and of extended, reasoned discourse. Additionally, researchers have defined academic language as the language that students must comprehend to access the concepts associated with a particular discipline (e.g., mathematics, science, social science) and use to demonstrate their understanding of those concepts. Academic language related to geometry, for example, might include words such as area, circumference, diameter, and radius; in order to fully describe the properties of a circle, a student would need to know these terms and be able to use them appropriately to demonstrate their understanding of the different ways one can calculate the size of a circle.
It is worth noting that academic language is not a concept that can be defined dichotomously, as in one student has mastered academic language while another has not. Instead, students' proficiency with academic language exists on a continuum, meaning that a student may have mastered academic language related to one content area or topic of interest but may not have mastered the academic language associated with another content area or topic. With regard to science, for example, a student who has just participated in a unit focused on meteorology may be able to use words such as *cumulus, stratus, cirrus,* and *nimbus* with little difficulty to describe the types of clouds as they appear in the sky based on their location and visual properties, thereby exhibiting their ability to use the formal technical terms associated with this field of science. The same student, however, may use language on the informal, casual end of the academic language continuum if they are just beginning a science unit focused on geology to describe the properties of different types of rocks, how they are formed, and where they can be found.
The features of academic language may vary as a function of the discipline (differences, for example, between the academic language used in social science vs. mathematics), topic, and whether the information is communicated orally or via written text. While some features of academic language may vary, features of academic language that are common across disciplines, topics, and modes of communication include: (a) conciseness, (b) frequent use of information-bearing words, and (c) complex grammatical and syntactic structures. One method of achieving conciseness is the process of nominalization, or the grammatical process of converting entire sentences into phrases that can be embedded in other sentences. Using nominalization, for example, “Thomas Jefferson invented the telephone” can be embedded in the following phrase, “Thomas Jefferson’s invention of the telephone revolutionized interpersonal communication.” The different types of information bearing words, as well as the grammatical and syntactic structures utilized in academic language will be discussed later in this presentation.
What is academic language? Take a minute, turn to a colleague, and in your own words define academic language. In your definition be sure to include any critical components, which may include examples to help illustrate those components. Are there any components that you forgot to mention that your colleague included in their definition?
Although the terms academic language and academic vocabulary are often used interchangeably, it is important to remember that academic language extends beyond the use of specific academic vocabulary – or words – and requires knowledge in the following areas:

(a) Understanding the phonological features of English (including intonation, stress patterns, and sound patterns)

(b) Lexical knowledge, which includes knowledge of academic vocabulary, how words are formed with prefixes, roots, and suffixes, the parts of speech, and the grammatical constraints that govern word formation and word usage

(c) Grammatical competence, which includes the accurate use and understanding of the functions of commonly occurring morphological or syntactic features.

(d) Discourse, which helps students to use linguistic components and meanings to communicate coherently in an organized way that adheres to social conventions of language (for example, the use of appropriate greetings when starting a conversation) and

(e) Cognition, which includes more than the ability to associate graphemes with phonemes and meanings with words to understand text but also requires the ability to predict, infer, and synthesize meaning in order to create and transform one’s understanding of what has been communicated.

Each of these components will be discussed in more detail on the upcoming slides.
Not surprisingly, the ability to understand and use academic language requires knowledge of all of the sounds in English and how those sounds can be combined to form words. At the most basic level, students need to know the arbitrary sound-spelling correspondences of English, which may be particularly difficult for irregular words such as *sugar* and *electricity* in which the same grapheme, *s*, makes two distinctly different sounds. In addition to knowing the sounds of English, however, students must also learn to understand and be able to apply stress and intonation patterns as these often distinguish between either (a) words that derive from one another (for example, *Canada* and *caNadian*) or (b) words that are spelled the same but have different functions, such as the following nouns (*INsight*, *REcord*) and verbs (*inCite*, *reCOrd*). Students are also required to learn new sound combinations and spelling patterns when learning academic words, such as those that have been followed from other languages, like *antebellum* and *facile*. 

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**Phonological Features**

- To use academic English, students must:
  - Knowledge of graphemes and sound-symbol correspondences
  - Understand and be able to apply stress, intonation and sound patterns
    - CANada / caNAdian
    - inCite / INsight
    - REcord / reCOrd
  - Be familiar with the sound patterns of English but able to learn and recognize patterns from words borrowed from other languages
    - *antebellum*
    - *facile*
Lexical Features

- Academic language requires knowledge of:
  - Forms and meanings of words that are used across academic disciplines
    - describe, explain, analyze
  - How academic words are formed with prefixes, roots, and suffixes
    - investigate, hypothesize
  - Parts of speech of academic words
  - Grammatical constraints governing academic words

In addition, to be proficient with academic language students also need to be familiar with the structures of words, how they are formed, and how they can be used across different academic disciplines. Students must know, for example, the forms and meanings of words that are used across academic disciplines and have similar meanings, such as describe, explain, or analyze. Knowledge of how words are formed using prefixes, roots, and suffixes is also critical, not only to understand the content presented in many academic disciplines, such as the sciences and social sciences, but also to understand the directions and purposes of an assignment or activity. In order to know what is being asked of them by prompts to investigate or hypothesize, for example, students must understand how those words are formed with prefixes and suffixes and what those affixes mean. Research also recommends that students be familiar with the parts of speech of academic words (nouns, verbs, etc.) and the grammatical constraints that govern the use of academic words.
Although the terms academic language and academic vocabulary are often used interchangeably, academic vocabulary may best be conceptualized as one component of academic language. More specifically, academic vocabulary can be defined as the words students need to be able to understand in order to access the concepts associated with a specific discipline and be able to use to demonstrate their understanding of these concepts. Academic vocabulary is frequently conceptualized as being composed of three tiers (or types) of words:

Tier 1: High frequency, non-academic words used across a variety of contexts (e.g., flower, sleep)
Tier 2: Non-specialized academic words that are used across content areas (e.g., illustrate, however, assert)
Tier 3: Specialized or technical content-area words that are used in specific academic disciplines (e.g., fulcrum, organism, rectangle)

Although a critical component of academic language, we need to remember that academic vocabulary, while necessary, is insufficient for building strong academic language – more skills are needed, as is evidenced by the multiple components of academic language (e.g., knowledge of phonological features, lexical features, etc.)
In addition to being conceptualized as being composed of different types of language, academic language can also be seen as being composed of different types of language. In particular, academic language includes the language of instruction, the language of text, and includes the use of multi-syllabic words with affixes and Greek and Latin roots.

The language of instruction consists of the words used to teach and learn the lesson content. This language might include the use of strategies such as predict and infer or cause and effect strategies for reading comprehension, or specific pre-writing strategies, such as the PLEASE paragraph writing strategy introduced by Harris and Graham (2005) that includes the following steps: (1) Pick a topic, (2) List your ideas about the topic, (3) Evaluate your list, (4) Activate the paragraph with a topic sentence, (5) Supply supporting sentences, and (6) End with a concluding sentence.

The language of the text consists of words that are related to the content area, theme, unit, or selection being read. If the theme or unit is focused on animal habitats, for example, the language of the text might include words like: habitat, camouflage, prey, carnivore, herbivore, and omnivore.

Academic language also relies heavily on the use of multi-syllabic words with prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots, such as informational, hopelessness, and psychology. Knowledge of word families – including understanding the meaning of words, their grammatical forms, and how each form of the word is created is also useful in helping build students’ academic language.
Presented here are word families for four different words with three word types – nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Some questions to consider include:

1. How are each of these words formed from the base form of the verb?
2. How would you teach your students about word families (what academic language would you use)? What types of word-building activities could you have students engage in to help them understand the concept of word families?
3. Can you think of other words that have these same classes of words and could be included to this list of word families?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dependence</td>
<td>depend</td>
<td>dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliance</td>
<td>rely</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyment</td>
<td>enjoy</td>
<td>enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribution</td>
<td>contribute</td>
<td>contributable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grammatical Competence

- Understanding and the ability to appropriately apply rules of English is required at two levels:
  - When using everyday/informal English students must be able to:
    - Form grammatically correct, simple sentences
    - Form complex sentences with subordinate clauses
    - Apply knowledge of the noun system (application of plural endings, irregular plurals, definite/indefinite articles and demonstratives)
    - Apply knowledge of the verb system to form sentences using all verb tenses (present, past, present perfect, present continuous, future, modal, etc. for regular and irregular verbs)

Knowledge of grammatical competence includes an understanding and the ability to appropriately apply the rules of English at two levels:
1. When using everyday, informal (conversational) English, and
2. When using academic English

Grammatical competence in everyday, informal English is evidenced by the ability to form grammatically correct simple sentences (e.g., Sarah is my friend) as well as complex sentences with subordinate clauses (e.g., Sarah is my friend because she shares her books with me).

Additionally, students must be able to appropriately apply their knowledge of the noun system, which includes (but is not limited to) the application of plural endings (e.g., She held five pencils), the formation rules for irregular plurals (e.g., The sheep was grazing in the pasture / The sheep were grazing in the pasture), the use of definite and indefinite articles (e.g., Here is a ruler vs. Here is the ruler) and demonstratives (e.g., Those boys were noisy).

Lastly, students need to have a firm understanding of the English verb system to be able to appropriately construct sentences using all verb tenses:
- Present: Ella walks to school.
- Past: Ella rode the bus yesterday because it was raining.
- Present perfect: Ella has walked to school 4 days this week.
- Present continuous: Ella is riding her bike to school today.
- Future: Ella’s dad will drive her to school tomorrow.

Additional examples of verb tenses students must learn include: phrasal verbs (run into, calm down), contractions, the use of would+ the base form of a verb to indicate habitual past tense in conversations, and the use of main verbs and complements (e.g., Ella enjoys swimming.)
In addition to being able to appropriately apply the grammatical rules of everyday, informal English when using academic language, students must also be able to: (a) apply knowledge of more complex syntactic structures, (b) apply knowledge of more complex clause structures, and (c) learn grammatical features for new nouns.

Academic English, for example, frequently relies on sentence structures that are more complex than simple present, past, and future syntactic structure, including compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences. A compound sentence is one that contains two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g., My friend Sarah likes chocolate ice cream and I like vanilla.), a complex sentence contains an independent clause and a dependent clause (e.g., Ella’s mom read her a story each night before bed because it helped her relax), and a complex-compound sentence contains 3 or more clauses, at least two of which are independent and one is dependent (e.g., My sister likes dogs but I don’t because they always slobber on my face). Other commonly used complex syntactic structures used in academic English include passive and ergative structures.

Other grammatical features learners of academic English must master include the grammatical features, such as subject-verb agreement, irregular plurals, nouns followed by prepositional phrases, and the process of nominalization for newly-learned nouns.
Scarcella (2003), in her review of the literature focused on academic language, argued that the discourse can be defined by multiple characteristics and can serve multiple purposes across different modalities of communication. In particular, discourse is composed of units of language that are more than one sentence in length (such as paragraphs), can allow for the organization of speech and/or writing, and helps convey meaning and coherence across sentences.

In speech, discourse knowledge helps students use appropriate greetings and pause fillers to keep the conversation going.

In writing, discourse knowledge helps students to use appropriate introductory and closing remarks/phrases and use effective transitions.

In reading, discourse knowledge helps students identify commonly used introductory and closing phrases (e.g., *Once upon a time* and *they lived happily ever after*), gain perspective on what they have read, understand relationships among sections of text, and follow logical lines of thought.

- (Scarcella 2003)
Although the linguistic component of academic language is undoubtedly critical, academic language also relies on students’ cognition:

- To think about a text in order to interpret it
- To predict, infer, and synthesize meaning
- To read for intention, to question sources, and to obtain factual information
- “The cognitive dimension of academic English minimally includes knowledge, higher order thinking, cognitive, and metalinguistic strategies” (Scarcella, 2003)

Although the linguistic component of academic language is undoubtedly critical, academic language also relies on students’ cognition, or the ability to actively think about, process, and understand what is said, what they have read, and/or what they are trying to say in their own oral or written conversations. In particular, Scarcella (2003) notes that students’ cognition plays a critical role in the following areas:
1. To think about a text and interpret the author’s intended meaning
2. To predict upcoming events, infer implicit meanings, or synthesize the meaning of several related sentences or ideas
3. To read for specific purposes (i.e., with intention), to question the sources of information that are presented, and to obtain factual information
Activity: Name that Knowledge Type!

As a group, name and describe each of the different types of knowledge needed to foster academic language. Provide examples of each type of knowledge and, if time permits, briefly discuss how each of these could be integrated into classroom instruction.

What are common roadblocks for students trying to acquire these types of knowledge?
Why is Academic Language Important?

• “Learning academic English is probably one of the surest, most reliable ways of attaining socioeconomic success in the United States today. This variety of English entails the multiple, complex features of English required for long-term success in public schools, completion of higher education, and employment with opportunity for professional advancement and rewards.” (Scarcella 2003)

This quote, from Scarcella (2003) emphasizes why academic language is important by discussing the potential benefits associated with academic language acquisition.
Although a wealth of research documenting the poor decoding skills on students’ reading fluency, comprehension, and overall proficiency, researchers have found that students’ lack of proficiency with academic English is actually a greater barrier to language and reading proficiency.

Academic language is also considered important not only because it fosters participation in an educated society but also because knowledge of and the ability to appropriately use academic English is needed to participate in the transformation and betterment of that educated society.

Equally important (although smaller in scope) is the fact that acquisition of academic vocabulary and grammar is needed to advance students’ knowledge of and ability to use everyday vocabulary and grammar. Academic situations frequently expose learners to vocabulary that they might not otherwise encounter, such as the use of the verbs *increase* or *decrease* with inanimate objects, such as *volume* or *price*, knowledge that is needed to understand and appropriately interpret a sign stating “Prices have been decreased by 25%” when shopping in a store. Knowledge and understanding of academic language, in other words, can be readily applied by learners in everyday situations, allowing them to communicate more effectively and precisely.

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**Why is Academic Language Important?**

- The problems many students face with language proficiency revolve more around their lack of mastery of academic English than their ability to decode single words (Wong, Fillmore, & Snow, 2000)
- Without knowledge of academic English, individuals may not only be excluded from participation in an educated society but also prohibited from helping transform it
- Acquisition of academic vocabulary and grammar is also necessary to advance students’ knowledge of and ability to use everyday vocabulary and grammar (Scarcella, 2003)
The importance of academic language has also been explicitly emphasized in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy that have been recently adopted by many states (including Oregon). According to the Standards, students are expected to be able to:

1. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a topic or subject area in that grade. Referring back to previous slides, general academic vocabulary can be likened to Tier 2 words, or non-specialized academic vocabulary that is used across content area, such as interpret, explain, describe, or hypothesize while domain-specific words are the same as Tier 3 words, or specialized, technical content-area words that are used in specific academic disciplines, such as fulcrum, organism, or rectangle.

2. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on reading and content relevant for that grade (including the use and knowledge of affixes, root words, and word meanings).
Explicit Instruction is Needed

- Many features of academic language are not intuitive. Therefore, the best way to teach academic language is through a curriculum with a defined scope and sequence.
  - There are, however, few curriculum materials that have solid evidence of effectiveness
  - Consequently, materials should be selected carefully and implementation should be planned thoughtfully.

Because many of the features of academic language are not intuitive, most students, particularly those with low language proficiency will benefit from explicit, systematic instruction in academic language, perhaps through the use of a curriculum with a defined scope and sequence. There are, however, few curriculum materials with solid evidence regarding the effectiveness of their academic language instruction, so materials need to be selected carefully and implementation of those materials should be thoughtfully planned. Plans for implementation may want to take into consideration: (a) the scope of the academic language content (e.g., is the focus solely on academic vocabulary or are other components of academic language included?), (b) the order in which is introduced, and, (c) the pacing of instruction (e.g., Will students receive academic language instruction at a reasonable pace? Will they receive multiple opportunities to practice their newly acquired skills across multiple contexts, modalities, and content areas?)
As noted on the previous slide, because curricula that explicitly and systematically teach academic language may not be readily available, it is important when planning instruction for all students across all content areas to incorporate well-structured activities that have been specifically designed to develop student’s oral language, such as emphasizing word endings during instruction, helping students hear those endings, and provide multiple opportunities to practice applying them appropriately. It is important not to forget that all students need to be able to demonstrate proficiency with academic language in written and oral communication.
While watching the video clip on the next slide, consider the following questions:
1. What type of academic language is being emphasized?
2. What vocabulary knowledge is important in this activity?
3. What kind of sentence structure is necessary to complete the activity?
4. Is the practice effective?

Once the video has finished, turn to a colleague (or, as a group) discuss your answers to each of these questions.
This next activity is intended to provide you with some hands-on practice and the opportunity to think about what academic language looks like and sounds like as you change the passage presented on the next slide from everyday, informal English to academic English.
Before moving on to the next slide, take a few minutes to convert the passage above from everyday, informal English to academic English. Either independently or as a group discuss what lexical and/or grammatical features of the passage could be modified to reflect the standards of academic English. You may also want to consider the author’s choice of vocabulary and tone.
Jack Springer maintains that the government should allow people the right to own a gun. This position asserts that the government is infringing on our democratic rights when it restricts gun ownership. Most people who own guns, so the argument goes, are responsible citizens who keep the guns for sport and recreation. It is further contended that the police are unable to stop violent crime and we need guns to protect ourselves. However, as Josephine Bluff states, guns increase the amount of violent crime in the community. Moreover, human life is worth more than giving shooters the right to go shooting on the weekend. In addition, many of the guns that are kept around the house are used in violent domestic disputes or teenage suicides.

Adapted from: Bill Daley, 1997
http://www.eslplanet.com/teachertools/argueweb/inform.html
The phrases in red are those that the original creator of this exercise, Bill Daley, modified to reflect the expectations of academic English. How does this revised passage compare to the passage you (and your colleagues) drafted to incorporate and reflect the expectations of academic English presented earlier in this presentation?
Take a minute to write down specific examples of informal and academic English from the two essays to show why the first essay is characterized as “informal” and the second as “academic”.

YOUR TURN: Characteristics of Language Types

Write down specific examples from the two essays to show why the first essay is informal and the second one is academic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal English</th>
<th>Academic English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Listed on this slide are characteristics of informal and academic English. Can you think of any additional characteristics that may distinguish these two language types?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal English</th>
<th>Academic English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses hedges (<em>kind of, sort of</em>)</td>
<td>Does not use hedges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses personal pronouns (I)</td>
<td>Avoids personal pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses simple connectors (<em>but, also, and</em>)</td>
<td>Uses sophisticated transition words (<em>moreover</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses slang (<em>stuff, guys</em>)</td>
<td>Uses academic words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some additional differences between informal and academic English. Informal English, for example, typically relies on more basic discourse structures, such as narratives, while the use of academic English often requires the use of specific linguistic functions, such as persuading, hypothesizing, reporting facts or findings, or presenting an argument. Perhaps not surprisingly, informal English makes more extensive use of oral communication – listening and speaking – while academic English is commonly used in more “formal” settings that require more extensive use of reading and writing skills. It can also be argued that informal English is often relatively contextualized, or used within a context that the speaker and listener are familiar with and a part of, whereas academic English is relatively decontextualized and therefore more cognitively demanding.
Throughout all of the grades, even the early elementary grades, students should receive multiple exposures to and opportunities to read both narrative and expository (or informational) texts. A narrative text is one that tells a story and usually follows a familiar structure. Narrative texts may be fictional inventions of the author, reporting of factual events, or the retelling of a tale from oral tradition. These texts are often written in informal, everyday English.

In contrast, expository, or informational texts, are typically written using academic English to provide an explanation of facts and/or concepts. The primary purpose of these texts is to inform, persuade, or explain.
This slide presents examples of narrative and expository texts, with the narrative text pictured on the left and the expository text pictured on the right. Take a minute or two to discuss with your colleagues how these two types of texts differ (that is, what elements of academic English are evident in the expository text on the right? What elements of informal, everyday English are evident in the text on the left?)
The early elementary grades are an ideal time to teach text structure because of children’s interest in stories. Identifying narrative text structure, for example, during a reading lesson or teacher read aloud gives students a framework for discussing and retelling the story. As a story is read, for example, the teacher could help students discuss who the story is about, what happened first, what happened next, and what happened at the end. If these same target story elements or text structure are always used to identify critical features of a story, students have repeated opportunities to discuss story elements and make text-to-text connections related to main characters and story sequence.
Reading expository or informational text requires a slightly different set of comprehension skills and an understanding about how informational text structure differs from narrative text structure. Because informational texts use a variety of organizational patterns (e.g., compare and contrast, cause and effect, problem and solution) that are different from traditional narrative text, understanding them is more difficult for nearly all students. Recent research, however, has found that elementary grade children can be taught to identify differences between narrative and expository texts and how to understand the features of informational text structure. For example, always asking “Is this a story book or information book?” and “How do you know?” before reading helps establish the purpose and focus for comprehension. Selecting a consistent framework, such as the use of K-W-L questions or a set of content-specific questions when discussing texts about animals or famous people, provides a predictable structure to use for expository comprehension.
Here are some more examples of narrative and expository texts. The narrative text appears at the top of the slide while the expository text appears at the bottom of the slide. Some questions to consider when examining these two text types are on the next slide.
Use these two questions to guide a discussion with your colleagues about the two text examples from the previous slides. In particular, you may want to consider:

1. How are these two text examples different?

2. How might an expert reader approach comprehending these two text examples differently?
Although research suggests that textbook organization affects reading comprehension, evaluations of textbooks have found many to be poorly written. Poorly written textbooks may play a part in the comprehension difficulties of poor readers, especially those who have difficulty recalling content, organizing information, identifying main ideas, and discriminating between relevant and nonrelevant information. Dickson, Simmons, & Kameenui (1995).

Let’s discuss each of these text features.
In some passages, a lot of information tends to be packed into a sentence; and while sentences may not be long, they are compressed with information and ideas. In order to show how they are structured and how structure affects meaning, Lily Wong Filmore suggests we should “unpack” some of the sentences for students.
Now, with the people at your table, try unpacking a passage and then putting it back together again. Use the sentence “The warmer the glacier the faster the ice moves because there is a greater amount of meltwater beneath the ice.” (the second sentence of the second paragraph in Icebergs and Glaciers)

Let’s take about 10 minutes to practice unpacking sentences and putting them back together.

What is a glacier?
What does meltwater mean?
What are we comparing
Why is there a greater amount of meltwater beneath the ice?
Why is there ice on the surface but meltwater underneath when the outside part is warmed by the sun? Or is the inner part warm and the outer part still cold?
The bold part beginning with the relative pronoun is the relative clause. It provides explicit information about the previous noun phrase. Other relative pronouns are who, whom, which, whose X, and whrc.

How about that—What WH question does that answer? Consider
Some volcanoes are called active volcanoes. What volcanoes? Volcanoes that erupt regularly
Our ancient ancestors created myths about evil gods. What evil gods? Evil gods that lived in volcanoes.
Instructional Features in Analyzing Text

Cohesive Devices

- How could you help your students become aware of various sentence structures?

- Why is it important for students to be aware of differing sentence structures?

Whether sitting in silence or erupting with violence, volcanoes have intrigued people for thousands of years. In an attempt to explain the immense power and unpredictable behavior of volcanoes, our ancient ancestors created myths about evil gods that lived within volcanoes. When angered, the gods would display their fury with eruptions.

All three sentences in the second paragraph begin with a phrase that is not the subject of the sentence. Why do you think the author made these structural choices? How could you help your students become aware of various sentence structures? (For example, having them—or the whole class—write their own sentences using this structure) Take a look at the Icebergs and Glaciers passage. What cohesive devices did the author use in this text? Notice that the writer uses various devices to move from general information about active volcanoes, their number, and the annual incidence of eruptions, to how people have always been intrigued and awed by them, and then back to the present. Take a look at the various devices used (vocabulary choice) to make smooth transitions and to tie the whole thing together. How could you help your students focus on these structures to enhance their comprehension of the text?
In addition to attending to the content of academic language instruction, it is also worth attending to additional features of instruction, such as the practices used to group students because such practices can influence the opportunities students have to learn and practice new content. Examples of ineffective grouping practices, for example, include unstructured, cooperative learning with no reading materials; all students, but particularly struggling readers, are likely to benefit from explicit, systematic, teacher-directed instruction that provides structured opportunities for learning and practicing new content. Additionally, students are more likely to benefit from carefully structured partner work in which each student has multiple opportunities to speak, listen, and/or practice reading compared to unstructured, free conversations in which all students (particularly those who are struggling with the content) are not likely to participate.
Researchers propose that teachers may serve multiple functions to support students’ academic language development. In particular, five have been identified in which teachers are: (a) communicators, (b) educators, (c) evaluators, (d) educated persons, and (e) agents of socializations.

As communicators, teachers attend to the structure of their own language output to maximize the clarity of the language they use when working with all students. This may include, for example, providing clarifying, student-friendly definitions when introducing new words or concepts.

As educators, teachers are charged with explicitly teaching the aspects of language associated with academic discourse for a variety of subjects. While teachers in the elementary grades may be responsible for teaching the aspects of language (e.g., word meanings) for multiple disciplines, teachers in the middle and secondary grades also need to be prepared to explicitly teach the aspects of academic language specific to their content area (vocabulary associated with biology, economics, or geometry, for example).

As evaluators, teachers can make informed, valid inferences about students abilities by understanding (a) vernacular varieties of English, (b) normal rates of progress for English Learners, and (c) developmental language delays or disorders. Understanding each of these components allows teachers to hold reasonable yet ambitious expectations for students’ academic language development based on their current skill level.

As educated persons, teachers understand basic concepts about literacy and language and use that understanding to engage in discussions and make informed decisions about language learning and development.

Lastly, as agents of socialization, teachers provide students with support in learning everyday language practices as well as the value and belief systems that help structure and guide the society in which they live.

(Wong, Fillmore, & Snow, 2002)
Additional Methods for Supporting Academic Language Development

- Provide explicit emphasis on language learning objectives
- Provide appropriate opportunities to practice listening and reading with individualized reading materials, clear articulation, use of high-frequency words and simple sentence structures
- Explicitly point out the differences between academic and informal language use for students
- Preview classroom texts, activate and build background knowledge, teach reading and dictionary strategies

(Horowitz, 2008 as cited in Anstrom, et al., 2010)

Here are some additional methods and strategies teachers can use to support academic language development:
1. Provide explicit emphasis on language learning objectives (e.g., explicitly share with students the objective of a lesson prior to beginning instruction)
2. Provide students with multiple, appropriate opportunities to practice listening and reading with individualized reading materials, use clear articulation across all instructional contexts, and use high frequency words and simple sentence structures during instruction
3. Explicitly point out for students the differences between academic and informal language use
4. Preview classroom texts, activate and build background knowledge, and teach reading and dictionary strategies to support students’ ability to access and understand texts.
Additionally, all teachers should:
1. Explain and model all academic language activities.
2. Provide sentence frames.
3. Make it a habit for students to always answer in complete sentences.
4. Have students practice extended discourse.
5. Record words and grammatical structures students have trouble with.
6. Repeat student answers using proper English.

Additionally, all teachers should:
1. Explain and model all academic language activities.
2. Provide sentence frames so that students can practice using new vocabulary in an authentic context.
3. Likewise, make it a habit for students to always answer in complete sentences.
4. Have students practice extended discourse (for example, having students engage in extended conversations about a text they have just read in class, their activities over the weekend, etc. It may be useful to provide students with sentence frames to structure this extended discourse).
5. Record words and grammatical structures students demonstrate difficulty with and provide additional explicit, systematic instruction on those words and grammatical structures (including opportunities to students to practice using them appropriately) and
6. Repeat the answers students provide using proper, academic English.
The following characteristics are both helpful and necessary for teaching academic English:
1. Including specific language objectives for all lessons
2. Providing explicit language instruction
3. Providing students with a wealth of exposure to language (and academic language in particular)
4. Provide students with multiple opportunities to practice newly learned skills
5. Provide students with explicit, targeted feedback
6. Engage students during all forms of language instruction.