

“Not Just for the Boomers”: The Importance of Grammatical Understandings in 21st Century P–20 Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The word “grammar” often conjures negative feelings for both students and teachers; for students, learning rules of language can be simultaneously daunting and boring, and teachers can often view this as a battle that they would prefer not to fight. In an age of texting, social media, and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), the use of proper punctuation, capitalization, and other writing mechanics has become less regulated, yet due to newly implemented ELA standards within the state of Georgia, as well as new legislation efforts designed to improve literacy for all students, there is now a deeper emphasis on grammar as a focal point of instruction. This article provides a literature review of the importance of teaching and learning grammatical concepts in all grade levels in P–12, as well as in educator preparation programs (EPPs), preparing the next generation of teachers, and provides context of how educators can provide information that best supports P–20 students’ communicative skills.

KEYWORDS

grammar; writing mechanics; P–12 education, educator preparation programs (EPPs); English Language Arts (ELA)

Teaching the mechanics of language is often a polarizing topic; in fact, Myhill (2021) posits that with the exception of phonics, there is no element of English language arts more divisive. Furthermore, to even define grammar is complex, as there are so many descriptions; as well, there are many ways to define what grammar instruction should entail. For our purposes, we lean into Alzahrani’s (2024) explanation of grammar as a skill necessary for enduring, effective communication and in Jean and Simard’s (2011) recognition that grammar is necessary for productive life skills. Additionally, we also include the mechanics of writing and speaking in our discussion of grammatical aspects. In this article, we advocate for explicit, student-centered grammar instruction that promotes a growth mindset. This refers to brief, purposeful, in-context teaching that makes language features visible, nameable, and discussable in service of helping students to improve their writing and communication. It includes modeling, dialoging, and targeted practicing that allow students to make applications to their own compositions immediately; it does not include decontextualized worksheets or isolated textbook instruction. Furthermore, what we consider to be effective and purposeful instruction is not based upon a ‘gotcha’ approach in which students are afraid to make errors and dread the proverbial red pen used to magnify each mistake. Instead, we focus on understanding, intentionality, and utilization.

A Brief History of Grammar Instruction

While grammar has been taught in schools for centuries, going back to the 1700s (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2011), there have been significant shifts in how it is taught and to the extent it is taught. Until the 1960s, schools within the United States provided students with lessons that were made up of isolated ‘skill and drill’ practice (Vakili & Mohammed, 2020), and grammar was exclusively taught through rote memorization instead of practical application (Watson, 2013). Educational stakeholders began questioning the validity of learning grammar, and in 1963, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) issued a report (Research in Written Composition) that found the teaching of grammar to be detrimental, even harmful, to students’ writing abilities (Braddock et al., 1963).

Due to this, from the 1970s to the early 2000s, grammar instruction was essentially taken out of many classrooms across the country (Vakili & Mohammed, 2020), and teachers whose school systems required the teaching of grammar often resorted to isolated, drill-related worksheet-type practices to do so (Kiuahara et al., 2009). At this time, reading and writing instruction were ‘the’ premier literacy skills taught, and while the focus centered on the practices associated with reading and writing, in some school systems, instructing students on the fundamentals and usage of the English language became deemphasized (Vakili & Mohammed, 2020). Many teachers were discouraged from explicitly teaching linguistic structures because, under the arch of whole language, such understandings would simply occur naturally, organically, and when the child was ready (Derewianka, 2015). Following the report from Braddock et al. (1963), many felt that grammar instruction was antiquated and unnecessary, and Elbow (1981) went so far as to suggest that “learning to ignore” grammar was the best way to help students with their writing skills (p. 169). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) further eliminated grammar instruction, as teachers began concentrating less on content that would not be assessed on high-stakes testing and delineated grammar as non-essential (McCarthy, 2008).

With the onset of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), grammar once again became a topic of conversation. CCSS (2010) confirmed that other communicative components of ELA are equally important, demonstrating that receptive (reading and listening) and expressive and descriptive (writing and speaking) skills are all critical to students’ success and college and career readiness. However, because it had been taken out of so many classrooms for years, many teachers were hesitant to teach it and felt unprepared to do so during this time (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016).

At the turn of the decade, COVID-19 forced schools to shut down for months, and educators and students worked and learned in online environments. During the pandemic, teachers attempted to create effective online instruction but were often met with a myriad of challenges, including students’ lack of technology, absenteeism, and attention issues (Francis & Weller, 2022; González et al., 2022). As students were taught outside of their respective classrooms, parents and caregivers were given more of a ‘front row seat’ to children’s learning, and while some parents and caregivers embraced, and continue to embrace, the notion that they are their child’s first teacher of language and literacy, not all recognize how important they are in their child’s understanding of the components of ELA, including grammar (MacWhinney, 2023). Additionally, many family members felt, and continue to feel, ill-equipped to provide strong foundational support for their children (Goudeau et al., 2021), and school closures created significant gaps in ELA competencies.

Undoubtedly, research shows that the negative implications of COVID-19 on students' academic well-being are far reaching (e.g., Colvin et al., 2022; Kuhfeld et al., 2022; Storey & Zhang, 2024). For instance, not only have ELA test results declined over the years since COVID-19, but results of a study conducted by Pejovic et al. (2024) also show that the language and communication development of infants and toddlers during the pandemic was significantly diminished. The vast majority of these children are now enrolled in formalized schooling, and many entered school with potential significant gaps in communicative skills (Pejovic et al., 2024). The global pandemic took a tremendous toll on basic understandings, and students' current "grammar knowledge is at an all-time low" (Erlbacher, 2025, p. 2).

Today, as we are now positioned in the post-COVID era, Common Core standards have been fully removed from all educational settings in Georgia. Although this phase-out has been underway for more than a decade, the adoption of revised ELA standards for the 2025-2026 academic year, brought forth by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), has eliminated the last remaining traces of Common Core (GaDOE, n.d.). Current instructional practices within the state focus on the science of reading (SoR), thus requiring teachers to be more structured, intentional, and explicit (Petscher et al., 2020). As defined by Cabell and Espittia (2025), SoR is "a body of knowledge about how people learn to read and how to best teach reading" (p. 19). The SoR allows educators to recognize the importance of foundational literacy skills, as these foundations provide strong structures for reading in the older grades (Cabell & Espittia, 2025).

While the science of reading is now a fundamental part of our 'literacy landscape,' we cannot forget the science behind writing. Just as explicit and intentional instructional practices are critical in reading, Graham believes that the same intentionality should be occurring in the teaching of writing skills (2019). Sadly, Graham's research suggests that writing is not given the same instructional time, as there is often less time in the day for explicit instruction and application of writing, and without foundational structures, students often continue to struggle in writing as they move throughout the grade levels. By recognizing that there is a science to writing, as well as reading, educators can empower students with heightened communication skills and an enhanced motivation to write (Graham, 2019).

The Importance of Grammar Instruction

With more than a quarter of the 21st century behind us, grammar instruction has once again shifted, as the new aforementioned ELA standards and curricula have enhanced the need to strengthen grammatical understandings. Within these revised ELA standards, GaDOE (n.d.) has demonstrated its mission of ensuring grammar instruction is a focal point in K-12 classrooms. Today's grammatical standards begin in kindergarten, as students begin to recognize rules of conversations, listening and speaking skills, the formation of complete sentences, and basic grammar. As students move throughout the grade levels, they are able to learn and apply more advanced components of grammar. The K-12 ELA grammar, mechanics, and usage standards showcase what is learned and taught throughout the grade levels. While these components are presented and practiced during various years, the standards provide a comprehensive outline of grammatical skills that are introduced, mastered, and reinforced during elementary, middle, and secondary grade levels. Appendix A gives a glimpse into these standards.

Grammar taught in schools is typically based upon Standard American English (SAE), also known as General American English. Carter (1999) defined such standardization as "a set of forms which are used with only minimal variation in written English" (p.163). SAE can also be called prescriptive grammar, which is often thought of as the formalized means of speaking and writing

(Huddleston et al., 2021). Xavier et al. (2020) define prescriptive grammar as the “correct and accurate use of grammatical structures,” focused on grammatical rules (p. 200).

In contrast, descriptive grammar is described as the way that individuals may actually speak and write in daily communication. Xavier et al. (2020) designate descriptive grammar as a means for “linguistic choices,” thus allowing individuals to gain more connectivity through “meaning-making” (p. 200). Prescriptive grammar is often thought of as more formally academic in nature, while descriptive grammar is more personalized in nature.

Grammar is an essential component of expressive language, and those with a proficient understanding of grammar are able to communicate with meaning and purpose (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Contrary to former ideologies from previous decades, Camps and Fonitch (2019) state that grammar is “not learned spontaneously or naturally” and must therefore be taught (p. 6). As command of grammar and mechanics can typically be seen as a benefit for speaking and writing, grammar can also benefit students’ reading comprehension (T. Shanahan, 2020), especially as state ELA standards have increased text-level complexity. Grammar can also enhance students’ morphology knowledge, thus allowing them to better understand the meanings of words (Jackendoff & Audring, 2020).

Students’ ability to understand and produce complex sentences is another important aspect of writing and reading comprehension. As older students read more complex texts, they need stronger understandings of how to write more complex sentences (Balthazar & Scott, 2023). Cognitive and psycholinguistic research further shows that comprehension depends heavily on a reader’s ability to integrate each word into the unfolding syntactic structure of a sentence, a process that underlies how meaning is constructed during reading (Dempsey et al., 2024; Van Dyke & Dempsey, 2025). Integrating syntax as part of grammar instruction supports not only writing skills but also access to complex texts.

Teachers must also recognize that students bring their own cultural linguistics into the classroom, and such descriptive grammar and dialect are a part of students’ identities (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). For students learning English as a second (or third) language, grammatical constructs in academic language can be perplexing (Uccelli et al., 2015). At the same time, multilingual learners bring a variety of linguistic resources that can serve as assets for their language development. When teachers encourage curiosity and awareness about patterns and connections between languages, students are able to leverage these resources to extend the knowledge and skills they bring with them into the classroom (Crosson et al., 2022).

Without doubt, classrooms are rich environments for sociolinguistics. Teachers do have a responsibility to teach prescriptive grammar, especially in light of enhanced standards, as to not do so could negatively impact college and career readiness and academic success. Yet we do not want to completely ignore descriptive grammar, as that can lead to enhanced writing motivation, feelings of individualism, and pride of culture and community.

Why is Teaching Grammar so Difficult?

The Student Lens

Students in all grade levels, especially in middle and secondary grades, spend an inordinate amount of time using digital language, which, according to Ovsienko et al. (2025), is more simplistic and concise than the language, writing mechanics, and grammatical structures expected in a classroom environment. Digital language is the etymology of social networks, online platforms, gaming systems, and messaging services (e.g., texting). Students are entrenched in digital language, which reduces syntax and punctuation, increases the use of abbreviations and acronyms, and often, visual

representations (e.g., emojis and gifs) take the place of text entirely (Ovsienko et al., 2025). Simply put, digital language has greatly influenced the grammar that our students use.

Due to this, there can be a huge disconnect when we as educators ask for subject/verb agreement, proper punctuation, capitalization, and complete sentences, as to many students, these are ‘old-fashioned’ methods and often seen as ‘taboo’ on social media platforms. For instance, in a recent study, when shown text messages, participants determined that those ending with a period were more negative than those with messages with no ending punctuation, regardless of whether the message itself was positive in nature (Houghton et al., 2018). This study clearly demonstrates that grammar, including punctuation, is valued differently in digital language.

It is important to remember that today’s P–12 students are, as Prensky (2001) termed, digital natives, as they have never known a world without technology and devices. They are developing in a world where digital technology is being disseminated at a rapid rate and where new social media apps regularly gain popularity (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat). The “Gen Z” generation consists of individuals born between the approximate years of 1997–2010/2012. “Gen Alpha,” a phrase coined by social researcher Mark McCrindle in 2020, refers to those born from approximately 2010 and beyond. Though these generations differ, those born within these years represent elementary, middle, secondary, and college-aged students. According to Howarth (2023), the number of individuals considered “Gen Alpha” will be approximately 2.2 billion worldwide by the end of 2025; this number, along with those born in the late 1990s and early 2000s, showcases the vast number of digital natives in our respective P–20 (P–12 and higher education) classrooms.

Those considered to be “Gen Z” or “Gen Alpha” have grown up with smartphones as a constant presence in their lives, shaping how they view writing and literacy. These students may feel as though writing mechanics is unnecessary in their academic work because of its unimportance online, and because of this, there is a fear that digital communication can and will negatively impact students’ language skills (Busch, 2018). Asking students to write with appropriate punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling can feel rather out of date to them, given that such conventions are rarely valued or modeled within digital spaces such as social media platforms.

Additionally, students in P–20 are increasingly using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in their writing (Gupta et al., 2024). As those within these generations seek immediate gratification and are digital natives, they tend to utilize technology sources that can be used for their immediate benefit (McCrindle, 2020). For instance, students frequently use programs such as Grammarly to correct writing errors automatically. While these practices can improve surface-level correctness, they also encourage an uncritical acceptance of changes to their writing. To counter this, Levine et al. (2025) suggest educators use ChatGPT as a tool to make writing processes visible, allowing students to critically examine their grammatical and stylistic decisions rather than outsource them to GenAI.

The Teacher Lens

Simply put, teaching grammar is not necessarily a favorite of many teachers. Often, teachers find the teaching of grammar to be an uphill battle, and because the “Do-we-teach-grammar-or-don’t-we-teach-grammar?” pendulum has shifted so much throughout the years, teachers can often feel unsupported in this area, commonly wondering how to best teach grammar and the rules of conventions. Implicit learning suggests that the rules are not explained and are instead implied; explicit grammar learning, on the other hand, suggests more detailed orientation and awareness of

form as the concepts are explicitly taught (Oxford et al., 2007). Numerous studies (e.g., Al-Jarf, 2022; Alzahrani, 2024) recognize that explicit instruction is often more valuable to students' success, yet many teachers still struggle with the ability to teach grammar in an explicit manner while not causing students to become bored and shut down. This is often due to the fact that there is a lack of standardization in grammar, and as 'grammar' is so ambiguous and broad, it can be difficult to recognize what to teach.

In addition, due to the aforementioned pendulum of grammar instruction, many teachers feel uncomfortable in their own understandings and language usage, as they themselves may not have received appropriate grammar instruction in school. This can lead to a sense of insecurity and frustration (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016), and teachers who are insecure in their own grammatical understandings often resort to rote, implicit methods of practice (Watson, 2014) or default to methods of teaching that they were taught as students (Smagorinsky et al., 2011). Compounding this issue, research by Myhill et al. (2023) found that many teachers do not view themselves as writers, which limits opportunities to engage in and model authentic grammatical awareness in practice.

Grammar in Educator Preparation Programs

Many teachers enter the classroom without sufficient preparation for teaching grammar because few educator preparation programs (EPPs) include explicit coursework on writing and language instruction. According to Van der Heijden et al. (2015), it is critical that EPPs enhance grammar instruction in order to adequately prepare preservice teachers for the field. Yet research shows that few EPP programs have specific courses, or even one specific course, aligned to the teaching of writing and grammar, leaving many teachers without a strong pedagogical foundation (Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Myers et al., 2016). In addition, EPP faculty members are often confused as to what to teach preservice teachers concerning grammar and are often even more perplexed as to how those preservice teachers can take what they learn and translate that into their own future classrooms (Liu & Master, 2003).

Moreover, while some preservice teachers might be exposed to grammar instruction in their education courses, this often varies based on educational majors and certification tracks; for instance, preservice teachers majoring in elementary education might receive a peripheral overview of grammar and mechanics in their overarching ELA classes, but those majoring in middle and secondary education take courses that are more literature-intensive. While preservice English teachers are required to take methods courses and complete year-long English placements aligned with GaDOE's new ELA standards and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) requirements, which include preparation in language and grammar, the nature and depth of that preparation can vary considerably across EPP programs. This is especially true as certification pathways have become more diverse and alternative certification routes are gaining in popularity (Dori et al., 2023; Peterson-Ahmad et al., 2025). As a result, novice English teachers may either avoid teaching grammar or rely heavily on textbooks and test-prep materials (Smagorinsky et al., 2011), as a lack of preparation often contributes to teachers feeling that they do not have the adequate knowledge or understanding of grammar (Chatterjee & Halder, 2023). Lee (2019) suggests that preservice teachers need learning experiences that allow them to create their own knowledge about grammar, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. Unfortunately, very few EPPs provide preservice teachers with these types of opportunities.

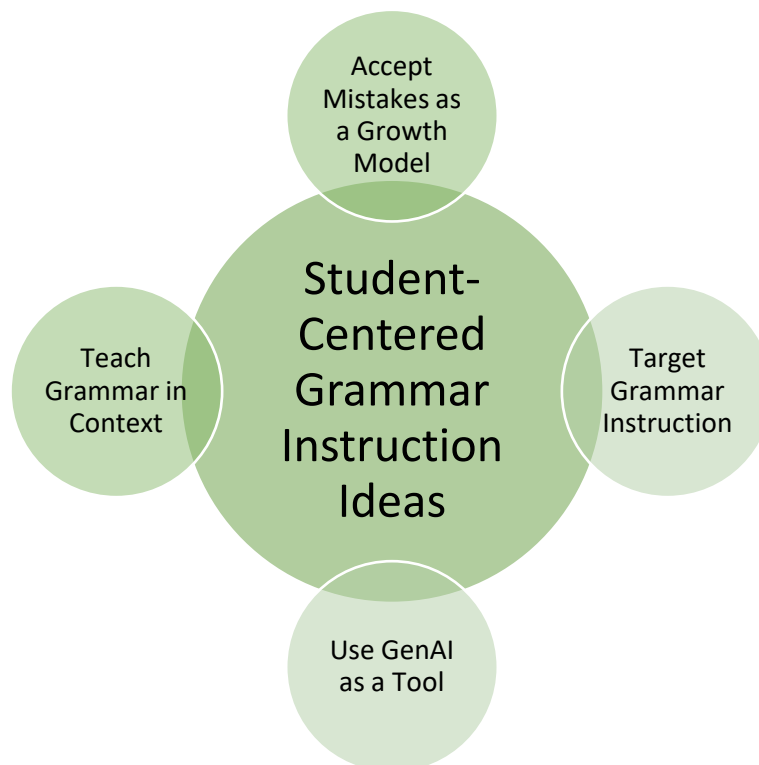
A lack of confidence in grammatical concepts also shapes teachers' identities, as many teachers do not see themselves as writers, making it challenging to effectively teach writing

(Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Myers et al., 2016; Myhill et al., 2023). Cremin and Oliver (2015) note that teachers often lack confidence with writing and carry negative past experiences with these into their classrooms, thus hindering their ability to create effective, positive writing experiences for students. Collectively, these aforementioned studies suggest that EPP programs must do more to prepare teachers to be teachers of writing by building a stronger pedagogical foundation, reshaping attitudes, and strengthening teachers' sense of themselves as writers (Cremin & Oliver, 2015; Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Myers et al., 2016; Smagorinsky et al., 2011).

Student-Centered Grammar Instruction

In order for students to personally connect to the nuances of grammar, they need time to practice; such implementation occurs most effectively when teachers model a curious, reflective, and growth-oriented approach to language. This includes demonstrating appropriate written and spoken prescriptive grammar when conducting academic instruction and also modeling a positive attitude toward grammar and a willingness to learn from mistakes and ask questions. When teachers approach grammar in this way, students are able to benefit not only from hearing and seeing proper grammar usage within the classroom but also from observing a positive and inquisitive view of language. Yet as previously mentioned, teachers often feel underprepared. Recognizing the importance of the utilization of written and spoken grammar, changing habits and attitudes, practicing appropriate prescriptive grammar in and out of classroom environments, and utilizing a growth mindset to continuously improve in grammar skills are some ways that educators can be positive models for their students. In this section, we discuss activities that can allow students to practice while also providing continuous guidance and support. Figure 1 showcases specific key ideas that can be used within K–12 classrooms.

Figure 1: Ideas for Student-Centered Grammar Instruction



Accept Mistakes as a Growth Model

In an age of GenAI, students who show a willingness to take chances and make errors in their own expressive work should be praised for their effort. This is true for all students, and perhaps even more so for English learners, for striving readers and writers, and for students with language-based disabilities. A growth-oriented stance towards grammar invites students to take an inquiry stance towards their own writing and explore how grammar and language work, rather than viewing grammar as a restrictive list of dos and don'ts. Eileen Shanahan (2021) frames this as “a shift from finding fault to finding the wonder” (p. 18), while Crosson et al. (2022) encourage us to “model and cultivate curiosity” around language and to encourage students to be lifelong language learners (p. 492). When responding to students' writing, lead with rich, descriptive feedback on ideas, evidence, and organization; address grammar and writing mechanics in targeted follow-ups (Walqui-van Lier & Hernandez, 2001). Beck and Jones (2023) suggest conference-based, dialogic feedback with student writers, which positions the teacher as an interested reader and keeps attention on the writer's goals and writing processes. This supports student agency and avoids an overemphasis on errors in conventions while still creating space for targeted work on grammar and mechanics. Over time, attending first to the what (what was written or stated), and then to the how (how the content was written or stated) improves writing and convention without dampening motivation or voice.

While we must allow students to make errors, we must also ensure that they are learning and growing from misunderstandings or inaccuracies. One way that this can be done is through allowing students to recognize mistakes on their own (Chiou, 2019). Sometimes, students are able to find flaws in someone else's writing faster than they can find errors in their own work. Teachers can ‘make mistakes on purpose’ as a means of allowing students to find and fix errors. Such types of activities engage students, and, according to Chiou (2019), enhance students' abilities to find their own errors in writing.

Using GenAI as a Tool

There is a current debate on the use and potential misuse of GenAI in P–20 settings. While we strongly believe that students should not rely extensively on GenAI for communication purposes, and while students should be given ample opportunity to write organically and to make errors in the process, we also believe in the value of GenAI as a teaching and learning tool. For instance, emerging research on AI-supported writing aligns with this perspective: Levine et al. (2025) found that when students compare their writing to ChatGPT-generated drafts, they often critique the AI's choices, especially when it removes their personality or voice, and use those differences to refine their own grammatical and stylistic decisions. Such work reinforces the idea that mistakes, revisions, and experiments with language are essential to growth.

In addition, teachers can prompt ChatGPT to generate multiple versions of an opening statement and then guide students in comparing those versions to identify underlying rhetorical or grammatical principles. Similarly, in the revision stage of writing, students can compare ChatGPT's edits to their own drafts and evaluate which revisions strengthen clarity, coherence, or syntax and which remove their “personality” or voice. Through this kind of guided comparison work, students learn to articulate and justify their grammatical and stylistic decisions while also learning to use GenAI in a productive and responsible way.

The utilization of such tools can help teachers and students practice Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as the functionality of ChatGPT and other GenAI programs can serve to scaffold writing skills until students begin to feel more confident. Bridging the gap

between what a student cannot yet do, or is unmotivated to do, and what a student can do with help and support enhances both skill and motivation (Fulton et al., 2021). Such gradual release of responsibility (Vygotsky, 1978) inhabits an “I Do, We Do, You Do” approach to writing throughout multiple grade levels.

Teach Grammar in Context

Teaching grammar in context means providing authentic reading and writing opportunities where grammar instruction can be engaging and relevant for students (Chatterjee & Halder, 2023). This often begins with helping students see the connections between reading and writing so that what is learned in one domain can transfer to the other (Kim & Zagata, 2024). When students become more aware of how authors use language to shape meaning in the texts they read, and then apply similar strategies in their own writing, they begin to understand grammar not as an isolated set of rules, but as a resource for comprehension and expression. Embedding grammar within high-interest and meaningful academic texts and assignments has been shown to be more effective than teaching it as an isolated skill (Andreev, 2025; Balthazar & Scott, 2023; Simmons, 2016). Balthazar and Scott (2023) argue that providing authentic texts also allows students to have richer semantic and syntactic support than decontextualized examples, so they are better able to understand and apply the grammatical concepts they are learning (Balthazar & Scott, 2023). This means students not only notice how grammar functions but also internalize these patterns more deeply when instruction is grounded in authentic texts. Relatedly, Simmons (2016) used *The Hunger Game Trilogy* as high-interest mentor texts to discuss how authors purposefully use grammar and language and then how students can apply these grammatical understandings to their own writing. Song lyrics can also be used in the classroom, as the lines contain a wide array of grammar structures ready to be dissected and analyzed (Roslim et al., 2011).

At the same time, teaching grammar in context involves encouraging students to authentically reflect on their own writing and grammatical decisions, while also recognizing and drawing upon the linguistic resources and language variations they bring into the classroom (Crosson et al., 2022; Godley et al., 2007). Effective grammar instruction should develop students’ metalinguistic awareness and support purposeful decision-making in their writing (Lancaster & Olinger, 2014; Levine et al., 2025; Myhill & Watson, 2014). For teachers, this means inviting students to dialogue about their language use, thus providing space and opportunities to think about how language works so they become more aware of their choices as writers.

Target Grammar Instruction

Given the complexities of grammar, it may be beneficial to limit the scope of the explicit grammatical lessons (Schenck, 2017). In identifying what grammar conventions to teach, it is often best to begin by examining students’ work and engaging students in conversation around their own grammar usage (Bohney, 2019; E. Shanahan, 2021). McCormack-Colbert et al. (2018) believe that grammar should be taught in small, explicit mini-lessons, as these shortened, focused lessons respond to specific needs in a structured and explicit manner while not taking time away from practice and implication. Bohney (2019) suggests focusing on just a few grammatical conventions throughout an academic year and providing students ample opportunities to identify, discuss, and apply those conventions.

One example of targeted instruction is syntax. Studies show that brief, explicit lessons in syntactic complexity support improvements in both comprehension and writing (Balthazar & Scott, 2023). For example, when students write fragments beginning with ‘because,’ teachers can

use this as an opportunity to discuss the relationship between dependent and independent clauses and model how complex sentences convey clearer meaning. In keeping with our previous advice, examples for complex sentences beginning with ‘because’ can be drawn from the class readings. Students can then be encouraged to practice incorporating these types of complex sentences meaningfully into their writing. This type of targeted syntactic work reinforces the idea that grammar instruction is most effective when it helps students make intentional language choices rather than simply comply with rules.

Conclusion

Understanding grammar is an important life skill and a necessity for academic success for college and career preparedness. The GaDOE K–12 ELA standards also emphasize the importance of helping students to deepen their grammatical knowledge over time. Studies throughout the years (e.g., Kagan, 1992) have focused on teacher beliefs, determining that how educators feel and what they believe about the content they teach has a tremendous bearing on the quality of instruction that is given to students. We posit that teacher beliefs about grammar might actually be even more relevant today, especially in light of how views and expectations around grammar instruction have changed drastically over the past several decades.

Educators must be cognizant and reflective of their own grammar instructional practices and their own feelings of grammar, as teachers who appreciate the significance of grammar are more likely to model it, take an inquiry stance towards language, teach it through targeted daily practices in all content areas, and recognize that aspects of grammar and communication skills are taught, learned, practiced, and discussed in all grade levels. Grammar is a necessary component of English language arts that must be cultivated through organic experiences and is critical for all ages. As students utilize technology consistently in their everyday lives, teachers should recognize that application through the use of digital tools can be helpful in the practice and analysis of grammatical constructs, as this can bring real-world application. However, digital tools should never take the place of educators’ explicit instructional practices that embrace a growth mindset.

As well, those preparing the next generation of teachers must take logistical steps to discuss and practice grammar in education courses designated for all certification tracks. For instance, as preservice teachers complete assignments within their respective EPP programs, faculty members should give specific feedback on both the content and the writing so that novice teachers, who may not have strong foundational skills in grammar and writing conventions, are able to recognize ways to improve in their written work. This will allow novice teachers to apply and practice strategies and better prepare them for their future classrooms.

Above all, P–20 educators must remember the cultural and linguistic differences in students. Just as students come into the classrooms with varying background knowledge and skillsets in other components of language arts, P–20 students have differing proficiency in spoken and written grammar. Being intentional in providing authentic student-centered instruction is critical in preparing learners of all ages for academic and career success in the 21st century.

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Appendix A: K–12 ELA Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage State Standards

Standard Code and Strand	Standard Description
K–12.L.GC.1.1 (Usage)	Use nouns and verbs to share complete thoughts when speaking.
K–12.L.GC.1.2 (Usage)	Form and use singular and plural nouns when speaking
K–12.L.GC.1.3 (Usage)	Use interrogatives to ask questions when speaking.
K–12.L.GC.1.4 (Mechanics)	Capitalize the first word of a sentence and the pronoun I.
K–12.L.GC.1.5 (Grammar)	Form regular plural nouns by adding -s or -es.
K–12.L.GC.1.6 (Grammar)	Form and use verbs by adding -ing, -ed, or -s.
K–12.L.GC.1.7 (Grammar)	Use action verbs.
K–12.L.GC.1.8 (Grammar)	Use adjectives and adverbs.
K–12.L.GC.1.9 (Grammar)	Use common and proper nouns.
K–12.L.GC.1.10 (Grammar)	Form and use the simple verb tenses.
K–12.L.GC.1.11 (Usage)	Use determiners (articles, possessive determiners, demonstrative adjectives).
K–12.L.GC.1.12 (Mechanics)	Capitalize proper nouns.
K–12.L.GC.1.13 (Mechanics)	Use periods, exclamation marks, and question marks at the end of sentences.
K–12.L.GC.1.14 (Grammar)	Form plural nouns by changing -y to -ies.
K–12.L.GC.1.15 (Grammar)	Use personal pronouns (subject, object, and possessive).
K–12.L.GC.1.16 (Grammar)	Use frequently occurring prepositions.
K–12.L.GC.1.17 (Mechanics)	Use commas to separate items in a series and to format dates, addresses, salutations, and closings.

K-12.L.GC.1.1 (Mechanics)	Use apostrophes to form contractions and singular possessive nouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.19 (Grammar)	Form and use irregular plural nouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.20 (Grammar)	Form and use the past tense of irregular verbs.
K-12.L.GC.1.2 (Grammar)	Use coordinating conjunctions to join words, phrases, or clauses.
K-12.L.GC.1.22 (Grammar)	Form and use verbs by adding -d or -es.
K-12.L.GC.1.23 (Grammar)	Use collective and abstract nouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.24 (Grammar)	Use reflexive pronouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.25 (Mechanics)	Use commas with coordinating conjunctions to join independent clauses.
K-12.L.GC.1.26 (Mechanics)	Use hyphens to divide words at line breaks.
K-12.L.GC.1.27 (Grammar)	Form and use prepositional phrases.
K-12.L.GC.1.28 (Grammar)	Form and use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs.
K-12.L.GC.1.29 (Usage)	Ensure pronoun-antecedent agreement.
K-12.L.GC.1.30 (Mechanics)	Recognize and use conventional capitalization, quotation marks, and commas to indicate exact words and dialogue.
K-12.L.GC.1.31 (Grammar)	Use relative pronouns and relative adverbs.
K-12.L.GC.1.32 (Grammar)	Use interjections.
K-12.L.GC.1.33 (Grammar)	Use helping and linking verbs.
K-12.L.GC.1.34 (Usage)	Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to/too/two; there/their/they're; advice/advise).
K-12.L.GC.1.35 (Mechanics)	Recognize and use conventional capitalization in abbreviations, proper adjectives, and formal titles.
K-12.L.GC.1.36 (Mechanics)	Use commas to indicate direct address and to set off the words yes and no.
K-12.L.GC.1.37 (Mechanics)	Use apostrophes to form plural possessive nouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.38 (Grammar)	Use indefinite pronouns, ensuring correct agreement.
K-12.L.GC.1.39 (Grammar)	Use subordinating conjunctions to join clauses.
K-12.L.GC.1.40 (Mechanics)	Use commas after introductory phrases or clauses.
K-12.L.GC.1.41 (Mechanics)	Use conventional capitalization and underlining, quotation marks, or italics to indicate titles of works.
K-12.L.GC.1.42 (Grammar)	Use intensive pronouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.43 (Grammar)	Form and use the progressive, perfect, and perfect progressive verb aspects.
K-12.L.GC.1.44 (Grammar)	Form and use participles.
K-12.L.GC.1.45 (Usage)	Recognize and correct vague pronoun references.
K-12.L.GC.1.46 (Grammar)	Use correlative conjunctions to join words, phrases, or clauses.

K-12.L.GC.1.47 (Mechanics)	Use conventional capitalization, quotation marks, commas, end punctuation, and attributions to indicate exact words and lines of dialogue.
K-12.L.GC.1.48 (Mechanics)	Use semicolons to separate items in a series or list when at least one of the items already contains commas.
K-12.L.GC.1.49 (Mechanics)	Use commas, parentheses, and dashes to set off nonessential words, phrases, or clauses.
K-12.L.GC.1.50 (Mechanics)	Use ellipses appropriately.
K-12.L.GC.1.51 (Mechanics)	Use hyphens with appropriate affixes and compound words.
K-12.L.GC.1.52 (Mechanics)	Use semicolons, with or without a conjunctive adverb, to form compound and compound-complex sentences.
K-12.L.GC.1.53 (Grammar & Mechanics)	Use parts of speech and their associated phrases or clauses to perform indicated sentence functions (e.g., subject, direct object, predicate)
K-12.L.GC.1.54 (Mechanics)	Use conventional capitalization, quotation marks, commas, end punctuation, and parentheses (citations) when incorporating textual evidence.
K-12.L.GC.1.55 (Grammar)	Use demonstrative pronouns.
K-12.L.GC.1.56 (Mechanics)	Use colons to introduce lists, examples, and explanations.
K-12.L.GC.1.57 (Usage)	Form and use verbals and verbal phrases (participles/participials, gerunds, and infinitives) based on function.
K-12.L.GC.1.5 (Usage)	Use tenses and aspects to indicate the mood of a verb.
K-12.L.GC.1.59 (Mechanics)	Use colons to introduce quotations.
K-12.L.GC.1.60 (Mechanics)	Use dashes appropriately.
K-12.L.GC.1.61 (Grammar, Usage, & Mechanics)	Use an appropriate style guide to address complex issues of grammar, usage, or mechanics.

Note: <https://case.georgiastandards.org/>