

Improving Reading Instruction and Student Reading Achievement: Teacher Study Groups in Vocabulary

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the proposed study?

- First grade is a time when vocabulary instruction, which is critical to successful reading, is not given adequate emphasis. Much of the professional development efforts in first grade reading have focused on phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency instruction.
- The purpose of the proposed study is to improve vocabulary instruction of first grade teachers from Title 1 schools by means of a professional development program called *Teacher Study Group in Vocabulary*.

What are the benefits of participating in the proposed study?

- A recent large-scale field trial on the use of the *Teacher Study Group in Vocabulary* indicates significant positive benefits in teachers' working knowledge of effective vocabulary instruction, their teaching practice, and their students' vocabulary outcomes (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, Santoro, 2009).
- All teachers and facilitators will receive a copy of the book, *Learning How to Improve Vocabulary Instruction through Teacher Study Groups* (Dimino & Taylor, 2009).
- Teachers in the *TSGs* may receive credit towards professional development hours.
- Teachers in the *TSGs* will acquire lesson plans that incorporate research-based principles.

What is the *Teacher Study Group in Vocabulary* program?

- The *Teacher Study Group in Vocabulary* program is a concentrated professional development effort designed to build teachers' working knowledge of research-based vocabulary instruction, improve their teaching practice, and increase their students' achievement in vocabulary.
- The *TSG* program is outlined in the book, *Learning How to Improve Vocabulary Instruction through Teacher Study Groups* (Dimino & Taylor, 2009).

What happens in a *Teacher Study Group*?

- All first grade teachers will meet twice a month for 75 minutes at their school site with a facilitator at a time that is convenient to them.
- During each session, a five-phase process is used to collaboratively work on building practical working knowledge of evidence-based practices in teaching vocabulary to young students. The five-phase process entails: (1) *Debrief*, (2) *Discuss the Focus Research Concept*, (3) *Compare the Focus Research Concept with Practice*, (4) *Plan Collaboratively*, and (5) *Assignment for Classroom Instruction*.

What are the expectations for teachers assigned to the *Teacher Study Groups*?

- First grade teachers will attend 11 *TSG* sessions held at the school site.
- Teachers will have to complete four brief surveys.
- Teachers will be observed teaching reading during one reading and language/arts block in the spring. Some teachers will be observed twice.
- The *TSG* sessions will be tape-recorded to help the research team refine the process.

What happens if a school is randomly assigned to the Control group rather than the TSG group?

What are the expectations for teachers in the Control schools?

- At the end of the study, Control teachers will receive the *TSG* curricular materials and training
- Teachers must complete three brief surveys.
- Teachers will *be* observed teaching reading during one reading and language/arts block in the spring. Some teachers will be observed twice.

What is expected from each school/school district?

- School and participating student demographic data will be collected from the school database (e.g., EL status, free and reduced lunch, AYP status, ethnicity).
- Schools/school districts will assist in identifying the facilitator (a member of the school's staff, excluding first grade teachers) to lead the 11 *Teacher Study Group* sessions at each school.
- Schools/school districts will assist in obtaining parental consent for first grade students from eligible schools.

How will the study work?

- The study will be conducted in the 2010-11 school year.
- We need 2-10 Title 1 schools from each district and 2 or more first grade teachers in each school.
- Participating Title I schools will be randomly assigned to the Experimental condition (teachers participate in the *Teacher Study Groups*) or the Control condition (teachers do not participate in the *Teacher Study Groups*).
- Ten students (with parental consent to participate in the study) from each teacher's classroom will be administered reading assessments. The research team will administer these assessments.
- All participants (teachers and facilitators) will be remunerated for their participation.

How will confidentiality of student, teacher, school, and school district information be maintained?

- Data will not be reported at the individual level. All information gathered will be aggregated as experimental and control group data (e.g., teachers in control condition did...).
- Teacher, student, school, and school district names will not be identified or released in any of our reports.

For more information contact:

Dr. Joseph Dimino
Senior Research Associate
Instructional Research Group
4281 Katella Avenue, Suite 205
Los Alamitos, CA 90720
Office: 714.826.9600
Cell: 562.221.3121
Email: joe.dimino@inresg.org