

## Instructional Research Group

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### **Teacher Study Group Professional Development in Academic Vocabulary for Eighth-Grade Teachers of American History**

The purpose of the proposed study is to improve academic vocabulary instruction of 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers of American history using a professional development model called Teacher Study Group (TSG) in Vocabulary. The TSG professional development program is comprised of 10 interactive sessions.

Teachers participating in the professional development program will learn two basic skills: (a) how to decide which words to teach to their students based on certain criteria (e.g., conceptually central to understanding the text, student background knowledge) and (b) how to teach these words in an engaging manner (e.g., student friendly definitions, examples) such that these words become part of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing vocabulary. **Teachers will not be required to change their curricular material. Instead, they will learn to augment and enhance their existing curricular material by incorporating academic vocabulary instruction.**

#### **Benefits to School Districts**

Informational texts constitute a major part of the reading material in eighth grade American History classrooms. These texts contain a high proportion of words that are abstract and unfamiliar for many students, such as grievance, logic, violate, and minority. Students have to understand the meaning of these words in order to comprehend and learn the content material. Building teachers' capacity to effectively teach these words in an engaging, evidence-based fashion is a priority.

The proposed study will provide a direct benefit to any school district by providing a pragmatic, evidence-based professional development program to 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers of American history in middle schools serving English learners and students who were formerly English learners. This program has been validated by rigorous research conducted in elementary schools in Los Angeles Unified School district and other urban districts (Gersten et al., 2010). Results of the study will provide districts with specific ways to build the capacity of middle school teachers to improve the *academic vocabulary* of their students- both English learners and other learners in the classroom.

The proposed study will also help in building a district's capacity by training facilitators who can provide the same professional development to other teachers in the district. The study will also provide a district with information on the effectiveness of a professional development program in vocabulary.

**ELA Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) Addressed by the TSG Professional Development Program**

Literacy Standards for Reading in History/Social Studies 6-8 (WHST)	L6-8WHST2	d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
Literacy Standards for Reading in History/Social Studies 6-8 (RH)	L6-8RH4:	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
Literacy Standards for Writing in History/Social Studies 6-8 (RH)	Craft and Structure L6-8RH4:	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
Language (L)	ELAGSE8L6:	Acquire and accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
Writing (W)	ELAGSE8W2	d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
	ELAGSE8W3	d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experience and events.
English Language Arts (RL) Craft and Structure	ELAGSE8RL4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	ELAGSE8L4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
	ELAGSE8L5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context. b. Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words. c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute).