

## Instructional Research Group

4281 KATELLA AVE, SUITE 205 • LOS ALAMITOS, CALIFORNIA 90720  
PHONE (714) 826-9600 • FAX (714) 826-9610

### **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 must understand the meaning of these words 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 the school district 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.

**Texas State Standards Addressed by the TSG Professional Development Program**

**Chapter 110. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading Subchapter B, Middle School**

<b>§110.20. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 8, Beginning with School Year 2009-2010</b>
(b) Knowledge and skills
(2) Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to: (B) Use context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to determine or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar or ambiguous words or words with novel meanings
<b>§110.25. English Language Arts and Reading, Reading (Elective Credit)</b>
(b) Knowledge and skills
(2) The student acquires vocabulary through reading and systematic word study. The student is expected to: (B) Determine word meaning by using context

**Chapter 74. Curriculum Requirements Subchapter A, Required Curriculum**

<b>§74.4. English Language Proficiency Standards</b>
(c) Cross-curricular second language acquisition essential knowledge and skills
(1) Cross-curricular second language acquisition/learning strategies (E) Internalize new basic and academic language by using and reusing it in meaningful ways in speaking and writing activities that build concept and language attainment
(3) Cross-curricular second language acquisition/listening (D) Speak using grade-level content area vocabulary in context to internalize new English words and build academic language proficiency (F) Ask and give information ranging from using a very limited bank of high-frequency, high-need, concrete vocabulary, including key words and expressions needed for basic communication in academic and social contexts, to using abstract and content-based vocabulary during extended speaking assignments
(d) Proficiency level descriptors
(2) Speaking, Kindergarten-Grade 12

(C) Advanced. Advanced ELLs have the ability to speak using grade-appropriate English, with second language acquisition support, in academic and social settings. These students:

- (ii) Discuss familiar academic topics using content-based terms and common abstract vocabulary; can usually speak in some detail on familiar topics

(D) Advanced high. Advanced high ELLs have the ability to speak using grade-appropriate English, with minimal second language acquisition support, in academic and social settings

These students:

- (ii) Communicate effectively using abstract and content-based vocabulary during classroom instructional tasks, with some exceptions when low-frequency or academically demanding vocabulary is needed; use many of the same idioms and colloquialisms as their native English-speaking peers

### **Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies Subchapter B. Middle School**

**§113.17. Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Middle School, Beginning with School Year 2011-2012.**

**§113.20. Social Studies, Grade 8, Beginning with School Year 2011-2012.**

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(30) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

- (A) use social studies terminology correctly;

### **Texas College and Career Readiness Standards English Language Arts Standards**

#### **II. Reading**

B. Understand new vocabulary and concepts and use them accurately in reading, speaking, and writing.

- 1. Identify new words and concepts acquired through study of their relationships to other words and concepts.

Example Performance Standards:

- a. Describe meanings of words read in texts examples, comparison, contrast, cause and effect, details provided in surrounding text)
- b. Explain how connotation determines meaning