

## 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.**

#### **Description of the Professional Development Program**

The TSG professional development program is comprised of 10 interactive sessions.

**Session 1:** Teachers learn how to determine which words are appropriate to teach prior to reading the selection and which words can be taught using context.

**Session 2:** Participants learn how to choose the most critical words to teach in a selection. The purpose of this activity is to help teachers identify the text factors, student factors and tier level of words before making decisions. It also helps teachers distinguish those words needing brief instruction from those that will require more elaborate instruction.

**Session 3:** Teachers learn to provide initial word meanings through student friendly definitions.

**Session 4:** This session highlights the teacher's role in supporting students' learning by demonstrating how to develop examples, nonexamples and concrete representations to pinpoint their meanings. They will learn how to embed into their history lesson student friendly definitions, examples, nonexamples, and concrete representations.

**Session 5:** This session focuses on ways teachers can develop students' knowledge and understanding of words through activities that provide multiple meaningful exposures to newly and previously learned words

**Session 6:** Teachers apply the information learned in Sessions 1-5 and practice planning lessons that includes student friendly definitions, examples and nonexamples, concrete representations, and activities for the words they selected.

**Session 7: Teachers will learn how to** teach students to determine meanings of words in context.

**Sessions 8 and 9:** Teachers apply the information learned in the PD sessions and practice planning lessons that includes student friendly definitions, examples and nonexamples, concrete representations, and activities for the words they selected.

During each session, a five-phase process for learning is repeated during each of the sessions. This process includes:

- A. *Debrief,*
- B. *Discuss the Focus Research Concept,*
- C. *Compare Research with Practice,*
- D. *Plan Collaboratively,* and
- E. *Assignment.*

Participants begin by debriefing the lesson they collaboratively planned in the previous session. Participants describe the lesson they taught, report on any changes or adjustments they made while teaching the lesson, and discuss how students responded. During *Discuss the Focus Research Concept* portion, a new research concept is presented. Participants review, reflect and discuss the concept before proceeding to the *Compare Research with Practice* segment where they compare how the research aligns with the instructional design of their social studies program. Then, participants incorporate the focus research concept into the lesson they collaboratively plan. At the end of each of the sessions, participants are given an assignment that they will need to complete before their next meeting. This usually involves implementing the lesson they developed during the session.

**Alignment of the TSG Professional Development Program in Academic Vocabulary with California CCSS**

The PD program addresses the following standards:

<b>Reading Standards for Literacy History/Social Studies 6-12 (RH)</b>	<b>Craft and Structure</b> <i>Grade 6-8: RH4</i>	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
<b>Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12 (RI)</b>	<b>Craft and Structure</b> <i>Grade 8: RI4</i>	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
<b>Language Standards 6-12 (L)</b>	<b>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b> <i>Grade 8: L4a, L4d, L5a, L5b, L5c, L6</i>	<p>4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on <i>grade 8 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</li> </ul> <p>5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.</li> <li>b. Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.</li> <li>c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., <i>bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute</i>).</li> </ul> <p>6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p>
<b>Reading Standards for Literature 6-12 (RL)</b>	<b>Craft and Structure</b> <i>Grade 8: RL4</i>	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.

<p><b>College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language</b></p>	<p><b>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:</b>  <i>Grade 6-12: L4a, 4d, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6</i></p>	<p>4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on <i>grade 8 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</li> </ul> <p>5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.</li> <li>b. Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.</li> <li>c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., <i>bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute</i>).</li> </ul> <p>6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p>
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## Alignment of the PD Program in Academic Vocabulary with History-Social Science and ELA/ELD Frameworks

The PD program addresses the following guidelines:

1. History-Social Science Framework (from page 329; lines 267-269):
  - To support student comprehension of these difficult and dense primary source texts, teachers will need to employ a variety of literacy support strategies, such as strategies designed to define unfamiliar vocabulary within context.
2. ELA/ELD Framework Chapter 2 (from page 75):
  - Explicitly teaching vocabulary critical to understanding and developing academic vocabulary over time.
  - Explicitly teaching how to use context clues to derive the meaning of new words as they are encountered.
  - Explicitly teaching cognates and developing cognate awareness.
3. ELA/ELD Framework Chapter 2 (from page 81):
  - General Academic (Tier 2): Words that are far more likely to appear in text than in every day use, are highly generalizable because they appear in many types of texts, and often represent precise or nuanced meanings of relatively common things.
  - Domain-Specific (tier 3): Words that are specific to a domain or field of study and key to understanding a new concept.
4. ELA/ELD Framework Chapter 6 (from page 520):
  - Research indicates that not all students have the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge necessary to succeed in their content-area classes (Kosanovich, Reed, and Miller 2010; Nagy and Townsend 2012). At the same time, research shows that teachers can improve students' knowledge and use of appropriate levels of academic vocabulary through explicit instruction combined with extensive exposure in a variety of ways (Kamil, and others 2008; Kosanovich, Reed, and Miller 2010). **Thus, a targeted and purposeful focus on vocabulary in all content areas is crucial.**
  - Dedicate a portion of the regular classroom lesson to explicit vocabulary instruction.
  - Use repeated exposure to new words in multiple oral and written contexts and allow sufficient practice sessions.
  - Give sufficient opportunities to use new vocabulary in a variety of contexts and activities, such as discussion, writing, and extended reading.
  - Provide students with strategies to make them independent vocabulary learners.
  - Provide explicit instruction of the vocabulary needed to understand a specific text or content area by offering student friendly definitions prior to reading, and generating multiple examples and non-examples.

**NOTE:**

1. The Instructional Research Group staff who developed the Teacher Study Group PD in Academic Vocabulary (discussed in this document) also developed the updated EL practice Guide referred to in the ELA/ELD Framework (page 82) and the corresponding Professional Learning Community Facilitator's Guide:  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/english\\_learners\\_pg\\_040114.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/english_learners_pg_040114.pdf)  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL\\_2015105.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL_2015105.pdf)

**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 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.