

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 8th 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 districts by providing a pragmatic, evidence-based professional development program to 8th 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.

LAFS: Language Arts Florida Standards Addressed by the TSG Professional Development Program

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature	
Cluster 2: Craft and Structure	
LAFS.8.RL.2.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text	
Cluster 2: Craft and Structure	
LAFS.8.RI.2.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
Strand: Writing Standards	
Cluster 1: Text Types and Purposes	
LAFS.8.W.1.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
Strand: Language Standards	
Cluster 3: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	
LAFS.8.L.3.4	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. 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.
LAFS.8.L.3.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., <i>bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute</i>).
LAFS.8.L.3.6	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.
Strand: Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6–12	
Cluster 2: Craft and Structure	
LAFS.910.RH.2.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.