

Nuggets of Knowledge

March, 2008

Department of Curriculum, Instruction, & Accountability
Supporting Kern County Districts

Director's Corner

Kathy Caric

"...studies demonstrate that effective schools can make a substantial difference in the achievement of students...the one factor that surfaced as the single most influential component of an effective school is the individual teachers within that school."

The Art and Science of Teaching, Robert Marzano 2007.

In a previous book by Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, *Classroom Instruction that Works (2001)*, Marzano and his colleagues identified three general characteristics of effective teaching:

- Use of effective instructional strategies
- Use of effective classroom management strategies
- Effective classroom instructional design

In that book, they also presented nine strategies that, based on multiple research studies, have a strong effect on increasing student achievement. Among the nine are the instructional strategies of summarizing and **note taking**, homework and **practice**, **nonlinguistic representations**, setting objectives and **providing feedback**, and the use of **questions**, cues and **advance organizers**.

The articles in this month's *Nuggets of Knowledge* describing AVID instructional strategies and effective literacy and English language instruction for EL students discuss the application of note taking, practice, nonlinguistic representations (e.g. graphic organizers), feedback, questions and advance organizers in reading and writing instruction. The research summarized in the ELD Corner reinforces the importance of these strategies in enhancing and accelerating the language and literacy proficiency of English learners. Although the research focused on EL instruction at the elementary level, I think you and your staff will find that the several of the recommendations would be applicable to instruction at middle and high school levels as well. Please feel free to contact Brad Ruff or Marta Escobar for more information on any of these strategies that your teachers might use to enhance their classroom instruction.



Math Adoption

For most of us, the 2007 math adoption process is in its early stages. Teachers or site and district administrators have both the opportunity and the responsibility to select a new math program. It is often a welcome opportunity to shed that which we don't like and choose something new. But it is also quite a responsibility, knowing that these texts and programs will impact students for the next 7 years, propelling us into the year 2014, when all our students are expected to be proficient. The biggest changes in the Mathematics adoption (besides the sheer number of submissions) are the addition of 2 entirely new adopted programs:

- Math Intervention (grades 4-7) - a program intended to be targeted, supplemental instructional minutes for students who are 2 or more grade levels below expected performance
- Algebra Readiness (Grade 8) - a year-long course designed as an alternative for 8th graders who are not yet ready for an Algebra 1 course

Both curriculums are described in detail in Appendix E of the *Framework*. The Math Framework can be found on the CDE website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ma/cf/index.asp>.

In order to assist schools in their endeavor to make the best possible textbook selection, the math subcommittee of CISC (Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee), in conjunction with CMC (California Math Council), developed the Mathematics Adoption Toolkit. Many local schools attended a Toolkit workshop in late November and are now in the process of developing their "district lens" or having their teachers do "standards sampling". Each of these processes helps a school to identify how a particular program will meet the needs of their specific students. The Toolkit is available online at: <http://www.cmc-math.org/> or <http://ccsesa.org/resources/MathToolkitColor.pdf>

To provide educators a closer look at the textbooks, the Kern County Superintendent of Schools hosted a Publisher Fair for all of the State-adopted programs in February 2008. All adopted materials are now available for review in the LRDC (Learning Resource Display Center).

The State is currently reviewing submitted programs for SB472 Math Professional Development Institutes. SB472 trainings will be available for all grade level and Algebra Readiness courses; KCSOS will keep you updated as trainings are developed and scheduled.

For further assistance with the mathematics adoption or for access to this textbook display area, please contact:

Kathy Hill at 661-636-4640 or kahill@kern.org.

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (*Classroom Instruction that Works*, 2001) conclude from their research that summarizing and note-taking are skills that all students must master in order to be successful at the next level of their education. The authors further contend that teachers must teach students to annotate texts and generate substantive notes from their marginalia. The notes can then be used to produce concise summaries of reading material, from textbooks to novels to periodicals.

Doug Biehl (*Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*, 2001) states that student learning and long-term retention of materials and concepts improve when teachers implement effective classroom strategies that promote interactive learning. Biehl mentions that students must interact with each other and with the texts and materials presented in class. A few of the interactive strategies the author suggests are:

- ◇ vocabulary/concept mapping
- ◇ interactive reading guides
- ◇ KWL charts
- ◇ learning logs
- ◇ inquiry charts
- ◇ jigsaw reading activities
- ◇ graphic organizers of all types

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) texts and manuals advocate effective note-taking strategies, reading and summarizing techniques, and interactive instruction for all AVID students. Cornell notes are the rule in every AVID elective class, and reading and writing strategies that lead students to successful interaction with texts and materials are key tools in any AVID teacher's cognitive toolkit. The writing and reading texts published by AVID Press, *High School Writing* (Mullen and Boldway, 2006) and *Middle Level Writing with Integrated Reading and Oral Language* (Campbell, 2007), have integrated many time-tested strategies and activities into effective teachers' guides and classroom texts that afford students highly effective reading and writing instruction.

For more information about AVID, contact Brad Ruff at 661-636-4546 or brruff@kern.org.



Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publishes practice guides in education to bring the best available evidence and expertise toward producing systematic change (*Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide*, 2007; <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee>). This particular practice guide focuses on improving literacy for English learners by formulating five specific and coherent evidence-based recommendations for educators. In this issue we will look at the first two recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Screen for reading problems and monitor progress

Current research indicates early reading measures administered in English can be used to screen English learners for potential early reading problems. Why is this important? The common practice has been to wait until English learners have achieved a reasonable level of oral English proficiency prior to administering beginning reading assessments.

What should be assessed? It is important to assess phonological processing, alphabet knowledge, phonics, and word reading skills.

When should the students be assessed? The research indicates assessing English learners at the middle/end of kindergarten or at the beginning of first grade results in accurately predicting future reading performance in all areas: word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension.

The primary purpose of formative assessment data is to identify at risk students and increase the intensity of reading instruction systematically. By providing intensive early reading instruction for English learners with additional time on English letter names and letter sounds, phonological awareness and reading fluency. This will assist in the challenge of learning a new language and learning to read in that language simultaneously.

Recommendation 2: Provide intensive small-group reading interventions

The major instructional principles are:

- Multiple opportunities for students to respond to questions
- Multiple opportunities for students to practice reading both words and sentences, either in a small group or with a peer
- Clear feedback from the teacher when students make errors
- Explicit instruction in all areas of reading, including explicit comprehension instruction and explicit vocabulary instruction
- Sufficient coverage of five areas- phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension- should be a key criterion in selecting an intervention program for use in the school district.

The studies indicated the need for extensive training of teachers and interventionists. One key item mentioned was for teachers to be trained to teach these programs at an appropriate pace.

Contact Marta Escobar for more information at 661-636-4730 or maescobar@kern.org.

For more information or to suggest
topics for future newsletters, contact
Kathleen White at 636-4635 or
kawhite@kern.org.