

Nuggets of Knowledge

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

Director's Corner

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As the end of the first quarter of instruction approaches, hopefully you can take a deep breath and reflect on what has been accomplished thus far in the 2008-09 school year. You can also take some time to review this issue of *Nuggets of Knowledge*, looking for information and ideas that will assist you and your staff in your efforts to ensure that all students are learning and to accelerate student achievement. Please let us know if there are particular topics of interest you would like to learn more about in future issues of this newsletter. Our goal is to provide you with timely, practical information on research validated instructional practices to support the continuous improvement efforts in your district.

Collaboration a Key to AVID Student Success



Student progress in the many areas of academic achievement has been measured over the years using a multitude of educational measuring sticks. Researchers and statisticians agree that no single teaching/learning strategy alone can account for a student's improvement in reading, writing, critical thinking, or success in reaching the next level of achievement. However, when we analyze trends in data gleaned from longitudinal studies and couple them with solid research conducted by reputable experts in the field, we can make some fairly accurate assumptions.

A fairly accurate assumption we can make in the AVID world is that the four planks of the AVID platform, **Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading (WICR)**, have led to a great deal of success for AVID students across the board. Collaboration in the form of Socratic seminars, regular tutorial sessions, and teambuilding activities, becomes the catalyst for much of the success that AVID students have achieved over the past three decades. Robert Marzano's research (Marzano, et al, 2001) shows that collaboration/cooperative learning yields an effect size of .73, making it the sixth most important instructional strategy that affects student growth.

Data gleaned from AVID Center's database (<http://reports.avidcenter.org>) fully support the assumption that the "C" in WICR plays a very important role in student success and achievement. Below are statistics reported by all high school AVID classes in California, Kern County, and the Kern High School District over the course of three school years. The data reflect that when the number of tutor hours per week increased, so did graduation rates and completion of college entrance requirements among AVID seniors.

	Number of Tutorial Hours			Seniors Completing College Entrance Requirements			Percent of Seniors Graduating in Pervious Year		
	CA	Kern	KHSD	CA	Kern	KHSD	CA	Kern	KHSD
2005-2006	20,273	283	125	86%	87%	86%	99.1%	100%	100%
2006-2007	21,993	267	179	87%	86%	87%	99.5%	100%	100%
2007-2008	25,541	437	287	88%	93%	92%	99.5%	100%	100%

Note: 1 Tutor Hour = 1 peer/college tutor working 1 hour / class period during the course of a typical school week.
(e.g., 1 tutor working in two classes twice during the week = 4 Tutor Hours)

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

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RtI) refers to the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention to meet the needs of struggling and at-risk learners through the implementation of a multi-tiered intervention model that is guided by student outcome data. RtI is based on several core principals including the perception that all children can effectively learn through the use of research-based, scientifically validated instruction and intervention. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) and the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) published an article entitled "NASDSE and CASE White Paper on RtI" (www.nasdse.org) that lists the three key components of RtI:

- High-quality instruction/intervention has been demonstrated to produce high learning rates for most students.
- Learning rate and level of performance are used in ongoing decision-making.
- Educational decisions are based upon individual student response across multiple tiers of intervention.

KCSOS is providing Response to Intervention workshop opportunities. Contact Julie Graves for more information at 661-636-4440 or jugraves@kern.org.

On the Road to V.E.G.A.S.: Increasing Student Achievement

The Curriculum, Instruction, and Accountability department is organizing a series of visits to exemplary schools, also known as the "Road trip to V.E.G.A.S." (**V**isiting **E**xemplary **G**ap-closing **A**chieving **S**chools). Visits have been scheduled for elementary, middle and high school visits for the 08-09 school year. The purpose of these visits is to gather first-hand information on the research based best practices these schools are implementing to improve student achievement for all students.

Educational researchers use a wide variety of techniques to collect data to identify best instructional practices. Observation data can often be the most eye opening. Mike Schmoker (*Results Now*, 2006, ASCD) advocates the practice of touring other classrooms with a clear focus on identifying the general quality and substance of instruction as well as the attentiveness of the students. Classroom observations can highlight exceptional practices used by many teachers that can be replicated by others to improve student performance in other classrooms as well as other schools.

Plan to join the CIA staff on one or more of the Road Trips to VEGAS to see first-hand how some schools are successfully accelerating the increase in student achievement for all students. Contact Danny Whetton for more information at 661-636-4240 or dawhetton@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>). In this issue we will focus on Recommendation 3:

Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction

- Adopt an evidence – based approach to vocabulary instruction.
- Develop district wide lists of essential words for vocabulary instruction. (Using core materials)
- Emphasize the acquisition of meanings of everyday words that native speakers know and are not necessarily part of the academic curriculum in vocabulary instruction for English learners

How would this look in the classroom?

- ◇ Researchers have suggested that an effective vocabulary program would include multiple exposures to target words over several days and across reading, writing, and speaking domains. English learners would be exposed to rich intensive vocabulary instruction that emphasizes "student friendly" definitions. English learners would be engaged in reading, writing, speaking and listening with regular review, with the goal of actually using these new words in their communication.
- ◇ The authors' suggest that adopting a district-wide core vocabulary list for English learners will help focus instruction on valuable words and reduce unnecessary duplication. Words for instruction should be selected carefully and explicitly taught with multiple exposures over time.
- ◇ Textbook publishers commonly assume that students know all simple words and therefore English learners may have gaps in vocabulary and comprehension. ELs would benefit from teachers intentionally providing instruction with words that may be unfamiliar to English learners. Teachers can teach many words as they arise in the context of classroom instruction, drawing attention to potentially confusing word and phrases.

The studies indicate a need for concerted professional development and coaching to ensure that all teachers learn to provide effective vocabulary instruction to English learners.

Additional resource: Beck, Isabel, McKeown, Margaret and Kucan, Linda. *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2002

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.