

VESTED™ INVESTMENTS

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KOLAK GROUP INC.

It's Not Necessarily About Talent: Performance Improves through Deliberate Practice

Geoff Colvin, author of *Talent is Overrated*, challenges conventional wisdom when it comes to answering an age-old question, "What do great performers and achievers have that the rest of us lack?" His answer suggests that talent isn't necessarily that special something that they possess. In fact, Colvin argues that research data simply do not support the belief that talent leads to success. So, what does?

Colvin proposes that the secret behind high levels of performance and achievement lies in what he calls engagement in "deliberate practice."

This notion of practice is not to be confused with traditional definitions. Nor should it fall under the same mantras such as "practice makes perfect." Colvin is very specific about the description and nature of this highly focused form of practice.

First, deliberate practice is designed to ensure that individuals work just outside of their comfort-zones with the intent to improve

specific aspects of a task. For example, golfers may work on a specific type of putting needed for rare occasions. Teachers might focus on specific teaching behaviors such as maintaining a four to one ratio between positive and negative comments to students in the classroom.

Second, deliberate practice is grounded in a great deal of repetition. Repeated activities chosen are those that fall just outside of an individual's capabilities as opposed to those that the individual already does well. Further, the practice sessions are intense and draining. Colvin stresses that deliberate practice is hard, mentally demanding and simply said, not fun. Top performers are willing to do those things that others would rather not do.

Third, deliberate practice requires continuous feedback. It's one thing to commit to excellence and to engage in purposeful practice. It's another to know if your best is really your best. This can only be determined

through the assistance of a mentor, a coach, or a critical friend.

Colvin identifies individuals such as Tiger Woods, Steven Ballmer of Microsoft, and Chris Rock among others as those who regularly engage in deliberate practice. They constantly work to push themselves and improve their performance. Although considered among the "greats" of their specializations, they still engage in the never-ending process of refining specific skills repetitively over time, no matter how often or rarely used. With outside help, they identify specific personal constraints and limitations and work to overcome them.

Today we ask you to reflect on the nature of your practice. Literature in education focuses on the importance of being reflective practitioners; but what about a focus on being deliberate practitioners as defined by Colvin? What would this do to the educational landscape?

Inside this issue:

Cloze Procedure..	2
Word Meaning Expansions	2
Conference Presentations	3
We Want Your Ideas and Stories	3
Special Shout Outs	3
Point to Ponder	4

Special points of interest:

- Are you a deliberate practitioner?
- Improve student vocabulary with cloze procedure and word meaning expansions.
- What happens when inclusion becomes something other than what it was meant to be?

Vocabulary Development: Cloze Procedure



Cloze Procedure



The Rock Cycle is a group of changes. Igneous rock can change into sedimentary rock or into metamorphic rock. Sedimentary rock can change into metamorphic rock or into igneous rock. Metamorphic rock can change into igneous or sedimentary rock. Igneous rock forms when magma cools and makes crystals. Magma is a hot liquid of melted minerals. The magma can form crystals when it cools. Igneous rock can form underground, where the magma cools slowly. Or, igneous rock can form above ground, where magma cools quickly. When magma pours out on Earth's surface, magma is called lava. The same liquid rock that you see coming out of volcanoes.

Word Bank (optional)

surface they change yes cools magma out
matter form minerals igneous magma can the
it into rock made

have been removed and replaced with blanks. Students are expected to fill-in the blanks with the appropriate words. For added support, the teacher may include a word bank. This method of assessment is used in the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). Further it can provide insights into student readability levels in the content areas. See Chamot and O'Malley's *CALLA Handbook* for more information on this strategy.

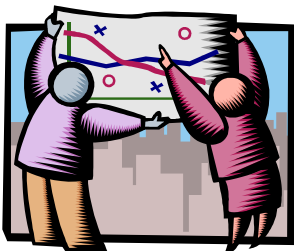
Cloze procedure involves the selection or development of a reading passage in which key words

Vocabulary Development: Multiple-Meaning Words



Strategies for Success: Word Meaning Expansions

Bar



Who uses the word?	What do they mean?	Picture
Gymnast	rail you can grip	
Attorney	test/exam	
Educator	goal/standard	
Men's Softball Team	place that serves drinks	
Person in shower	a block	
Musician	where notes are found	
Police Officer	to keep people from going somewhere	

(Cardenas-Kolak and Kolak, 2008)

This adapted strategy from "Words Across Contexts" enables students to investigate the varied meanings of multiple-meaning words. These words may appear to be harmless on the surface

but can wreck havoc on students new to English. Further, many students may not be aware that simple words like *bar* can be used in a variety of contexts and settings with dramatically different

meanings. Students identify those who might use the words, record intended meanings, and provide picture representations of the meanings for support.

Kolak Group to Present Video Review Techniques at the TSDC Conference, Discuss the Texas ELPS at PASA and Share VESTED™ At the 2009 NABE Conference

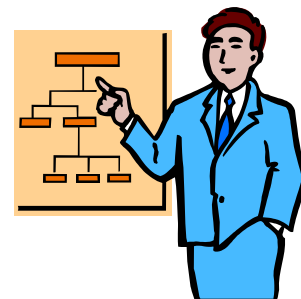
Kolak Group will be presenting a session entitled "Let's Give'em Something to Talk About" at the Texas Staff Development Council (TSDC) Conference in Houston, Texas, January 20, 2009. The session will feature guidelines for conducting video reviews with teachers and their students. It will also allow participants to engage in a group recall session.

Further, Kolak Group will be participating in two panel discussions, one for teachers and one for ad-

ministrators, at the 2009 Promoting Accountability and Student Achievement (PASA) Conference in Austin, Texas in January. We will discuss the launch of an administrative web portal in support of implementing the Texas ELPS. The web portal will feature four training modules that we wrote and developed for the Texas Education Agency in collaboration with Region 2 ESC.

Kolak Group will also be presenting "Conveying Academic Content for

Secondary English Language Learners" at the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) Conference in Austin, Texas in February. This session will be a repeat of the session conducted at TexTESOL this year, but will feature a different sample lesson on the major battles of the American Revolution.



We Want Your Stories and Ideas!

Kolak Group would like to share your tales out there on the front lines! It is through the sharing of our challenges and successes that the rest of us can benefit. We hope our newsletter can work to keep all in touch with one another as we all work to provide the best instruc-

tion for all students.

As we have opportunities to observe you and visit with you, we will be looking for great successes and ideas to share with others through this publication. So, if you do not toot your own horn, we will do it for you!



Special Shout Out for Amber Shumacher of Cy-Fair ISD!

We would like to extend a special shout out to Amber Shumacher of Cypress-Springs High School in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. We had the privilege of sitting in on her review session in preparation for an exam on photosynthesis in her sheltered science class.

Rather than facing a re-

view consisting of a hand-out and lots of time fumbling through their notes and science textbook, the students were engaged in a highly visual and spatial review of all of the key points and vocabulary that the students needed to know. Through healthy instructional conversation, fueled with simplistic language that extended into

more academic forms, Ms. Shumacher facilitated her students' understanding into more conventional representations for the level of content that the students faced.

Way to keep expectations high without watering-down the bottom line!



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Learning Inside a Kaleidoscope
KOLAK GROUP

It's important to note that the VESTED™ Instructional Approach was born out of the need to provide teachers with specific guidelines for conveying and delivering content area instruction to English language learners, especially at the high school level. After careful consideration and lengthy discussions with experts in the field, Kolak Group Inc. expanded the approach to address the needs of all students —ELLs, GT, Special Ed., mainstream— since VESTED™ works to provide both inclusion and accessibility to curriculum goals for all. Kolak Group Inc. is currently collaborating with districts to continue to expand and refine the theoretical underpinnings of this instructional approach with continued quantitative and qualitative research efforts.

We are on the web!
kolakgroup.com

Point to Ponder: Inclusion to the point of Exclusion?



The VESTED™ Instructional Approach aims to provide inclusion and accessibility to core content area knowledge and skills for all students. But, what happens when one group of students dominates the classroom? We've seen it before.

Cindy had to face the proposition of being part of a team of teachers that would cater to the needs of English language learners (ELLs) in mainstream classrooms. In this way, the other

teams would not have a predominance of ELLs in their classes. The idea was eventually scrapped due to the realization that all teachers should be implementing best practices, thus enabling the ELLs to be placed in any classroom. Addressing the requirements of ELLs needed to be the responsibility of all teachers as a shared endeavor, as all worked to refine their teaching skills and repertoire.

Michael taught in a situation where all of the students with special needs were placed in the same class along with other students who struggled. The lack of a broader diversity in the classroom made it easy to keep expectations low and to get bogged down in the details of too many IEPs and behavioral manage-

ment plans. Inclusion quickly became elusive as the lack of full integration with other students was clearly a not-so-hidden form of exclusion.

There are no easy answers. One thing is for certain. The school climate must be one of professional cooperation and collaboration where teams of teachers work together to find solutions to the challenges they face. All must work to be both reflective and deliberate practitioners who constantly strive for continual improvement as they share the responsibility of teaching all, no matter what the circumstances and no matter who sits in their classrooms. It is on this very premise that the VESTED™ Instructional Approach was developed.