

VESTED™ INVESTMENTS

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KOLAK GROUP INC.

Quality Counts 2009 Report Focuses on English-Language Learners

America's 5.1 million English language learners struggle to make the grade in schools across the country according to *Education Week's* "Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population." Even more unsettling are the statistics that were published in the report.

Only three states in the nation require prospective teachers to show they have the background and competence to teach English language learners. These states are Arizona, Florida, and New York. Further, only 10 states offer incentives for the teachers to earn an ESL license or endorsement. Texas is not one of them.

Seven states, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Wisconsin, ban or limit the use of native-language instruction as an appropriate intervention.

Although educators usually tell math teachers that their subject is easier for ELLs to learn due to the hands-on use of manipulatives, the 2007 National Assess-

ment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores reveal the greatest gaps in student achievement between native-speakers and non-native speakers of English exist in math across the nation. Only Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, and Virginia show greater gaps in reading as opposed to math. Texas data reveals a 25 point gap in math and a 23.3 point gap in reading.

When it comes to funding programs for ELLs, only eight states reserve funds to be used for ELLs only. Texas is among them. Still Texas was rated with a D+ for school finance in general when compared to other states. The report went on to quote Michael Griffith, a senior school finance analyst with Education Commission of the states based in Denver. He said that cost-benefit analyses are extremely difficult to do. This is largely because school districts are not asked to account for what they spend on students of any subgroup including ELLs.

According to the report's Chance

-for-Success Index, Texas earned a C. The report also indicated that Texas has a 68.5% graduation rate for public high school students.

In general, content-based ESL programs are the most popular across the nation with ESL-pullout following closely behind. In fact, of the 48 states reporting, all but two support English-only programs. Only 15 states have districts that provide developmental bilingual programs. Twenty-three support two-way immersion.

Overall, states vary widely when it comes to answering the question: Are ELLs making progress toward language proficiency in English? While some states report less than 2% of their ELLs are not making adequate gains, other states report percentages higher than 40 who are not making gains.

In terms of rating the state of the nation's progress when it comes to serving ELLs, overall, the U.S. was rated a C.

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Special points of interest:

- A special poem from Porter High School
- Using the QAR strategy to help students respond to questions on exams
- TOAST Strategy for vocabulary development
- Can a national set of tests raise the achievement of students in math?

InVest in Me by Adriana Villarreal, Porter High School, Brownsville ISD

After completing a VESTED™ Institute with her Porter High School colleagues, Adriana Villarreal wrote the following poem about the VESTED™ Instructional Approach. We are glad that she agreed to let us share it with the rest of you.

InVest in Me

All eyes can create to
recognize and understand

The globe is a stage to
perform an awesome
band

Imagine a life with an

open mind

Share your ideas freely
and be kind

Speak your mind and be
constantly clear

Communicate your
thoughts with a precious
peer

Transform and spread
your wings and fly

For before you know it, it
was worth a try

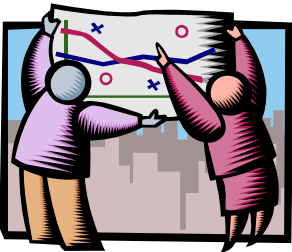
Extend, climb, and reach
your abilities to the high-
est peak

Remember challenges

are not just for nerds and
geeks

You deliver what you mas-
ter in your mind

For knowledge is invested
and always kind



Spotlight Strategy Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR)

In an effort to teach students how to ask and analyze their own questions, it is important to teach them about the various relationships between questions and answers. Research conducted by Rafael (1982, 1984) shows that students who understand these relationships, outperform those students who do not in reading comprehension.

Introduce and model each of the question-answer relationships while reading a piece of text. Teach the students that answers to questions can be generated by considering at least one of four ways to look for the needed information they need in order to respond appropriately.

The four ways consist of looking for information in the text (write there);

thinking and searching; considering what is understood between the author and themselves; and considering their own experiences, perspectives, and ideas (on my own).

•Right There: Demonstrate that in this QAR, the answers to the questions can be found directly in the text itself.

•Think and Search: Demonstrate that in this QAR, the answers to the questions are usually in the text, but must be synthesized by combining pieces of information provided throughout the text.

Author and You: Demonstrate that in this QAR, the answers to the questions are not in the text.

Finding the answer requires the careful consideration of what the reader already knows, what in-

formation the author provides, and how these two work together.

•On My Own: Demonstrate that in this QAR, the answers are not in the text. Chances are, you can answer the question without reading the text, because the question requires you to use your own experiences and prior knowledge to answer the question.

By considering these relationships between questions and answers, students can better approach the process of matching an appropriate response to question types that they may encounter in academic settings.

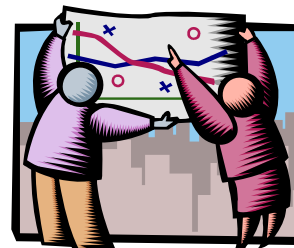
Spotlight Vocabulary Strategy: TOAST

TOAST (Dana and Rodriguez) is an acronym for test, organize, anchor, say and test. It is a strategy to assist students with independent vocabulary development. Each step of the strategy is outlined below.

1. Test. Students should pretest themselves on the new vocabulary introduced to them in class.
2. Organize. The students should organize or categorize the words somehow in a way that will facilitate their own recollection of the words and their respective meanings.
3. Anchor. Another strategy should be employed for the students to move
- the word into their long term memory such as practicing with a partner, listening to a tape recording of the words and definitions, using timed trials to remember the words, or examining the morphemes present in each word.
4. Say. This step encourages the consistent practice and review of the new words. Vocabulary that has been forgotten should be relearned at the anchoring stage of the strategy.
5. Test. Students should conduct posttests to see how they are coming along with their vocabu-

lary development. They might even want to use the same sort of strategy that they used for their pretest.

Students at the advanced and advanced high levels of language proficiency in English should use this strategy with native-speaking counterparts as a means to broaden their academic vocabulary.



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 instruction for all students.

As we have opportunities to observe you and visit with you, we will be look-

ing 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!



Where are the Kolaks?

Kolak Group Inc. is currently managing several projects all at once in the shadow of personal illness and family members undergoing critical surgeries in January. Not only are the Kolaks planning for two summer institutes, but have decided to participate in the TEA Proclamation 2010 and 2011. This involves writing textbooks to implement the ELPS in high school for 2010 and K-8 in 2011. These textbooks will not be of the traditional kind.

They will be on-line staff development courses aimed at helping teachers implement the ELPS in the content areas. We hope to make the state textbook adoption list in 2010 and 11!

The Kolaks are also coding observational data from schools participating in VESTED™ research efforts and running statistical data through a third party to elevate reliability and validity of results. Formal reports will be

provided to all participating teachers for their review and input for final reporting to district research and evaluation departments.

Further, VESTED™ has been picked up as a state approved option for the Texas High School Redesign and Restructuring Project.

We hope to get back into classrooms as soon as possible to follow-up 2008-2009 research

efforts, especially with video review sessions.

All projects work to keep the Kolaks viable during the economic difficulties that districts are experiencing throughout the nation. We are always looking for innovative ways to improve the teaching-learning connection while expanding our research and influence in an effort to positively impact the schooling of all students.

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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: Could National Assessments in Mathematics Raise Student Achievement?

Steven Leinwand, a principal research analyst at the American Institute for Research in Washington suggests that “establishing a set of high-stakes, high-quality, annually released national assessments [in mathematics] will drive improvement, reduce the current hodgepodge of state assessments, and move the United States toward a rational alignment between what is taught and what is tested” in an article from *Education Week* (January 7, 2009, p.32).

He believes that this would in part enable textbooks to be rewritten to ensure depth without redundancy while balancing procedural and conceptual under-

standing of mathematics.

States could still employ their own favored curriculum and maintain “local control.” The assessments would create a climate that could encourage the development of much needed national mathematic standards for grades K-12.

In this way, students could be held accountable for understanding concepts, communicating their thinking, and working to solve problems as opposed to being tested with instruments that measure lower-level skills and employ multiple choice options.

In Texas, many teachers receive state supported training and are

provided with tools to help students do these higher order tasks for which Leinwand believes students should be held accountable.

The question is, “Could national tests based on a set of national mathematics standards improve student achievement?”

From a Texas perspective, “Have the state assessments in mathematics, which are based on state standards, improved the achievement of Texas students?”