

# VESTED™ INVESTMENTS

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KOLAK GROUP INC.

## Managing Differentiation with Layered Curriculum®

Author Kathie Nunley offers a method to build and reinforce student motivation through a differentiated instructional framework called Layered Curriculum®. Her philosophy is grounded in the benefits of offering students choices with regards to their learning. She uses the latest research on brain-based learning to support her theory that choice makes a major difference in the achievement of students.

Layered Curriculum® is organized into three tiers of student tasks: C, B, and A. All tasks are assigned point values, and then score totals are posted to determine which scores will yield an A in the class vs. a B or a C.

Activities in the C layer/tier are basic tasks designed for all students. Usually tasks such as participating in a class lecture is in this layer for a total of anywhere between 5-15 points. Other tasks designed for this layer have similar point values. Once students complete the minimum requirements, they can choose to go onto tasks in the B

layer to earn higher grades. The level that offers students to make an A is the A layer.

The beauty of the approach is that students choose what they do. Consequently, engagement can look markedly different between a class under the influence of Layered Curriculum® versus other formats. For example, in a standard classroom, it is not unusual to see students off task, sleeping, texting, or talking during a teacher-led lecture. In a Layered Curriculum® class lecture, all students are engaged. All students are listening. All students are taking notes without the snoring. Why? Nunley suggests that student respond positively when it is their choice to engage in certain activities. No longer does a teacher need to fuss with a student that comes to class without a book or their binder for their notes. They can opt to do something else during the lecture for points. Because listening to the lecture and taking notes is relatively easy for most students, most of the students usually opt for this task anyway— just with a better attitude

about it—due in large part to choice.

Teachers interest in Layered Curriculum® can get started by going to Nunley's website where several teachers have volunteered to have their curriculum posted. The postings include layered tasks for all grade levels and content areas.

The web address is [www.Help4teachers.com](http://www.Help4teachers.com).

Layered Curriculum® is best employed in the last three stages of VESTED™.



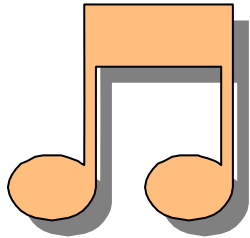
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### Special points of interest:

- A special song from Porter High School
- Using the SWAT strategy to help students think critically
- Ms. Traya and Mr. Burns try hard and turn up the heat in their science classrooms
- Should students be required to take Algebra 1 by a certain grade level?

### VESTED™ in “Staying Alive” Parody, by Luis Antonio Quintanilla, Porter High School, Brownsville ISD



After completing a second VESTED™ Institute with Porter High School colleagues, Luis Antonio Quintanilla wrote the following song set to the melody of *Staying Alive* by the Bee Gee's about the VESTED™ Instructional Approach. Everybody did their best strut as Antonio took the stage and rocked the house! With his permission, we pass it on to you all to enjoy!

Well you can see how not all students learn the same we must diversify.

We can use all kinds of things to teach with different strategies.

But now all we have to do

Is use something that's been tried and true.

And VESTED™ is a key to teach

with all the different strategies.

V-E-S-T-E-D VESTED™ is our strategy!

V-E-S-T-E-D VESTED™ is our strategy!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

VESTED™ is our strategy!

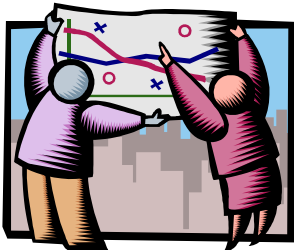
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Staying with VE—STED

Ooo!



## Spotlight Strategy SWAT Analysis



SWAT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Advantages, Threats) Analysis: Have the students work in groups of 3 (4 if needed) to work together to complete a SWAT Analysis Chart on a rotating basis. One person draws the chart. Another adds an element. The third adds another element. The first person continues by adding an item to the chart, and then the second...the third and so on. For example, after participating in a learning experience with water evaporation in science class, the students can identify the strengths, weaknesses, advantages, and threats about water evaporation in a four column chart. The students might include comments such as:

Strengths: Makes clouds, Creates steam in a sauna, Can collect and rain down again

Weaknesses: Must have heat, Difficult to store

Advantages: Makes the body feel cool when you sweat, Steam can help things move like a train or boat: can be used as a source of power, can do work

Threats: Too much can cause drought, Steam burns hurt human skin

## Special Institute Set to Advance the Achievement of Beginning and Intermediate ELLs in the Content Areas

Make a date with us in San Antonio, Texas this summer. Kolak Group will be hosting and presenting a two-day institute called *Advancing Beginning and Intermediate ELLs in the Content Areas*.

The institute will be held at the Radisson Market Square, July 30-31, 2009. Seating is limited.

The institute will help teachers learn specific, practical, and easily adaptable strategies to accommodate and advance the English language proficiency of ELLs

in the content area.

Teachers can expect to walk away knowing how to:

- Accelerate the ESL literacy process;

- Implement the ELPS commensurate with the needs of beginning and intermediate students;

- Use Accelerated Learning methods to boost instruction and enhance the instructional environment;

- Integrate technology to support content and language objectives;

- Design instructional experiences from which ELLs may derive meaning with a focus on content concepts;

- Support ELLs in the writing process;

- Use ESL methodologies to increase understanding and recall for all students;

- Address the social and emotional needs of ELLs with culturally responsive techniques; and

- Use assessment data to anticipate and plan for student needs.



## 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!



## Special Shout Outs for Ms. Traya and Mr. Burns of Galena Park ISD

A special shout out goes to Ms. Traya of Cobb Sixth-Grade Campus for her provision of strong visual support for her unique classroom setting among other things.

Michael observed Ms. Traya's inclusion classroom and came back excited about her rapport and command of the lesson delivery process. "Students can't help but learn in that classroom!" Michael chimed. "Her pacing really helped to

keep the students engaged. She has a nice touch. Ms. Traya certainly has shown much effort to integrate the principles of VESTED™ into her instructional delivery."

I also had the opportunity to observe Mr. Burns class at Cobb Sixth-Grade Campus. He had been able to get through the first four stages of VESTED™ within the first thirty minutes of class.

Prior to the observation,

he greeted me at the door and said, "Oh, yeah, I'm doing some VESTED™ today!" And boy did he!

Mr. Burns employed the Frayer Model with his sheltered science class and scaffolded them throughout. Students did not have a choice other than to be successful.

Mr. Burns also employed drawings to make the content more comprehensible for his students as well. Bravo!



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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.



## Point to Ponder: Should All Students Take Algebra 1 by 9th Grade?

According to an article in *Education Week* (March 11, 2009), over 160,000 students were included in a study that looked at Algebra failure rates in Chicago schools.

The findings were discouraging. Since 1997, Chicago has had a policy in place, requiring all students to take Algebra 1 in the ninth grade. But a new study suggests that the policy has led to increased failure rates.

Data also reflect that there have been no sizeable gains in test scores or increased percentages of students who went onto take higher-level courses in math later on in the upper grade levels.

What surprised researchers was

the fact that the student sub-group that appeared to have the highest failure rate were those students who were labeled "average." The failure rate was increase by 8.7%.

Little or no change was found among students who were determined to be above average. Researchers explained that those who passed algebra were the ones who would have taken it anyway, without the policy.

Students at the bottom quartile had an increased failure rate of 3%, less than the next quartile up at 3.5%.

Researchers suggest that perhaps the lower quartile appear to have a lower increase in failure

rate, because the failure rate in that sub-group was already high in the past.

The question remains. Is it a good idea to require students to take Algebra 1 by a certain grade level? California has already established a policy aimed at having all students take Algebra 1 by the 8th grade, but findings indicate that students are having a hard time passing math in the 6th and 7th grade to begin with.

Researchers argue that the sooner students begin to explore Algebraic thinking, the better. What do you think?