

An Examination of the Benefits of Disciplinary Classroom Support of Word Study, Vocabulary and Comprehension for Adolescent Students

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Abstract : The goal of this project is to create the conditions wherein every teacher, especially subject area experts, sees themselves as a teacher of language and vocabulary. Assessment and observational data suggest that students are not getting the support they need in vocabulary and reading comprehension, and secondary teachers do not currently have the confidence or expertise to provide this support. This study seeks to examine the impact of 10-20 minutes of daily, targeted instruction around orthography and vocabulary on student competence with the navigation of complex vocabulary and comprehension of subject-specific concepts and texts. The first phase of the pilot included 6 participating classroom teachers of grades 9 and 10 English (95 students in total) who administered an initial reading comprehension assessment. The results of this assessment indicated that the vast majority of students were reading below grade level. Teachers were then provided with a slide deck of complete lessons on orthography, vocabulary (etymology, roots and affixes) and reading comprehension strategies. For five weeks, teachers delivered lessons with their students, implementing the recommended evidence-based teaching strategies. Students and teachers completed surveys to provide feedback on the value and impact of the method. The results confirmed that this was new learning for the students and that the teaching strategies improved engagement. The lessons succeeded in providing equitable access to challenge by simultaneously offering theoretical learning to proficient readers, and exposure and practice to weaker readers. A second reading comprehension was administered after 5 weeks of daily instruction. Average scores increased by 41%, and almost every student experienced progress. The first phase was not long enough to measure the impact of the method on vocabulary acquisition or reading comprehension of subject-specific texts, however. The project will use the results of the first phase to design the second phase, and new teaching and learning strategies will be added. The goals of the second phases are to increase motivation, and to grow the daily practice beyond English class and into science and / or math. This team will continue to document a continuation of the daily lessons, Commented [E1]: Please do not use rhetorical questions in the abstract. measure the impact of the strategies, and address questions about the correlation between daily practice and improvements in the skills students need for vocabulary acquisition and disciplinary reading comprehension.

Keywords : adolescent, comprehension, orthography, reading, vocabulary, etymology, word study, disciplinary, teaching strategies

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