

E-Newsletter

Administrator Edition, First Six Weeks, 2009

Question-Signal-Stem-Share

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Question-Signal-Stem-Share is a strategy that helps to actively engage all students in thinking and allows teachers opportunities to listen for student understanding, misconceptions, and use of academic vocabulary. It is simple to implement and stimulates discussion.

Q

Pose a **question** to students. This question should be a thought provoking question that requires more than a one word answer. Write the question on the board or on a PowerPoint slide so that students can read the question and refer back to it while they are thinking. Sources for questions might include released TAKS items, TEKS, textbooks, curriculum documents and /or CSCOPE Guiding Questions found in the Exemplar Lessons.

S

Give students a **signal** that indicates they have thought about the question and are ready to share. For example, say, "When you can answer the following question, please stand up." Signals might also include raise/lower hands, sit down, pencils up/down, hand on chin, tap nose. Signals provide for wait time for all students. They allow ELL students time to translate information, if necessary, think, and formulate their answers. The result is higher level answers and students with more confidence in their answers. Wait time can also be used to allow students to write their responses in their journals.

S

Provide students with sentence **stems** as a framework to jump start their answers. Sentence stems provide grammatically correct models, thus allowing students to grapple with and focus on the content. This increases student confidence. When you expect student responses to be in complete sentences, providing a stem is essential.

Write stems on the board or in a PowerPoint. Provide word walls that include the major vocabulary used in the current topic of study. Prompt students to reference the wall as needed.

S

Students **share** their responses with a partner. In this way, each and every student has an opportunity to verbalize a response. Walk around the room and listen as students talk; check for understanding and listen for misconceptions. After partners have shared, select several students at random to share either their responses or their partners' responses. (This allows for more student confidence and eases stress.)

Based on the work of John Siedlitz

CRITICAL FACTORS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Thoughts on CSCOPE

Dennis Hill, Superintendent of Llano ISD

In every organization, there are a number of factors that are vital to the realization of the success of the mission of that organization. These factors exist and exert a constant force on the organization. These factors may be identified by members of the organization and managed effectively or these factors may go unrealized or ignored by members of the organization. Proper management of these critical factors increases the probability that the organization will remain strong and accomplish its mission and purpose for existence. Failure to identify these critical factors will likely result in organizational ineffectiveness or outright institutional collapse.

Many years of experience in educational administration have given me some insight into the critical factors that impact academic progress in schools. I realize that there are many more forces that impact organizations than I have listed. In fact, the list of all forces acting upon an educational institution might well be almost endless. I have not attempted to identify and discuss all factors that might have some impact on the academic progress of a school; but rather only those factors which, in my experience, have proven critical to the success of the academic institution. The list below appears in no particular order.

Instruction – Instruction is the most obvious of the critical factors affecting academic excellence. Professional educators and laypersons alike can readily agree that effective instructional practices are the cornerstone of academic progress. Staff that are well versed in both the theories of learning and the practical application of those theories increase the probability that all students will learn. Knowing what instructional strategies to employ and when to employ those strategies will play a vital role in assuring that a broader range of students will assimilate a greater amount of material with a more thorough understanding of that material than would otherwise be the case.

Curriculum – Utilization of a guaranteed, viable curriculum is essential to improving student performance. In an era of ever increasing academic accountability, schools must spend considerable time and resources to ensure that they are actually teaching what students are required to know. Curriculum and instruction go hand in hand. Effectively teaching material of questionable worth results in frustration for staff, students, and parents. It also is terribly inefficient to spend time, energy, and money on learning that may ultimately be of little value.

Research has shown that without an aligned curriculum, several variables will predict student performance on standardized state assessments. These factors are: the educational level of the parents; the number of parents living at home; the type of community in which the school is located; and the poverty rate of the students. In effect, failure to provide staff and students with a sound curriculum places the school in the unenviable position of leaving academic performance to factors outside its locus of control. In the current age of academic accountability, this situation is intolerable.

Personnel – Schools are not bricks and mortar. Schools are people. We are in a people business. Therefore, it stands to reason that attracting and retaining quality people who care about students and have the strength of character to place the mission of the organization above their own self interest is paramount if the organization is to excel. Healthy organizations have an effective employment/dismissal process. Organizations become or remain strong by recruiting those who have values that are desirable and dismissing those who cannot or will not meet the standards required of employees.

A “seller’s market” exists in today’s educational environment. Demand for quality educational professionals far exceeds supply. As such, it is increasingly important to frequently review compensation packages and working conditions so as to make them as attractive as possible. Retention of quality employees is a “must” if the organization is to achieve exceptional academic performance.

Resources and Materials – Sufficient resources and materials to support the instructional process must be available to teachers and support staff. Textbooks, instructional technology, and physical plant needs

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State CSCOPE Update August, 2009

It has been an amazing year for CSCOPE, and we are excited about the continued growth of our curriculum management system. Additionally, we now have over 530 districts/charter schools in the state using CSCOPE, and the CSCOPE collaborative has grown from 10 to now 14 supporting education service centers.

We had a very successful 2009 State Summer Conference with over 2,400 teachers and administrators in attendance, and we are pleased to be hosting the 2009 State Leadership Conference this coming November 12-13 at the Westin Galleria Hotel in Houston. What has been really exciting is to watch the interaction and networking opportunities that these events provide to the many school districts and systems using CSCOPE statewide.

For the 2009-2010 school year, there are now several new features to the Developer site that we encourage you to explore and utilize. Specifically, if you go to the Curriculum Elements tab at the top left of the main page, choose CSCOPE Resources, and then select a content area tab, you will notice that the Materials and the Resources links are now separated. In the Materials link, we will place six weeks materials lists for each grade level/subject in the appropriate folder. The Resources link will now include true resources that apply to a specific content area and/or grade level. For example, we now have College and Career Readiness alignment documents for Math and Science located in this area. There will be more resource documents coming in the near future as applicable or necessary.

This is also the year of providing the primary components for the new ELAR and SLA standards. As we mentioned last year, lessons will not be available until 2010-2011; rather, we are providing documents up to the IFD and Assessment level to allow for users to get familiar with the new standards and the new format of the New ELA and SLA IFDs for planning instruction.

At the State Development Team level, we have tried to keep the system as stable as possible- based primarily on district and ESC feedback. Therefore, most of the units and lessons in all content areas will look much like they did in 08-09. We did make enhancements and revisions as necessary, and we will try to provide as much information around what exactly changed as possible through the Resources links. Ultimately, all CSCOPE users are encouraged to check the Developer for the latest versions of any document(s).

I encourage you to check the Unit Status Reports under the "Main" tab of the Developer for the most updated listings of 09-10 lesson and New ELA IFD postings. There will also be a link for revised Assessment postings in this same location. Also, we are in the process of conducting audits of translated units for grades K-5 in Math, Science, and Social Studies and will be uploading those in the near future.

As always, please contact your supporting ESC for additional information regarding support and training. The CSCOPE State Team is in constant communication with member ESCs regarding feedback from our districts and campuses, and we strive to make this curriculum management system as relevant and accommodating as possible for users. Thank you very much for your continued interest and support of CSCOPE.

Wade N. Labay, Ed.D.
Director, State CSCOPE

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must all be met if academic progress is to be maximized. In my judgment, highly motivated instructional staff can achieve more with much less than is currently the accepted norm of thought among mainstream educators. However, there is no doubt that certain essential resources play a key role in academic achievement.

Community Support – Schools are a function of the communities they serve. Generally, the effectiveness of the school will be proportional to the expectations of the community. Some degree of shared vision for the school is vital if the institution is to achieve and maintain academic excellence. Setting realistic attainable goals and holding staff accountable for the realization of those goals is a common characteristic of schools that exhibit uncommon academic performance. The number one predictor of student success in school is the emphasis placed on education in the home. Contrary to popular belief, my experience is that parents exert great influence over their children. If parents frequently communicate high expectations for academic performance to their children, it is likely that those children will reflect that positive attitude in their academic performance at school.

Identification of these factors that are critical to increased academic performance and constant monitoring of the degree to which the organization is proficient in each of those factors is essential if the organization is to achieve excellence. The success of any academic organization will be a function of the level of proficiency in each of these critical areas. Stated another way, the organization will never rise above the level of its weakest point in any particular area.

At Llano I.S.D., we are working diligently to ensure that each of these critical areas is improved and/or maintained to a degree that will enhance the academic performance of all students.

D.

Please join us at the
2009 CSCOPE State Leadership Conference
November 12 and 13, 2009
Westin Galleria Hotel
Houston, Texas

For conference information, visit <http://www5esc13.net/cscope/cscopeconference/index.html>.

To register, visit <http://ecampus.esc13.net> and enter workshop number: FA0916963. The cost is \$200.





Technology Corner: Tools for an Engaging Engage

Integrating new information with prior knowledge is key to comprehension and aides in the metacognitive process. When students participate in activities that activate background knowledge they become authentically engaged and motivated to explore. Furthermore, engaging students to elicit background knowledge allows teachers a unique window into what students already know, and more importantly, where misconceptions might exist. The CSCOPE Instructional Focus Documents (IFDs) each begin with a section that provides insight into commonly held misconceptions and underdeveloped concepts. Teachers can expand this and identify localized misconceptions, which will vary from student to student. Many of these localized misconceptions are the result of students' prior experience with instruction that was not a component of an aligned curriculum and did not include specificity to the TEKS. In short, teachers throughout student academic careers may have inadvertently introduced misconceptions and these must be identified prior to continuing in a lesson.

Considering the importance of engaging learners from the start, it is critical that teachers identify and use tools and strategies that accommodate a wide range of student backgrounds and experiences, while at the same time, continuing to target the concepts and key understandings outlined in the IFD. Fortunately, certain technology tools can be integrated into the "engage" activities that provide for relevant and exciting experiences that transform teaching and learning in ways not otherwise possible. The following table provides columns to explain the high-level roles and responsibilities of students and teachers in the "engage" activities of a 5-E CSCOPE Lesson. On the following page, you will find classroom applications and corresponding resources that suggest strategies and practices teachers can adopt. (For more information about any of these resources and how to get started, visit <http://www5.esc13.net/instructionaltech.>)

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Developing Academic English for English Language Learners using the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)

Imagine that you are a student in the grade level that you teach. You are expected to follow written and oral instructions, interpret words with multiple meanings, learn hundreds to thousands of abstract vocabulary words related to content-area concepts, write essays in response to literature and expository texts, and use comprehension strategies and prior knowledge to interpret what you are reading. Now imagine that you are must accomplish all of these tasks in a language that you don't know very well. Sound exhausting? Welcome to the world of an English language learner. English language learners (ELL) face the daunting task of being responsible for making progress in content area classes while simultaneously learning academic English, an abstract, complex form of English specific to content area subjects. In order to support ELL ability to produce academic English both orally and in writing, teachers should align their instruction with the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).

The ELPS charge educators with integrating second language acquisition techniques with quality content area instruction in order to ensure that ELLs acquire social and academic lan-

guage proficiency in English, learn the knowledge and skills in the TEKS, and reach their full academic potential. The English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) specifically outline the student expectations for using language in the classroom to develop fluency in the areas of learning strategies, listening, speaking, reading and writing. The ELPS also outline the English language proficiency level descriptors that ELLs may exhibit within the language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for the levels of for the levels beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. These proficiency level descriptors show the progression of second language acquisition from one proficiency level to the next and serve as a road map to help content area teachers provide linguistic accommodations to instruct ELLs commensurate with students' linguistic needs.


Using Language Objectives to Develop Academic English

Instruction for English learners must incorporate activities that support students' language devel-

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The Student...	Engage Activities...	The Teacher...
<p>Asks questions. Why did this happen? What do I already know about this? What can I find out about this? How can this problem be solved?</p> <p>Shows interest in topic. Responds to questions demonstrating their own entry point of understanding</p>	<p>Initiate the learning task. The activity should make connections between past and present learning experiences, and anticipate activities and organize students' thinking toward the learning outcomes of current activities.</p> <p>Generate interest Access prior knowledge Connect to past knowledge Set parameters of the focus Frame the idea</p>	<p>Raises questions and problems. Elicits responses that uncover students' current knowledge about the concept/topic. Generates interest. Generates curiosity.</p>
Integrated Technology Strategy	Integrated Technology Strategy	Integrated Technology Strategy
<p>What – Peer Collaborative Discussion – Online Learning Community Why – Students need to participate in two way conversations with both teachers and peers. These discussions, although facilitated, are intended to be structured around open ended questions that require a personal response. Furthermore, each response should inspire feedback and “banter” about the subject. The more each student participates in discussing and defending their contribution, the more background knowledge and misconceptions are revealed. When – It is often difficult or impossible to ensure that every learner has equal opportunity to participate in this level of engaging discussion. Large classes, introverted/reliant learners, and limited time continue to inhibit all-inclusive meaningful class discussions. Structure an online community of learners so that limited, flexible class time is needed to initiate the dialogue, and the conversations can continue anytime-anywhere. How – Fortunately for educators there are many free and easy online resources for building effective collaborative learning communities. Although the purpose of an online community of learners includes much more than discussion, the opportunity for learners to participate in a variety of discussion formats is an extremely important factor. The following tools are examples that represent tools teachers have used with students. It is important to understand the subtle and obvious differences, the pros and cons (such as sign up processes and front-loaded time) and the implications for security and legal concerns.</p> <p>PBWiki Wikispaces Ning-- Google Apps/Docs/Sites Moodle ELGG VoiceThread OfficeLive</p>	<p>What – Pre and Post Learning Maps (Mind Mapping) Why – Activating background knowledge is most valuable when learners can visually represent connections to existing information and new information. One strategy is to have students create graphic organizers such as mind maps. When – Creating dynamic pre and post learning maps should begin before any formal instruction. The idea is to have students use graphics and connecting lines with annotation to scribe everything they know, or believe they know. Teachers might consider having students begin with KWL charts to collect initial thoughts. Consider the pre learning map as a draft that will transform as learning takes place. How – Using the IFD as a guide, the teacher should provide students with the Key Understandings for Learning and the Concepts. Students then make a list, create a Venn diagram, KWL chart, or any form of note taking to record everything they know or believe they know about the information. Teachers review these informally and note any misconceptions that will need attention. Compare these with the ones listed in the IFD.* Students then use any one of the following technology tools to create a draft pre learning map, making connections and comments. As learning occurs, students are given time to return to the saved versions of their graphics and add, remove, adjust, and modify accordingly. Teachers can formatively assess student learning through interaction with students and their learning maps.</p> <p>Inspiration Kidspiration Gliffy CMAP</p>	<p>What – Teacher facilitated blog with comments – problem based Why – When learners are confronted with messy, real-world problems, they must activate multiple problem-solving strategies simultaneously and draw heavily on what they already know. Teachers engage students early in the CSCOPE unit by posing open-ended, problematic situations related to each Exemplar Lesson. When – At the beginning of each Exemplar Lesson, there are Key Understandings and Guiding Questions. Teachers can open each exemplar lesson by crafting a real-world, messy (no clear answer) problem or using the Guiding Questions. How – A major challenge in a classroom setting is allowing for each student to participate and contribute to ongoing problem-solving. Using technology tools such as a blog or wiki, teachers can craft and post the problem statements and questions. Students then access these and comment, dialogue and document as a way of contributing their input. Young elementary aged students should write their responses in a way that is developmentally appropriate. The teacher can then compile these into a class blog and share the class’s collective wisdom. Older students can participate by commenting directly to the prompts in the chosen tool. The result will be a collection of student generated common understandings and comments that can add to the <i>Explore, Explain, Elaborate</i> and <i>Evaluate</i> sections of the lesson. Some recommended tools are:</p> <p>Blogspot PBWiki Wikispaces Google Moodle Ning</p>

Grouping Strategies

 The lesson calls for you to assign the students into groups of 4-5. Now... you have some choices to make. Should you limit the size to 4? Should the students be heterogeneous or homogeneously mixed? Should you assign roles? The root of these questions exists as "What structures do I need to use?" In addition, reflecting on the goal(s) of the group learning experience is important.

Laurie and Spencer have many publications regarding Cooperative Learning. In the **Cooperative Learning Course Workbook** (2000), these goals are listed as "domains." The "domains" include: class building, teambuilding, mastery of content, thinking skills, communication skills, information sharing, and decision making. When you decide on the goals of the group learning experience, you can then plan the "structure" of the group.

Structure, according to Kagan & Kagan, is the "how" of teaching or the directions. Within each particular grouping strategy (examples: Carousel Feedback, Mix Pair Share, Inside-Outside Circle, and Numbered Heads Together), the teacher should consider positive interdependence of students, individual accountability, equal participation, and simultaneous interaction.

In **How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms** (2001), Carol Ann Tomlinson, illustrates a user-friendly chart for teachers as they prepare for any grouping strategy. (See sidebar.)

Cooperative grouping of students is essential to create an effective learning community. One key aspect of creating this environment is for the teacher and students to collaborate for mutual growth and success (Tomlinson, 2001). In addition, cooperative learning should be applied consistently and systematically (Marzano, et al., 2001). As with all instructional strategies, the success of cooperative learning is directly proportionate to the teacher's planning of the structure of the groups.

Sources.

Kagan, Laurie, and Spencer Kagan. Cooperative Learning Course Workbook. San Clemente: Kagan Publishing, 2000.

Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2001.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann. How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2001.

Teacher Checklist for Group Work

- Students understand the task goals.
- Students understand what's expected of individuals to make the group work well.
- The task matches the goals (leads students to what they should know, understand, and be able to do)
- Most students should find the task interesting.
- The task requires an important contribution from each group member based on the student's skills and interests.
- The task is likely to be demanding of the group and its members.
- The task requires genuine collaboration to achieve shared understanding.
- Time lines are brisk (but not rigid).
- Individuals are accountable for their own understanding of all facets of the task.
- There's a "way out" for students who are not succeeding within the group.
- There is an opportunity for teacher or peer coaching and in-process quality checks.
- Students understand what to do next after they complete their work at a high level of quality.

*Article contributed by
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CSCOPE Doc Spot

⚡ When planning instruction, remember to start with the **Instructional Focus Document**. It contains several useful sections.

State Resources. Links to other state resources and training and websites are listed, thus providing reminders and a “container” for state trainings that relate to the unit.

Rationale. Explains which TEKS are bundled in the unit and why. Makes reference to previous and future learning ties.

Misconceptions and Underdeveloped Concepts. Identifies where previous inaccurate or imprecise student learning may become a barrier to accurate current learning. Listen for these during instruction so they can be addressed and corrected.

Performance Indicators. Defines the content to be mastered by the end of the unit and a process for demonstrating that mastery. ELPS choices are suggested.

Concepts and Key Understandings for Learners. Overarching ideas and essential understandings that students should have by the end of the unit. Unit instructional activities should each tie to these concepts and key understandings. Guiding Questions which lead to these understandings can be found in the Exemplar Lessons.

Key Academic Vocabulary Supporting Conceptual. Identifies the vocabulary that carries the weight of the unit content load and that will be used across grade levels. Vocabulary of instruction that ties to this vocabulary and unit concepts is found in the Exemplar Lessons.

Instructional Components. New to ELA this year. Instructional components for Grades K-5 are Word Study, Shared Reading, Shared Writing, and Independent Reading. Instructional components for Grades 6-12 are Word Study, Reading, and Writing.

The instructional components were added for the following reasons:

1. To support districts who teach reading and writing separately - (Helps teachers separate the standards and ensures that reading and writing are aligned even if taught at separate times or by different teachers.)
2. To better support a reading/writing workshop formats.
3. To ensure that writing is given the same emphasis as reading

TEKS and Specificity. Lists unit TEKS and specificity; also found in the Vertical Alignment Documents. Clearly defines what each student expectation looks like for the grade level. Crossed out portions of the TEKS have been/will be addressed in other units and are not the focus for the current unit. Specificity comes from TAKS and other state resources, the ELA/R glossary, and the College and Career Readiness Standards.

Submitting Unit Feedback

To submit feedback for a specific unit, you must be working in the unit first.

1. Open a unit.
2. Select **View/Edit Unit**. (This is the first tab on the right side of the screen.)
3. Select **Collaborative Feedback**. (This is the third tab from the left.) You will be able to see all of the feedback from your district.
4. Select **Submit Feedback** on the far right side of the screen.
5. Enter feedback or comments. Be very specific, using unit number, lesson number, page number and problem numbers.
6. Choose the category of feedback. You may enter different kinds of feedback:
 - Grammatical/Punctuation/Format Errors
 - Developer Issues/Bad Web Links/Attachment Issues/Other Tech Issues
 - Content-related suggestions or recommendations
 - Assessment Issues
7. Select **Submit**.

Quick Tip

Once you submit feedback, the response to that feedback will be placed on your home page under the Feedback tab. Select the unit title to view the feedback and the response.

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opment. The English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), section C, outline the student expectations for developing language fluency in the areas of using learning strategies, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Educators have long known the importance of clearly setting content objectives for students at the beginning of a lesson. These objectives should be aligned to the TEKS student expectations for the subject area. In addition to content objectives, teachers of English learners must establish *language* objectives in every lesson. Language objectives are aligned to the ELPS.

To craft language objectives for English learners, follow these easy steps:

1. Identify the content objective using the TEKS.
2. Determine what type of language skills the student will use to participate in the lesson and process the learning specified by the content objective (i.e. using learning strategies, listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing).
3. Choose the appropriate objective from the cross-curricular second language acquisition essential knowledge and skills sub-section C of the ELPS.
4. Craft a specific language objective for the lesson the ELPS. In the language objective, the teacher may want students to use specific content-area vocabulary words, sentence stems and/or paragraph frames to help students scaffold language.

Example:

TEKS 8.7(C) Use pictures or models to demonstrate the Pythagorean theorem;	Content Objective: Students will use manipulatives to explain the Pythagorean theorem.
ELPS: 3(D) speak using grade level vocabulary in context to internalize new English words and build academic language proficiency.	Language Objective: Students will use the vocabulary terms “Pythagorean theorem” and “model” and “demonstrates while giving an oral explanation of the Pythagorean theorem.

To successfully implement language objectives for ELL, follow these simple guidelines. Language objectives should be:

- ✦ Stated orally and posted in writing
- ✦ Discussed by the teacher and students at the start of the lesson
- ✦ Reinforced with explicit instruction during the lesson
- ✦ Practiced and assessed during the lesson

Reference: **ELPS Toolkit**, First Edition, Education Service Center Region XIII, 2008

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Have questions about the newsletter? Contact your Education Service Center.

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