

## **LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ACTION RESEARCH ABSTRACT**

**Dan Storz**  
**Francisco Middle School**

### **Research question:**

What impact will an image-rich curriculum have on helping students access the core curriculum text?

### **Context:**

Getting middle school students to engage with a history textbook is a challenge not new to any social studies teacher. It seems as though the challenge is getting greater due to a variety of factors. Society in general is less dependent on reading for news and information, as well as for entertainment, and that trend is particularly acute among the youth of today. Students are increasingly visual learners and used to seeing text-based information in the form of relatively short passages. Adding to the challenge is the fact that the stakes are higher thanks to the emphasis on standardized test scores for reading and, now in California, standardized state testing in Social Studies. Through my research I hope to show how text-based lessons can be enhanced for all students by scaffolding them with image-rich activities.

The context in which this research is taking place is a heterogeneous eighth grade classroom where approximately 65% of the students are second language English learners, but all students have been exited from the ESL program. 80% of the students fall in the second or third quartiles of the CAT6 reading test, and 2 students participate in the SPED program.

### **Findings/policy implications:**

The tools I used to collect data were field notes and traditional exams taken by students at the end of the lesson. In previous lessons I would introduce the lesson by identifying key vocabulary, with a vocabulary activity, and providing a short introductory lecture prior to the reading. For one of these lessons I recorded through observation who was reading at the beginning of the time allotted, then every 5 minutes during the approximately 15 minute reading time. For the model lesson, students examined about 35 photos of terrain along the Oregon and California trails, gold rush and Mormon settlements, and wagon trains. The class discussed the images and students wrote descriptions and responses to what they saw. Students then had a reading assignment similar to previous lessons, and I recorded my observations of who was reading. I also compared test results with those of previous lessons.

My observational data showed that more students began reading during the reading time, and continued reading through the entire reading period. Comparison of test results was inconclusive. There was not a significant improvement in test scores.

The internet is a great source for images, but it can be time consuming and difficult for teachers to access these resources on their own, and organize them around one topic. There are resources available for purchase on CD and DVD, and through web-based subscription services, but funding is inconsistent and often difficult to obtain. Schools and districts need to look at consistent ways to fund technology-based curricular resources.

### **Next steps/questions:**

- How do schools/districts identify and evaluate potential resources?
- Where can/should funding come from?
- What kind of professional development is needed to accompany new technology-based resources?