



# The LADSE Spotlight

## Highlighting Important Issues in Education

The  
Spotlight is on  
Improving  
Vocabulary  
Instruction

A Publication of The LaGrange Area Department of Special Education

### From the Desk of the Executive Director

I trust that you have all had a relaxing summer, a fun vacation, and are ready to begin the 2009-2010 school year. Despite the challenges we experienced this past year I am very optimistic and excited about LADSE's future, and I can confidently say that LADSE remains a viable and innovative child-centered organization dedicated to meeting the needs of the students and families we serve.

I am happy to report that a balanced budget was approved by the Directing Board in May, as well as a plan that will keep us financially solvent for the next five years. A special thanks to LADSE-A for its collaborative efforts and assistance in helping us maintain the integrity of our services and programs while solidifying our fiscal future.

As I reflect on the changes that have taken place, the enduring LADSE attributes that stand out most in my mind are the quality and dedication of the staff. LADSE has a reputation throughout the state for being one of the most innovative cooperatives in Illinois, and I want to assure you that we will not only maintain that reputation but develop new opportunities for improving our programs and services.

As we approach the first day of the school year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your dedication and professionalism in making the LaGrange Area Department of Special Education the best cooperative in the state. I very much appreciate the dedicated efforts that go above and beyond the school day to ensure that our students and families are exposed to excellence throughout the year.

Welcome back!

Dr. James Surber  
Executive Director

*“Even Tiger Woods has a coach.”*

Dr. Kevin  
Feldman

### Highlights from Dr. Kevin Feldman's\* Presentations

On March 16, 2009, Dr. Kevin Feldman presented **“Improving Adolescent Content Literacy”** for the entire staff at Riverside Brookfield High School. The next day, he modeled lessons in World History and Biology classes while staff observed and debriefed afterwards about the strategies that he used with their students. On March 18, Dr. Feldman delivered a similar presentation on the topic of **“Boosting Vocabulary and Comprehension”** for the K-GR 8 population. The following are some quotes and ideas from Dr. Feldman's presentations.

**“Even Tiger Woods has a coach.”** Dr. Feldman talked about schools that are already strong

always striving to improve. He also discussed the gap between what we know and what we do as educators.

**“Inspect what you expect.”** Students will respond more to what we do than what we say so if we want students to do something, we need to hold them accountable by specifically observing, collecting data, and providing feedback on their performance. As an example, Dr. Feldman suggested that class participation be part of the students' grades.

**“Every time we throw out a question, allow three students to answer it and the rest to sit around, we**

**unintentionally widen the gap.” and “...the students most in need of our instruction are least engaged in it.”** Dr.

Feldman discussed the importance of structuring active learning and provided tools to increase academic engagement. Some of the strategies he suggested include: (a) group responses, (b) partner responses, (c) written responses, and (d) randomly calling on students. These strategies are important for all students and critical for struggling students because of the strong relationship between academic engagement and student achievement.

**“I do it. We do it. Y'all do it.**

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# Highlights from Dr. Kevin Feldman's\* Presentations

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**You do it.”** Dr. Feldman shared Anita Archer's formula for explicit instruction with Ed Ellis' addition of “Y'all do it.” The first step, “I do it” refers to the teacher modeling phase, including thinking aloud. The second step, “We do it” refers to the phase where the teacher guides the students through a task. The third step, “Y'all do it” was an addition to the original formula and involves partner practice and the final step, “You do it” includes independent practice with feedback. This formula for explicit instruction is important because students don't spontaneously generalize strategies.

**“The best predictor of reading comprehension is your background knowledge” and the key rationale for explicit vocabulary instruction comes from Marzano and Pickerin (2005), “Given the importance of academic background knowledge, and the fact that vocabulary is such an essential aspect of it, one of the most crucial services that teachers can provide, particularly for students who do not come**

**from academically advantaged backgrounds, is systematic instruction in important academic terms.”**

## **Instructional Guidelines for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction**

First, teachers must be careful about the words they choose to teach. They want to focus on words that are crucial for comprehension and words that are used across domains. Next, teachers can follow these steps with the students: (1) pronounce the word as a group; (2) explain the words using a student-friendly definition (not dictionary definition); (3) provide examples and non-examples; (4) help students deepen understanding with activities such as using the new word in a sentence; and (5) review the word and coach the students in its use. To watch videos of Anita Archer modeling explicit vocabulary instruction, go to Sonoma County Office of Education website, [www.scoe.org](http://www.scoe.org), and look for the link to the Anita Archer video series on the front page. Sonoma County Office of Education is where Dr. Feldman works part-time.



Kevin Feldman, Ed.D.

*\*Dr. Kevin Feldman is the Director of Reading and Intervention with the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). Dr. Feldman serves as a consultant to the CalSTAT Statewide Special Education Reform Project and a number of publishers and literacy organizations nationwide. He is a senior consulting author for various secondary curricula including Prentice-Hall Middle/High School Language Arts Program, Scholastic's Read 180 Intervention Program-Enterprise Edition, Scholastic's Read About Program, and Pearson's Middle School Social Studies Program. Dr. Feldman recently co-authored the monograph, Narrowing the Language Gap: The Case for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction (2005) with Dr. Kate Kinsella.*

## Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| August 21, 2009                      | ABC's of Autism  |
| August 25, 2009                      | Paraeducator Training  |
| August/September                     | Easy IEP-New Staff Trainings   |
| September 29, 2009                   | Keys to Effective Inclusion for Students on the Autism Spectrum  |
| October 2, 2009                      | Using Authentic Assessment-Part I  |
| October 13, 2009                     | Boosting Academic Vocabulary & Comprehension: Practical Tools to Increase the Literacy Achievement of ALL Students |
| October 14, 2009<br>(Repeat Session) | Boosting Academic Vocabulary & Comprehension: Practical Tools to Increase the Literacy Achievement of ALL Students |

Register for professional development activities **ONLINE** through our website, [www.ladse.org](http://www.ladse.org).

LaGrange Area Department of Special Education

Our next issue will Spotlight Transition is for Everyone

Remember to browse our website, [www.ladse.org](http://www.ladse.org), to find:

Professional Development Listing

Contact Information

Student Forms

Check Out This Website...



<http://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/vocabulary-comprehension.html>

## LADSE

The LaGrange Area Department of Special Education

1301 W. Cossitt Avenue  
LaGrange, IL 60525

Phone: 708.354.5730

Fax: 708.354.0733

TTY: 708.352.5994

[www.ladse.org](http://www.ladse.org)