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Six Main Essential Elements of the Common Core State Standards

Addressing the Reading Standards Without Books?

Discussions4Learning focuses on the most important elements of the Common Core reading standards through targeted discussions of fine art images and real-world photography from around the globe. High-level academic vocabulary is taught and revisited in authentic contexts so that it is comprehensible, memorable, and challenging to all students.

1 Shift to Informational Text

Discussions4Learning provides the foundation for shifting to informational text by providing students with opportunities to engage in discussions that are **the oral equivalent of informational text**. It's using language to inform – not to tell, or listen to, a story. **Students practice the language and vocabulary of informational text in each lesson** as they discuss the images and use the vocabulary and syntax necessary to describe and debate what they see in each image.

In a scientific test comparing students using the program with similar students not using the program, there was a **significant increase in students' comprehension of informational text**. This is particularly significant since the only difference in curriculum between the students who made significant gains and those who did not was 20 minutes a day, three days a week, of *Discussions4Learning*.

2 Build Vocabulary

Discussions4Learning includes **more than 40% of the Coxhead Vocabulary List**. The words are **high-level vocabulary, generative in nature, and taught in authentic, meaningful contexts**. Students are engaged with the images, as they learn vocabulary that serves to help them explore and discuss each image. The lessons are sequential, with **ongoing, explicit review of previously learned words** so that students have continuing, frequent opportunities to use new vocabulary in varied contexts and over time.

Scientific testing demonstrated that students using *Discussions4Learning* not only had high retention of the target vocabulary, but they also scored higher on overall vocabulary knowledge as compared to control students who did not use the program.

3 Close Reading of Primary Sources

"Close reading is rereading – inviting students back into that text several times – with purpose." In *Discussions4Learning*, **students practice close "reading" of images by going back to view the image from several vantage points**. As in close reading strategies, students encounter the image for the first time with minimal frontloading. Students are asked to view the image and discuss what they see.

Students are then asked to go back and view the image, **noting specific details**. Students discuss what the artist might be trying to communicate, and share their position with their peers – agreeing, disagreeing, asking for evidence, providing evidence, and offering counter claims.

Additionally, *Discussions4Learning* includes **important primary sources from cultures around the world and across time**, from ancient Egypt to 21st-century Japan.

4 Deeper Evidence-Based Research

Discussions4Learning provides **opportunities for students to learn how to cite evidence to support a claim or idea**. Students are asked throughout the program to support their positions with evidence. Students are encouraged to agree or disagree with their classmates, citing evidence for their positions and offering counter claims.

This oral practice in supporting a position using evidence found in a visual image provides a strong foundation in the skills students need to conduct independent research based on written texts.

5 Increased Text Complexity

Discussions4Learning prepares students for increased text complexity with **increasingly complex context sentences across the four levels, A–D**. Each new target word is introduced in a context sentence, which students are encouraged to repeat. This oral practice with complex language supports students as they read increasingly complex texts.

6 Identify and Analyze Point of View

In *Discussions4Learning* **students learn to identify and analyze point of view by focusing on the artist's point of view**. This allows all students – even those who are still struggling with reading fluency – to learn to identify and analyze point of view. Like authors, artists have a point of view and have a variety of purposes for their compositions.