



An Introduction to Constructing Meaning

for the
MVLA Board



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What is Constructing Meaning?

Constructing Meaning's *Vision of Explicit Language Instruction* is a research based framework with three salient instructional features:

- **Cognitive tasks** – supporting the language functions that lead to deep learning
- **Target language** – addressing both the content 'bricks' and functional 'mortar' of subject discourse
- **Instruction and application** – providing structured opportunities to practice language within a gradual release model

A Vision of Explicit Language Instruction

Starting from a meaningful task, backward map the language students need to gain agency for:

- Confident accuracy in comprehension (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing)
- Attending to audience, purpose, and discipline (discourse style and register)
- Making language choices and developing metalinguistic awareness

Cognitive Task

Each day, students are called to:

- Read and respond to grade-level text
- Interact with adults and peers
- Develop and compose ideas in writing
- Discuss content learning

What are the high-utility language functions embedded in academic and social interactions?

- Contribute ideas and opinions
- Ask for clarification or assistance
- Draw conclusions and make inferences
- Classify and compare/contrast
- Describe, explain, and elaborate
- Present and defend an argument
- Sequence events or processes
- Express cause/effect
- Pose a problem/solution

Target Language

What language is needed to understand and express thinking for a particular purpose?

Mortar

Mortar consists of the words and phrases specific to a particular language function. Command of functional mortar allows us to generate oral and written language for a wide range of purposes.

Agile use of mortar relies on a working knowledge of grammatical features, syntax, formal and informal conventions, and the ability to vary sentence structures.

want to; would like to
is like; is similar to
(noticed, realized) that
caused; When ____, ____.
(Most, Many, Some)
agree with ____, because
Eventually; initially
slower than; slowest

Bricks

Brick vocabulary is specific to a particular content concept or topic. It may include nouns, adjectives, verbs, and/or adverbs related to a theme or subject. These words and phrases may move from basic to specific to increasingly precise, and can be used in various contexts:

nice → kind → caring → compassionate
draw → sketch → map out
water, air → liquid, gas → property, matter

Bricks also include technical vocabulary and terminology used in distinct contexts (colonialism, cold front, factor, memoir).

Instruction and Application

Every lesson follows a student-centered sequence with various levels of support.



What does Constructing Meaning instruction look like?

A lot of talking, writing, graphing, creating, etc., because students are engaged with the content and each other.

This engagement results from the teacher providing:

1. A **learning goal** that makes clear the lesson content, functional language, and product.
2. **Language supports** for complex thinking, talking, writing, creating, etc.
3. **Structured peer interactions** to deepen understanding and create a community of scholars

Chemistry Example

A **learning goal** that makes clear the lesson **content**, **functional language**, and **product**.

NGSS Disciplinary Core Idea PS1 - *Each atom has a charged substructure consisting of a nucleus, which is made of protons and neutrons, surrounded by electrons.*

The learning goal: Students will demonstrate their understanding of **atomic structure** by explaining their **similarities and differences** between ${}^{23}_{11}\text{Na}^{+1}$ and ${}^{16}_8\text{O}^{-2}$ in a **written paragraph**.

Precise vocabulary: proton, neutron, electron, atom, element, nucleus, atomic mass, atomic number, cation, anion

Chemistry Example

Structured peer interactions to deepen understanding and create a community of scholars

	Protons	Neutrons	Electrons	Atomic Mass	Atomic Number	Charge	Anion or Cation
${}^{23}_{11}\text{Na}^{+1}$	11	12	10	23	11	+1	Cation
${}^{16}_8\text{O}^{-2}$	8	8	10	16	8	-2	Anion

With your A/B partner:

Use the language patterns and take turns **explaining** or **clarifying** how you determined your numbers. Student B starts the conversation.

I found the ___ by ___

I know the number of ___ is always equal to the ___.

The ___ is made up of ___ and ___

Can you clarify how you found ___?

I have a question about ___?

Explain & Describe
Language Patterns

Chemistry Example



Language supports for complex thinking, talking, writing, creating, etc.

While both sodium and oxygen contain **protons, neutrons and electrons**, they differ in the number of those **subatomic particles**. Protons and neutrons are found in the **nucleus** of an atom and make up the atom's **atomic mass**. Oxygen has 8 protons and 8 neutrons and therefore has a mass of 16 amu. In contrast, sodium has 11 protons and 12 neutrons so its atomic mass is 23 amu. Both element's electrons orbit the nucleus. However sodium is a **cation** meaning it has a positive charge and oxygen is an **anion** which is negatively charged. This is due to the fact that sodium has 11 positively charged protons and 10 negatively charged electrons, so it has a charge of +1. Oxygen has 8 positively charged protons and 10 negatively charged electrons and so has a charge of -1. For both atoms the **atomic number** is the same as the number of protons. Therefore, sodium atomic number is 11 and oxygen's atomic number is 8. The difference in the number of subatomic particles results in a different atomic number, atomic mass and charge of an atom.

Topic Sentence:

While ___ and ___ contain ___ they differ ___
Although ___ and ___ have similar ___ they have different ___

Body:

Both ___ are found ___ and make up ___.
Another difference is ___
This is due to the fact ___
A distinction between ___ and ___ is

Conclusion:

The difference in ___ results in ___
Whereas ___ and ___ are similar in that ___, the major difference between the two is _____.

Compare & Contrast
Language Patterns

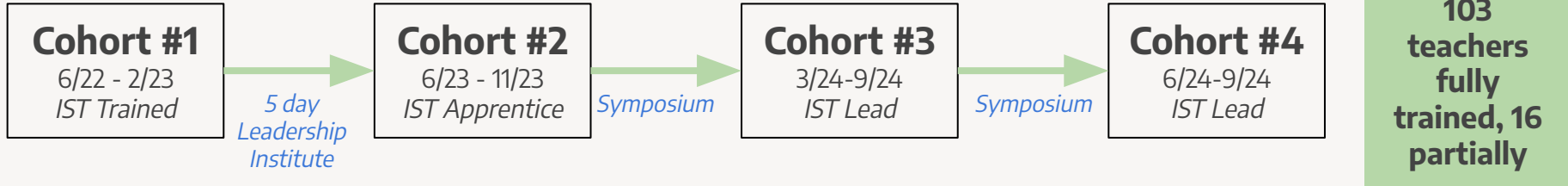
Our Multilingual Learners

	MVHS	LAHS
Total	2188	2173
RFEP (R)	508	595
EL (L)	125	188
LTEL	45	76
IFEP (F)	268	301

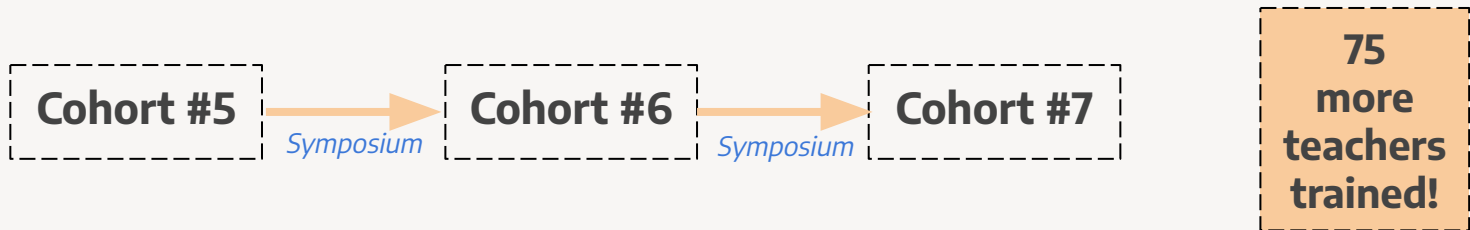
**48% of MVLA
students are
Multilingual
Learners**

Our Implementation Journey


5-Day Constructing Meaning Professional Learning




5-Day Constructing Meaning Professional Learning 24-25 School Year



MVLA Constructing Meaning Implementation - We all play a role!



MVLA Constructing Meaning Implementation at a Glance
Quality at our Core!



Getting off to a solid start

District	Site	Classroom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish need for inclusive classroom and consistent Tier 1 instructional strategies 2. Communicate alignment with district beliefs about teaching and learning, and existing initiatives 3. Identify a committed district team who will consistently lead the CM work (PLPC) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Leadership team to communicate the need and the vision 2. Support IST in organization APPLS and Structured Student Talk PDs 3. Support teachers participating in CM PD with release days and subs. 4. Set expectations for instructional vision for the inclusive classroom 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the diverse instructional needs of your ELs and discuss goals 2. Identify instructional practices that currently help address student needs and meet learning goals 3. Actively participate in the CM training and try out new learning between sessions (establish interaction routines, plan and teach lessons developed, etc.)

Ensuring the Work Takes Root

District	Site	Classroom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish support structures for teachers and administrators 2. Establish a method for gathering data on CM practice across sites 3. Regularly meet with site leaders in Learning Walks to gauge quality CM implementation using and build on successes 4. Continue to work with PLPC to review at data and determine next steps 5. Continue to communicate the why and the vision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage in Learning Walks with District Admin, Coordinators and IST with observation tool 2. Utilize LT meetings to discuss and calibrate using the observation tool and determine next steps 3. Establish system for departments to collect common student achievement data 4. Celebrate successes and provide support (co-planning and reflection, peer observation, coaching, PD, etc.) 5. Continue to communicate the why and the vision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design learning goal and instruction to incorporate content, functional language, and product 2. Incorporate language patterns to create opportunities throughout instruction to learn content "brick" and functional "mortar" 3. Structure peer interactions to deepen content understanding through discussion using target language

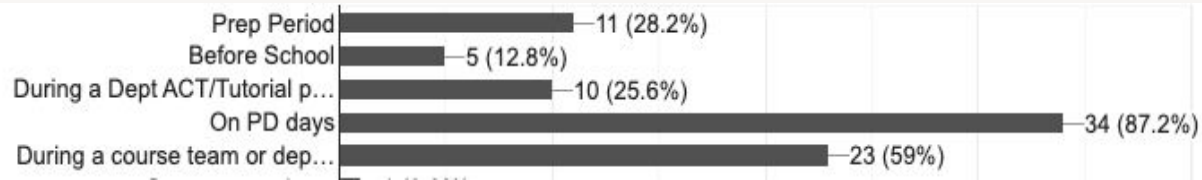
Sustaining the Initiative

District	Site	Classroom
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to communicate the why and the vision 2. With PLPC, semi-annually gauge the quality of CM implementation and student achievement across sites. 3. Continue to collect data to plan and prioritize ongoing support based on teacher reflection, observations, and achievement data 4. Continue Learning walks with admin, coordinators, and IST 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to communicate the why and the vision 2. Continue Learning walks with admin, coordinators, and IST 3. Continue to utilize LT meetings for ongoing discussions are classroom engagement teacher reflections, observation, and achievement data 4. Work with department and/or grade-level teams to ensure support structures are helping meet established goals 5. Share successful practices among teachers to strengthen implementation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to design instruction incorporate language goals, cognitive functions and structured student talk. 2. Continue to formatively assess students and refine instruction based on student need. 6. Celebrate personal successes and continue to build from them 7. Collaborate with peers to analyze student work and instruction to identify content and language growth and needs.

Here is what our trained teachers indicate they need:



Here is when trained teachers indicate they would like to collaborate & deepen their implementation:



Please let us know if you have any further questions, would like to co-observe with one of us, or stop by a future training!

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