



## ***Using Mnemonics to Teach Social Studies Vocabulary***

### **What is the evidence base?**

- This is a Promising Practice based on one acceptable group study and six studies with strong research designs.

### **Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?**

The best place to find out how to implement using mnemonics to teach vocabulary is through the following research to practice lesson plan starters:

- [Using Mnemonics to Teach Social Studies Vocabulary](#)

### **With who was it implemented?**

- Students with
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder (1 study, n=5)
  - Emotional/Behavioral Disorder (1 study, n=4)
  - Learning Disability (6 studies, n=195)
  - Mild Intellectual Disability (1 study, n=3)
  - Other Health Impairment (1 study, n=14)
  - Speech/Language Impairment (1 study, n=1)
- Ages ranged from 11 years – 16 years
- Males (n=235), females (n=91), not specified (n=42)
- Ethnicity
  - African American (n=19)
  - Asian/Pacific Islander (n=4)
  - Caucasian (n=164)
  - Hispanic/Latino (n=19)
  - Multiracial (n=1)
  - Native American (n=2)
  - Not specified (n=59)
  - None reported (n=46)

### **What is the practice?**

“Memory-enhancing or mnemonic strategies refer to ‘specific reconstruction of target content intended to tie new information more closely to the learners’ existing knowledge base and, therefore, facilitate retrieval” (Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2007).

In the studies used to establish the evidence base for using mnemonics to teach Social Studies vocabulary included using:

- Keyword-pegword mnemonics to teach junior high students with learning disabilities the chronological order of 32 U.S. presidents (Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Whedon, 1997).
- Mnemonic pictures to teach 14 students in 3rd – 7 th grade with learning disabilities and three students with a mild intellectual disability relevant information from a social studies textbook (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1989).
- Classwide peer tutoring with embedded mnemonic strategies to teach 7th grade social studies content to 42 students with mild disabilities (Marshak, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2011).
- Mnemonic strategies and direct instruction to teach social studies vocabulary to high school students with learning disabilities (Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2007).

### **Where has it been implemented?**

- 13 inclusive classrooms (3 studies)
- 2 resource rooms (2 studies)
- 3 special education classrooms (1 study)

### **How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. NOTE: This is the same as the first CCSS – but, it's for a different grade level

### **How does this practice relate to the Common Career Technical Core?**

- Apply appropriate academic and technical skills. Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
  - [https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/CCTC\\_Standards\\_Formatted\\_2014.pdf](https://careertech.org/sites/default/files/CCTC_Standards_Formatted_2014.pdf)
- A/V Technology & Film Career Pathway (AR-AV) 1. Describe the history, terminology, occupations and value of audio, video and film technology.

- Telecommunications Career Pathway (AR-TEL) 1. Demonstrate the use of telecommunications terminology, tools and test equipment.
- Travel & Tourism Career Pathway (HT-TT) 6. Use common travel and tourism terminology used to communicate within the industry.
- Legal Services Career Pathway (LW-LEG) 6. Use legal terminology to communicate within the legal services community.

## References used to establish this evidence base:

Brigham, F. J., Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1995). Elaborative maps for enhanced learning of historical information: Uniting spatial, verbal, and imaginal information. *The Journal of Special Education*, 28, 440-460.

Marshak, L., Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2011). Curriculum enhancements in inclusive secondary social studies classrooms. *Exceptionality*, 19, 61-74.

Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (1989). Mnemonic social studies instruction: Classroom applications. *Remedial and Special Education*, 10, 40-46.

Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., & Levin, J. R. (1987). Learning-disabled students' memory for expository prose: Mnemonic versus nonmnemonic pictures. *American Educational Research Journal*, 24, 505-519.

Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., & Whedon, C. (1997). Using mnemonic strategies to teach information about US presidents: A classroom-based investigation. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 20, 13-21.

Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., Whittaker, M. E., & Bakken, J. P. (1994). Applications of mnemonic strategies with students with mild mental disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 15, 34-43.

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