Appendix I
Champion of IDEAS and
Scientifically Based Research

Most teachers want to use materials that are effective in helping their English learners develop language skills and master educational standards. Increasingly, the use of effective classroom practices and materials has become a public policy issue. A cornerstone of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) is that educators should engage in classroom practices that work. The law emphasizes the importance of selecting instructional approaches and materials that are based on scientific research and have a proven record of success. The *Champion of IDEAS* program has been designed with this model specifically in mind.

What is scientifically based research?
According to the U.S. Department of Education, an instructional practice or program is research-based when there is carefully obtained, reliable evidence that the program or practice works. The Department of Education uses an example of an evaluation that measures a group of students who are learning how to read using different methods, and then compares the results to see which method is most successful.

Why is scientifically based research sometimes difficult to obtain?
The challenge researchers face is that classrooms are not experimental laboratories where they can compare the effectiveness of one set of instructional practices or materials with another while holding all other variables constant. In addition, it is difficult to find reliable, valid, and cost-effective assessment tools that measure a full range of student abilities, including creativity, higher-order thinking skills, problem solving, the ability to work collaboratively, and the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use information.

Language in the NCLB act suggests that educators look to the medical arena for a model. The Department of Education states, "Whenever the results of scientifically controlled studies (like clinical trials) are available, educators are expected to consider their results before making instructional decisions." However, the law also recognizes that some practices (e.g., reading instruction) have been validated through years of peer-reviewed and replicated scientific research.

What scientific research supports the *Champion of IDEAS* program?
Champion of IDEAS is based on solid educational research and effective practices, including such pedagogical underpinnings as the following:

> **Active learning and prior knowledge**
> Learning is most effective when students actively apply new knowledge in meaningful activities that link to their existing knowledge and when they are working within their zone of proximal development (Piaget, 1969; Gardner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). The *Champion of IDEAS* program focuses on student-centered, active learning and links new content to students' prior knowledge.

Authentic and meaningful communication

Students develop fluency through authentic uses of language, both oral and written, and opportunities to practice newly learned structures in different contexts (Dutro, 2002). Further, repeated exposure to vocabulary in multiple contexts aids word learning. *Champion* provides many opportunities for students to use the words and apply the concepts they have learned in meaningful contexts, thereby developing their fluency and strengthening their vocabulary.

Cooperative learning groups

Learning is extremely effective in cooperative group settings when the task is structured and clearly defined. Students learn when they share information with other students, thereby creating opportunities for students to learn from one another. The collaborative environment works most effectively when students are engaged in activities that have many possible right answers (Hill & Hill, 1990). Throughout the *Champion of IDEAS* program, strategies are suggested to engage learners collaboratively in a variety of student groupings (e.g., pairs, small groups).

Learning modalities

Tapping into multiple learning modalities is essential because learners "store" information in various places within the brain. By activating multiple learning modalities (e.g., seeing, hearing, movement, and touch), learning is stored in various parts of the brain. This enables learners to recall the information more readily because they can "find" it stored in many places (*Educational Leadership: How the Brain Learns*, 1998; Jensen, 1998). The *Champion of IDEAS* program emphasizes activities that activate multiple learning modalities—listening, reading, conducting hands-on experiments, researching information (in traditional sources as well as technology-based ones), presenting role plays, and engaging in kinesthetic activities.

Positive learning environment

The learning environment must be positive and stress-free. Pressure and tension negatively affect learning, especially with students who have the additional burden of learning a complex skill (such as reading) in the context of a new language (Herrell, 2000; Joyce & Weil, 1972; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1979; Spangenberg-Urbschat & Pritchard, 1974). The *Champion of IDEAS* program emphasizes the importance of creating a positive learning environment and suggests teaching strategies throughout the lessons to achieve this goal in the context of developing and refining English language skills.

Text comprehension

It is important that students formulate a general mental outline of the new content they are learning. This helps them become familiar with the scope and sequence of ideas and assists them in mastering the new material. Teachers should help students become "learning-wise" and "text-wise"—in other words, be able to understand the layout and organizational features of learning materials (including text) in order to distinguish main ideas from subordinate ones, build on concepts and information they have already learned, and acquire maximum content knowledge. (See, for example, Kinsella, 2000.) The *Champion* program is organized with these ideas in mind.

What is "academic language" and why is it important in English language development programs?
Academic language is the type of English used in schools in the service of learning. The academic success of English language learners (ELLs) is largely dependent upon their mastery of academic language.

Students need to develop a working knowledge of academic language in order to understand textbooks and other learning resources, as well as teachers and other students in content area classrooms. Students also need academic language to facilitate their participation in classroom discussions and learning activities. For example, being unfamiliar with words such as *personification*, *compass*, and *extinct* will not hamper a student's ability to engage in casual social conversation, but it will impede the student's ability to succeed in the content areas and to demonstrate an understanding of language arts, social studies, and science on a standardized test.

Similarly, knowing what it means to write a research report and knowing how to use words such as *compare* and *contrast* in an essay are essential parts of showing learning at school. Thus, in order to succeed in the classroom, to earn good grades, and to be successful on any standardized test, ELLs must master proficiency in basic social language as well as academic language. They must know general academic words such as *compare* and *contrast*, specialized academic words like *personification,* and special ways of structuring their answers into reports, essays, and research projects.

How does the *Champion of IDEAS* program incorporate academic language?
The approach to academic language in the *Champion of IDEAS* program was shaped by the work of Dr. Alison L. Bailey and Dr. Frances A. Butler of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). They conducted evidence-based research to develop a framework for characterizing academic language for K-12 test development purposes. This research provided important lessons for us in terms of defining and operationalizing the concept of academic language. We are indebted to their work in this area in our development of the learning and assessment materials contained in the *Champion of IDEAS* program. We are also indebted to the work of Drs. Sari Luoma and Yeonsuk Cho who identified the scope of academic language ELLs need to function in mainstream classrooms. While their research was aimed specifically at developing the basis for assessing academic language proficiency in English language proficiency tests, it also provided a rich data source for the *Champion of IDEAS* program development team. Academic language is introduced, practiced, and spiraled throughout the *Champion* program. There is no master list, per se, of academic language appropriate for English learners; what is considered academic language in grade 12 is not necessarily so in grade 6. Since *Champion of IDEAS* is a program based on language level rather than grade level, in developing the academic language content and the sequence of presentation, the authors relied on many sources, including vocabulary lists, textbooks, and data from the aforementioned research projects. The authors listed academic language for each chapter. The chart on the next page arrays some of the academic language (listed in alphabetical order) introduced in each unit of the *Champion of IDEAS* Red Level program.

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
advantage	characteristic	affix	archaeologist
capital	citizen	agriculture	atmosphere
directions	coast	crop	carbon dioxide
disease	colonist	cycle	comedy
economy	community	experiment	compass rose
example	culture	government	confederation
fiction	degree	legacy	constitutional
heading	diagram	legislature	consultant
idiom	elevation	myth	democracy
industry	feline	nutrition	element
main idea	history	percentage	environmental
nonfiction	island	pyramid	framework
opportunity	mammal	setting	kingdom
resume	museum	simile	landmass
skill	parallel	slogan	leadership
society	sculpture	summary	metaphor
survey	summit	symbol	personification
title	wildlife	tragedy	pollution

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