

word

generation

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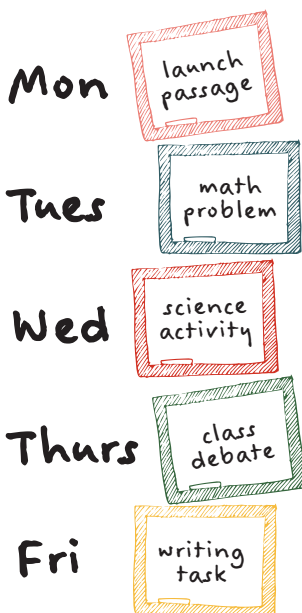
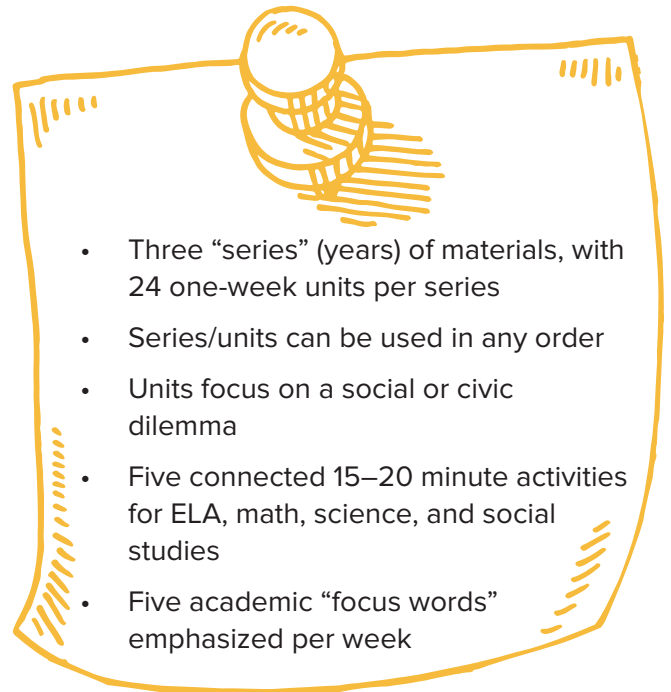
wordgen.serpmedia.org



How WordGen WEEKLY Works

An introductory guide for middle school teachers to get started using SERP's original interdisciplinary academic language program

The original Word Generation program (*WordGen Weekly*) is a supplementary curricular resource that offers a series of discussable dilemmas designed to promote students' academic language and argumentation skills. WordGen Weekly creates the opportunity for students to become familiar with current issues and persistent dilemmas, while acquiring skills prioritized in the 21st century learning standards. The program is unique in its cross-disciplinary design, giving teachers of ELA, science, social studies, and math the chance to collaborate on the shared goal of helping students use academic language to articulate their thinking. Series (or individual units) can be used school-wide in grades 6–8.

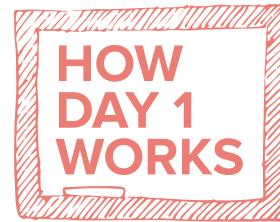


Daily instructional activities designed to build the vocabulary of middle school students through repeated exposure to academic words in various contexts

So much more than a vocabulary program!

WordGen Weekly:

- ▶ Builds the **reasoning and argumentation** skills that are necessary for learning in all content areas.
- ▶ Builds **reading comprehension** and content-area literacy by providing students with motivating text, **opportunities for discussion and debate, and weekly writing.**
- ▶ Sets students on a path to **college and career readiness** by providing multiple perspectives on complex problems, and requiring that students **sift through evidence** that supports or contradicts particular perspectives.



Five academic focus words are embedded in the weekly activities to provide opportunities for students to read the words and establish a context for their meaning.

Word Generation
UNIT 1.01

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

This week's issue:
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

Each unit focuses on a civic or social dilemma designed to develop students' academic language and argumentation skills.

Launch passage provides opportunities to read the words in context and associate meaning.



Why do we go to school? Some people think the primary goal of education is giving knowledge to students. They feel there is specific information that all kids should know. For instance, they want kids to know what happened in the Revolutionary War and how the food chain works. Others **interpret** the main role of school as one of preparing students to join the workforce. They are most concerned about students learning particular skills, such as reading, writing, and math.

Some argue that schools should introduce a set of shared values, including liberty and justice. They believe this will help students understand the **structure** of our democratic government. For example, they feel it is important for students to understand that while each of the three branches of government has a different function, the three work together to make sure we all enjoy certain freedoms and live by the same rules.

Some think schools should teach students to critically **analyze** what they see, hear, and read. They want students to be able to think carefully about different perspectives, to respect and challenge other viewpoints, and to form their own opinions about issues that affect them. Although many people say that they want kids to be able to think for themselves, students do not always have the freedom to do so in the classroom.

What do you think the **function** of school is? What do you consider the most important **factors** in providing a good education?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:

- What are two different interpretations of the purpose of school?
- Which function of school do you think is the most important? Why?
- What is an example of a learning activity that teaches students to analyze something?
- What are some of the structures that help schools fulfill their function?
- What are some of the factors that teachers should consider when preparing a lesson for their students?

Discussion questions accompany each launch passage and check students' understanding of the passage while tapping into their beliefs about the week's topic.

Launch This Week's Issue
(Usually led by ELA teacher)

1. Introduce the topic of the week, providing students the opportunity to discuss their perspectives with a partner.
2. Read or have volunteers read the passage aloud, stopping to discuss the passage. Examples of questions for classroom discussion are noted on the launch passage of each unit.



Teaching tip: Many WordGen Weekly topics are highly controversial. It is important to establish discussion norms to hold students accountable for respectful, equitable, and productive discussions.



Resources on establishing norms are available on the WordGen website.

3. Discuss the various positions presented in the passage. Encourage students to begin developing a claim, an arguable statement about the topic.



Teaching tip: Explain to students that the lessons present information that can be used to argue both for and against particular claims. Also, each day's lesson adds a bit more information, so it is important to participate in all the activities.



Instructional Considerations:

- ✓ Model fluent reading of the passage by having the teacher or a fluent reader read the passage while the class follows along.
- ✓ Model reading and thinking strategies in context. Encourage the use of highlighters or sticky notes to annotate the text.



Use the Focus Words

(Usually led by ELA teacher)

4. Introduce the unit focus words by displaying each word, reading each word aloud, and having students repeat each word.



Teaching tip: Establish a routine to introduce and review the focus words.

5. Build students' understanding of the focus words using the definitions, sample sentences, and Turn and Talk prompts.



Teaching tip: Throughout the week, teachers can use this page as a reference and/or for review.



Resources for effective strategies for vocabulary instruction, including vocabulary cards, are available on the WordGen website.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

Student-friendly definitions and sample sentences are included for each word.

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

UNIT 1.01

USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

analyze (verb) to examine; to study
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Some think schools should teach students to **analyze** critically what they see, hear, and read.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How is **analyzing** a short story different from just reading it?

factor (noun) something that influences the result of something else
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** People have different ideas about the most important **factors** in providing a good education.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What are some **factors** that allow a team to win?

***factor (in/into)** (verb) to include in a decision
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Brittany **factored** the weather into her beach day plans.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What do you **factor** into your decision to buy new clothes? I **factor** _____ (price, style, need) into my decision to buy new clothes.

function (noun) purpose; role; use
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Each of the three branches of government has a different **function**.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What is the **function** of homework?

***function** (verb) to work or operate
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Edwin observed that his camera did not **function** properly in very cold weather.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Does your brain **function** best in the morning, afternoon, or night? How do you know?

interpret (verb) to understand or explain something's meaning
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Others **interpret** the main role of school as one of preparing students to join the workforce.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** When a person is quiet or silent, how might you **interpret** this behavior?

structure (noun) the way that parts of something relate to each other and work together
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** They believe that this will help students understand the **structure** of our democratic government.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How does the **structure** of a cheetah's body help it to run fast?

***structure** (verb) to build or organize
⇒ **Sample Sentence:** Aftab **structured** his presentation so that there would be time for questions at the end.
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** When there is no school, how do you **structure** your day so that you don't get bored?

Math has its very own use of **factor!** For example, when you **factor** the number 10, you get the **factors** 1, 10, 2, and 5.

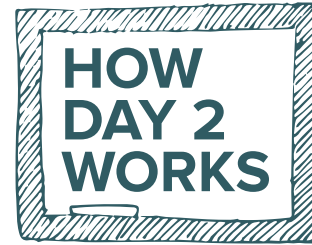
Turn and Talk format encourages students to deepen their understanding of the unit focus words through discussion.

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Instructional Considerations:

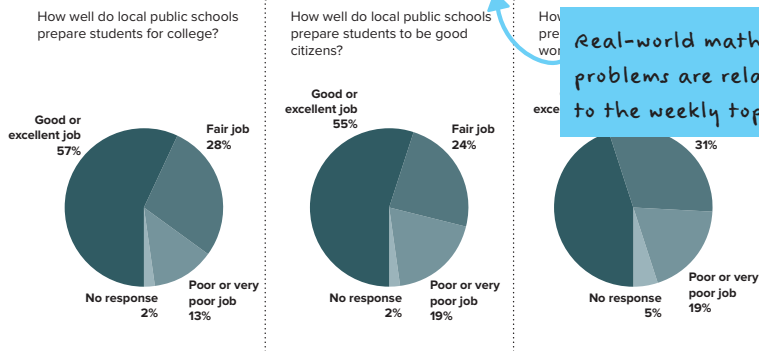
- ✓ Make word learning fun! Recognize students who use the focus words during and outside of class time.
- ✓ Encourage students to acknowledge the focus words throughout their daily discussions.
- ✓ Creatively display the focus words on a word wall. Display the current words on an active word wall and retire the previously used words to a designated location in the room where students can reference previously taught words throughout the year.
- ✓ Encourage experimentation with the words and use mistakes as teachable moments.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

DO THE MATH

How do Americans view their public schools? **Analyze** the three graphs below. The information comes from a national survey of American parents taken by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.



Option 1: Which of the following is the best way to **interpret** the data shown in these three graphs?

- A. Most American parents think that public schools do a good job of teaching job-related skills.
- B. American parents are concerned that the next generation will not be good citizens.
- C. **Most American parents believe that public schools get students ready to go to college.**
- D. American parents are disappointed with today's public schools.

Option 2: Based on the graphs, what is the probability that an American parent thinks public schools do a good or excellent job of preparing students for college AND that they do a good or excellent job of preparing students for the workforce?

$.57 \times .45 = .2565$, or 25.65%

Discussion Question: Many teachers believe that classrooms **function** more effectively when students are actively involved. In social studies, students might present an analysis of U.S. foreign policy and our relationship to other countries. In Spanish class, students might **interpret** and act out a play written by a Colombian author. In these cases, students prepare and present while the teacher acts as a guide. Is this kind of **structure** realistic for a math class? Or, when you're learning how to multiply or **factor** numbers, is it best for a teacher to give knowledge by explaining the facts?

Discussion questions accompany each math lesson. This allows the teacher to connect the math activity to the topic, tap into students' beliefs about the week's topic, and provide an opportunity to explicitly use the focus words.

Focus words embedded in the activity provide opportunities for students to read the words and establish a mathematical context.

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

Real-world math problems are related to the weekly topic.

Math lessons offer selected and open-ended response questions.

Do the Math

(Usually led by math teacher)

1. Review the focus words.



Teaching tip: Ask students to think about and explain how the focus words can be used in a math classroom.

2. Read and solve the math problem(s) that relate to the weekly topic. Option 1 usually involves a simple operation presented in a selected response format. Option 2 is an open-ended response question and is typically more challenging for students.



Teaching tip: Students may work in pairs or groups to encourage discussion about the math problem.

3. Facilitate a class discussion using the discussion question at the end of the lesson.



Instructional Considerations:

- ✓ If the math problems are out of reach for your students, discuss and solve Option 1 as a class or in groups. Problems can also be used to demonstrate the proper use of problem solving strategies.
- ✓ The lesson is designed to take 15–20 minutes; however, class discussions can prolong the lessons. Some teachers use timers to streamline instructional procedures and routines in WordGen Weekly classrooms.
- ✓ The discussion questions at the end of the lesson provide a format for connecting the math activity to the topic, explicitly using the focus words, and tapping into students' beliefs.
- ✓ Encourage students to use the focus words in the discussion and use mistakes as teachable moments.

HOW DAY 3 WORKS

Hypothetical scenarios reinforce scientific thinking.

Focus words embedded in the activity provide opportunities for students to read the words and establish a scientific context.

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

THINK SCIENTIFICALLY
The students in Ms. Kahn's class are learning how to **analyze** substances according to their properties.

"One important property of a substance is its density," says Ms. Kahn. "Can anyone tell me what density is?"

"Isn't it sort of like how massive something is?" says Marian. "I mean, that's not it exactly, but mass is an important **factor** in density... It's hard to explain. Density is sort of how tightly mass is packed into something."

"Yeah," Jamal adds, "density is how much mass a certain volume of something has. Say you have two things that are the same volume, but one has more mass. Then the one that's the same size but more massive is more dense."

"Right," says Ms. Kahn. "Density is the ratio of mass to volume. We can write it as an equation, like this." Ms. Kahn writes $d = m/v$ on the board and then says, "Density equals mass divided by volume. Scientists often compare the density of different substances to water, because water has a density of exactly one gram per milliliter. But don't take my word for it—see if you can figure out the density of water for yourselves."

Marian and Jamal set out to check the density of water, but each interprets Ms. Kahn's assignment differently.

Marian puts a graduated cylinder marked off in milliliters on a scale and resets the scale to zero so that it will not count the mass of the cylinder.

Then Marian pours some water into the cylinder and records the volume and mass of the water.

Next, Marian adds some more water and records the volume and mass again.

Meanwhile, Jamal goes online and finds the following information on three reliable websites:

The density of water is 1 g/mL (one gram per milliliter).

Which student do you think got the most accurate answer, Marian or Jamal?

Jamal

(A gram was originally defined as the mass of 1 mL of water.)

How would you have **interpreted** the purpose of this assignment? How does it relate to the purpose of school?

Answers will vary. The purpose of this assignment wasn't to learn how to calculate density, but to see that there are different ways of finding an answer—each with benefits and drawbacks. Encourage students to discuss whether they would have used Marian's, Jamal's, or another method to solve this problem.

What might be some reasons for the difference in their answers?

There were minor measurement and instrument errors in Marian's experiment.

Data tables, charts, and graphs provide opportunities to interpret data and draw conclusions.

Opportunities for discussion and writing encourage scientific thinking while exploring the weekly topic.

Think Scientifically

(Usually led by science teacher)

1. Review the focus words.

Teaching tip: Ask students to think about and explain how the focus words can be used in a science classroom.

2. Read and discuss the *Think Scientifically* passage, allowing students to interpret the data and draw conclusions.

Teaching tip: Students may work in pairs or groups to encourage discussion about the lesson.

3. Facilitate a class discussion using the discussion question at the end of the lesson.



Instructional Considerations:

- ✓ The lesson is designed to take 15–20 minutes; however, class discussions can prolong the lessons. Some teachers use timers to streamline instructional procedures and routines in WordGen Weekly classrooms.
- ✓ Encourage students to make connections between the weekly topic and the data in the science experiment.
- ✓ Encourage students to use the focus words in the discussion and use mistakes as teachable moments.

HOW DAY 4 WORKS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

DEBATE THE ISSUE
Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A The primary **function** of school is to teach students for the workforce.

OR

B The primary **function** of school is to teach students to **analyze**, to **interpret**, and to think for themselves.

OR

C The primary **function** of school is to prepare students for democratic citizenship.

CREATE YOUR OWN _____

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

Students are encouraged to use focus words to develop their argument.

Positions are chosen and evidence is gathered to support a claim.

Academic language supports prepare students to engage in debate activities as they use evidence from multiple sources to develop arguments.

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

“Can you show me evidence in the text that...”

“I believe that...”

“You make a good point, but have you considered...”

“I agree with you, but...”

UNIT 1.01

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Debate the Issue

(Usually led by social studies teacher)

1. Review the focus words.
2. Review the discussion norms.
3. Review the debate question and the positions.
4. Let teams pick a position, or assign positions if necessary to ensure both sides are represented.
5. Give each team a few minutes to develop their claim, accumulate evidence supporting or countering their position, explain their reasoning about the connections, and take notes in preparation for the debate.
6. Select a debate format and explain the procedure to students.



Teaching tip: In the early weeks and months, reviewing discussion norms is likely to be required routinely. Over time students will internalize the norms.



Debate resources are available on the WordGen website.



7. Debate the issue!

Rubrics for discussion and debate are available on the WordGen website.



Instructional Considerations:

- ✓ Debates in WordGen Weekly are planned classroom activities in which particular claims are discussed, and students plan together to present and defend their claim. The purpose is not winning or losing the debate; the purpose is to develop students' abilities to think through a set of claims or arguments in order to deepen their understanding and enhance their ability to learn.
- ✓ Many teachers create debate organizers or provide chart paper for students to write their arguments. This can serve as a pre-writing activity for the "take a stand" essay the next day.
- ✓ Discussion norms should be established early on to encourage student engagement and to make the class environment a safe place to discuss freely and to debate ideas. Some teachers have students participate in setting norms. At a minimum, discussion norms should establish expectations for respectful disagreement and establish practices that allow all students to participate. Post norms in the classroom as a reminder.
- ✓ During the debate, encourage students to share, clarify, and expand their thoughts using academically productive talk, and to listen and respond to the ideas of others.

HOW DAY 5 WORKS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

Students are encouraged to use focus words to construct their written argument.

UNIT 1.01

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

analyze | factor | function | interpret | structure

Students are given an opportunity to develop an argument based on the unit's question and use evidence accumulated during the week's activities to justify their reasoning.

Word Generation | Series 1A | Unit 1.01 | wordgeneration.org

Take a Stand

(Usually led by ELA teacher)

1. Review the displayed focus words.
2. Introduce the writing assignment.



Teaching tip: Students should use evidence to support their written argument. Possible sources of evidence are the launch passage, math activity, science activity, and debate.

3. Students write an essay taking a stand on the issue.



Instructional Considerations:

- ✓ The writing assignments can change throughout the year based on the needs of your students. Teachers have used WordGen Weekly writing assignments as quick-writes, free-writes, information pieces, letters, and argumentative writing pieces. The main goal of the writing assignment is for students to make a claim and justify that claim with evidence from the text using academic language.



A rubric for argumentative writing can be found on the WordGen website.



More resources available online! wordgen.serpmedia.org

> **Download Center for Students**

Students can access individual units for free (no registration necessary).

> **Download Center for Teachers (simple registration required)**

Teachers can access student materials and teacher editions for free. Both color and grayscale PDFs available.

> **Teacher Resources**

- Focus word vocabulary cards
- Information about academic language and vocabulary instruction
- Vocabulary assessments
- Activities to develop discussion and debate in the classroom
- Rubrics for discussion, debate, and argumentative writing
- Professional learning opportunities
- Interviews with the developers of the program
- Videos of Word Generation classrooms
- Topic lists
- Focus word lists

Much more!