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ABSTRACT

An adult educator in Butler, Pennsylvania, noticed that, although students who took the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) seemed highly motivated to improve their basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, only 2 of her 20 students who took the GATB made a concerted effort to develop their vocabulary. Thinking that those two students were a peer vocabulary-building team because they were brothers, the instructor undertook an action research project to increase students' vocabulary skills by using a peer vocabulary-building team system. During the 4-month study, the instructor had students spend 15 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team. Data were collected in three ways: field observations, interviews with team members, and pre- and posttests to measure vocabulary gains. Of the 16 students enrolled in the instructor's GATB preparation class, 12 participated in the peer vocabulary-building team system. After 4 months, all 12 students demonstrated word recognition gains ranging from 23% to 583%. (Attachments constituting approximately 60% of this document contain a chart detailing the 9 aptitudes measured by 12 tests in the GATB and a student vocabulary progress record.) (MN)

Action Research Monograph

ED 440 226

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Peer Vocabulary Building Teams

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PRODUCT

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Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

While students taking the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) are highly motivated to improve basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from developing vocabulary skills. This study is an effort to increase vocabulary skills by using a peer vocabulary building team system. Every student participating in this system increased word recognition from between twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent.

II. PROBLEM

I work part-time as an ABE/GED instructor for Midwestern IU IV at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church on McKean Street in Butler. Class meets on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and operates from mid September to the end of May. The setting is rural.

Two of the county's largest industrial employers are the Armco Steel Corporation and the Penreco Oil Refinery. Both of these companies use Job Family 4 of the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) as one of the major criteria for interviewing and hiring new staff and have designated the Butler Job Center to serve as their GATB testing site. Test dates for the GATB test are scheduled several times each year. If a prospective employee does not earn a high enough score in Job Family 4 of the test to warrant an interview with these companies, he/she is given an opportunity to take one retest.

The Job Service refers most of the students who attend my class. They already have their high school diploma and, in many cases, have completed some kind of post high school training program. They come to class for the specific purpose of improving their skills and getting a better score on the GATB.

While students are highly motivated to improve their basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from working to develop their vocabulary skills. Since the ability to identify synonyms and antonyms is part of the score for Job Family 4, their test results would improve if they would devote some study time increasing their vocabulary.

In case the reader is unfamiliar with the GATB, a short overview of the test follows: The GATB measures nine aptitudes using twelve 6-minute tests. Seventy three percent of the score for Job Family 4 includes the scores from the verbal, numerical (arithmetic reason & computation),

and spatial aptitudes. The remaining 27% of the score in Job Family 4 include mark making, manual dexterity (placing and turning), and finger dexterity (assemble and disassemble). I have included a chart that names the twelve aptitudes and a breakdown of the aptitudes included in each of the five Job Families as Attachment A.

The people who want to work for Armco and Penreco probably have a higher aptitude for and are more interested in solving numerical, mechanical, and three dimensional problems because they went the to job center to secure a technical or manufacturing job. During our intake interview, most of these students share that they are not avid readers.

Students who study vocabulary might get a better score in Job Family 4 of the GATB and would increase their chances of receiving an interview for a job at Armco or Penreco.

I am always trying to improve my teaching methods. If I could find a way to encourage students who want to improve their GATB scores to study and improve their vocabulary, I would become a better ABE teacher.

III. PLANNING

In addition to completing all of the basic intake forms for program accountability, I administer the math section of the TABE locator test followed by the appropriate math level of Form 7 of the complete battery of the TABE test. The information provided from the TABE Individual Diagnostic Style Form serves as a guide in each student's individual education plan, and I use a variety of study aids to develop math and spatial relations skills. One of the most useful and popular study tools is the GATB study curriculum, which was developed in 1991 by Marilyn Gentzler and Debra Hudson at the Centre County Vocational Technical School.

Rationale for what I plan to do: Approximately twenty students who have attended classes at Saint Andrew's took their GATB retest on October 16. Although each of these students knew that improving his vocabulary skills would, in turn, improve his score in Job Family 4, only two brothers made a concerted effort to increase their sight vocabulary. Following one of my suggestions, they made flash cards to quiz each other on word recognition. Their efforts paid off, and they both came back to class after the test to let me know how much easier the vocabulary section of the test was after they had studied together. In fact, the Job Center noticed such a drastic improvement that they called me to ask what these two students did to improve their vocabulary

scores.

These brothers had a built-in peer vocabulary building team. Since their scores improved so much after using flash cards, I thought, why not create peer vocabulary building teams in my class and see what happens?

I will begin the project when students return to class on January 4, 1998. I will stop collecting data on April 30.

Methods used to collect the data

Field notes, interviews with students who work in a vocabulary building team, and tests of learner performance (pre- and post-test of vocabulary gains).

Baseline

Before we start using peer vocabulary building teams, students will mark the number of words they know from the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests. Unfortunately, I don't remember where I found this list, but I have used it for years, and students have found it most helpful. (See Attachment B)

Criteria for success

After fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team, students will realize at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests.

Constraints

The Job Center cannot announce the date of the next GATB test until approximately three weeks before the test is actually scheduled. Since my class operates on an open enrollment basis, some students may not attend enough classes to participate in fifteen 30-minute study sessions. If this happens, I will still administer a post-test and note the number of study sessions they attended.

Approval

My supervisor Elaine Nagel has already given her approval to this project.

I will explain the rationale for using the peer vocabulary building team system and ask students to participate in the project. Students are regularly pre- and post-tested in other content areas, and they are generally receptive to any study aid we use in class. I'm confident that most, if not all, students will respond favorably to participating in this research.

Colleagues to discuss and evaluate work

Elaine Nagel, my supervisor Dan LaPorte, the counselor for my class and Charlene Fleming, an instructor who works with me on Thursday evenings.

Problem statement

Will every student who attend ABE classes to study for the GATB test show at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests after fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team?

IV. ACTION/ RESULTS

Sixteen students registered in my class to study for the GATB test. Four students did not complete a vocabulary recognition post-test. Two of these students did not want to work on a vocabulary building team. I think that the reason why they declined to study with the group is that they were embarrassed that they didn't know many of the words. Both of these students took a copy of the definitions home with them, but I'm not certain if they studied the words. Another student completed the pre-test, but he didn't come to class regularly and did not study with a team. The last student who did not complete the post-test knew almost all of the words when he took the pre-test and decided to devote his class time to studying for the math sections of the GATB.

Following is a chart to show student achievement:

| NAME | Vocabulary Team Sessions | Pre-Test Score | Post-Test Score | % of Increase | Study at Home? |
|---------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Eric | 5 | 116 | 143 | 23% | No |
| Shawn | 9 | 58 | 111 | 91% | No |
| Brian | 4 | 28 | 90 | 221% | Yes |
| Larry | 3 | 91 | 173 | 90% | Yes |
| James | 16 | 6 | 41 | 583% | No |
| Terry | 1 | 230 | DNF | N/A | N/A |
| Lenny | 5 | 140 | 190 | 35% | Yes |
| Charles | none | DNF | DNF | N/A | N/A |
| Rob | 5 | 84 | 117 | 39% | No |
| Rhonda | 10 | 75 | 121 | 61% | No |
| Jim | none | DNF | DNF | N/A | N/A |
| Randy | 14 | 41 | 217 | 429% | Yes |
| Kris | 8 | 44 | 121 | 175% | Yes |
| Ron | 5 | 33 | 73 | 121% | No |
| Jay | 2 | 70 | DNF | N/A | N/A |
| Lisa | 10 | 85 | 159 | 87% | Yes |

Every student who participated in the Vocabulary Building Teams increased his word recognition skills by twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent. In addition, students laughed more. They came to class more often and became cheerleaders for their team members. Many students who studied their words at home got their families involved in their learning. They were proud of themselves for their accomplishments. They felt more confident about taking the GATB test.

V. REFLECTION

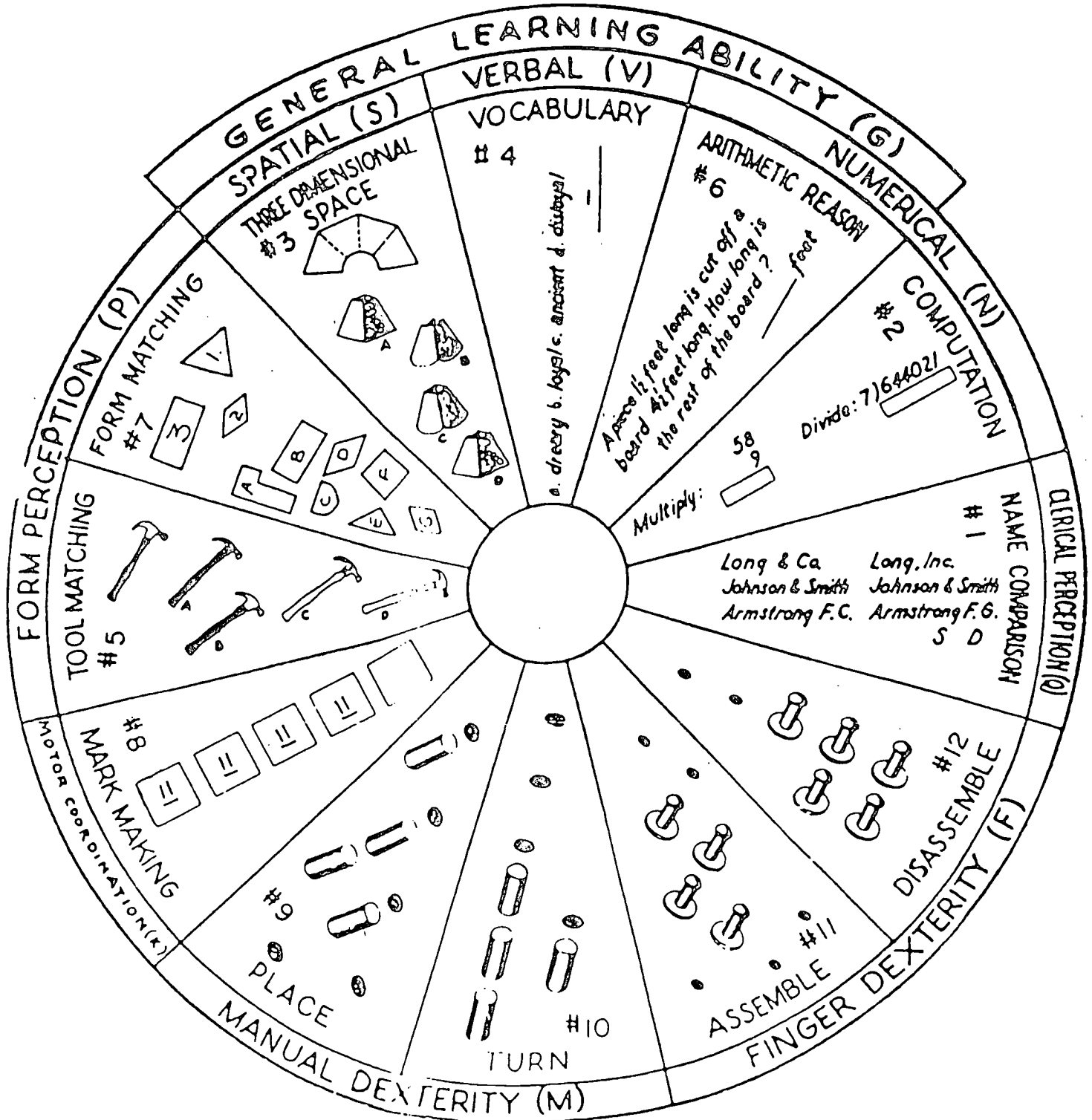
This project illustrates the theory of Occum's Razor that states the simplest solution is usually the best. Although students did not have enough time to participate in fifteen sessions with their peer vocabulary team, they all learned new words, and they had fun in the process.

However, I would do one thing differently. Just because students learned the meanings of new words does not guarantee that their GATB test scores would improve. The verbal section of the GATB test measures, not only a person's ability to recognize the definitions of words, but also his ability to identify pairs of synonyms and antonyms.

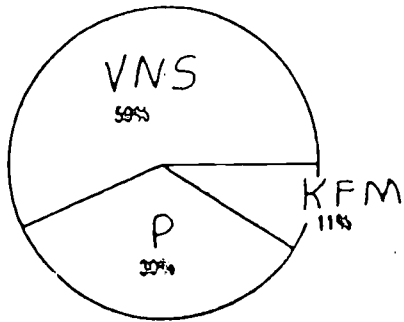
Since I am confident that students will work in teams, I have asked my supervisor, Elaine Nagel, to purchase some vocabulary building study aides for next year that focus on synonym and antonym identification. I can see two benefits from using these books next year. First, students will be able to learn words and practice using them as they will appear on their GATB test. Second, those students who shied away from working on a peer vocabulary team might be more inclined to participate if they also had a workbook to use.

All of the students came together to make this project successful. Next year, I hope that I will be able to document the same student achievement when I add vocabulary workbooks to the recipe of peer vocabulary teams.

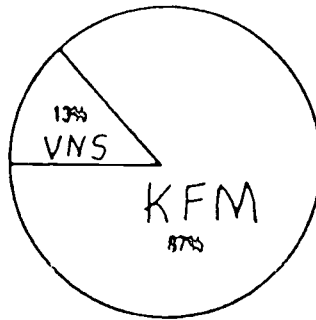
NINE APTITUDES MEASURED BY TWELVE TESTS IN THE GENERAL APTITUDE TEST BATTERY B-1002



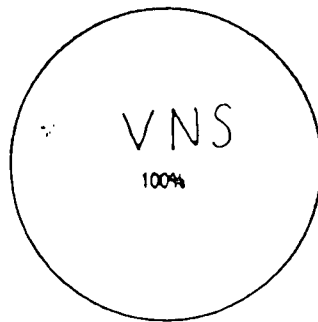
JOB FAMILY 1
Set-up Jobs



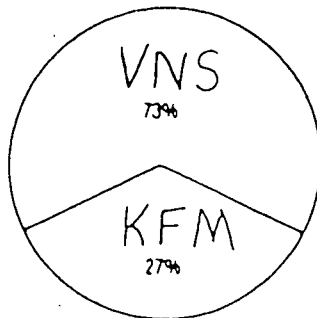
JOB FAMILY 2
Feeding-Offbearing Jobs



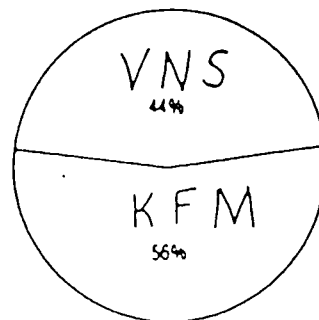
JOB FAMILY 3
Professional & Supervisory Jobs



JOB FAMILY 4
Skilled Trades & Clerical Jobs



JOB FAMILY 5
Semi-Skilled Jobs



ATTACHMENT B

Name _____

Date

Date

_____ oblivious

_____ indifferent

_____ obscure

_____ ostentatious

_____ objective

_____ contentious

_____ revere

_____ reprove

_____ discriminate

_____ pessimism

_____ embellish

_____ cursory

_____ denounce

_____ profligate

_____ innovate

_____ miser

_____ stagnant

_____ jocular

_____ candid

_____ fracas

_____ impartial

_____ caricature

_____ discern

_____ corroborate

_____ vulnerable

_____ precarious

_____ hypocritical

_____ expository

_____ eccentric

_____ bolster

_____ disdain

_____ daunt

_____ abstract

_____ apathy

_____ valid

_____ ambiguous

_____ subtle

_____ fervent

_____ enigma

_____ vagrant

_____ inevitable

_____ undermine

_____ inferred

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|
| _____ | _____ diverse | _____ | _____ prodigal |
| _____ | _____ articulate | _____ | _____ assess |
| _____ | _____ apprehensive | _____ | _____ deter |
| _____ | _____ benevolent | _____ | _____ complacent |
| _____ | _____ virulent | _____ | _____ contempt |
| _____ | _____ pious | _____ | _____ eloquent |
| _____ | _____ skeptical | _____ | _____ virtue |
| _____ | _____ provincial | _____ | _____ vital |
| _____ | _____ resignation | _____ | _____ guile |
| _____ | _____ illuminate | _____ | _____ biased |
| _____ | _____ resolution | _____ | _____ censor |
| _____ | _____ servile | _____ | _____ monotonous |
| _____ | _____ diligent | _____ | _____ trivial |
| _____ | _____ refute | _____ | _____ profound |
| _____ | _____ anarchy | _____ | _____ enhance |
| _____ | _____ miser | _____ | _____ phenomenon |
| _____ | _____ discord | _____ | _____ enduring |
| _____ | _____ inclined | _____ | _____ advocate |
| _____ | _____ perceptive | _____ | _____ solitude |
| _____ | _____ superficial | _____ | _____ tentative |
| _____ | _____ lucid | _____ | _____ contemporary |
| _____ | _____ immune | _____ | _____ provocative |
| _____ | _____ aesthetic | _____ | _____ adversary |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| _____ | _____grave | _____ | _____elusive |
| _____ | _____banal | _____ | _____facilitate |
| _____ | _____depravity | _____ | _____static |
| _____ | _____temper | _____ | _____ironic |
| _____ | _____censure | _____ | _____irrational |
| _____ | _____extol | _____ | _____dogmatic |
| _____ | _____indulgent | _____ | _____flagrant |
| _____ | _____erratic | _____ | _____frivolous |
| _____ | _____insipid | _____ | _____taciturn |
| _____ | _____euphony | _____ | _____infamous |
| _____ | _____antagonism | _____ | _____redundant |
| _____ | _____arbitrary | _____ | _____authoritarian |
| _____ | _____austere | _____ | _____exhaustive |
| _____ | _____expedite | _____ | _____reticent |
| _____ | _____heresy | _____ | _____fervor |
| _____ | _____compromise | _____ | _____scanty |
| _____ | _____condescend | _____ | _____dispassionate |
| _____ | _____fallacious | _____ | _____pragmatic |
| _____ | _____intangible | _____ | _____didactic |
| _____ | _____arrogant | _____ | _____deference |
| _____ | _____compatible | _____ | _____alleviate |
| _____ | _____dubious | _____ | _____vacillate |
| _____ | _____solicit | _____ | _____endorse |

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------------|
| _____ | _____ conspicuous | _____ | _____ relevant |
| _____ | _____ negligence | _____ | _____ incoherent |
| _____ | _____ ephemeral | _____ | _____ mitigate |
| _____ | _____ relegate | _____ | _____ reprehensible |
| _____ | _____ futile | _____ | _____ augment |
| _____ | _____ condone | _____ | _____ engender |
| _____ | _____ tranquility | _____ | _____ deride |
| _____ | _____ dissent | _____ | _____ acclaim |
| _____ | _____ conciliate | _____ | _____ lethargic |
| _____ | _____ incessant | _____ | _____ fanatic |
| _____ | _____ disparity | _____ | _____ novel |
| _____ | _____ disparage | _____ | _____ solemn |
| _____ | _____ conventional | _____ | _____ ambivalent |
| _____ | _____ rigor | _____ | _____ indolence |
| _____ | _____ profuse | _____ | _____ benign |
| _____ | _____ expedient | _____ | _____ tedious |
| _____ | _____ fastidious | _____ | _____ amiable |
| _____ | _____ prosaic | _____ | _____ laud |
| _____ | _____ philanthropy | _____ | _____ caustic |
| _____ | _____ languid | _____ | _____ atrophy |
| _____ | _____ astute | _____ | _____ meander |
| _____ | _____ authentic | _____ | _____ instigate |
| _____ | _____ brevity | _____ | _____ heed |

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|
| _____ | _____ virtuoso | _____ | _____ orthodox |
| _____ | _____ predecessor | _____ | _____ innate |
| _____ | _____ deplete | _____ | _____ preclude |
| _____ | _____ compliant | _____ | _____ efface |
| _____ | _____ inadvertent | _____ | _____ marred |
| _____ | _____ acquiesce | _____ | _____ ameliorate |
| _____ | _____ levity | _____ | _____ prodigious |
| _____ | _____ belittle | _____ | _____ concise |
| _____ | _____ extraneous | _____ | _____ immutable |
| _____ | _____ digress | _____ | _____ stoic |
| _____ | _____ emulate | _____ | _____ innocuous |
| _____ | _____ appease | _____ | _____ credulous |
| _____ | _____ sage | _____ | _____ blasphemy |
| _____ | _____ auspicious | _____ | _____ lax |
| _____ | _____ universal | _____ | _____ cryptic |
| _____ | _____ fickle | _____ | _____ hinder |
| _____ | _____ furtive | _____ | _____ esoteric |
| _____ | _____ remorse | _____ | _____ pretentious |
| _____ | _____ repress | _____ | _____ incongruous |
| _____ | _____ gullible | _____ | _____ unprecedented |
| _____ | _____ respite | _____ | _____ merger |
| _____ | _____ scrutinize | _____ | _____ pedestrian |
| _____ | _____ coalesce | _____ | _____ prudent |

_____ _____exemplary
_____ _____sycophant
_____ _____neutral
_____ _____rescind
_____ _____retract
_____ _____fundamental
_____ _____rejuvenate
_____ _____contrite
_____ _____exemplify
_____ _____nullify
_____ _____vilify
_____ _____hypothetical
_____ _____nostalgic
_____ _____assuage
_____ _____saccharine
_____ _____stanza
_____ _____jeopardy
_____ _____supercilious
_____ _____avarice
_____ _____pivotal
_____ _____blithe
_____ _____scrupulous



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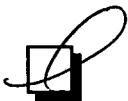


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