

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY GUIDES

Grades K-6

Read Alouds | Shared Reading | Small Group Reading Instruction
| **Vocabulary** | Fluency | Writing | Phonological Awareness |
Phonics | Oral Language | Independent Reading

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OVERVIEW

Vocabulary development is an unconstrained skill, that is, it continues to develop throughout our lifetime. Our vocabulary is a reflection of our background or world knowledge, as well as exposure to words. It includes our knowledge and understanding of morphemes.

The National Reading Panel Report (2000) states that, "Benefits in understanding text by applying letter-sound correspondences to printed material come about only if the target word is in the learner's oral vocabulary. When the word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, it will not be understood when it occurs in print" (p. 230). Vocabulary is intrinsically linked to our ability to comprehend all forms of text as well as to accurately express ourselves.

CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS

While vocabulary instruction has the potential to correlate to several Organizing Ideas, for this resource the one with the strongest correlation is Vocabulary.

Vocabulary Organizing Idea:

Communication and comprehension are improved by understanding word meaning and structures.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children develop vocabulary through a variety of literacy experiences.
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze word formation and meaning.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students expand vocabulary by connecting morphemes and words to their meanings.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze new words and morphemes to enhance vocabulary.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students expand vocabulary and analyze morphemes to communicate in multiple contexts.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students analyze how knowledge of vocabulary supports meanings and use of language.

- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students evaluate how vocabulary enhances communication and provides clarity.

THE ROLE OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Our vocabulary knowledge often reflects the concepts to which we have developed some background knowledge. Often vocabulary is a label for a concept. Fisher and Frey (2023) say, "As our experiences grow, so does the terminology that we use to understand and share those experiences" (p. 1).

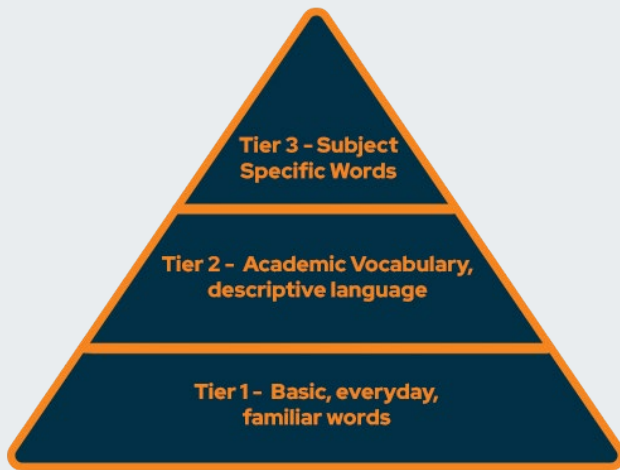
How can we build background knowledge?

- Content area subjects are critical to the development of background knowledge. Students learn about the world through science and social studies.
- Reading aloud to students and videos can expand on students' knowledge to topics they may not be familiar with.
- Create experiences for students through field trips - in-person or virtual, demonstrations, guest speakers.
- Try a strategy like List-Group-Label as you begin to learn about a curricular topic. This is a strategy that can be used in all grades. In a group or individually, a list of words about the topic are generated. After the list is created, groups organize the words into categories. Decide on labels for the categories. There are no right or wrong answers, the important thing is the explanation of why they were grouped together. For more information check out the following: <https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/list-group-label>

CHOOSING WORDS TO TEACH

It is estimated that six year olds have a spoken vocabulary of 6,000 words (Cairns, 1996), and that by the end of grade eight students have a reading vocabulary of 25 000 words, by grade twelve 50,000 words (Graves, 2006). It would be impossible to explicitly teach 2,000–3,000 words per year, so we must have a way to determine which words will be explicitly taught as well as teaching students how to learn new words on their own.

Tier 2 & 3 Words:



Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (2ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Tier 1 words may be referred to as general vocabulary. They are the everyday words we use in conversations and rarely need instruction.

Tier 2 words are used in literature and across academic disciplines. They may also be words with multiple meanings. Often they are needed to complete tasks.

Tier 3 words are the technical words associated with specific content areas.

Explicit instruction is needed for tier 2 and 3 words.

Criteria for Choosing Words for Instruction

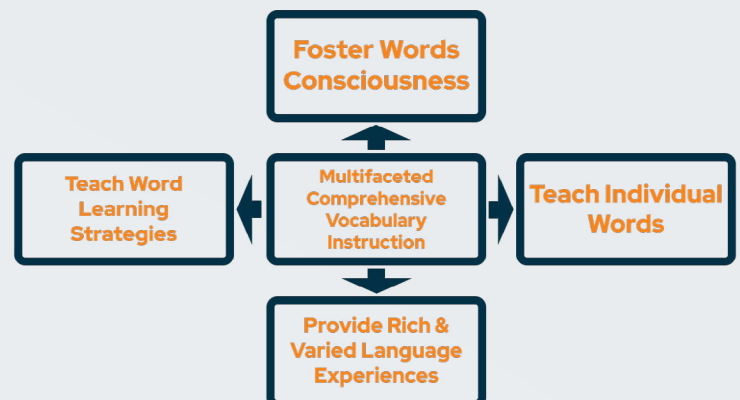
Fisher and Frey (2023), present some considerations for choosing words for explicit instruction: representation, repeatability, and transportability. If you answer yes to the following questions, you likely need to teach the word:

Representation	Is the word representative of a family of words that students should know? Is the concept represented by the word critical to understanding the text? Is the word a label for an idea that students need to know? Does the word represent an idea that is essential for understanding another concept? Does the word represent a shade of meaning or a more precise/mature way to describe a concept/topic that students already have familiarity with?
Repeatability	Is the word used again in the text? If so, does the word occur often enough to be redundant? Will the word be used again during the school year?
Transportability	Will the word be used in group discussions? Will the word be used in writing tasks? Will the word be used in other content or subject areas?

(Fisher & Frey, 2023, p. 14)

KEY INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS

Cobb and Blachowicz (2014) have created a “multifaceted comprehensive vocabulary instruction” framework.



Cobb, C. & Blachowicz, X. (2014). *No more “Look up the ist” vocabulary instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Providing a language rich environment allows for implicit word learning through read alouds, independent reading, and discussions. We need to ensure that students have opportunity to talk and write using their newly acquired vocabulary.

Fostering word consciousness is two fold: students know when they don't understand a word and they are always on the lookout for new and interesting words. Knowledge of morphology, etymology, and the interrelationships of words supports word consciousness.

We need to teach students how to learn new words independently. This involves using context clues and morphology to figure out words.

There are words that require explicit instruction. Teaching new words should be active.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ACTIVE WORD LEARNING

Marzano's Six-Step Process for Teaching New Terms



Retrieved from:

<https://www.teachthought.com/literacy/building-academic-vocabulary/>

One of the best ways to explicitly teach a new vocabulary word is through Robert Marzano's "Six-Step Process."

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term. It is also beneficial for many students to provide a non-linguistic representation of the term.
2. Ask students to restate the description,

explanation, or example in their own words.

3. Ask students to create a picture, symbol, or graphic representation of the word.
4. Engage students in periodic activities for review to reinforce and deepen their understanding of the word.
5. Provide students with opportunities to use the term in discussions with others.
6. Involve the students in games that allow them to play with the terms.

Concept Definition Map

A concept definition map is a structured word web. There are many examples of concept definition maps but there are commonalities among them. The three common components are:

- What is it?
- What's it like?
- What are some examples?

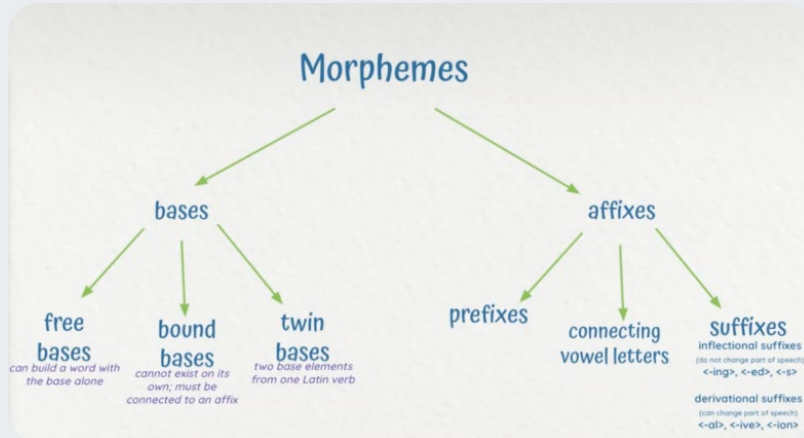
Context Clues

Fisher and Frey (2023, p. 40) have identified seven types of context clues that are worth teaching students to use as they are reading. They are:

1. Definition or explanation - the author explains the word right after it is used.
2. Restatement or synonym - the author may restate or use a synonym for the harder word. This often comes right after the word, but it may be separated.
3. Contrast or antonym - this type of context clue requires the reader to infer meaning from the antonym used.
4. Inference or description - in this type of clue, the word is not immediately clarified, but relationships are inferred. Clues may be before or after the word.
5. Comparison - comparisons involve clues that the reader uses to see how words are the same or similar to each other.
6. Examples or lists/series - the author may provide a list of examples or even non-examples that give the idea of the word's meaning.
7. Cause and effect - the reader determines the meaning of the word by inferring a cause-and-effect relationship.

MORPHOLOGY

Morphology is the study of words and their parts, often thought of as the base and affixes including spelling changes. They are the smallest units of words that have meaning.



Retrieved from: <https://aplc.ca/pd-resource/qmo/>

Instruction in morphology enables students to make meaning from many words once they understand the meaning of the parts. The study of morphology helps students understand terms in many content areas.

For strategies to teach morphology visit "Curriculum Resources" at www.aplc.ca

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS:

- If kids don't have the words and they don't have the literacy in their long term memory, they aren't able to access the curriculum. – Mike Ruyle
- Results from a 2012 study completed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—known as the Nation's Report Card—compared vocabulary scores and reading comprehension scores and found a tight correlation between vocabulary and comprehension. Students who scored high in comprehension also scored high on vocabulary. – Laura Robb
- Vocabulary is linked to general and conceptual knowledge development, and research has established a reciprocal relationship between the two. – Jennifer Serravallo

- Our job as reading teachers is to create an awareness of morphemes. This awareness will strengthen students' word recognition and spelling. It will also help students develop richer and deeper vocabularies and improve comprehension and writing. – Deb Glaser

DESIGNERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIPS

- Be sure not to choose too many words for explicit instruction. You don't want to overwhelm students.
- Create a root word wall as a reference for morphology. You can use your wall for review games like 20 questions.
- Choose texts to share with your students with interesting words. Remember words are learned both explicitly and implicitly.
- Point out morphemes that are used across content areas, for example – trans – transformation in Math, transportation in Social Studies, etc.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

- Students use words that have been taught in conversations and writing.
- Students' writing displays effective word choice.
- Students are able to use context to figure out words independently.
- Choose core instructional strategies. More isn't necessarily better. Students will do better with predictable routines rather than always changing things.

CHALLENGES

- It can be difficult to choose words. Avoid causing cognitive overload.
- Make application the goal rather than mastery of a list.
- Providing practice in context.

PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

When you are introducing a strategy for vocabulary or morpheme instruction, be sure to provide ample modelling and guided practice.

It can be beneficial for a school staff to decide upon a common language for tier 2 words like the verbs in the curriculum.

Assessment of vocabulary learning should be done in conjunction with the content students are learning as it is intertwined with comprehension and knowledge acquisition. One way to assess the use of specific vocabulary is through the use of a teacher checklist (Fisher & Frey, 2023, p. 138). The teacher notes when they notice students using terms in discussions (D), writing (W), and in tests (T). This can be done using a grid like this:

TERM	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
	DDWT	DW	WT	T

Analyzing student writing is another way to assess vocabulary and morpheme use. Matching terms and meanings, drawing a picture to represent a word, and concept definition maps are also good ways to assess vocabulary knowledge.

SEE IT IN ACTION



Vocabulary Instruction

Reading Rockets, April 25, 2014

Using Movement to Teach Vocabulary

Edutopia, March 17, 2023

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

ESU6PD, Feb. 1, 2012

Vocabulary Instruction 2nd Grade

Dr. Anita Archer, With Pearls of Wisdom, Feb. 18, 2013

Concept Definition Map

Dr. Andy Johnson, March 8, 2014

Concept Sort

Reading Rockets, July 1, 2011

Building Vocabulary

Alberta Professional Learning Consortium, April 11, 2024

Morphology Resources for Teachers

Alberta Professional Learning Consortium

RESOURCES

Auer, V. & Hartill, M. (2014). *Vocabulary now!: 44 strategies all teachers can use*. San Clemente, CA: Seidlitz Education, LLC.

Beck, I., McKeown, M., & Kukan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction 2e*. New York, NY: Guildford Press.

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2023). *The vocabulary playbook: Learning words that matter, grades K-12*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2023). *Teaching reading: A playbook for developing skilled readers through word recognition and language comprehension, grades PreK-6*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Glaser, D. (2024). *Morpheme magic: Lessons to build morphological awareness for grades 4-12*. Boise, ID: DG Publishing.

Hegland, S. S. (2021). *Beneath the surface of words: What English spelling reveals and why it matters*. Learning About Spelling.

Robb, L. (2015, June 30). Vocabulary is comprehension. <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2015/06/30/vocabulary-is-comprehension>

Serravallo, J. (2024). *Teaching reading across the day: Methods and structures for engaging, explicit instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

