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Meeting and Exceeding the Common Core State Standards for Vocabulary

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Vocabulary instruction has been a central concern of educators at least since the time of Edward Lee Thorndike, who began his long line of research on vocabulary more than 100 years ago. And rightly so! Having a substantial vocabulary is clearly important to students' success in school and to their continued success in the world beyond school. In this article, we describe a comprehensive vocabulary program that both meets and exceeds the vocabulary standards in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). We believe strongly that this comprehensive program is sufficiently powerful to assist all children in building the vocabularies they need. Before describing the program itself, in this introductory section we discuss the importance of vocabulary, the number of words students learn, and the influence of the CCSS on the vocabulary learning task students are likely to face in school.

The Importance of Vocabulary

Myriad facts, such as the following, testify to the importance of vocabulary:

- Vocabulary knowledge is one of the best indicators of verbal ability.
- Vocabulary knowledge in kindergarten and first grade is a significant predictor of reading comprehension in the middle and secondary grades.
- Vocabulary difficulty strongly influences the readability of text.
- Teaching vocabulary can improve reading comprehension for both native English speakers and English language learners (ELLs).

Additionally, vocabulary is identified as a vital component of reading instruction by major study groups in the United States such as the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), and the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

A particularly vivid portrayal of the plight faced by children who enter school with inadequate vocabularies, the cost to society of failing to help these children build their vocabularies and succeed in school, and the financial cost of current approaches to solving the problem was recently presented in a PBS report and is available at www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june11/readinessgap_04-05.html.

➡ For additional references on vocabulary, see Sources Testifying to the Importance of Vocabulary.

The Number of Words Students Learn

The Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 2009) lists more than 400,000 active words, and achieving students learn a substantial number of these words. Based on the work of Nagy and Herman (1987) and a number of other scholars, our best estimate is that typical students enter kindergarten with vocabularies of 5,000–10,000 words and graduate from high school with vocabularies of something like 50,000 words. This means that students are learning approximately 10 words a day.

➡ For additional references on vocabulary size, see Sources on the Size of Students' Vocabularies.

The Influence of the Common Core State Standards

Today's students learn a very substantial number of words. But tomorrow's students,

those in schools attempting to meet the CCSS, will face an even more challenging task. The Standards call for students to read more complex and challenging texts. They also call for students to read more informational texts, texts that contain vocabulary challenges different from those in the narrative texts that now predominate in schools (Hiebert & Cervetti, 2012). Moreover, they call for *all* students, not just *some* students as is the case today, to read challenging texts and deal with the challenging vocabulary those texts contain.

In addition to the call for more challenging text and more informational texts, the Standards put a great deal of emphasis directly on vocabulary. A sampling of the more important CCSS vocabulary standards includes the following:

- Acquiring and using accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases
- Understanding and dealing with nuances and connotations of words
- Mastering word learning strategies such as the use of context and word parts
- Mastering and dealing with vocabulary in reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Mastering and dealing with vocabulary in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects as well as in English language arts

For further information on the place of vocabulary in the CCSS, see the video available at engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-6-academic-vocabulary/ and the International Reading Association's *Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards* available at www.reading.org/general/aboutira/white-papers.aspx.

A Comprehensive Program to Help Students Meet the Standards

A vocabulary program that can assist students in meeting the high standards set in the CCSS must be a powerful one. More specifically, such a program must be multifaceted, long term, and implemented throughout the curriculum. Over the past two decades, Michael, the first author, has worked to describe such a program. It contains four components:

- Teaching individual words
- Teaching word learning strategies
- Providing rich and varied language experiences
- Fostering word consciousness

The program is described in the following four books and in a number of shorter writings: *The Vocabulary Book: Learning & Instruction* (Graves, 2006), *Teaching Individual Words: One Size Does Not Fit All* (Graves, 2009b), *Essential Readings on Vocabulary Instruction* (Graves, 2009a), and *Teaching Vocabulary to English Language Learners* (Graves, August, & Mancilla-Martinez, 2012). Additionally, Blachowicz, Baumann, Manyak, and Graves (2013) describe an Institute of Education Sciences–supported R & D program that follows the four-part framework in another IRA E-ssentials article entitled Flood, Fast, Focus: Integrated Vocabulary Instruction in the Classroom. In the remainder of this article, we briefly describe each of the four parts of the program.

For a list of additional sources on the four-part program, see Others Who Have Made Use of the Four-Part Program.

Teaching Individual Words

This aspect of vocabulary receives the greatest emphasis in the Standards. In discussing how to teach individual words, we consider characteristics of effective instruction and three levels or intensities of instruction—rich and powerful instruction, introductory instruction, and repetition and review.

Characteristics of Effective Instruction

Thanks to the insights of vocabulary scholars whose work was done decades ago (for example, Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986) to that of contemporary scholars (for example, Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013), we absolutely know how to most effectively teach individual words. The following shows components of increasingly powerful vocabulary instruction:

- Instruction that involves both definitions and the words in context is markedly stronger than instruction that involves only one of these.
- Instruction that also involves activating prior knowledge and comparing and contrasting meanings is stronger still.
- Even more robust instruction that also involves students in actively manipulating meanings, making inferences, searching for applications, and frequent encounters with the words and is still stronger.

Thus, if you want the strongest possible vocabulary instruction, you should design instruction that contains all of these elements. Unfortunately, instruction that contains all of these elements is extremely time-consuming. Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown (1982), for example, devoted approximately 20 minutes of instruction to each word they taught. Given the huge number of words students need to learn, we cannot use the strongest possible instruction with all of the words we teach.

Rich and Powerful Instruction

As noted, some words deserve rich and powerful instruction, but because of the time such instruction demands, you probably can only afford to use it with something like the 100–200 most important words you are teaching in a given year. Marzano's (2004) six-step procedure is one sturdy approach:

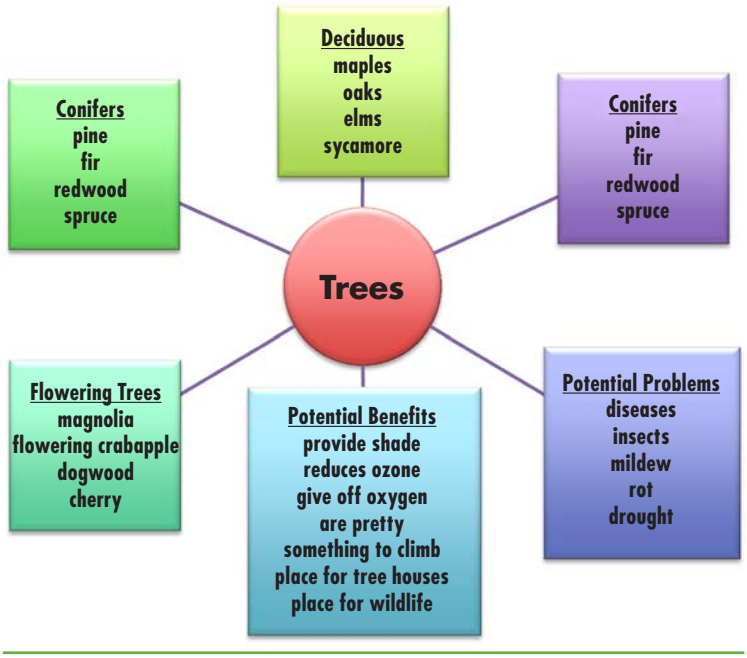
1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words or make personal observations and record these in notebooks.
3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the term and to add these to their notebooks.
4. Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their notebooks.
5. Ask students periodically to discuss the terms recorded in their notebooks with one another.
6. Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with the terms in their notebooks.

For an example of Marzano's instruction, see this PowerPoint presentation on Marzano's Six-Step Procedure.

Semantic mapping is another rich and powerful approach. This tried-and-true method is described at length in an IRA monograph (Heimlich & Pittelman, 1986) and has been successfully used by teachers for a number of years. See Figure 1 for an example of semantic mapping using the word *trees*. The following outlines a process for semantic mapping:

1. Put a word representing a central concept on the chalkboard, overhead, or LCD.
2. Ask students to work in groups, listing as many words related to the central concept as they can.

Figure 1. Semantic Map for the Word *Trees*



3. Write students' words on the chalkboard, overhead, or LCD, grouped in broad categories.
4. Have students name the categories and perhaps suggest additional ones.
5. Discuss with students the central concept, the other words, the categories, and their interrelationships.

For a description of robust instruction, see Robust Instruction—Another Approach to Rich and Powerful Instruction.

Introductory Instruction

For words other than the most important 100–200 that you teach, you are going to have to use less time-consuming procedures. The use of a definition, context, and a picture (Graves, 2006) is one example of such instruction. In Figure 2, we illustrate how students might be introduced to the term *solar system* using this method of instruction.

The brief explanation approach used by Baumann, Blachowicz, Manyak, Graves, and Olejnik (2009–2012) is another introductory method. With this method, the teacher briefly interrupts as she or a student reads a passage orally and provides a synonym or brief definition and a context. For example, in the following scenario, the class is reading an excerpt from Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and the teacher decides to give a brief explanation of the word *befall*:

> A student reads the following text from *Island*: "I must say that whatever might befall me on the endless waters did not trouble me." The teacher says, "*Befall* means 'to happen' or 'take place.' For example, we might say, 'Peng didn't know what would befall him when he entered the dark cave.' Or we could say, 'Peng didn't know what would happen to him when he entered the dark cave.'"

For additional approaches to introductory instruction, see this PowerPoint presentation on Introductory Instruction.

Repetition and Review

No matter how well you initially teach a word, if students are going to have the word as a permanent part of their vocabularies, repetition and review are crucial. Connect Two (Blachowicz, 1986) is a good example of a rehearsal technique. You first display two columns of words you have taught and want to review and then ask students to pick one word from each column and identify a relationship between the two (see Figure 3).

Considering what is perhaps the easiest pair first, one student might observe that you might find a *bayonet* on the end or a *musket*. Another student, one wishing to make a political comment, might suggest that the investment banker currently under indictment was *exposed* for the *cunning* thief he actually was.

For additional approaches to repetition and review see this PowerPoint presentation on Repetion and Review.

Teaching Word Learning Strategies

The use of word learning strategies is another approach to vocabulary instruction emphasized in the Standards. No matter how diligent you are

Figure 2. Introductory Instruction of the Term *Solar System*

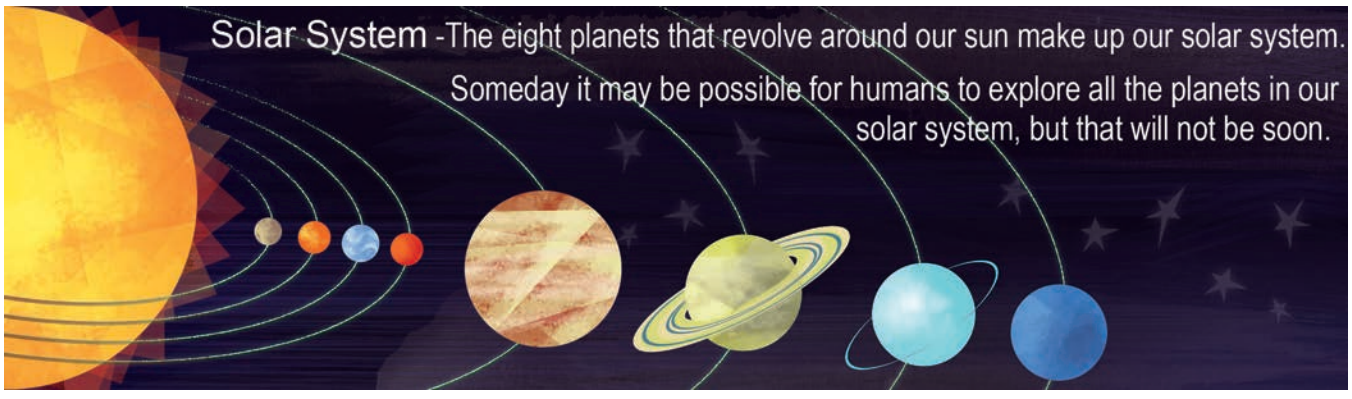
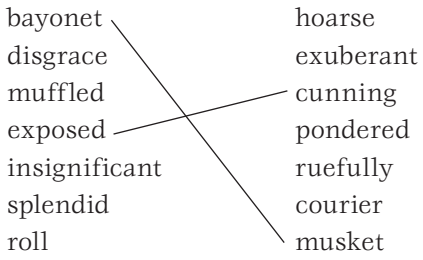


Figure 3. Connect Two



in teaching individual words, you will teach only a small fraction of the 3,000 or so words students must learn each year. Thus, developing students' word learning strategies—their proficiency at learning words on their own—is crucial. More specifically, all students need to learn to use word parts and context, as well as the dictionary and other reference tools to unlock the meanings of unknown words. Further, Spanish-speaking ELLs need to learn to make use of cognates, and all ELLs need to learn to deal with idioms.

It is also important to consider when to teach word learning strategies. The CCSS indicate that some work on context and word parts should begin in grades 1 and 2, and we would certainly include some work in those grades. However, at these grade levels, we would keep the instruction rather casual, informal, and brief. Beginning in grade 3, we would begin more formal instruction and teach all of the strategies. In an ideal world, initial instruction in word learning strategies would be concluded by grade 5. However, if older students have not had quality instruction in word learning strategies by grade 5, we need to provide it for them, regardless of their grade level.

As a basic instructional approach to teaching word learning strategies, we recommend direct explanation (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011). This widely researched approach involves the following:

- An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used
- Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action
- Collaborative use of the strategy in action
- Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility
- Independent use of the strategy

Effective as it is, direct instruction can be a bit brittle when used by itself. Thus, we suggest tempering it with more constructivist elements (Pressley, Harris, & Marks, 1992):

- Giving students opportunities to construct knowledge
- Explaining and discussing the value of strategies
- Working continually on transfer

➡ For a description of the components of instruction that combines direct explanation and more constructivist approaches, see Characteristics of Instruction That Combines Direct Explanation and More Constructive Approaches.

Over the past several years, we have been working on a federally funded project developing and testing a program to teach word learning strategies to 4th- and 5th-grade students (Graves, Sales, & Ruda, 2012). A description of the project and the results is available at www.wordlearningstrategies.com. Besides yielding formal results, the project yielded a good deal of informal information and led us to developing some guidelines for strategy instruction. The absolute necessity of motivation is one of the most important.

Gradually increasing the complexity of the task is another useful lesson we learned (see Figure 4).

➡ For additional lessons we learned, see this PowerPoint presentation on Additional Guidelines for Teaching Word Learning Strategies.

Providing Rich and Varied Language Experiences

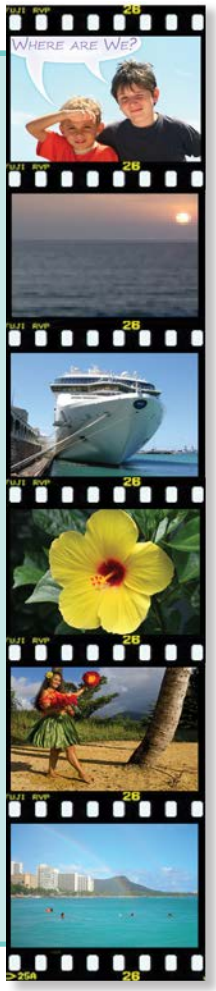
Providing rich and varied language experiences is not something directly discussed in the Standards, but it is an essential part of a comprehensive vocabulary program. If children are to develop the richest and fullest vocabularies possible, the sort of broad and deep word knowledge envisioned in the CCSS, they need to be in the richest possible

The Role of Motivation

Make motivation a prime concern. Students seldom come to school excited about learning to use context or word parts to figure out the meanings of unknown words. Thus, motivation is absolutely in order. Sometimes, we resort to extrinsic motivation. For example, we include three superheroes that act as guides for students. One superhero represents context clues, one represents word parts, and one represents the dictionary. We include representations of these superheroes in student materials and in colorful posters such as this one.

At other times, we are able to use more intrinsic motivation. For example, we begin a unit on teaching context with slides illustrating how context, in this case visual context, supports inferences. In doing so, we present the slides in the margin one at a time, preceding the slides with the question "Where am I?" and asking students not to shout out the answer but to jot down their response in a notebook once they have made the inference.

After showing the slides and after students have identified the destination—which is, of course, Hawaii—we discuss with the class the clues in the pictures, how students were able to use the clues to make an inference about the destination, and the fact that the process or inferring word meanings from verbal context is similar in many ways.



word learning environment. The language experiences children need include both experiences for all students and supplementary experiences for students who arrive at school with very small vocabularies.

Experiences for All Students

All students need to be continually immersed in a word-rich environment. This means having lots of books and other reading material, invitingly displayed, on various topics, at various reading levels. It also means having words prominently displayed on a word wall, at other points around the room, on the teacher's desks, on word cards, in the library, in the halls, and even at home. And it means creating a nurturing environment in which children are encouraged to experiment with new words and language without fear of criticism or embarrassment.

Figure 4. Gradually Increasing the Complexity of the Task

With word parts, you might move from

Inflections ⇨ Prefixes ⇨ Derivational Suffixes ⇨ Non-English Roots

With cognates, you might move from

English and Spanish words spelled identically: animal/animal

Spanish word differs by adding a single letter: experiment/experimento

Spanish word differs in that more than one letter is changed: activity/actividad

Spanish word differs at both the beginning and the end: student/estudiante

With texts, you might move from

Word Parts ⇨ Words ⇨ Sentences ⇨ Paragraphs ⇨ Complete Texts

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Experiences for Students With Very Small Vocabularies

Students who arrive at school with very small vocabularies certainly need all of the aforementioned experiences. Additionally, they need experiences that will accelerate their word learning so that they can catch up with their peers. The most thoroughly researched approach to increasing the vocabularies of young children with very small vocabularies is one that is often called *shared book reading*, which generally includes the following characteristics:

- It involves several readings of a number of short selections
- It focuses students' attention on words
- It deliberately stretches students' thinking and scaffolds their efforts
- It employs carefully selected words and books

Recently, we developed an individualized, web-based version of the approach to teach grades 1–4 students with very small vocabularies the first 4,000 most frequent English words (Graves & Sales, 2008; Sales & Graves, 2008). These words make up about 80% of the words in a typical text and an even larger percentage of the words in a text for beginning readers.

The following four panels of Figure 5 show an excerpt from James Giblin's *Charles A. Lindberg: A Human Hero*, a biography written for upper elementary students, and the words a student would know if he or she knew 500, 1,000, 2,000, or all of the 4,000 words.

As can be seen from the four panels, with some help from the teacher and context, students who know all 4,000 words are in a position to understand the text, while students

Figure 5. Four Panels Identifying Words Students Would Know Using *Charles A. Lindberg: A Human Hero* (Giblin, 1997)

Knowing only the 500 most frequent words, a student could read only the words shown here.

Could it be an _____? The year before, _____ had seen one for the first time when his mother took him to a _____ _____ in _____, _____ _____. He had _____, _____, as the _____ a _____ by _____ on the _____ of a _____ that was _____ on the _____. Now _____ an _____ was right here in _____, and about to _____ over his house. Not _____ to _____ a thing, _____ the _____ and _____ up the _____ of the house to its _____. From there he had a good _____ of the _____, _____ the _____ place. And in the _____, _____ ever_____, he saw the _____.

Knowing the 1,000 most frequent words, a student could read only the words shown here.

Could it be an _____? The year before, _____ had seen one for the first time when his mother took him to a _____ in _____, _____. He had watched, _____, as the _____ gave a _____ by _____ on the _____ of a _____ that was _____ on the ground. Now maybe an _____ was right here in _____, and about to _____ over his house. Not _____ to _____ a thing, _____ opened the window and _____ up the _____ of the house to its _____. From there he had a good view of the _____ River, _____ past the _____ place. And in the sky, coming ever _____, he saw the _____.

Knowing the 2,000 most frequent words, a student could read only the words shown here.

Could it be an airplane? The year before, Charles had seen one for the first time when his mother took him to a flying _____ in _____, Virginia. He had watched, _____, as the _____ gave a _____ by _____ oranges on the _____ of a _____ that was _____ on the ground. Now maybe an airplane was right here in _____, and about to fly over his house. Not _____ to _____a thing, Charles opened the window and climbed up the _____ roof of the house to its _____. From there he had a good view of the _____ River, _____ past the _____ place. And in the sky, coming ever closer, he saw the plane.

Knowing the 4,000 most frequent words, a student could read all the words shown here except those italicized.

Could it be an airplane? The year before, Charles had seen one for the first time when his mother took him to a flying *exhibition* in Fort Myer, Virginia. He had watched, *enthralled,* as the pilot gave a bombing *demonstration* by dropping oranges on the outline of a *battleship* that was traced on the ground. Now maybe an airplane was right here in Minnesota, and about to fly over his house. Not wanting to miss a thing, Charles opened the window and climbed up the sloping roof of the house to its peak. From there he had a good view of the Mississippi River, flowing *languidly* past the *Lindbergh* place. And in the sky, coming ever closer, he saw the plane (p. 3).

who do not know all 4,000 words are much less likely to understand it.

The online program we developed to teach these 4,000 essential words uses a multimedia system to diagnose individual students' knowledge of the most frequent words and begins teaching unknown words at the level at which the student knows about 90% of them. The words are ordered by frequency, from the most frequent ones (e.g., *little*, *even*, *good*, *long*), to middle frequency ones (e.g., *file*, *boots*, *reflect*, *custom*), to the least frequent ones (e.g., *abuse*, *generous*, *excessive*, *arteries*). Figure 6 shows panels of a preassessment item (the student hears the word *knee* and clicks the appropriate picture), the Cozy Cave (the setting where the reading takes place), and one of several games that provide practice on the words taught (in this case, *knee*).

A full description of the program, the words themselves, and a demo are available at www.thefirst4000words.com.

For brief descriptions of some other shared book reading programs available, see Other Shared Book Reading Programs.

Fostering Word Consciousness

Fostering word consciousness is another part of a comprehensive vocabulary program not directly considered in the Standards. It is, however, another part of a curriculum that helps children build really strong vocabularies, vocabularies that enable them to understand and deal with "nuances and connotations of words" (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). If students are to become sensitive to nuances and connotations of words and develop the most powerful vocabularies possible, they need to become interested and intrigued by words. The term *word consciousness* refers to an awareness of and interest in words and their meanings (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). Word consciousness integrates metacognition about words, motivation to learn words, and deep and lasting interest in words.

Although fostering word consciousness differs from grade to grade, doing so is vital at all grade levels because only if students are interested in and excited about words are they likely to achieve the very substantial vocabularies the need. Fortunately, although there are some time-consuming word consciousness activities, for the most part fostering word consciousness does not take a lot of your time or your students' time. Susan Watts-Taffe and one of us (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2008) have discussed six types of word consciousness activities. We briefly describe these six types in the following sections.

Figure 6. Screens From The First 4,000 Words

Treehouse Preassessment

Cozy Cave Reading Room

Vocabulary Game

Creating a Word-Rich Environment

A word-rich environment is one in which words and books are prominently displayed and students are invited and encouraged to read widely in a variety of narrative and informational texts. Importantly, the books available in the classroom should span a range of difficulties. A second-grade classroom, for example, might include Arnold Lobels's *Frog and Toad Together*, James Marshall's *George and Martha*, Lisa Lunge-Larsen's *The Race of the Birkebeiners*, and Peter Sís's *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*.

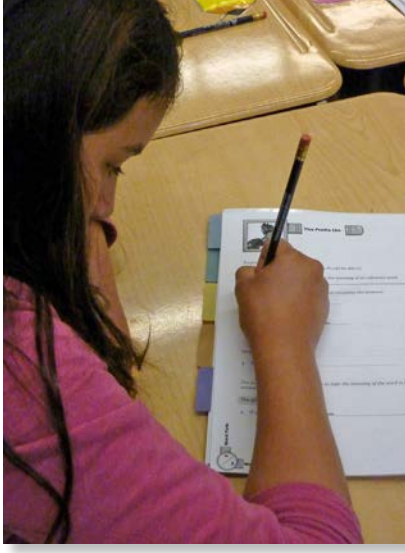
Recognizing and Promoting Adept Diction

The goal here is to heighten students' interest in words by using some sophisticated words yourself, pointing out adept word choices authors make, and recognizing adept word choices kids make. *Humane* and *enterprise* are examples of sophisticated words you might use with 4th and 5th graders. *Sequestered* and *daunting* might be pointed out as sophisticated word choices used by authors of middle-grade material. And you would certainly want to compliment the first grader who announces that she heard a train *rumbling* through town on the way to school.

Promoting Word Play

Anything you can do to get students actively playing with words is likely to prove fruitful. Word play might involve rhymes, puns, riddles, homophones, synonyms, antonyms, crosswords, and hink pinks. Here, for example, is a homophone teaser taken from Richard Lederer's (1996) *Pun and Games: Jokes, Riddles, Daffynitions, Tairy Fales, Rhymes, and More Word Play for Kids*, an excellent resource:

> In the blanks below, insert a word that means the same as the words before and after. The number of dashes indicates the number of letters in the missing word.
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | Spinning Toy | _ _ _ | Summit |
> | Student | _ _ _ _ _ | Part of the Eye |
> | Deep Hole | _ _ _ | Fruit Stone |
> | Even Contest | _ _ _ | Neckware |
> | King and Queen | _ _ _ _ _ | Measuring Stick |



Fostering Word Consciousness Through Writing

Writing is an extremely powerful context for fostering word consciousness because writing is relatively permanent, not fleeting like speech. When students revise and polish their writing, they have an excellent and authentic opportunity to consider word choices. For example, if a student is describing something that is not small, you might suggest the options *big*, *large*, *huge*, *gigantic*, *enormous*, *gargantuan*, and any other "large" or "very large" words students suggest and discuss with the class whether there are any differences in the meanings of these words and in what situation they might choose one over another.

One very useful tool for fostering word consciousness in writing is a checklist like the following one, which gives students a procedure for considering the word choices in their writing.

- Is this the best word to get across my meaning?
- Is the word precise?
- Is it a word whoever reads my writing will know?
- Is it a word whoever reads my writing will find interesting?
- Have I used the word too much? Should I use a synonym?
- Is the word appropriately formal or informal?

Involving Students in Original Investigations

Because words surround us both in the classroom and in our everyday lives, they serve as an easily accessed object of study. Elementary or middle grade students, for example, might enjoy studying the many names family members use in referring to each other. One of us (Michael), for example, is somewhat unfortunately called "Big Pa" by his

grandchildren (a somewhat derisive term that he suspects was coined by a certain son-in-law). Students can collect and then share the terms they use in referring to their brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives and caregivers. As students share their terms, you can celebrate the variety of terms turned in, note that the diversity of terms reflects the diversity of our culture, and perhaps share some of the terms you or people you know use for their family members.

Teaching Students About Words

The last category of word consciousness activities is somewhat different from the others in that it is more academic and formal. Gaining some knowledge about words as a part of becoming word consciousness was suggested by Nagy and Scott (2000) and seems well worthwhile.

For example, it is important for students to realize that many words have more than one meaning, and that as a consequence when they look up a word in the dictionary they need to consider the context in which they encountered the word. As another example, it is worth students' deliberately recognizing that words affect people differently and are differentially appropriate in different contexts. There are some words that are perhaps acceptable to use on the playground but that have no place in the classroom or a formal essay.

This has been a brief discussion of word consciousness, and there is a lot more that could be said.

For a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the topic, see Fostering Word Consciousness in K–5 Classrooms.

Where to Go From Here

Where you go from here depends on whether you have sufficient information for your purposes, want to know more about the four-part program, or want to get other perspectives on vocabulary instruction. If you are satisfied with the information you have, then the first place to go is to wherever you do your planning, and the second place to go is to your classroom to implement a comprehensive vocabulary program that can assist your students in learning the 50,000 words they need to meet and exceed the Common Core State Standards and succeed in school.

As you consider planning, one thing to keep in mind is that the broader the agreement among the teachers in your school—even better, the broader the agreement in your district—the stronger your vocabulary program will be. Tasks such as deciding which words to teach when and deciding which word learning strategies to teach when become much more meaningful when there is coordination across teachers, grades, and schools.

If you want to learn more about the four-part program, see Additional Sources of Information on the Four-Part Vocabulary Program. If you want to know more about vocabulary instruction in general, see Three Useful Books on Vocabulary Instruction.

Note

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Sources Testifying to the Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary as a Predictor of Verbal Ability

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Others Who Have Made Use of the Four-Part Program

Baumann and Kame'enui (2004), Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006), Kame'enui and Baumann (2012), and Stahl and Nagy (2006) use similar frameworks. Baumann, Ware, and Edwards (2007) validated the program in a small-scale study. It served as the framework for a multifaceted study completed by August and Snow (2008–2012) and was validated in a substantial study by Baumann et al. (2009–2012).

August, D., & Snow, C. (2008–2012). *Vocabulary instruction and assessment for Spanish speakers.* Research project funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in the Institute of Education Sciences.

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Robust Instruction—Another Approach to Rich and Powerful Instruction

Robust Instruction is a powerful procedure that has been developed and investigated by Beck and McKeown and their colleagues over time (for example, Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Beck & McKeown, 2007) and that is described in detail in Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002, 2008). Robust Instruction is designed to give students deep and lasting understanding of word meanings and is particularly appropriate and effective when used with interesting and somewhat intriguing words such as *banter*, *retort*, *glum*, *berate*, and *impatient*. Here is a version that can be used in a number of situations. For the sake of simplicity, this example deals with a single word—*ambitious*. Often, however, Robust Instruction is used to teach a set of words over a period of a week or so.

1. Begin with a student-friendly definition.
   - *ambitious*—really wanting to succeed at something
2. Arrange for students to work with the word several times. One encounter with a word is very unlikely to leave students with a rich and lasting understanding of its meaning.
3. Provide the word in more than one context so that students' understanding is not limited to one situation. The several contexts need not come at the same time.
   - Susan's *ambition* to become an Olympic high jumper was so strong that she was willing to practice six hours a day.
   - Rupert had never been an *ambitious* person, and after his accident he did little other than watch television.
4. Engage students in activities in which they need to deal with various facets of the word's meaning and in investigating relationships between the target word and other words.
   - Would you like to have a really *ambitious* person as a friend? Why or why not?
   - Which of the following better demonstrates *ambition*? (1) A stock broker gets up every day and goes to work. (2) A stock broker stays late at work every day, trying to close as many deals as possible before leaving.
   - How likely is it that an *ambitious* person would be *lethargic*? How likely is it that an *ambitious* person would be *energetic*? Explain your answers.
5. Have students create uses for the words.
   - Tell me about a friend that you see as very *ambitious*. What are some of the things she does that show how *ambitious* she is?
6. Encourage students to use the word outside of class.
   - Come to class tomorrow prepared to talk about someone who appears to be *ambitious*. This could be a stranger you happen to notice outside of class, someone in your family, someone you read about, or someone you see on television.

Robust Instruction will create deep and lasting understanding of words. Robust Instruction takes a great deal of time, certainly more time than you can spend on most words you teach. You will need to decide which words merit its use.

Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2007). Increasing young low-income children's oral vocabulary repertoires through rich and focused instruction. *Elementary School Journal*, *107*(3), 251–271.

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Characteristics of Instruction That Combines Direct Explanation and More Constructive Approaches

- Motivate students to use the strategy, explaining and discussing its value.
- Provide a description of the strategy and information on when, where, and how it should be used.
- Model use of the strategy for students on a text the class can share.
- Work with students in using the strategy on a text the class can share.
- Give students opportunities to construct knowledge.
- Discuss with students how the strategy is working for them, what they think of it thus far, and when and how they can use it in the future.
- Guide and support students as they use the strategy over time. At first, provide a lot of support. Later, provide less and less.
- Work over time to help students use the newly learned strategy in various authentic in-school and out-of-school tasks.
- Review the strategy and further discuss students' understanding of it and responses to it from time to time.

From Graves, M.F., Ruda, M., Sales, G.C., & Baumann, J.F. (2012). Teaching prefixes: Making strong instruction even stronger. In E.B. Kame'enui & J.F. Baumann (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 95–115). New York, NY: Guilford.

Other Shared Book Reading Programs

A number of shared book reading programs have been developed. Here are three of them. One of the earliest programs developed was Dialogic Reading (Whitehurst et al., 1988, 1994; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). This is a one-to-one picture book shared book reading technique designed for preschoolers. It can be used by teachers, teacher aides, other caregivers, and parents to foster vocabulary development and language development more generally. There are two videotapes designed to train parents and teachers to use dialogic reading (*Read Together, Talk Together* [Parent Video], 2002a; [Teacher Training Video], 2002b). Words in Context (Biemiller, 2001, 2009; Biemiller & Boote, 2006) is a shared book reading technique intended for K–2 students. The procedure includes very direct instruction, more direct than that provided in some of the other approaches. Also, Words in Context differs from some of the other approaches in that vocabulary development is the sole concern. Text Talk, another (and much different) shared reading program, was developed by Beck and McKeown (2007) and is available as a commercial program (Beck et al., 2005). The program is particularly strong in providing robust and interesting instruction.

Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2007). Increasing young low-income children's oral vocabulary repertoires through rich and focused instruction. *Elementary School Journal, 107*(3), 251–271.

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Biemiller, A., & Boote, C. (2006). An effective method for building meaning vocabulary in primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 44–62.

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Zevenbergen, A.A., & Whitehurst, G.J. (2003). Dialogic reading: A shared picture book reading intervention for preschoolers. In A.V. Kleeck, S.A. Stahl, & E.B. Bauer (Eds.), *On reading books to children: Parents and teachers* (pp. 170–192). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Additional Sources of Information on the Four-Part Vocabulary Program

Baumann, J.F., & Kame'enui, E.J. (Eds.). (2004). *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice*. New York, NY: Guilford.

This collection of articles on vocabulary by various authors uses the four-part framework as an organizing principle and has sections on Teaching Specific Vocabulary, Teaching Vocabulary-Learning Strategies, and Teaching Vocabulary Through Word Consciousness and Language Play.

Baumann, J., Manyak, P., Blachowicz, C., Graves, M., Arner, J., Bates, A.,...Olejnik, S. (2012). MCVIP—A multi-faceted, comprehensive vocabulary instruction program. *Vocabulogic*. Available at vocablog-plc.blogspot.com/2012/10/mcvip-multi-faceted-comprehensive.html

This article describes the MCVIP program, a three-year research and development that implemented the four-part vocabulary program in a number of elementary classrooms and obtained very positive results.

Blachowicz, C.L.Z., Baumann, J.F., Manyak, P.C., & Graves, M.F. (2013). *"Flood, fast, focus": Integrated vocabulary instruction in the classroom* [IRA E-ssentials series]. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. doi:10.1598/e-ssentials.8027

This IRA E-ssentials article describes additional aspects of the MCVIP program.

Graves, M.F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press; Newark, DE: International Reading Association; Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

This is the basic book on the four-part program.

Graves, M.F. (Ed.). (2009). *Essential readings on vocabulary instruction.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

This is a collection of articles on each of the four parts of the program by various authors.

Graves, M.F., August, D., & Mancilla-Martinez, J. (2012). *Teaching vocabulary to English language learners.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press; Newark, DE: International Reading Association; Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics; Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

This book describes the four-part program adapted for use with ELLs.

Kame'enui, E.J., & Baumann, J.F. (Eds.). (2012). *Vocabulary instruction: Research to Practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.

This is an updated edition of the Baumann and Kame'enui book (2004).

Three Useful Books on Vocabulary Instruction

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

Beck and her colleagues' approach is different from the one presented in this IRA E-ssentials article in that they give priority to teaching individual words, stress in-depth instruction, and deal particularly with literary words.

Blachowicz, C., & Fisher, P.J. (2010). *Teaching vocabulary in all classrooms* (4th ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Blachowicz and Fisher have created a very practical book with suggestions for myriad vocabulary. Their book is, as the authors say, "written for preservice and inservice teachers of all grade levels and in all content areas who recognize the importance of vocabulary."

Stahl, S.A., & Nagy, W. (2006). *Teaching word meanings*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Stahl and Nagy take a position much like that presented in this IRA E-ssentials article, but they have different emphases and come at things in different ways. One particularly valuable section of their book is a well-reasoned discussion of the size of students' vocabularies.