

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION:  
A HANDBOOK FOR PRIMARY GRADE TEACHERS

---

A Project  
Presented  
to the Faculty of  
California State University, Chico

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education  
Reading/Language Arts Option

---

by  
Mary B. Alldrin  
Fall 2010

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION:  
A HANDBOOK FOR PRIMARY GRADE TEACHERS

A Project

by

Mary B. Alldrin

Fall 2010

APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
AND VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH:

---

Katie Milo, Ed.D.

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

---

Claudia Peralta Nash, Ph.D.  
Graduate Coordinator

---

James E. Richmond, Ph.D., Chair

---

Rebecca L. Justeson, Ed.D.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
List of Tables .....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction .....	1
Purpose of the Project.....	2
Scope of the Project.....	3
Significance of the Project.....	3
Definition of Terms .....	5
II. Review of the Literature.....	7
Introduction .....	7
Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension .....	8
Vocabulary: Acquired and Learned.....	9
Vocabulary Gaps in Young Children .....	11
Schools: Widening the Gap .....	12
Vocabulary Instruction Needed.....	15
Effective Vocabulary Instruction .....	16
Conclusion .....	21
III. Methodology.....	23
IV. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	28
References .....	33

CHAPTER	PAGE
Appendices	
A. Vocabulary Development Handbook .....	39
B. Assessment of Vocabulary Development Handbook .....	78

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	Participating Teacher Profile .....	25
2.	Assessment of Handbook Data .....	26

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Language and Sampling Experience.....	13

ABSTRACT

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTION:  
A HANDBOOK FOR PRIMARY GRADE TEACHERS

by

Mary B. Alldrin

Master of Arts in Education

Reading/Language Arts Option

California State University, Chico

Fall 2010

The purpose of this project was to identify what current research suggests regarding effective methods of vocabulary instruction for primary grade students and to create a handbook to assist and guide primary grade teachers in implementing a comprehensive vocabulary development program that uses direct, explicit, rich and effective vocabulary instruction to promote children's abilities to learn to read and write successfully. The handbook was intended to be helpful to teachers who use the California English-Language Arts state standards and fulfill a need by providing extra support for the adopted language arts text, specifically in the area of vocabulary.

The project presents a concise handbook about vocabulary instruction for primary grade teachers. It is designed to inform primary grade teachers of the need for and

significance of vocabulary instruction in kindergarten through third grade. The handbook shares current research about the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement. A variety of activities, practices and programs are described to help aid the teacher in creating a comprehensive vocabulary program for their primary classroom.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The ability to effectively teach reading and writing is critical for elementary teachers. Children need to develop strong reading skills if they are to achieve the academic competencies required for success in school and beyond. National and state policies have made reading and writing the most crucial goal in the education of young children. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates have put increasing pressure on public education to evaluate the effectiveness of how and what they teach. In 2000, the report of the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read*, examined research in five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary as well as made recommendations of effective teaching practices in each of the areas. Since research-based practices are mandated nationally, teachers need to be aware of and use effective reading strategies that are grounded in research.

Having taught in public education at the elementary level for 19 years, I have received training or attended conferences on most aspects of reading instruction. During the 1980s and early 1990s, comprehension strategies were emphasized. Then the emphasis shifted to phonemic awareness and explicit instruction in phonics. In the last few years, fluency has been the focus with the use of Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) tests 3-4 times a year to track students' fluency. One area of reading instruction that has been essentially ignored is vocabulary development. From my observations at

my school site, conversations with colleagues and experiences with my own children's education, vocabulary is generally not taught, reduced to dictionary definitions or quick discussions about a few words before reading a text. Little emphasis has been placed on vocabulary instruction, especially at the primary age level. Is vocabulary instruction an important component in the education of young children? Does it affect a child's ability to read and write? Should it be explicitly taught in the primary grades? A preliminary review of the literature indicated clearly that vocabulary development has a positive impact on children's abilities to read and write and that it should be taught explicitly in the primary grades.

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to identify what current research suggests regarding effective methods of vocabulary instruction for primary grade students and to create a handbook to assist and guide primary grade teachers in implementing a comprehensive vocabulary development program that uses direct, explicit, rich and effective vocabulary instruction to promote children's abilities to learn to read and write effectively.

As a primary grade teacher, I have found very little vocabulary curriculum for primary aged children. Recently, publishers have started to create vocabulary curriculum for the primary teacher, but often the activities fall short of what research states is effective instruction. The curriculum books that I have previewed also lacked sharing what research has revealed regarding the importance of vocabulary instruction in the primary grades and its relationship to reading achievement.

### Scope of the Project

This project presents a concise handbook about vocabulary instruction for primary grade teachers. It is designed to inform primary grade teachers of the need for and significance of vocabulary instruction in kindergarten through third grade. The handbook will share current research about the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement. The main body of the handbook will focus on the following four components needed in an effective, comprehensive vocabulary program.

Vocabulary instruction should:

1. Provide frequent, rich, and varied language experiences.
2. Teach individual words.
3. Teach word learning strategies.
4. Foster word consciousness. (Graves, 2006)

A variety of activities, practices, and programs will be described to help aid the teacher in creating an effective, explicit vocabulary program for their primary classroom.

### Significance of Project

According to Tompkins (2003), a balanced reading program should include “learning word recognition and identification, vocabulary and comprehension” (p. 15).

Vocabulary in reading achievement and its importance has been recognized for more than half a century (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Whipple (1925) stated that growth in reading requires “continuous enriching and enlarging of the reading vocabulary and increasing clarity of discrimination in appreciation of word values” (p. 76). Davis (1942) presented evidence that reading

comprehension was comprised of word knowledge or vocabulary and reasoning. There is much evidence that vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement are closely related. The students who have larger vocabularies are more capable readers and have a wider range of strategies for unlocking the meanings of unfamiliar words than less capable readers do (McKeown, 1985). Knowing the meaning of words increases comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982). Having an extensive vocabulary is positively linked to greater academic success (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). “Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension; one cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean” (Nagy, 1988, p. 1). Research on early literacy has consistently found that vocabulary knowledge is a critical component of reading proficiency.

Research has also found vast differences in the amount of vocabulary knowledge children have when they enter kindergarten. Hart and Risley’s 1995 research revealed large differences in children’s vocabulary knowledge based on their socioeconomic status. Children from a privileged home have more than twice the vocabulary knowledge than children from a disadvantaged home. Moats (2001) estimated the average first grader from a linguistically rich home knew meanings of 20,000 words compared to 5,000 words for a child from a linguistically poor home. A study by Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin (1990) found that reading measure scores for disadvantaged children start to decline around fourth grade. Low-income children in grades 4-7 had greater difficulty with abstract, literary, and academic word meanings than their advantaged peers. Students who have early vocabulary deficits have reading difficulties later on when they enter fourth-grade (Biemiller, 2003a). Research has not shown an ability to catch up

vocabulary knowledge in upper elementary grades. If schools want to increase reading comprehension of low-income students, they will have to enrich oral language development during the primary years. Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui and Stoolmiller (2004) state "there is a need for researched-based intensive vocabulary interventions for young children at risk of experiencing reading difficulties" (p. 146). Biemiller (2003b) concurs "If we could avoid the growing vocabulary gap during kindergarten to grade two, and possibly fill in some words already missing at the beginning of kindergarten, reading comprehension, perhaps, could be improved" (pp. 328-329). Clearly, vocabulary instruction is a necessary and important factor in primary grade reading instruction and can have long-term effects.

### Definition of Terms

#### Curriculum Based Measurement

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) is a timed read test that measures how many words a student reads correctly in one minute. The reading materials are based on the type of material the learner would encounter in every-day schooling.

#### Direct Instruction System for Teaching and Remediation

Direct Instruction System for Teaching and Remediation (DISTAR) is a phonics-based reading program that was developed to help students who were behind their peers in language and reading skills.

### Fourth-Grade Slump

The observable decline in reading comprehension among children who previously were performing at grade level. This decline is most noticeable during the fourth-grade year.

### National Reading Panel Report

A report written by a congressionally mandated independent panel in 2000 that reviewed research regarding reading instructions in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The report entitled, *Teaching Children to Read*, gave recommendations of effective practices in each area.

### No Child Left Behind

A federal law aimed at improving public education by increasing learner performance by increasing the standards of accountability and through extensive measures of student achievement.

### Storybook Intervention

An intervention for young children that integrates explicit vocabulary instruction within a shared storybook reading experience.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this project is to create a handbook that will assist and guide primary grade teachers in implementing a comprehensive vocabulary program that uses direct, rich, and effective vocabulary instruction. This review will 1) examine the role vocabulary size plays in reading comprehension, 2) describe how vocabulary is acquired, 3) examine causes for vocabulary gaps, 4) show a need for vocabulary instruction in primary grade classrooms, and 5) identify effective practices in vocabulary instruction that improve comprehension.

Children need to develop strong reading skills if they are to achieve the academic competencies required for success in school and beyond. Schools are recognizing the importance of explicit, systematic instruction and are improving in the teaching of beginning decoding skills. Unfortunately, having strong decoding skills alone does not mean the child will be a skilled reader. Some students, after mastering decoding and having wide reading experiences, do make gains in their knowledge and comprehension of text. These gains can only occur if the student already has enough knowledge of the concepts presented in the text to comprehend what he or she is decoding to words (Hirsch, 2006). Having strong decoding skills alone is not effective for reading comprehension for students beyond the primary grades. Becker (1977) noted the

early success of DISTAR (Direct Instruction System for Teaching and Remediation) on children's decoding skills was lost for reading comprehension in upper elementary grades due to vocabulary limitations. In the last decade, public education has put a needed emphasis on phonemic awareness and decoding in the primary grades, but in doing so, has down played a critical component of reading – vocabulary.

### Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension

By comparing children's performances on comprehension tasks to their performance on vocabulary measures, research has determined that a person's word knowledge is strongly related to their ability to comprehend text (Stahl, 2003). A reader's depth of vocabulary knowledge has a direct link to their reading comprehension (Biemiller, 2004). Stahl (1999) estimates that a child needs to understand at least 90% of the words in a text in order to understand the meaning of the text and be able to infer the meaning of the other 10% of the words.

To be successful in reading, students must develop and use a large vocabulary. Children use words they already know to decipher new words in text. Vocabulary instruction does not necessarily increase reading comprehension, but limited vocabulary can hinder reading success (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). People who habitually read a wide variety of texts have a much richer vocabulary than people who do not read often. Having a rich vocabulary makes it easier to read challenging texts. "You need a rich vocabulary to read widely, and the best way to develop a rich vocabulary is to read widely. Thus, vocabulary size is both a cause of and a consequence of reading success" (Wren, 2003, p. 4).

A person's vocabulary comes in two forms—oral and print. A reader can decode a strange word to speech, and if the word is in the reader's oral vocabulary they will be able to understand it. If the word is not a part of the reader's oral vocabulary, he or she will have to discover the meaning through other means. The larger the reader's oral or print vocabulary is, the easier it will be to make sense of the text (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

To understand spoken or written language, a person needs to have knowledge of the explicit words in the text as well as background knowledge about the inferred meanings of the text. Together the spoken and unspoken knowledge creates meaning. A reader cannot understand text without the unspoken background knowledge. This is why some children can easily decode the words of the text, but are not able to understand it. Broad general knowledge, as well as specific word knowledge, is necessary for reading comprehension and proficiency (Hirsch, 2006). Since vocabulary is critical to reading comprehension, it is important to understand how a person acquires or learns vocabulary.

#### Vocabulary: Acquired and Learned

A person's vocabulary includes all the words he or she knows, understands, and can use correctly. Throughout life, a person's vocabulary will grow in understanding and with each new experience. A child's acquisition of vocabulary starts in the home. The quantity of words a child hears and the experiences he or she has with words, from infancy on, affects the size of vocabulary or word knowledge the child will have (Hart & Risley, 1995). When a child repeatedly encounters a word in different contexts, he or she will begin to limit possible meanings. After each exposure to a word, the child's

understanding will grow a little more until he or she has full knowledge of the word. Children learn new words through repeated exposures in context from reading and listening (Cunningham, 2005; Stahl & Stahl, 2004).

There are two types of vocabulary abilities people use- receptive and expressive. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words the person *understands* in speech and reading.

Expressive vocabulary refers to words the person *uses* in conversation and writing. A child's receptive vocabulary is greater than his or her expressive vocabulary. It takes multiple opportunities and rich experiences for children to acquire the level of word knowledge needed to use a word appropriately in different contexts (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006).

The process of learning words is incremental and goes through stages. There are several levels of knowledge a person can have regarding a word. Beck et al. (2002) list five levels of word knowledge:

- No knowledge.
- General sense, such as knowing *mendacious* has a negative connotation.
- Narrow, context-bound knowledge such as knowing that a *radiant* bride is a beautifully smiling happy one, but unable to describe an individual in a different context as radiant.
- Having knowledge of a word, but not being able to recall it readily enough to apply it in appropriate situations.
- Rich, decontextualized knowledge of a word's meaning, its relationship to other words, and its extension to metaphorical uses, such as understanding what someone is doing when they are *devouring* a book. (p. 10)

Students can be taught how to learn new words through a metacognitive approach. First, the student recognizes the word as unknown. Then the student must desire to know the word by engaging in the learning process. Finally, the student must

integrate the definition and contextual information to prior experience in order to understand the word. Learning new words requires the student to know what it means (definition), how it is used (context), and how it relates to what he or she already knows (background experience) ((Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006).

Reading requires two types of vocabulary: word recognition vocabulary and meaning vocabulary. Word recognition vocabulary is the words a student can pronounce, read by sight or decode when seen in print. Meaning vocabulary refers to words the student knows the correct meaning of or can define. Recognition vocabulary is related to the print, where meaning vocabulary is related to speaking and reading (Chall, 1983).

McKeown (1985) studied the process that high and low ability fifth graders used to acquire word meaning from context. The meaning acquisition process was found to be complex. There were significant differences between the groups, favoring the high ability group. The success of the high ability group appeared to be attributed to having greater past experiences, which helped them in acquiring the meaning of new words.

#### Vocabulary Gaps in Young Children

Almost everything a child learns during the first few years of life comes from his or her family. Of all the words in a child's vocabulary, 86%-98% of the words are also in his or her parent's vocabulary. Researchers have found that vocabulary acquisition is strongly related to a person's socioeconomic level and his or her experiences. The quantity of words spoken in the home affects the amount of vocabulary a child learns and uses (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Hart and Risely (1995) completed a 2½-year study where they observed and estimated the quantity of words spoken to a child from the approximate age of seven months to three years old. They examined families from three socioeconomic levels-welfare, working class, and professional. Hart and Risely found a difference of over 30 million words that were spoken to the child from a professional home compared to a child from a welfare home. Professional families used more affirmation statements that encouraged and extended their children's speech, whereas, the welfare families had a greater amount of discouragements spoken to their children such as "don't," "stop," or "shut up." The size of the children's expressive vocabulary in a professional home was much greater at three years of age than children from a welfare home (Figure 1).

Hart and Risley (2003) found that "... trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction were well established and clearly suggested widening gaps to come" (p. 3). The differences found in vocabulary size at age three also predicted language skill in third grade. Having a large vocabulary helps achieve academic success and school achievement (Beck et al., 2002; Hart & Risley, 2003).

### Schools: Widening the Gap

The profound differences in vocabulary knowledge of preschoolers from different socioeconomic groups continues to grow as they enter elementary school. Moats (2001) estimates the average first grader from a linguistically rich home knows the meanings of 20,000 words compared to 5,000 words for the child who is from a linguistically poor home. Stanovich (1986) labeled the continuing vocabulary gap between children as the Matthew Effect. The proficient reader usually reads more

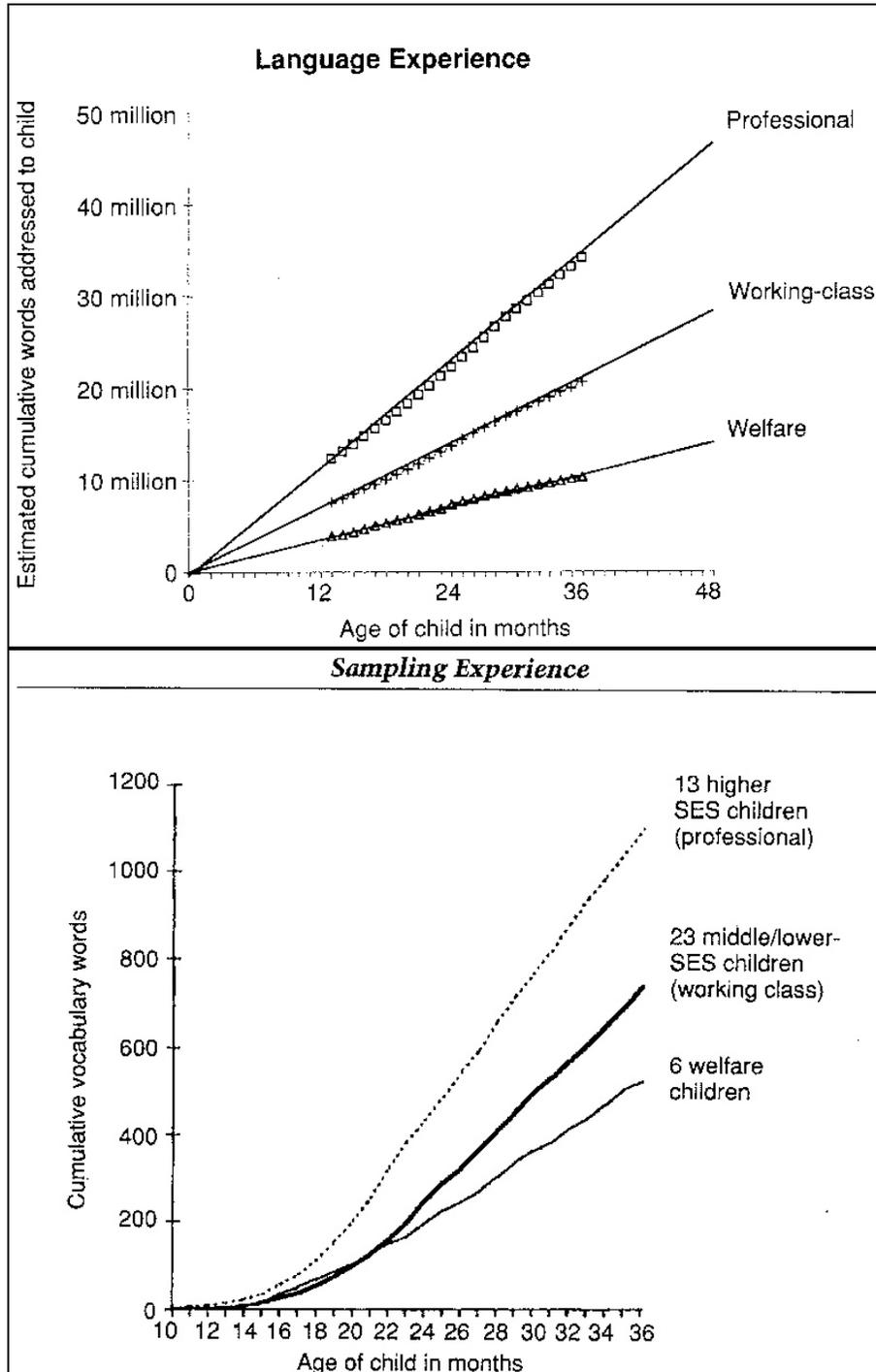


Figure 1. Language and sampling experience.

Source: Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc. Reprinted with permission.

challenging text and learns more words from context, which increases his or her vocabulary knowledge. The poor reader reads less and what he or she does read contains less complex vocabulary. The cycle of “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer” widens the vocabulary gap between proficient and struggling readers (Cunningham, 2005; Stahl & Stahl, 2004).

Biemiller (2001) found vocabulary development to be lacking in school curriculum. Due to the increased emphasis on phonics in primary grades, “current school practices typically have little effect on oral language development during the primary years” (Biemiller, 2003a, p. 1). There are many reasons for lack of vocabulary instruction in the primary grades. Beginning readers read books with simple vocabulary that are limited to what a primary child can read and write. Instruction is also given in the simplest, plain-spoken form so that all learners can comprehend (Biemiller, 2003a; Manzo, Manzo, & Thomas, 2006). Vocabulary instruction has also not been a priority in U.S. schools. Prior to 2005, annual reports in *Reading Today* of what’s hot and what’s not have listed vocabulary as “what’s not” (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2003/2004).

Nagy (1988) found that most vocabulary instruction that occurred in schools failed to produce in-depth word knowledge. Definitional approaches to vocabulary instruction lead to a superficial level of word knowledge. Dictionary definitions do not always contain enough information to help the reader use the new word correctly and definitions are not always accurate. Contextual approaches to vocabulary instruction are also ineffective for teaching new word meanings. Context, by itself, does not always supply enough adequate information for the person who has no knowledge about the

meaning of the word. To get a good grasp of the meaning of new word, the student would need multiple contexts or other supplemental information (Nagy, 1988).

### Vocabulary Instruction Needed

A study by Chall et al. (1990) found that low-income children in grades 2 and 3 achieved about the same as the general population on reading measures. Reading measure scores started to decline for disadvantaged children around grade 4. Teachers of low-income children call this the “fourth-grade slump.” The study found low-income children in grades 4-7 had greater difficulty with abstract, literary and academic word meanings compared to their peers (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall et al., 1990). Biemiller (2003a) asserts that students who have early vocabulary deficits have reading comprehension difficulties later on when they enter fourth-grade. Research has not shown an ability to “catch up” vocabulary knowledge in upper elementary grades. If schools want to increase reading comprehension of disadvantaged students, they will have to enrich oral language development during the primary years of schooling (Biemiller, 2003a).

Teachers of young children spend very little time analyzing word meanings in text or using rich oral vocabulary. Research suggests that attending primary school does not increase vocabulary acquisition (Biemiller, 2001, 2004). Becker (1977) found the emphasis in early grades on word identification skills (decoding) and the lack of emphasis on books with rich vocabulary, later resulted in reading comprehension difficulties for upper grade students. Coyne et al. (2004) state “there is a need for research-based intensive vocabulary interventions for young children at risk of

experiencing reading difficulties” (p. 146). Biemiller (2003b) concurs “If we could avoid the growing vocabulary gap during kindergarten to grade two, and possibly fill in some words already missing at the beginning of kindergarten, reading comprehension, perhaps, could be improved” (pp. 328-329). Research is clearly finding that vocabulary instruction is a necessary and important factor in primary reading instruction and can have long-term effects.

### Effective Vocabulary Instruction

An effective and comprehensive primary vocabulary program should contain four components:

- It should provide frequent, rich, and varied language experiences.
- It should teach individual words.
- It should teach word learning strategies.
- It should foster word consciousness (Graves, 2006).

### Rich Varied Language Experiences

Listening and speaking in grades K-3 are the primary ways teachers can promote vocabulary growth. Immersing students in a variety of rich language experiences that allow students to learn words through listening, speaking, reading and writing is key to an effective vocabulary program. Most of the new words primary grade children learn come from listening and discussion. Teachers of primary grades need to directly build their students oral vocabularies through interactive oral reading (Graves, 2006). Effective interactive reading includes:

- ❑ Using interesting and enjoyable books for children.
- ❑ Having adults read with expression to engage children.
- ❑ Reading books several times.
- ❑ Focusing children's attention to a small number of words.
- ❑ Interaction of the reader and children as they discuss and ask questions about the text (Graves, 2006).

Coyne et al. (2004) completed a study with 96 kindergarten students who were at risk due to poor letter-naming and phonological awareness skills. The students received a storybook intervention that focused on rich, engaging discussion, multiple readings, and activating prior knowledge. Three target words were chosen from each story. Definitions were explicitly given and discussions were focused around those words. Multiple exposures were given to the target words over a week. The storybook group made greater gains regarding the taught vocabulary than the control group. "Students in the intervention with lower receptive vocabulary skills demonstrated greater gains in explicitly taught vocabulary than did students with higher receptive vocabulary" (p. 145). These findings suggest that primary teachers may be able to help narrow, or halt the widening gap of word knowledge through explicit teaching of vocabulary within a shared storybook reading intervention.

### Teaching Individual Words

There is an overwhelming quantity of words students need to learn. Teachers cannot teach all of them directly in a school year, but that does not mean they should not teach some of them. Not every word a teacher wants to introduce to students from a text requires rich instruction and knowledge. Context can give enough information about

some words to acquire and maintain meaning. Rich instruction is needed only for words that are necessary for comprehension of the text or that turn up in a wide variety of contexts, or that require more than a brief explanation to be understood (McKeown & Beck, 2004). The experts (Beck et al., 2002; Graves, 2006; Nagy, 1988) agree on the following effective ways to teach a new word:

- Use a definition of the word and have students work with the word in context.
- Have students actively relate similarities and differences of a new word to words and concepts they know and practice using the word in various situations.
- Provide multiple exposures to a new word through games, definitions and using it orally and/or in writing.
- Review and remind students about the word as it occurs in other contexts over time.
- Spend time learning the word.

Effective word learning instruction provides examples of a word used in various contexts and includes discussion what the word means in each context. Children need contextual and definitional information to gain understanding of how the meaning of a word changes in different contexts (Stahl, 2003; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

Juel and Deffes (2004) conducted a six-week study with kindergarten students comparing three forms of vocabulary instruction- context-based, anchored word and analytic vocabulary instruction. The teachers using the context-based method related word meanings to the background knowledge of the students. The analytic word method had students analyze word meanings along with connecting the word to background knowledge. The anchored word method had students analyzing words, connecting words

to background knowledge and focusing on the letters and sounds of the words. All of the instruction was delivered through storybook reading where five words were targeted from each book. The study found the analytic and anchored methods were the most effective in teaching word meanings to students. There was not a significant difference between the two methods. The study did find that students who were behind their peers in letter-naming fluency seemed to make greater gains in vocabulary growth if they had received the anchored method of instruction (Juel & Deffes, 2004).

### Teaching Word Learning Strategies

The use of word learning strategies can increase vocabulary acquisition. A teacher can not teach every word his or her students will encounter, but by teaching word learning strategies, a teacher can help students become independent word learners (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Graves, 2006; Nagy, 1988). Three important word-learning strategies are: 1) Teaching students to use context to infer the meanings of unknown words, 2) Teaching students to use word parts to glean word meanings, and 3) Teaching students to use the dictionary (Graves, 2006, p. 23).

Primary teachers can informally begin to teach these strategies through modeling, scaffolding and discussion with their students. More formal teaching of word learning strategies should occur in grade 4 and above (Graves, 2006). Lubliner and Smetana's book, *Getting Into Words: Vocabulary instruction that Strengthens Comprehension* (2005), dedicates a chapter to teaching word learning strategies in the primary grades. The goal of a primary teacher is to help students be aware of words they do not know and decide if the word is important to the meaning of the text. This metacognitive approach to word learning encourages students to think about the unknown

word, determine if they have heard it before, try to find the word's meaning from the rest of the sentence or paragraph, and look at the parts of the word in order to determine the meaning. This process is most often taught informally through shared storybook reading (Lubliner & Smetana, 2005).

### Fostering Word Consciousness

“Word consciousness refers to the knowledge and dispositions necessary for students to learn, appreciate, and effectively use words” (Scott & Nagy, 2004). When a child is word conscious, they have an interest in and an awareness of words around them—words they read, hear, speak and write (Graves, 2006). Word consciousness is not another component of vocabulary instruction, but rather the goal teachers strive for their students to attain as they teach individual words, word-learning strategies and provide rich language experiences (Scott & Nagy, 2004).

To foster word consciousness, a teacher must model and encourage an enthusiasm for new words. The use of games, riddles, homophones, and puzzles is highly motivating in primary classrooms. Reading instruction in primary grades is not just teaching students that printed words convey meaning, but that words can feel and sound good and can incite laughter and be fun to play with (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002).

In a study of vocabulary learning, Beck et al. (1982) found that students in one particular middle school classroom learned more incidental vocabulary (words that had not been taught) than the other classrooms. Researchers, attempting to find the cause, found a poster of interesting words in the classroom. The teacher stated it was the class “word wall.” Whenever a student encountered a new word from TV, conversation or

reading, they could write the word on the poster and share where they heard or saw it. The students received points in a class contest when they used the new word. This simple activity fostered word consciousness by motivating students to look and listen for new words and use them in their speech and writing.

Teachers play a vital role in helping their students become word conscious. When teachers use rich vocabulary in the classrooms, teach words fully so that their students can develop new word schemas and create an environment where students can explore and use words, they are giving their students tools necessary for success in school and beyond (Scott & Nagy, 2004).

### Conclusion

Research has revealed a significant difference in vocabulary knowledge among children from different socioeconomic groups. This vocabulary gap continues to increase in primary-grade school. The reading comprehension of disadvantaged students does not seem to be affected by the lack of word knowledge until the student reaches fourth grade and above. Research has found primary aged children have the greatest potential for increasing vocabulary knowledge through direct instruction and narrowing the word knowledge gap. Once children enter fourth grade, the ability the “catch up” in vocabulary knowledge is limited (Beck et al., 2002; Biemiller, 1999, 2001, 2003a; Graves, 2006).

Primary grade teachers have the ability to influence the future reading and school success of students through teaching direct, effective vocabulary instruction. There is a need for more vocabulary instruction studies using primary aged students. All

of the research on word learning strategies was completed in upper elementary or middle school classrooms. There is a need to have more studies focusing on children in kindergarten to second grade in regard to knowing how to best teach word learning strategies to primary aged children. There is also a lack of studies that look at the long-term effects of various primary vocabulary intervention strategies. We do know from the literature that the most effective vocabulary programs had a rich approach to vocabulary that included direct explanation of the meaning of words, teaching word learning strategies, and provided thought-provoking, playful and interactive activities. The teacher who looks for opportunities to use interesting words and is an active, enthusiastic word learner, will instill a life long love of words in his or her students (Beck et al., 2002).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook (Appendix A) for primary grade teachers to use as a guide in creating and implementing a comprehensive vocabulary development program for use in their classroom. Part of my job as a Title I teacher is to assist, train and provide materials for teachers in the area of reading instruction. The handbook was intended to be helpful to teachers who use English-Language Arts state standards and fulfill a need by providing extra support for the adopted language arts text, specifically in the area of vocabulary development. In determining what would be included in the handbook, one-on-one conversations and group conversations were held with eight primary grade teachers. As a result of the suggestions of teachers and a review of the literature, it was determined that the handbook should be pragmatic and have activities and lessons that a teacher could implement right away as well as programs or practices that could be implemented over a period of time. The following suggestions resulted from the individual and group conversations with teachers.

- Explain the importance of teaching vocabulary to primary aged students.
- Provide research information that supports teaching of vocabulary to young children.
- Include immediate activities the teacher could implement.

- ❑ Have reviews of any vocabulary programs or materials that could be purchased for primary vocabulary instruction.
- ❑ Be organized in an easy to read format.

The organization of the handbook was developed from the primary grade group suggestions and the review of the literature. The first section in the handbook shares research information that supports the importance of vocabulary development for primary aged children. The next section explains characteristics of effective vocabulary instruction and lists the components that are found in an effective and comprehensive vocabulary program. The last section contains activities and lessons for vocabulary development and instruction. Activities were chosen based on their interest level and appropriateness for primary aged children. The activities and lessons were organized under the four components: language experiences, learning individual words, word learning strategies and developing word consciousness. An annotated bibliography at the end of the handbook provides suggested books for further reading regarding vocabulary instruction and development.

As activities were being formed for the handbook, they were field tested in a first/second grade combination classroom. The field testing included teaching an activity from the handbook, having the teacher write notes regarding the amount of time the lesson took, the grade level(s) the activity was appropriate for, the success of or student interest in the lesson, and to indicate if modifications were needed in the written directions. For example, in the activity Synonym Word Sort, the field test teacher suggested adding modifications for older students. She felt her second graders could read, write, and manipulate the synonyms with a partner, while her first graders could only do

the activity orally with the teacher guiding them. In the Shared Storybook Reading activity, examples of what the teacher would say were added in italics. Other modifications to written directions and lesson length were made as needed to make them easier to implement and of higher interest to the students.

The preliminary handbook was given to seven teachers (Table 1) representing Kindergarten through Third grade. The average number of years teaching was 16 with a range of 6-25 years.

Table 1

*Participating Teacher Profile*

Teacher	Years of Teaching	Grade Level
A	22	1/2
B	25	K
C	21	K/1
D	15	1
E	22	3
F	15	2
G	6	1/2

Each participating teacher also received an incentive in the form of a gift card. After reading the handbook, the teachers chose at least two activities to try with their students. They wrote down any suggestions or thoughts regarding the lesson and

completed an assessment (Appendix B). The following modifications were made to specific lessons based on teacher suggestions.

- More examples were added to the idiom and homophone activities.
- Grade level change was made on Synonym Sort.
- Graphics were added to the Compound Word activity.

The assessment contained four questions in which teachers could respond with ‘yes’, ‘somewhat’ or ‘no’ and write in comments or suggestions (Table 2).

Table 2

*Assessment of Handbook Data*

Question	Yes	Somewhat	No
1. Were the activities appropriate for your grade level?	6	1	0
2. Do you feel you could integrate some of the lessons/activities into your daily schedule?	6	1	0
3. Is the handbook organized in an easy to use format?	7	0	0
4. After reading the research piece, did you feel you gained a greater understanding for the importance of vocabulary instruction/development in primary grades?	7	0	0

Six teachers felt the activities in the handbook were appropriate for their particular grade level and that they could incorporate them into the district curriculum (question 1 & 2). One kindergarten teacher felt that many of the activities required the ability to read and would not be appropriate for kindergarten-aged children. Another teacher felt that adding anything else to their teaching schedule would be difficult due to

time restraints. All seven teachers thought the format of the handbook was organized and presented in an easy to use format (question 3). One teacher suggested changing the font style to differentiate the research from the activities. All of the teachers stated they gained new insight into the importance of vocabulary instruction for primary grades (question 4). The research portion of the handbook helped clarify some things that one teacher had read and heard at conferences regarding vocabulary and its importance to reading success.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ability to teach reading and writing effectively is critical for elementary teachers. Children need to develop strong reading skills if they are to achieve the academic competencies required for success in school and beyond. National and state policies have made reading and writing the most crucial goal in the education of young children. Since research-based practices are mandated nationally, teachers need to be aware of and use valid reading strategies that are grounded in research.

Primary grade teachers play a critical role in laying the foundation of effective reading skills for their young students. Research in early literacy is consistently finding that vocabulary is a significant component in developing reading proficiency. Many studies have shown that early, extensive vocabulary is related to later reading comprehension (Chall et al., 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Scarborough, 1998). Students who have larger vocabularies are more capable readers and have a wider range of strategies for unlocking the meanings of unfamiliar words than less capable readers do (McKeown, 1985). Research has also found large differences in children's vocabulary knowledge as they enter kindergarten (Hart & Risley, 1995). These profound differences in vocabulary knowledge of children from varying socioeconomic groups continue to increase as they enter elementary school. This is, in part, due to a lack of vocabulary

development in primary school curriculum and vocabulary instruction that is not effective in producing in-depth word knowledge (Biemiller, 2001, 2004; Nagy 1988). Coyn et al. conclude, “There is a need for research-based intensive vocabulary interventions for young children at risk of experiencing reading difficulties” (2004, p. 146). If schools want to increase reading comprehension of disadvantaged students, they will have to enrich oral language development during the primary years of schooling (Biemiller, 2003a).

This project provides a vocabulary development handbook can be used by an individual teacher in his or her classroom, as part of staff development training, or as a mentoring tool with a literacy coach. To gain the greatest benefit from the vocabulary handbook, it is recommended that it be used for an on going staff development or with a literacy mentor who can demonstrate, observe, and encourage the teacher. The user of the handbook may also find it helpful to keep the handbook in a binder. They can then easily add other vocabulary activities they find, as well as write notes or suggestions regarding their experiences with the activities.

Using the handbook for an on going, yearlong staff development would allow teachers time to systematically learn and incorporate new vocabulary routines and activities into their school day. Meeting in small grade level groups throughout the year would give the teachers time to share, problem solve and encourage one another as they are implementing the strategies from the handbook. The following outline is an example of how a literacy coach might use the handbook for an on-going staff development.

□ Session 1

- Summarize the research and the need for vocabulary instruction in the primary grades.
- Share components of effective vocabulary instruction.
- Model Shared Storybook Reading: Have the teachers work in pairs as they take a picture book or chapter and write a lesson plan for it using the Shared Storybook Reading strategies. Each pair may present their lesson in a small group and receive feedback from peers and the literacy coach.
- Have teachers practice using the Shared Storybook Reading strategies in their classrooms a few weeks before meeting again.

□ Session 2 (follow same format as above)

- Have teachers share their classroom experiences with Shared Storybook Reading. Allow time for questions and problem solving.
- Review the components of effective vocabulary instruction strategies.
- Share the strategies from ‘Teaching Individual Words’ section of the handbook.
- Model Motor Imaging, Synonym Word Sort, Webs, Homophone Book and Vocabulary P.E. Give teachers time to create and prepare lessons and materials to use in their classroom for one or more of the modeled activities.
- Each teacher may present an activity to their grade level group or share what they plan to implement in their classroom. Feedback from peers and literacy coach may be given.

- Have teachers practice using the new strategies and activities in their classrooms a few weeks before meeting again.

☐ Session 3

- Have teachers share about their experiences in using activities for teaching individual words Allow time for questions and problem solving.

- Quickly review the components of effective vocabulary instruction.
- Teach the strategies from the ‘Word Learning’ section of the handbook.
- Model Word Detective, Compound Words and Prefixes activities.
- Give teachers time to create/make lessons and materials to use in their

class.

- Teachers may present an activity to a small group and receive feedback from peers and literacy coach.

- Have teachers practice using the new strategies and activities in their classrooms a few weeks before meeting again.

☐ Session 4

- Teachers may share their experiences using vocabulary activities. Allow time for questions and problem solving.

- Teach the last component on how to foster word consciousness.
- Model/play the activities and games that foster word consciousness.
- Give teachers time to create/make games or activities to use in their

classroom.

- Have teachers present an activity to a small group and receive feedback from peers.

- Have teachers practice using the new activities and strategies in their classrooms a few weeks before meeting again.

☐ Session 5

- Teachers may share their experiences using the activities for fostering word consciousness. Allow time for questions and problem solving.

- Discuss future support, materials and time needed for the teachers to continue in their efforts to create an effective, comprehensive vocabulary program in their classrooms.

## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I., Perfetti, C., & McKeown, M. (1982). The effects of long-term vocabulary instruction on lexical access and reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 506-521.
- Becker, W. C. (1977). Teaching reading and language to the disadvantaged: What we have learned from field research. *Harvard Educational Review, 47*, 518-543.
- Biemiller, A. (1999). *Language and reading success*. Newton Upper Falls, MA: Brookline Books.
- Biemiller, A. (2001). Teaching vocabulary: Early, direct, and sequential. *American Educator, 25*(1), 24-28, 47.
- Biemiller, A. (2003a). Oral comprehension sets the ceiling on reading comprehension. *American Educator, 27*(1), 23, 44.
- Biemiller, A. (2003b). Vocabulary: Needed if more children are to read well. *Reading Psychology, 24*, 323-335.
- Biemiller, A. (2004). Teaching vocabulary in the primary grades. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 28-40). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Blachowicz, C. L., & Fisher, P. J. (2006). *Integrated vocabulary instruction: Meeting the needs of diverse learners*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.
- Cassidy, J., & Cassidy, D. (2003/2004, December/January). What's hot, what's not for 2004. *Reading Today*, 21, 3-4.
- Chall, J. S. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Chall, J. S., & Jacobs, V. A. (2003). Poor children's fourth-grade slump. *American Educator*, 27, 14-15, 44.
- Chall, J. S., Jacobs, V. A., & Baldwin, L. E. (1990). *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coyne, M. D., Simmons, D. C., Kame'enui, E. J., & Stoolmiller, M. (2004). Teaching vocabulary during shared storybook readings: An examination of differential effects. *Exceptionality*, 12(3), 145-162.
- Cunningham, A. E. (2005). Vocabulary growth through independent reading and reading aloud to children. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp. 45-68). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and the ability 10 years later. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 934-945.
- Davis, F. B. (1942). Two new measures of reading ability. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 33(5), 365-372.

- Graves, M. F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning & instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Graves, M. F., & Watts-Taffe, S. M. (2002). The place of word consciousness in a researched-based vocabulary program. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (Vol. 3, pp. 140-165). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. (2003). The early catastrophe. The 30 million word gap. *American Educator*, 21(1), 4-9.
- Hirsch, J. E. D. (2006). Building knowledge: The case for bringing content into the language arts block and for a knowledge-rich curriculum core for all children. *American Educator*, 30(1). Retrieved from [http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&.tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#\\_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214](http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&.tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214)
- Juel, C., & Deffes, R. (2004). Making words stick. *Educational Leadership*, 61(6), 30-34.
- Lubliner, S., & Smetana, L. D. (2005). *Getting into words: Vocabulary instruction that strengthens comprehension*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Manzo, A. V., Manzo, U. C., & Thomas, M. M. (2006). Rationale for systematic vocabulary development: Antidote for state mandates. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(7), 610-619.

- McKeown, M. G. (1985). The acquisition of word meaning from context by children of high and low ability. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20(4), 482-496.
- McKeown, M., & Beck, I. (2004). Direct and rich vocabulary instruction. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary Instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 13-27). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Moats, L. C. (2001). Overcoming the language gap: Invest generously in teacher professional development. *American Educator*, 25(2), 5-9. Retrieved from [http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#\\_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214](http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214)
- Nagy, W. E. (1988). *Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension*. Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Scarborough, J. S. (1998). Early identification of children at risk for reading disabilities: Phonological awareness and some other promising predictors. In B. K. Shapiro, P. J. Accardo, & A. J. Capute (Eds.), *Specific reading disability: A view of the spectrum* (pp. 75-119). Timonium, MD: York Press.
- Scott, J. A., & Nagy, W. E. (2004). Developing word consciousness. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary Instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 201-217). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Stahl, S. A. (1999). *Vocabulary development*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Stahl, S. A. (2003). Vocabulary and readability: How knowing word meanings affects comprehension. *Topics in Language Disorders, 23*(3), 241-247.
- Stahl, S. A., & Fairbanks, M. M. (1986). The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-Analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 56*(1), 72-110.
- Stahl, S. A., & Stahl, K. A. D. (2004). Word wizards all! Teaching word meanings in preschool and primary education. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 59-78). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 360-407.
- Tompkins, G. E. (2003). *Literacy for the 21st century* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Whipple, G. (Ed.). (1925). *The twenty-fourth yearbook of the national society for the study of education: Report of the national committee on reading*. Bloomington, IL: Public School Publishing.
- Wren, S. (2003). *Developing research-based resources for the balanced reading teacher: Vocabulary*. Retrieved from <http://www.balancedreading.com>

## APPENDIX A

# Vocabulary Development and Instruction: A Handbook for Primary Grade Teachers

Written by:  
Mary Alldrin

# Contents

Vocabulary Development for Primary Grades: Is it Really Necessary? .....	42
Effective Vocabulary Instruction .....	45
Frequent, Rich and Varied Language Experiences .....	47
Shared Storybook Reading	
Text-Talk	
Teaching Individual Words .....	51
Motor Imaging	
Synonym Word Sort	
Homophone Book	
Webs	
Strategies for Practice and Review .....	57
Two in One	
Anything Goes	
Vocabulary P.E.	
Word Wizard	
Word Learning Strategies.....	60
Word Detective	
Compound Words	
Prefixes	
Fostering Word Consciousness.....	66
Bingo Games	
Animal Idioms	
Word Jars	
Rich \$ Words	
Homophone Memory Game	
Multiple Meaning Jeopardy	
Vocabulary Quiz Game Show	
Word Play Books	
Further Reading .....	75
References .....	76

## **Vocabulary Development for Primary Grades: Is it Really Necessary?**

### *Introduction*

The ability to teach reading and writing effectively is critical for elementary teachers. Children need to develop strong reading skills if they are to achieve the academic competencies required for success in school and beyond. National and state policies have made reading and writing the most crucial goal in the education of young children. National mandates have put increasing pressure on public education to evaluate the effectiveness of how and what is taught. In 2000, the report of the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read*, examined research in five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary as well as made recommendations of effective teaching practices in each of the areas. Since research-based practices are mandated nationally, teachers need to be aware of and use reading strategies that are validated through research.

### *The Significance of Vocabulary*

Primary grade teachers play a critical role in laying the foundation of effective reading skills for their young students. A common misconception primary teachers often have is that reading instruction for young children should focus on phonemic awareness, phonics (decoding) and comprehension, while vocabulary instruction should be the focus in upper elementary grades. Since vocabulary increases in difficulty in upper elementary texts, it makes sense that this is the time that one would focus on teaching the vocabulary that students encounter in texts. While it is important to have a strong emphasis on vocabulary in grades 4 and above, research shows that effective vocabulary instruction in the primary grades is the most beneficial time to teach and expand a child's vocabulary.

Research in early literacy consistently finds that vocabulary is a critical component in developing reading proficiency. Many studies have shown that early vocabulary size is related to reading comprehension in the later elementary years. Scarborough (1998) found that a child's vocabulary size in kindergarten successfully predicted reading comprehension in upper elementary school years. Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin (1990) attributed declining comprehension scores of upper elementary students to the limited vocabulary of students by third grade. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) tested the oral vocabulary of end of the year first graders and found that it was a significant predictor of reading comprehension 10 years later. In each study, early oral vocabulary size was related to later reading comprehension (Biemiller 2004). There is much evidence that vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement are closely related. The students who have larger vocabularies are more capable readers and have a wider range of strategies for unlocking the meanings of unfamiliar words than less capable readers do (McKeown, 1985). Knowing the meaning of words increases comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982).

Research has also found vast differences in the amount of vocabulary knowledge children have when they enter kindergarten. Hart and Risley's 1995 study revealed large differences in children's vocabulary knowledge based on their socioeconomic status. Children from privileged homes have more than twice the vocabulary knowledge than children from disadvantaged homes. Moats (2001) estimated the average first grader from a linguistically rich home knew meanings of 20,000 words compared to 5,000 words for a child from a linguistically poor home.

The impact, though, of this large vocabulary gap does not greatly affect the reading scores of primary aged children. In reading, low-income children in grades 2 and 3 achieved as well as children in the normative population as noted by Chall et al. (1990). These findings can be attributed to the fact that beginning readers are generally given texts that have vocabulary limited to the words in the young child's oral language; thus allowing the beginning reader to focus on

decoding the words, rather than trying to understand the meaning of the words (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005).

The effect of the vocabulary gap begins to surface through lower test scores in grade 4 and beyond. Teachers often notice the drop in reading test scores of low-income children in upper elementary grades. Specifically, Chall et al. (1990) found that word meaning was the first and strongest reading sub category to drop in low-income children in grades 4 through 7. These struggling students have greater difficulty defining academic, literary, abstract and less common words compared to the normative population. Even though students at all grade levels learn to read and read to learn, students in grades 4 and above shift their emphasis from learning to read to using reading as a tool for learning. Upper grade texts contain words and ideas that are beyond the students' own oral language, experience and knowledge of the world.

#### *Vocabulary Instruction Needed*

The profound differences in vocabulary knowledge of children from varying socioeconomic groups continue to increase as they enter elementary school. This is, in part, due to a lack of vocabulary development in primary school curriculum and vocabulary instruction that is not effective in producing in-depth word knowledge (Biemiller 2001, 2004; Nagy 1988). Research has not shown the ability for linguistically limited students to “catch up” in their vocabulary knowledge in upper elementary grades. If schools want to increase reading comprehension of disadvantaged students, they will need to enrich oral language development during the primary years of schooling (Biemiller, 2003). Coyn, Simmons, Kame'enui and Stoolmiller (2004) state “there is a need for research-based intensive vocabulary interventions for young children at risk of experiencing reading difficulties” (p. 146).

#### *Conclusion*

Research is clearly finding that effective vocabulary development is a necessary and important component in primary reading instruction and can have

long-term benefits. Primary grade teachers need to be willing to spend a part of each day teaching vocabulary development effectively, even though immediate improvement in student reading scores may not be obvious. Ultimately, though, effective vocabulary development in primary grades could make the difference between success and failure for the child in years to come.

## Effective Vocabulary Instruction

The National Reading Panel's 2000 Report, *Teaching Children to Read*, emphasized that effective vocabulary instruction needed to be taught both directly and indirectly. Vocabulary knowledge increases through explicit teaching of new words and word learning strategies as well as indirectly through reading opportunities, listening to stories and conversations. "The key to a successful vocabulary program is to use both formal and informal encounters so that attention to vocabulary is happening anytime and all the time" (McKeown & Beck 2004, p. 21).

Words should be taught through direct and explicit formal lessons and activities, like the ones shared later in this handbook. When deciding what words to teach, whether they're from a text being read or relating to a concept being taught, use the following guidelines. Choose words that are:

- \* necessary for the comprehension of the material being read or taught
- \* likely to be met in other texts and contexts
- \* useful for the student to know (McKeown & Beck, 2004)

Not all words need to be taught through a formal lesson. A simple definition or showing the student a picture is all that is needed for some words. Words that are too difficult to explain in terms the child can understand should not be taught to primary grade children in formal lessons.

Vocabulary learning can also occur through informal means, such as class routines, spontaneous conversations, attending to classroom management or discussing assignments. There are many opportunities throughout the day that can be used for introducing and drawing attention to vocabulary. A teacher might

use new words to label something familiar, make a comment about a student's use of a particular word or use a sophisticated word and give a quick definition. Using these opportunities throughout the day to infuse vocabulary in the classroom will create a rich verbal environment that is vitally important for students who do not have a language-rich home environment (McKeown & Beck, 2004).

Along with direct and indirect teaching, research has identified four components that should be included in an effective and comprehensive vocabulary program:

- \* provide frequent, rich, and varied language experiences
- \* teach individual words
- \* teach word learning strategies
- \* foster word consciousness (Graves, 2006)

The rest of this handbook will explain each of these components and provide activities or programs that can be used in the primary classroom. Developing an effective and comprehensive vocabulary program takes time. Start with one method or activity. As you feel comfortable, expand, until you have a complete vocabulary development program; one that is rich in language experiences, where students have an awareness of and an enthusiasm for words.

## Frequent, Rich and Varied Language Experiences

Listening and speaking in grades K-3 are the primary ways teachers can promote vocabulary growth. Immersing students in a variety of rich language experiences that allow students to learn words through listening, speaking, reading and writing is key to an effective vocabulary program. Most of the new words primary grade children learn come from listening and discussion. Teachers of primary grades need to directly build their students speaking vocabularies through interactive oral reading. Effective interactive reading includes:

- \*using interesting and enjoyable books for children
- \*having adults read with expression to engage children
- \*reading books several times
- \*focusing children's attention to a small number of words
- \*interaction of the reader and children as they discuss and ask questions about the text (Graves, 2006)

### Shared Storybook Reading:

Grades: K-3                      20-30 minutes

Young children love to have stories read to them and they love to talk about stories they've heard or read. Shared Storybook Reading or Interactive Reading is the most effective way a primary teacher can introduce and discuss new vocabulary with his or her students.

#### Before Lesson:

~Choose a story that has 3-6 words that are unfamiliar to most of the students.

The concepts represented by the words should be ones they can understand and use in conversation.

*Example: A Pocket for Corduroy by Don Freeman*

*Words: insisted, reluctant, drowsy*

~Before reading the story write a brief definition on a sticky note for each word.

Place sticky note on the page where the word first appears.

**Day 1:**

1. Read story to students, pausing and giving brief definition of targeted words.
2. After reading give instruction for each word.

~Contextualize word in the story.

*In the story Lisa was reluctant to leave the Laundromat without Corduroy.*

~Explain the meaning of the word.

*Reluctant means you're not sure you want to do something.*

~Ask students to say the word.

*Say the word 'reluctant' with me.*

~Give an example for the word in contexts other than the story.

*Someone might be reluctant to learn to skate because they're afraid they'll fall, or someone might be reluctant to let their little sister play with their favorite toy.*

~Ask students to provide their own examples.

*Can you think of something you might be reluctant to do? Try to use the word reluctant when you share. Say "I would be reluctant to \_\_\_\_\_".*

~Ask children to repeat word one more time.

*What word have we been discussing?*

3. Repeat step 2 for the remaining two\*\* words.

*In the story, the laundromat was about to close and Lisa's mother insisted that she leave. Insisted means to tell someone what they **MUST** do and they can't say no. Say the word insisted with me.*

*Before you cross the street, your mom may insist that you hold her hand so you will be safe. When you're getting ready for school, what are some things your parents might insist that you do? Try to use the new word in your sentence. "My mom insists that I \_\_\_\_\_".*

*What is the word we're learning?*

\*\*If there are more than 3 words that you want to teach, repeat this format the next day.

Start by orally reviewing what happened in the story. As you review the story, use the words learned on day 1. Then give direct instruction on the remaining words.

4. Use all 3 words in a quick review activity.

*Let's think about the 3 words we have been learning. Show me how you might look if you were feeling drowsy.*

*Show me how you would look if you were reluctant to go on a roller coaster.*

*Show me how your mom might look if she insisted you go to bed.*

**Day 2:** (day 3 if more than 3 words are being taught)

1. Re-read story, pausing after you read one of the target words and ask “Who can tell me what \_\_\_\_\_ means?”

2. Use all targeted words in review activities. Choose 2 or more activities listed below. You will need to prepare situations and questions in advance for each targeted word.

**Questions, Reasons, and Examples:**

Create questions and examples that require the student to respond and explain their answers.

*Which of these things might make you feel drowsy?*

*- playing an exciting game with a friend*

*- roller skating*

*- watching a long, boring T.V. show*

*What is something that your teacher might insist that you do? Why?*

*Why would someone be reluctant to give a speech in front of a large audience?*

**Making Choices:**

Students must decide if a situation you give is an example of the target word. If it is they say the word out loud.

*If any of the things I say are things that a parent might insist you do, say the word insist. If not, remain silent.*

*- brush your teeth every day*

*-eat all your vegetables*

*-watch t.v.*

*-do your homework*

*-have a friend over to play*

**Choose between 2 words:**

Students must make a choice between 2 of the targeted words.

*You are jumping off the high dive for the first time. Are you going to feel drowsy or reluctant?*

*Your mom tells you to go to bed now. Is she being insistent or reluctant?*

*You stayed up really late to watch a long movie. Are you feeling insistent or drowsy?*

(Source: Adapted from Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York, NY: Guilford Press)

### **Text-Talk:**

Text-Talk is an interactive storybook program created by the researchers Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown. Each kit contains 20 storybooks and a teacher's manual that supplies all the questions and activities for each book. The format for Shared Storybook Reading came from the creators of Text-Talk. The kits contain sticky notes to attach to the books to aid you as you read aloud to the class. Each book teaches 6 words and takes 1 week to complete the lessons. You can download a sample lesson and order the kits at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/texttalk/index.htm>.

## Teaching Individual Words

There are large quantities of words students need to learn. Teachers cannot teach all of them directly in a school year, but they should teach those words that have been determined by the district and/or implied by the state's English/Language Arts Framework to be appropriate for a specific grade level. Not every word a teacher wants to introduce to students from a text requires rich instruction and knowledge. Context can give enough information about some words to acquire and maintain meaning. Rich instruction is needed only for words that are necessary for comprehension of the text or that turn up in a wide variety of contexts, or that require more than a brief explanation to be understood (McKeown & Beck, 2004). Effective ways to teach a new word include:

- \* Use a definition of the word and have students work with the word in context.
- \* Have students actively relate similarities and differences of a new word to words and concepts they know and practice using the word in various situations.
- \* Provide multiple exposures to a new word through games, definitions and using it orally and/or in writing.
- \* Review and remind students about the word as it occurs in other contexts over time (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Graves, 2006; Nagy 1988).

### **Motor Imaging:**

Grades: K-3                      3-5 minutes

Motor imaging uses physical, cognitive, and sensory domains of learning. Expressing words in physical terms creates a strong association that aids in recall of the word and its associated concepts.

Steps for Motor Imaging:

1. Identify a difficult word and write it on the board. Tell students what it means.
2. Ask, "How would you 'show' someone what this word means?"

3. All the students pantomime simultaneously how they would show the meaning of the word.
4. Select the most common action you see and demonstrate it to the class. Everyone does the action together.
5. Occasionally review 'pantomimes' for words learned and check for recall of meaning. (Honchell & Jones, 2008)

### **Synonym Word Sort:**

Grades: 1-3                      15-20 minutes

This activity takes a known or common word and exposes the student to other words that have a similar meaning. This activity can be modified according to the grade level of the students.

1. Write the known word on a sentence strip or 3 x 5 card. Show the students the word. Have them say the word and ask someone to use the word in a sentence.
2. Show students a thesaurus. Explain that they can find synonyms or words that have a similar meaning as another word in a thesaurus. Look up the known word. Read off some of the synonyms. Pick 3 or 4 of the words to write down on 3 x 5 cards (this could be done before the lesson). Put all of the words in a pocket chart for the students to see.
3. Take one word at a time and say the word. Have the students say the word. Use the word in a sentence and share how this word is similar to the known word. Emphasize how its meaning may be a little different too. Ask students if they have ever heard the word before and share how it was used. See if they can use the word in a sentence.
4. Once all words have been shared, try to put the words in order by their strength of meaning. There is not a right or wrong order, but this should lead to a discussion among the students about what they think the order should be and their reasons why.
5. Encourage students to try and use the newly learned words in their conversation rather than the known word.

*Class, I have the word 'eat' written on this card. This is a word you know. Can someone use the word in a sentence for me?*

*This is a thesaurus. A thesaurus is a book that tells me synonyms or other words that mean the same or almost the same as a particular word. I looked up the word eat in the thesaurus and these are some of the words it had listed: devour, nibble, consume, and gobble. Say the word 'devour'. Devour means you're really hungry and you eat the food fast. "The hungry dog devoured his dog food quickly." Have you ever seen an animal devour their food? Have you ever devoured your dinner because you were so hungry? The next word is nibble...(continue in the same format).*

*Now that we've discussed the words, I'd like your help in putting them in an order from the weakest meaning to the strongest meaning. What do you think the strongest meaning of eat is. Which one seems like you're really hungry and eating everything quickly. What do you think the weakest meaning of the word eat is? Which one seems like you're not that hungry? Now that we have the strongest and weakest meaning, how should we place the rest of the words? Which word is a little stronger than nibble? Which word is a little weaker than devour? (Continue until all words are placed.)*

*nibble – eat – gobble – consume – devour*

*You have just learned some synonyms for the word 'eat'. I'd like you to try and use one of these words instead of the word 'eat' this week. Let me know if you hear a classmate use one of the new words we've learned or if you used it. You can use them at school or at home. You might tell your mom. "I consumed my entire lunch today. It was really good!" Or you might say, "I nibbled on my cookie because I wanted to make it last longer."*

Modification for older students: The students can look up the word in the thesaurus. Older students can write the words on slips of paper and sort them individually or with a partner. After a couple of minutes different students can share how they sorted the words and why. Each student can have a Ziploc bag to store his or her sorts. After a few sorts have been placed in the bag, the students can take all the words out and try to sort them in synonym groups. This can be quite challenging when you have 20 or more words in a bag.

### Possible Synonym Word Sorts

help, assist, aid, support	small, tiny, miniature, petite, little
honest, truthful, candid, upfront	funny, comical, hilarious, amusing,
humorous lock, latch, lever, bolt	yell, shout, holler, bellow, scream
huge, gigantic, enormous, colossal	fast, swift, quick, rapid, speedy
sleep, slumber, snooze, doze	try, attempt, endeavor, undertake
eat, nibble, devour, consume, gobble	answer, reply, response, retort
look, gaze, watch, stare, peer	teach, instruct, tutor, educate, coach
shy, timid, bashful, fearful	rich, wealthy, affluent, prosperous, well off

### Homophone Book:

Grades 1-3

Kelli Lawson and Cari Viramontes, teachers from Southern California, have created Homophone picture cards that you can purchase for a small fee and download. Print the cards on 8 1/2 x 11 tag board, laminate and bind with rings to create a great tool for teaching homophones. Each page in the book has a pair of homophones, a sentence for each and a picture to illustrate. Antonym and synonym picture cards are also available.

<http://store.atozteacherstuff.com/download-now/vocabulary.html>

### Webs:

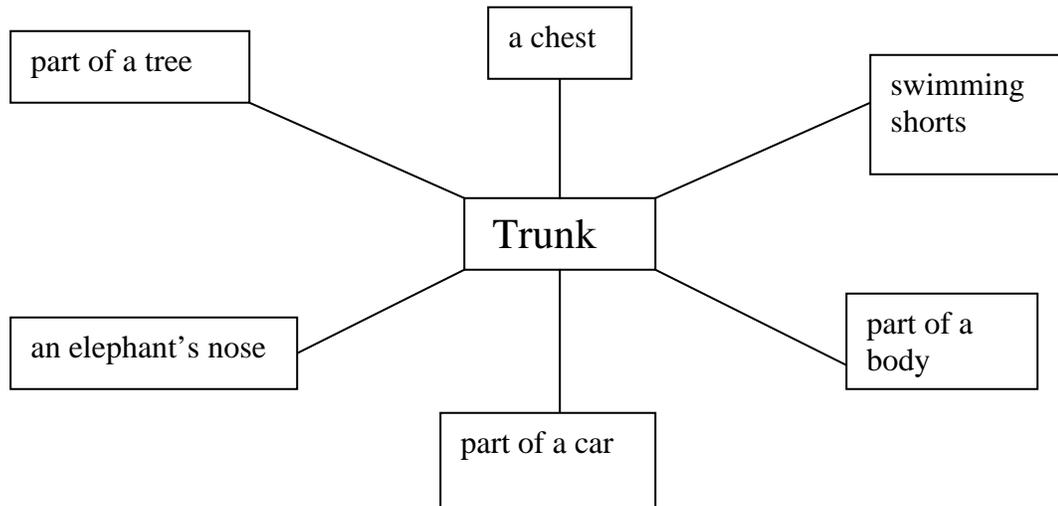
Grades K-3

10-15 minutes

Webs are a graphic organizer that can help students gain or expand meaning from concepts or words. Webs create classroom discussion and encourage students to think about words and concepts. Webs are very useful to use with Science and Social Studies concepts or as a prewriting activity. Illustrated below are three types of webs.

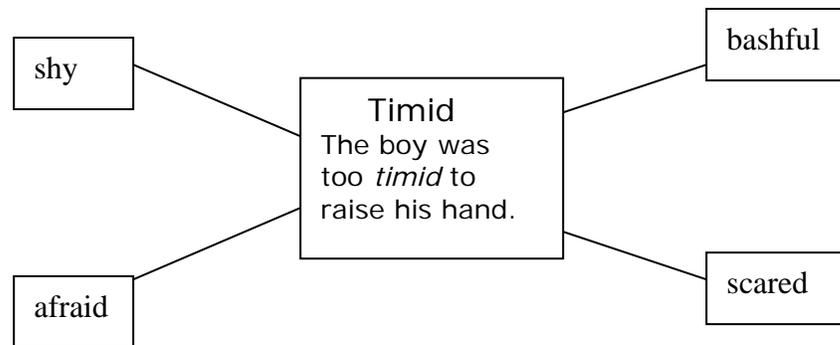
### Multiple Meaning Web

Displays the many meanings of a word



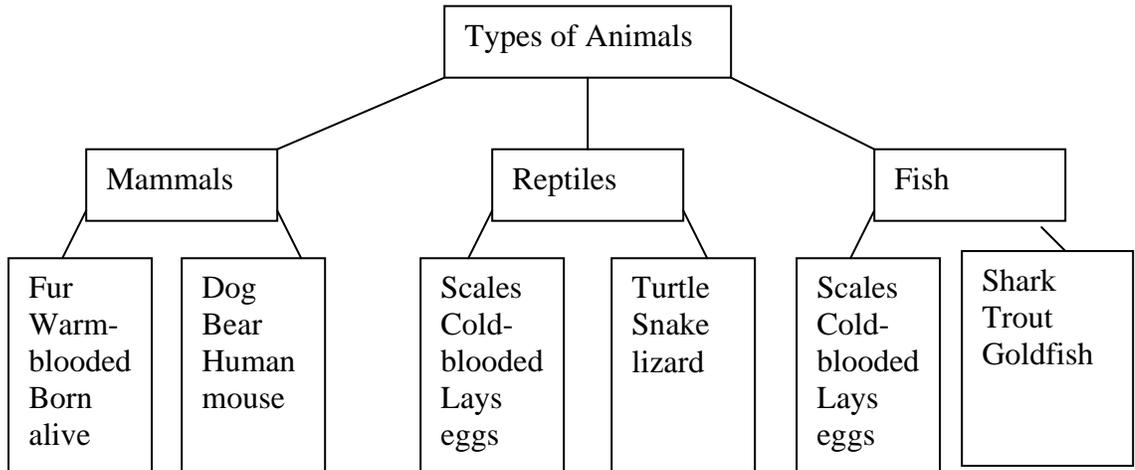
### Semantic Web

Connects related words to the new word



# Facts Web

Gives supporting ideas and details



## Strategies for Practice and Review

Words are learned through multiple exposures when you review, rehearse and remind students about the word over time and in various contexts. The following activities can be used after words have been introduced.

### Two in One:

Grades: 1 and above                      10-15 minutes

1. Write a list of previously learned words on the board or chart paper.
2. The students try to form a sentence using 2 words from the list. The form of the word may be changed. Students may work in pairs.
3. After a set amount of time—5 or 10 minutes—the students may share the sentences with the class.

(Richek, 2005)

### Anything Goes:

Grades: K and above                      5-10 minutes

1. Display words you're studying or have studied.
2. Point to a word and say it. Ask students the following types of questions:
  - ~What is the meaning of the word?
  - ~Can you give me two meanings for this word?
  - ~Can you use this word in a sentence?
  - ~Can you give me a synonym or antonym for this word?
  - ~ What is the root of this word?
  - ~Are there any prefixes in this word?
3. Point to 2 words and read them out loud. Ask students the following types of questions:
  - ~What is the difference between these 2 words?
  - ~Which word means to\_\_\_\_\_?

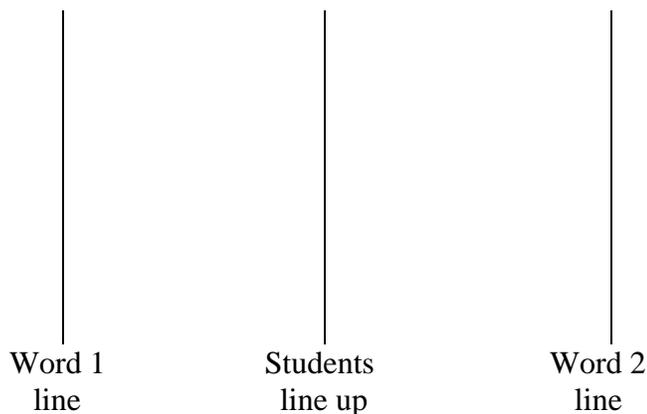
(Richek, 2005)

## Vocabulary P.E.:

Grades K-3                      10-15 minutes

This game may be played inside or outside. The teacher will need a list of vocabulary words that have already been introduced. A large playing space is needed where three parallel lines can be drawn or identified with cones.

1. Students line up on middle line.
2. The teacher says two vocabulary words, one for the line on the left and one for the line on the right.
3. The teacher gives an explanation of one of the words and the students must choose which line to run and stand on.
4. The teacher asks a few students why they chose the particular line/word.
5. The students return to the middle line and the game continues.



## Word Wizard:

Grades K-3

Word Wizards is designed to encourage students to listen for and use the new words they have learned. An incentive poster is displayed containing the children's names on the side and the words learned are written on the top. When the student sees, hears or uses one of the words in or out of the classroom, they receive a check. At the end of a designated time period the student(s) with the most checks becomes the Word Wizard. You may give a reward to the student(s). In order to receive a check, the student

must share the context of where they saw, heard or used a word. It is possible that a child will make up a situation, but if they're using the word correctly in the right context then the goal is accomplished (Beck et al., 2002).

## Word Learning Strategies

Teaching word learning strategies can help students become independent word learners. Three important word-learning strategies are:

- \* teaching students to use context to infer the meanings of unknown words,
- \* teaching students to use word parts to glean word meanings, and
- \* teaching students to use the dictionary (Graves, 2006, p. 23).

Primary teachers can informally begin to teach these strategies through modeling, scaffolding and discussion with their students. More formal teaching of word learning strategies should occur in grade 4 and above (Graves, 2006) The goal of the primary teacher is to help students be aware of words they don't know and decide if the word is important to the meaning of the text. This metacognitive approach to word learning encourages students to think about the unknown word, determine if they have heard it before, try to find the word's meaning from the rest of the sentence or paragraph, and look at the parts of the word in order to determine the meaning. This process is most often taught informally through shared storybook reading (Lubliner& Smetana, 2005).

### **Word Detective:**

Grades: K-3                      20-30 minutes

This activity promotes word awareness and is an excellent tool for teachers to use in modeling and scaffolding beginning word-learning strategies as they read text to their students.

1. Each child has a pre-made stop sign. This can be easily made with construction paper and a popsicle stick.
2. Tell the students that they are going to be detectives, listening for words they are unfamiliar with. When they hear an unfamiliar word, they are to hold up their stop sign. Model this for your students as you read a piece of text and then let them practice.

3. Once a word has been identified as unfamiliar or unknown, tell the students that they will look for clues to figure out the meaning of the unknown word. There are 4 clues or steps they will think about every time they come to an unknown word. It may be helpful to have these “clues” written on the board or a poster visible to all the children.

- \* Look at the word. Have they seen or heard it before?
- \* Look around the word. Does the rest of the sentence or paragraph give any hints to what the word means.
- \* Look inside the word. Are there any word parts (prefix, root word) that you already know?
- \* Think about it. Does the word make sense, if not, ask another detective or adult for help.

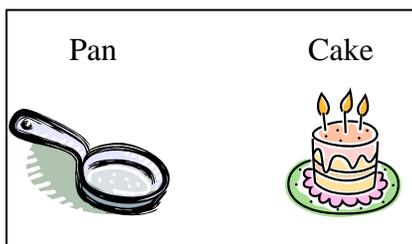
The teacher models the process as he or she goes through the steps of trying to identify the meaning of an unknown word. At the K-1 level this is all oral discussion and the goal is to help students to become aware of new words and begin to think about their possible meanings. Second and third grade can start to implement the process as they read text together in class. Developing beginning metacognitive skills of monitoring ones own word learning and use of strategies to unlock word meanings will help students become independent word learners in the upper grade years.

Lubliner and Smetana (2005) devoted a whole chapter to describing this word learning process for primary aged children in their book, *Getting Into Words: Vocabulary Instruction that Strengthens Comprehension*. They include an 8” x 11” worksheet with the Word Detective clues that could be copied for each child.

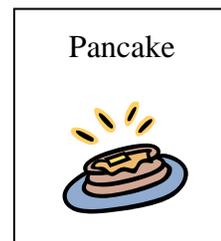
## **Compound Words:**

Grades: K-3                      15-20 minutes

Brainstorm ahead of time or with the class a list of compound words. Give each child or pair of children a word to illustrate. On one side of a blank paper have the children illustrate the two words in the compound word and label them. On the other side of the paper have them draw the new meaning of the words combined.



Front of paper



Back of Paper

(Source: Microsoft Office SR-1 clipart [Computer software]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft.)

Discuss how the separate meanings put together create a new word and a new meaning.

### **Prefixes:**

Grades: end of 2<sup>nd</sup> and above.      15-20 minutes

The following chart lists the most frequently used prefixes. Primary teachers can start with the top 3-5 prefixes. The rest of the prefixes should be taught in upper elementary grades.

### **Ten Most Frequent Prefixes**

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Words with the Prefix</u>
un-	782
re-	401
In-, im-, ir-, il- (not)	313
dis-	216
en-, em-	132
non-	126
in-, im- (in or into)	105
over- (too much)	98
mis-	83
sub-	80

(Source: Adapted from Graves, F. M., & Watts-Taffe, S. M. (2002). The place of word consciousness in a researched-based vocabulary program. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (Vol. 3, pp. 140-165). Newark, DE: International Reading Association)

**Day 1:**

Introduce the concept of prefixes as a way to unlock the meanings of words they don't know. Discuss the basic Facts About Prefixes and give examples.

**Facts About Prefixes**

\*Prefixes are a group of letters that go in front of words.  
ex: 'un' which means not

\* Prefixes don't appear by themselves- they are always attached to a word. Ex: *unhappy*

\* A prefix changes the meaning of the word it's attached to. Ex. happy to not happy

\* If the group of letters is really a prefix, you can remove them from the word and still have a real word left.  
Ex. *unhappy* becomes happy when you remove the prefix.  
*Uncle* does not have a prefix because if you remove 'un' you are left with cle which is not a word.

(Diamond & Gutlohn, 2006)

Let students know that the next day they will be studying the prefix 'un' and encourage them to look for words with the prefix in newspapers and books and to listen for the prefix in conversations.

**Day 2:**

Review the Facts About Prefixes (listed in Day 1). Ask of anyone found or heard a word that had the prefix and list them on the board or chart paper. Brainstorm words with that prefix and add them to your list.

Check to see if all the words listed truly have the prefix by removing the group of letters to see if a real word is left.

Based on their knowledge of some of the words on the board, see if they can determine the meaning of the prefix.

State or confirm the meaning of the particular prefix. Choose 1 familiar word (i.e., *unhappy* or *unkind*) and slowly guide students in filling in the Prefix Worksheet (see immediately below) for that word.

**Day 3:**

Briefly review Facts About Prefixes (listed in Day 1). Break apart and complete worksheet for 2 more familiar words with the particular prefix.

Choose one or two unfamiliar words with the prefix (ex: unstable, unskilled). Break them apart in the chart and see if the students can determine the meaning of each word.

Repeat day 2 and 3 as you introduce other prefixes.

(Graves, 2006)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Prefix Chart

Prefixed Word	Prefix	Meaning of Prefix	Base word	Meaning of Base Word	Meaning of Prefixed Word

(Source: Adapted from Lubliner, S., & Smetana, L. D. (2005). *Getting into words: Vocabulary instruction that strengthens comprehension*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes)

## Fostering Word Consciousness

When a child is word conscious, she or he has an interest in and an awareness of words around them- words they read, hear, speak and write. Word consciousness is the goal teachers strive for their students to attain as they provide rich language experiences, teach individual words and word-learning strategies (Graves, 2006; Scott & Nagy, 2004).

To foster word consciousness, a teacher must model and encourage an enthusiasm for new words. The use of games, riddles, homophones and puzzles is highly motivating in primary classrooms. Reading instruction in primary grades is not just teaching students that printed words convey meaning, but that words can feel and sound good, incite laughter and be fun to use (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002).

### **Bingo Games:**

Grades: 1 and above      15-20 minutes

You can make a simple bingo game by giving each child a blank grid. Display a list of words the children have learned. Children can choose the words they want and write them on their bingo grid.

To play, the teacher gives a definition or a synonym for the word. If the child has the word, they place a marker on the word. General Bingo rules apply.

Lakeshore also sells vocabulary bingo games that focus on synonyms, antonyms, homophones, prefixes and suffixes. You can find these on-line at [www.lakeshorelearning.com](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com).

# Vocabulary Bingo


# Vocabulary Bingo

		Free Space		

## Animal Idioms:

Grades: K-3                      10-20 minutes

Idioms are fun to work with because they are part of everyday vocabulary. Students learn to interpret literal and figurative meanings of idioms. Below are a few animal idioms you can use with primary students.

- \* to have ants in your pants                      \* to take the bull by the horns
- \* to let the cat out of the bag                      \* to be raining cats and dogs
- \* to have a cow    \* to be in the doghouse
- \* to seem a little fishy                                      \* to eat like a horse
- \* to hold your horses                                      \* to put the cart before the horse
- \* to wait until the cows come home                      \* the straw that broke the camel's back

### Explanation:

Tell students an idiom is an expression where the entire meaning is different from the usual meanings of the individual words within it. Give an example to discuss, draw or act out its literal meaning. Then tell the meaning of the expression. Give an example of how it could be used in conversation.

*Boys and girls, today we are going to learn about idioms. Idioms are a group of words that have a special meaning completely different from what the actual words mean by themselves. For example, the idiom 'you have ants in your pants' does not literally or actually mean there are little insects crawling in your pants.*

*Have you ever had something crawling on your leg or in your clothing? How did you react? Sam, come up and act out what you did when you felt like you had an insect crawling on you. Yes, you wiggled around and may have jumped up and down.*

*The real meaning of this idiom means that a person is fidgeting or having a hard time sitting still like a person who might actually have a bunch of ants crawling up their pants might act. This is how someone might use this idiom. "Sam, you are wiggling in that chair so much that I think you have ants in your pants." Right where you're seated, act out what it might look like to fidget or wiggle in your seat.*

Animal idioms are fun for primary aged students to learn. As you are discussing idioms, your students may come up with other idioms they've heard in conversations. You can add these to your list and discuss their meanings.

### **Word Jars:**

Grades: K-3                      5-15 minutes

This activity may be used after reading the book, *Donavan's Word Jar* by Monalisa Degross. This is a short chapter book about a third grade boy who likes to collect interesting words by writing them on a slip of paper and putting them in a jar.

1. Give each child a plastic zip-lock bag with a few slips of paper. Instructions should be included in the bag telling parents that the students are to look for words that are unfamiliar and interesting to them. They may look in books, magazines, newspapers, canned food labels, cereal boxes – wherever there are words. The student writes the word on a slip of paper and discusses the meaning of the word with their family.

2. Children can share the word they found and its meaning in class. The class can discuss how useful the word may be and how they might use it in their conversations or writing. Older children may look words up in a dictionary. A thesaurus is be useful in finding synonyms that are known to the students to help them relate the word to concepts they already know.

3. Words can be placed on a vocabulary bulletin board or chart. Rewards can be given for students who bring words in or use the words in their conversations or writing.

### **Rich \$ Words:**

Grades: K-3                      5 minutes

1. Decorate a poster board or bulletin board with play money.
2. Discuss with the class how using new words makes your vocabulary rich and will help you do better in school and transfer to success in a career.
3. Every Monday write a word on a sentence strip and tack it to the poster board. The word can be from text you have read as a class or a word that you think is useful and would like the students to use.

4. Discuss the meaning of the word and brainstorm how you would use it in conversation and writing.

5. When a student has used the word in conversation or writing, write his or her name and date on the sentence strip that the word is written on. After the word has been used 10 times by different students, the word can be retired to the Vocabulary Hall of Fame (words that have previously been on the poster board). Another word can be placed on the poster board.

(Barger, 2006)

### **Homophone Memory Game:**

Grades: 1-3                      15-20 minutes

Choose words from the homophone list below. Using 3 x 5 cards, write one word on each card.

*To Play:* Lay cards face down in rows. Each player takes a turn by turning over 2 cards. If the cards are a matching homophone pair they may keep the cards. If they are not a pair, they turn cards over and the next player takes a turn. After all homophone pairs have been found, players count how many matches they found. The player with the most pairs wins.

*Extra Challenge:* When a player turns over a matching pair of homophone words, they must use each word in a sentence correctly in order to keep the cards.

#### *Homophone pairs:*

there, their	see, sea	no, know
to, too, two	blue, blew	new, knew
where, wear	be, bee	sale, sail
tale, tail	red, read	break, brake
week, weak	write, right	ate, eight
ant, aunt	bear, bare	flour, flower
for, four	hear, here	hole, whole
meat, meet	son, sun	plain, plane

won, one	knight, night	hair, hare
ball, bawl	beet, beat	by, buy, bye
threw, through	some, sum	pain, pane

### **Multiple Meaning Jeopardy:**

Grades: 2 and 3      15-20 minutes

Preparation: Write out one clue per 4 x 6 card from the list below or make up your own clues. Write the answer on the other side. Using a pocket chart arrange the cards in rows with the clue facing out. Each row can be worth a given amount of points (10, 20, 30).

1. Divide the class into two teams.
2. Call on a student from a team to choose a card under a given amount of points.
3. Read the clue. If they answer correctly they get the points. If they answer incorrectly the opposing team gets to answer for the points.

## Multiple Meaning Clues

A toy that bounces or Cinderella's dance

A bed covering or a single piece of paper

A part of a tree or someone who goes away

The opposite of bottom or a spinning toy

A mammal that flies or a something you hit a ball with

The sides of a river or building where money is kept

To teach a particular skill or a vehicle that moves

Where you wash your hands or the opposite of float

A child or a baby goat

A heavy jacket or a layer of paint

Part of a tree or an elephant's nose

The opposite of left or being correct

Not heavy or not dark

Tree covering or a dog sound

12 inches or what you put your shoe on

Antonym for soft or very difficult

Use this to light a fire or 2 things that go together

A container for pouring water or person who throws the ball

Antonym for soft or very difficult

Use this to light a fire or 2 things that go together

Someone who is smart or a lot of light

## Vocabulary Quiz Game Show:

Grades 1-3

Lakeshore sells a vocabulary jeopardy game that comes with a special pocket chart and pre-made cards. The categories of cards included in the game are synonyms, antonyms, homophones, multiple meaning words and definitions. Go to

[www.lakeshorelearning.com](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com) to request a catalog.

## **Word Play Books:**

There are many entertaining books that expose children to the concept that words can be fun to know and use.

*A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* by Fred Gwynne, 1976 (Aladdin). An illustrated multiple meaning book that is fun for all ages.

*A Little Pigeon Toad* by Fred Gwynne, 1988 (Simon & Schuster). An illustrated multiple meaning book.

*Animalia* by Graeme Base, 1986. An alphabet book with clever illustrations and amusing text like “crafty crimson cats carefully catching crusty crayfish”.

*Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster* by Debra Frasier, 2000. A humorous story of a student’s misadventures with a particular word. The book is full of rich adjectives.

*The King Who Rained* by Fred Gwynne, 1970 (Simon & Schuster). One of several illustrated multiple meaning books by this author.

*Word Wizard* by Cathryn Falwell, 2006 (Clarion). An illustrated story of a young girl who embarks on a series of adventures with a magical spoon that makes new words by changing letters around.

*What is That Thing? Whose Stuff Is This?* by John Gile, 2000 (JGC United). An illustrated book that discusses the importance of words and how they are used everyday.

## For Further Reading

Baumann, J.F. and Kame'enui, E.J. (2004) *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice*. Guilford Press.

*Vocabulary instruction: Research to Practice* is a compilation of current writings from well-known researchers (Biemiller, McKeown, Beck, Stahl, Graves, Blachowicz, Nagy, Marzano) in the field of vocabulary. The articles are divided into three topics: teaching specific vocabulary, teaching vocabulary learning strategies and teaching vocabulary through word consciousness and language play.

Beck, I., McKeown, M., and Kucan, L. (2002) *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Guilford Press.

*Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, written by the creators of Text Talk, provides a research-based framework and practical strategies for developing vocabulary with children from Kindergarten through high school. Emphasis is placed on instruction that offers rich information about words and their uses and improves students' language comprehension and production. This is an excellent resource to teachers who want to better implement shared storybook reading in their classrooms.

Lubliner, S., and Smetana, L. (2005) *Getting Into Words: Vocabulary Instruction that Strengthens Comprehension*. Paul H. Brooks.

*Getting Into Words: Vocabulary Instruction that Strengthens Comprehension* provides research-based practical strategies for teaching word learning strategies to children of all ages. Using the author's model, teachers will help students use metacognitive skills as they learn when and how to use various word learning strategies. A chapter is devoted to primary grades as well as English learners. Activity worksheets are included, some of which have Spanish translations.

## References

- Barger, J. (2006). Building word consciousness. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(3), 279-281.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I., Perfetti, C., & McKeown, M. (1982). The effects of long-term vocabulary instruction on lexical access and reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74, 506-521.
- Biemiller, A. (2001). Teaching vocabulary: Early, direct, and sequential. *American Educator*, 25(1), 24-28, 47.
- Biemiller, A. (2003). Oral comprehension sets the ceiling on reading comprehension. *American Educator*, 27(1), 23, 44.
- Biemiller, A. (2004). Teaching vocabulary in the primary grades. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 28-40). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Blachowicz, C. L., & Fisher, P. J. (2006). *Integrated vocabulary instruction: Meeting the needs of diverse learners*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.
- Chall, J. S., Jacobs, V. A., & Baldwin, L. E. (1990). *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coyne, M. D., Simmons, D. C., Kame'enui, E. J., & Stoolmiller, M. (2004). Teaching vocabulary during shared storybook readings: An examination of differential effects. *Exceptionality*, 12(3), 145-162.
- Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and the ability 10 years later. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 934-945.
- Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2006). *Teaching vocabulary*. Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/9943>
- Graves, M. F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning & instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Graves, M. F., & Watts-Taffe, S. M. (2002). The place of word consciousness in a researched-based vocabulary program. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (Vol. 3, pp. 140-165). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

- Hiebert, E. H., & Kamil, M. L. (2005). *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Honchell, B., & Jones, S. (2008) Student-centered vocabulary strategies that promote comprehension. *The California Reader*, 41(4), 24-30.
- Lubliner, S., & Smetana, L. D. (2005). *Getting into words: Vocabulary instruction that strengthens comprehension*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- McKeown, M. G. (1985). The acquisition of word meaning from context by children of high and low ability. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20(4), 482-496.
- McKeown, M., & Beck, I. (2004). Direct and rich vocabulary instruction. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary Instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 13-27). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Moats, L. C. (2001). Overcoming the language gap: Invest generously in teacher professional development. *American Educator*, 25(2), 5-9. Retrieved from [http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&.tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#\\_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214](http://us.mc389.mail.yahoo.com/mc/welcome?.gx=1&.tm=1288631614&.rand=drbjnuupvag3g#_pg=showFolder&fid=Inbox&order=down&tt=98&pSize=25&.rand=315733510&.jsrand=2543214)
- Nagy, W. E. (1988). *Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension*. Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Richek, M. A. (2005). Words are wonderful: Interactive, time-efficient strategies to teach meaning vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(5), 414-423.
- Scarborough, J. S. (1998). Early identification of children at risk for reading disabilities: Phonological awareness and some other promising predictors. In B. K. Shapiro, P. J. Accardo, & A. J. Capute (Eds.), *Specific reading disability: A view of the spectrum* (pp. 75-119). Timonium, MD: York Press.
- Scott, J. A., & Nagy, W. E. (2004). Developing word consciousness. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 201-217). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

## APPENDIX B

## Assessment of Vocabulary Development Handbook

**Instructions:** After reading the Vocabulary Development Handbook and trying at least two activities, please complete the following assessment. Any suggestions for improvement would be greatly appreciated!

1. Were the activities appropriate for your grade level?

No

Somewhat

Yes

Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you feel you could integrate some of the lessons/activities into your daily schedule?

No

Somewhat

Yes

Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the handbook organized in an easy to use format?

No

Somewhat

Yes

Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. After reading the research piece, did you feel you gained a greater understanding for the importance of vocabulary instruction/development in primary grades?

No

Somewhat

Yes

Comments/Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_