



Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings. Readers acquire vocabulary incidentally through daily reading and spoken language, as well as through explicit instruction of specific words and word-learning strategies. Students can build rich and flexible word knowledge through informal talk, discussion, reading literature, reading informational texts, and by listening to text read aloud. For some students, incidental acquisition of vocabulary is a relatively easy task, but this is not the case for all students; thus explicit instruction of vocabulary should be a part of daily instruction.

By increasing awareness of word parts, word relationships, and word origins, as well as using context clues within a text, students can independently determine the meaning of many unfamiliar words or concepts. Some instructional strategies include dictionary use, morphemic analysis, contextual analysis, and cognate awareness.⁸

Examples of Learning Tasks

- Engage students in Word Sorts (i.e. by sound, pattern, concept/meaning).
- Build word walls to organize and revisit content area vocabulary learned throughout the year.
- Introduce academic vocabulary across content areas; encourage the use of these words in daily speaking, listening, writing, and reading.
- Write meaningful sentences that include new vocabulary.
- Engage in “rich,” in-depth knowledge of word meanings including thinking of examples and non-examples, synonyms, and analysis of word parts – not just repeated definitions.
- Provide clear, accessible explanations and examples of word meanings in various contexts, with opportunities for students to discuss, analyze, use, and compare the words in these contexts.
- Explicitly teach cognates (related words from other languages) for the languages spoken by students in the class
- Engage students in active, deep processing by getting them to use words in new contexts and to create associations among words.
- Introduce and use morpheme word-family maps, word sorts, and other independent word consciousness and word-learning strategies.

Small groups can best be done by focusing instruction on gaps in student understanding of content-specific or academic vocabulary.

Vocabulary acquisition is a complex aspect of literacy. It can be challenging to find vocabulary assessments that quickly and widely measure

student vocabulary beyond simple understanding. Therefore, it can be helpful to utilize a variety of data sources to identify gaps in students' vocabulary skills. This can be done by tailoring assessments to specific vocabulary lists that cut-cross curriculum and administering pre-and post-assessments to measure growth.

Vocabulary Tools

Instructional Resources

[Vocabulary Summary Sheet](#)
[Berkley Schools Grade Level \(strategies and word lists\)](#)
[Marzano's Grade Level Academic Vocabulary Lists](#)
[Fray Model \(graphic organizer to build vocabulary\)](#)
[Florida Center for Reading Research VPK Learning Center: Language and Vocabulary Activities](#)
[Florida Center for Reading Research Grades K-1 Student Center Activities](#)
[Florida Center for Reading Research Grades 2-3 Student Center Activities](#)
[Teaching Reading Sourcebook](#)

Assessments

[Classroom Vocabulary Assessment for Content Areas](#)
[DAZE Passages](#)

⁸ Honig, B., Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2013). Teaching reading sourcebook. Novato, CA: Arena Press