2013

Vocabulary instruction : becoming word conscious to support reading comprehension

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Vocabulary instruction: becoming word conscious to support reading comprehension

Abstract
Currently, many classroom teachers are striving to support students’ comprehension skills. Teachers are currently teaching vocabulary through incidental exposures. The dependency of vocabulary skills are falling to the students. The students might be asked to memorize rather than gathering a deeper meaning of a word and how we use the word within context. Over the past several years research has shown that vocabulary develops more rapidly after grade three, but the primary grades need to begin with a strong literacy foundation in word learning strategies (Biemiller, 2003, 2006). This research project organized professional development sessions for teachers, to provide the planning tools to support their students with vocabulary strategies to comprehend a word.
VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION:
BECOMING WORD CONCIOUS TO SUPPORT READING COMPREHENSION

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

Amy Evelyn Bries

July, 2013
This Project by Amy Evelyn Bries

Titled: Vocabulary Instruction: Becoming Word Conscious to Support Reading Comprehension.

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Masters of Arts in Education.

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Abstract

Currently, many classroom teachers are striving to support students' comprehension skills. Teachers are currently teaching vocabulary through incidental exposures. The dependency of vocabulary skills are falling to the students. The students might be asked to memorize rather than gathering a deeper meaning of a word and how we use the word within context. Over the past several years research has shown that vocabulary develops more rapidly after grade three, but the primary grades need to begin with a strong literacy foundation in word learning strategies (Biemiller, 2003, 2006). This research project organized professional development sessions for teachers, to provide the planning tools to support their students with vocabulary strategies to comprehend a word.
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INTRODUCTION

This project consists of providing teachers the opportunity to learn more about vocabulary instruction and strategies to incorporate in their classrooms. Vocabulary is often the forgotten soldier of reading comprehension and oftentimes thought of as an aspect that incidental exposure can fill and teach itself. However, vocabulary brings so much more into the comprehension of what is read. The strategies within this project are traditional and technology based strategies.

When choosing a topic of study for this project, vocabulary has always been a passion for me. In my experiences with vocabulary, I felt that I was very knowledgeable but my word choice was always beyond my comfort zone. I enjoyed writing but my word choice was simple and bland. I wanted to venture out of my comfort zone but wasn’t comfortable enough to do so. I feel like our students feel the same way. When they read a story and come to a word they don’t understand and instead of striving to figure the word out, they skip over it and miss out on an opportunity to grow as a reader. As a teacher, it is our ambition to teach the student necessary skills to read and comprehend text but we are forgetting the simple skills of learning a word and using the word in context. We push our students to learn more numbers, so why aren’t we encouraging them to learn how to use new words?

Within the project, I have included a literature review that describes the importance of vocabulary learning and how it effects reading comprehension. Throughout the literature review, many strategies are described and pros and cons for each strategy are shared. Many educators believe that using flashcards and posted word walls in their classrooms is enough to support students’ comprehension and writing skills.
However, without the bridge of vocabulary and language, those skills are going to deteriorate or remain at a non-challenging level for the students. Those strategies will assist the students to memorize but not necessarily learn how to use those words in context or what the words might mean within different contexts. In any regard, it is a fine place to start but other strategies will help to improve and challenge the students to look deeper into word meanings and usage. Therefore, the project portion reveals many professional development meetings that would support implementing richer vocabulary teaching and learning strategies in the classrooms. As reading teachers, it is our job to support our staff and introduce new strategies to challenge our students. Within these professional development sessions, the strategies are explained and assessment recommendations are discussed to collect data of student achievement. Informal and formal assessments are reviewed and broken down to assist with the implementation of the strategies in teaching, as well as connecting more closely with the data received from the assessments.

As a teacher, I felt that some things that we learn within quarterly professional developments fall through the cracks the remainder of the year. With that in mind, I developed follow-up meetings that would occur every month after a large professional development. For instance, in August, November, January, March, and May there would be strategies or assessments introduced for the teachers to start implementing within their classrooms. To support the teachers, follow-up meetings were scheduled in September, October, December, February, and April. These meetings would consist of modeling and discussion periods that would support teachers with ideas, instruction, and question/answer sessions. After thinking these areas through, I would hope that this would
support the teachers so that they would not feel overwhelmed with the information presented. This long-term, sustained professional development over the course of the school year versus short professional development sessions is more effective at influencing long term instructional change.
METHODOLOGY

While working on the organization and development of this project, I wanted to take into consideration what was missing in a daily reading lesson. I wanted to look at potential points of weakness within a reading lesson. When consulting with many peers, I realized the effect of vocabulary and the instruction of new and existing vocabulary was an area of need.

Methods for Locating Data

After beginning an outline for the project, I researched journal sources using the major databases of Education Full Text (Wilson) and ERIC (Ebsco). The following search terms were included: vocabulary instruction, vocabulary strategies, vocabulary and reading comprehension, primary grades, elementary classrooms, vocabulary and technology, or websites. I also implemented the snowball method of researching. As articles were read, they oftentimes provided additional references to support the research that was found.

Methods for Selecting Sources

Articles used were peer-reviewed and supported the information being presented. The articles were printed and reread. Important parts of the articles were highlighted and then revisited before including within the literature review and project.

The Project

While approaching the first portion of the project, I wanted to explain the importance of complete vocabulary instruction and how current practices might not be the most beneficial for our students. I wanted to share different strategies that have been found to be effective for teaching vocabulary. I used information gathered throughout
many articles to share the different strategies reviewed in the articles. I sifted through the information by deciding which strategies would be time efficient, recognizing the time constraints within a teacher's typical day and strategies that included the use of technology for both accessibility and efficiency. My focus on the use of technology was influenced by the targeted audience for this professional development within my school, which has started to implement more technology across instruction. I wanted to not only share traditional strategies but also technological strategies to promote vocabulary instruction in the classrooms. When reading the articles, I chose the articles that supported the pros and cons of the selected strategies. When sifting through the articles, I would read an article that I found interesting and then review the articles that were in their resources to find more articles to support my findings. When I ran out of options, I would look at the library's resources and continue on my search for strategies that would encourage vocabulary-rich instruction.

In the second portion of the project, I planned on informing educators about what might not be enough with their current vocabulary instruction. I brought attention to using flash cards and incidental exposure for the only vocabulary instruction in their classrooms. I used multiple statistics from different articles to support my findings that the first set of strategies that I used in the beginning of my literature review. When constructing the power points for the professional developments, I wanted to incorporate traditional strategies but also to incorporate a strategy using technology as well. I started with the strategies that were most likely already in the classrooms, in some shape or form. Then I expanded with strategies that were similar to each other and finally strategies that might encourage teachers to step beyond their comfort zones to
teach in a different way: student inquiry, explorations of words, and vocabulary assessment in the classroom.
Students enter classrooms every year, with different vocabulary and comprehension levels (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 2004). Some students have more literacy experience while others have had little or no literacy rich opportunities. What do teachers do with this? What options do educators have to help correct this deficit? Teachers and parents are the providers of the foundation of comprehension strategies (Fien et al, 2011; Christ & Wang, 2010). Comprehension is an area of reading that is of great concern for school districts across the nation (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007). Researchers recognize that vocabulary development is an underlying factor of comprehension (Coyne et al, 2004; Boote, 2006; Christ & Wang, 2010; Silverman & Crandell, 2010). Without the knowledge of word meanings in different contexts, the students would not understand what they are reading (Christ & Wang, 2010). Vocabulary instruction, then, becomes a key issue for successful comprehension.

Part of the issue with teaching vocabulary is that there appears to be a misunderstanding about what constitutes instruction that is effective and appropriate.

Many people, particularly teachers and students, associate vocabulary instruction with long lists of ambiguous words, copying the definitions from the dictionary by rote, completing accompanying analogies, or matching the words with their meanings and taking a quiz at the end of the week (Kinloch, 2010, p.113).

A focus on memorization of vocabulary from a list of disconnected words that are studied through rote activities (such as copying) does not support a student’s comprehension
through understanding words in meaningful ways. What kind of instruction supports young learners best? How does vocabulary knowledge develop in young readers?

Over the past several years research has shown that vocabulary develops more rapidly after grade three, but the primary grades need to begin with a strong literacy foundation that includes such elements as within word analysis and vocabulary study, as well as fluency work to help improve vocabulary knowledge (Biemiller, 2003, 2006). Currently, reading education is built on the principle that while reading fluency increases, vocabulary development will gradually build itself as a secondary outcome (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). This is considered incidental learning, and for many incidental learning seems to be the most reasonable way to learn new vocabulary in the primary grades (Biemiller, 2003). Biemiller and Boote (2006) found in their study about vocabulary development, that teachers using repeated readings (which is a fluency technique to improve fluency rate) increased the number of words known by their primary age children. Experts believe that many of the words students learn in a year are through incidental learning experiences (Lane & Allen, 2010). Evidence also shows that increasing knowledge about word meanings can be achieved through multiple exposures (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985).

However, research shows the impact of decoding skills and vocabulary knowledge on fluency growth across pre-primary and primary grades (Boote, 2006). In addition, direct instruction targeting vocabulary also impacts a young learner’s knowledge of words. Boote (2006) in her study of direct instruction of vocabulary in the primary grades found that “...half an hour of daily vocabulary instruction resulted in children learning 3-4 new word meanings per day or up to 12 new word meanings per
Boote argues that the use of consistent vocabulary instruction can have a significant effect on young learners' academic progress.

Further, if appropriate word meanings could be taught consistently each week throughout the primary grades, Kindergarten to Grade 2, a child could acquire about 1200 additional word meanings. This would be enough to significantly increase the developed vocabulary of children with initially low vocabularies and help to close the gap mentioned earlier, (p. 24).

Including the teaching of word meanings in the early grades has the potential for improved vocabulary acquisition for young learners.

The conflict between direct instruction and incidental learning has been visible in the literature over the past three decades. As early as the mid-1980s, some researchers were concerned about the focus on direct instruction as the only explanation for children learning vocabulary. Nagy, Herman, and Anderson (1985), as experts in the field of vocabulary instruction and learning, believed many studies were being conducted and too much credit was being given to direct instruction of vocabulary. Their concern was the focus solely on the direct instruction as the cause for improvement, without taking into account the multiple opportunities children had in the classroom to address key vocabulary outside of the direct instruction lesson, such as large group reading and small group discussions (Nagy et. al., 1985).

Biemiller (2003, 2006) believes if everything were left up to incidental learning, the academic gap could have the potential to be even larger than it already is. Currently, professionals are finding that by the final months of second grade, students in the highest
and lowest vocabulary quartiles differ by an average of 4,000 root words (Biemiller, 2006). “Vocabulary knowledge has long been acknowledged as a critical component of learning to read and reading to learn,” (Pullen et al., 2010, p. 1). Pullen et al. (2010) explain the importance of improving students’ oral vocabulary in the primary grades so students can recognize words and have strategies to decode words when reading to learn through the upper primary and elementary grades. So the conflict between incidental vocabulary learning and direct instruction of vocabulary continue, but the real issue is providing those varied opportunities for children to be exposed to and to learn about vocabulary.

At this time, research suggests that there are instructional strategies that support students’ vocabulary development (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Boote, 2006; Griffith & Ruan, 2007). Throughout multiple studies, research has consistently shown that teachers are aware of vocabulary instruction for students in general, but do not know how to differentiate for specific student needs. Biemiller (2003) found that in a typical school year teachers are instructing 100-200 word meanings, yet he argues that students need to learn at least 800 word meanings within a year to remain at grade level standards. Biemiller (2003) elaborates,

It is estimated that by the end of the elementary years, an average child has acquired around 9,000 root words. This reflects acquiring about 2.2 words per day from age 1 through age 8 and 2.4 words per day during ages 9 through 12. (p. 327)
Even though most teachers are devoting approximately a half an hour a day to vocabulary instruction (Biemiller, 2003), it is not clear that 30 minutes is enough time for effective vocabulary learning. The demand in learning 800 vocabulary words per year on vocabulary instruction suggests that teachers need more instructional approaches and resources to address vocabulary learning.

What can teachers do to develop effective lessons to increase students’ vocabulary learning? Educators have so many resources but oftentimes are not aware of the effectiveness of those resources. Areas of instruction that improve vocabulary learning include verbal support, self awareness of vocabulary, context, conceptualizing organization of thought, visual support, and technology.

**Read Aloud with Vocabulary Instruction**

Biemiller and Boote (2006) conducted a study which focused on vocabulary instruction that was embedded within the children’s read aloud stories. The first part of the study focused on rereading and pretesting of words and their meanings. Biemiller and Boote believed rereading would promote more exposure to the words in context, with the hypothesis that the more the students play with the words in context, the more they recall them later. The study focused on reading a story potentially four times. The first time reading through the story would be read without a focus on word meanings to concentrate on the flow of the story. Through the final readings more focus would be put on unknown words to incorporate a deeper level of meaning. Through the study, one classroom used repeated readings with direct instruction of vocabulary words and the other classroom used repeated readings without direct instruction of vocabulary words.
Biemiller and Boote discovered after reading a story four times kindergarten children gained 23% of instructed word meanings. In grades 1 and 2, 21%-24% of instructed words were acquired when stories were read two to four times. Through pretest to posttest results, there was a gain of 13% for repeated readings and 22% for repeated reading plus word meaning explanations. Therefore, Biemiller and Boote found that reading with the instruction of new words was more powerful than without vocabulary instruction. (p. 50-51)

When repeatedly reading a story aloud to students, there is information to be gained. Repeated readings allow students to recall what the story may be about but this strategy encourages students to comprehend with deeper meaning the purpose which an author writes a story. Samuel (1997) stated, “As less attention is required for decoding, more attention becomes available for comprehension. Thus rereading both builds fluency and enhances comprehension.” (p. 378) Even though Samuel argues rereading is beneficial for comprehension and fluency, Biemiller and Boote (2006) argue that to increase vocabulary learning as well, Read Alouds should also incorporate attention to vocabulary instruction while rereading. “Thus, if appropriate word meanings could be taught at a successful rate and continued to do so for 3 primary years, a child could acquire 1,000-1,500 additional word meanings” (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 55). The word knowledge that could be gained by addressing vocabulary words with students while reading aloud is impressive. Providing vocabulary instruction while reading aloud proves to be beneficial when compared to just reading a story in class. Using a read aloud strategy with purposeful vocabulary instruction embedded within the activity, allows teachers to expand beyond their half hour language arts period to use read alouds
with vocabulary instruction throughout other subject areas.

Using read alouds in content areas requires teachers to consider the organization of the major ideas addressed in the text when selecting words to introduce to readers before they begin reading aloud (Flanigan & Greenwood, 2007). The selection of words chosen should be grouped according to importance to the content and connections both across the words and with the content being addressed. Flanigan and Greenwood (2007) have found that students relate to learning vocabulary when the target words are clustered so the students can make connections to the reading. Flanigan and Greenwood acknowledged four different groups of words that students come across in their learning, “critical ‘before’ words, ‘foot-in-the-door’ words, critical ‘after’ words, and words not to teach” (p. 229-230). When preparing a read aloud, Flanigan and Greenwood suggest that goals need to be set to decide the instructional purpose of the chosen story. Once the purpose for instruction is decided, Flanigan and Greenwood’s scanning process begins for selecting words for instruction. Words from the selected story are written on a paper and then the teacher weeds through them to determine where the words fit into the categories of word types. Once the type of word category is decided upon for instruction, the teaching strategy unfolds within that category. Using a read aloud for instruction is a process, and for the children to reap the benefits all of the steps need to be included. With this process of read alouds and embedded vocabulary instruction, read aloud instruction becomes an effective strategy for vocabulary learning.
Story Dictation

Even though a read aloud can be beneficial, using story dictation in pre-primary grades can be even more meaningful. Christ, Wang, and Chiu (2009) implemented a study which supported the importance of one-on-one adult and student interaction. The overall adult-child interaction supported vocabulary development through the use of story dictation. When implementing story dictation correctly Christ et al. suggest four steps to follow (1) ask questions about unknown word meanings, (2) while encountering words, give definitions, (3) have the students repeat unknown words after giving a definition, and (4) use a gradual release of responsibility model (Christ, Wang, & Chiu, 2009). In the story dictation strategy, the teacher’s role is to (1) provide repetition of a word, (2) question the students, in both broad and specific ways, (3) to check for understanding of the word and (4) to check the context in which the word is being used by the child as the story is being dictated, (5) prompt to help support the student’s story, and (6) give feedback (Christ, Wang, & Chiu, 2009; Christ & Wang, 2010). As the study progressed, the researchers noticed that as the students’ motivation increased so did the depth of their target word meaning during the story dictations. Target words are the words selected by the teacher as words that need to be further defined or a word that most students should be aware of. If a child is motivated, learning becomes less of a chore and more of an exciting hobby. With gradual release of responsibility, the students become more reliable for their own learning and the learning of other students around them. Christ, Want, and Chui (2009) found through using story dictation, children were able to take their learning into their own hands and experiment with something that was important to
them. This experimentation with ideas and manipulation of language to create dictated stories helped bridge the child’s learning of the story and vocabulary.

**Becoming Word Conscious**

When finding what motivates children in learning about words and language, Christ and Wang (2010) found it is important to help students become aware of the words around them. Often teachers may take for granted that students see words around them, but teachers cannot always assume this is true. “Not all children strategically attend to clues in the environment to help them expand their understandings of word meanings” (Christ & Wang, 2010, p.86). Every child comes with reading tools or strategies but unless they are taught how to use those tools or find new ones, they will not use the tools to their full potential. Lane and Allen (2010) suggest adapting current vocabulary which might be simple or dull for students to more polished and exciting vocabulary. Lane and Allen propose steps to follow when instructing the students to be word conscious (1) plan which words will be introduced, (2) create word lists and synonyms that your students could understand and use throughout the school day, (3) select words that are the most familiar concepts and begin introducing more refined terms for those words, and (4) for more difficult concepts, teach the concept first in simple terms until the students are comfortable and then expand to more mature terms later (Lane and Allen, 2010).

Students need specific instruction to recognize words in front of them or around them (Christ & Wang, 2010; Kesler, 2010). In fact, the words teachers use on a daily basis often have a great deal of impact on students’ vocabulary development (Christ & Wang, 2010; Lane & Allen, 2010). Lane and Allen (2010) observed two different
classrooms and the style of language each teacher used. The teachers began with simple vocabulary words and expanded to more complex words as the school year continued. The following excerpt from Lane and Allen’s study shows the power of teacher language on the language development of children.

Fast Forward to February in Ms. Barker’s class. Circle time looked much like it did in September, but there were subtle differences. Instead of simply reciting the days of the week, the students were able to tell Ms. Barker what day it was yesterday and what day it will be three days from then. Instead of simply reciting the months of the year, the children identified the holidays that occur in February, how many days there are in the month, and in what session it falls.

Perhaps the biggest difference became evident when Ms. Barker was going over the duties of the class jobs. The zookeeper had become the “animal nutrition specialist.” The cleanup helper had become the “custodian.” The line leader was the “class movement coordinator,” whereas the caboose was still the caboose. The weather watcher had become the “meteorologist.” (p. 363)

Providing opportunities for students to become “word conscious” (Lane & Allen, 2010, p. 365) is critical to consider as teachers instruct, and for students with limited past exposure to vocabulary the opportunity to become word conscious helps to build their word knowledge base.

**Cloze procedure.** Giving students the opportunity to get involved in their learning is a key point to getting children to notice words around them (Kesler, 2010).
Through Kesler’s (2010) research, getting students to become word conscious might amplify their abilities recognize and learn unknown words on their own (p. 272).

While reading aloud, applying the strategy called the Cloze Procedure could engage the students on a deeper level (Kesler, 2010, p. 273). Kesler (2010) suggests the teacher begins using the Cloze Procedure by choosing a book for a read aloud. The teacher continues by introducing some chosen vocabulary words. When the teacher reads aloud the story, the teacher chooses to remove those words. Instead of reading the words, the teacher leaves the sentence with a missing word. The missing word would be filled in with other words which the students disclose from the clues from the story. This strategy gets the students using context clues and synonyms to create possible words that finish the missing part of the sentence. As Kesler (2010) continued reading, he gradually gave phonetic clues which enabled the students to trim their choices and eventually figure out the original word (p. 273).

If the students are having difficulty with synonyms for the words or possibly background knowledge of the text being read aloud, then concept or semantic mapping would be sufficient. These two strategies could easily be effective when used hand-in-hand.

**Concept or semantic mapping.** If the Cloze Procedure is unsuccessful with a group of students, another method to consider is concept mapping. Kesler (2010) realized through using a concept map, the teacher could understand which terms the students understood and which words would need to be introduced again. Kelser maintains that in order for students to realize the difference between the words the
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students understood and did not understand, the teacher would make reference to the words that were being manifested throughout the concept map and how easy it could be for the students to think of words that extended from the central word. If the students were showing difficulty with revealing synonyms for the central word, then the teacher would need to make additional resources available to review that particular word. Bridging connections between the words the students knew and the words that were unfamiliar provide a beginning point for the teacher to determine the upcoming reading instruction. Foil and Alber (2002) added how important these connections are and that semantic maps allow students the visual aspect of understanding the meaning of a word. Making visual and mental connections is important, but adding the kinesthetic aspect helps students make connections while repeating the words (Kesler, 2010; Foil & Alber, 2002). Using simple circles and lines to group words in ways which allow students to make connections; helps them organize their thoughts and start accessing their background knowledge to help them comprehend while reading a specific selection (Foil & Alber, 2002). Foil and Alber found the important impact to make when using semantic mapping is to include “vertical and horizontal” learning of the definition of the words (p. 134). An example of “vertical mapping” would be giving a general vocabulary word and then defining it with other words that are associated with that word (Foil & Alber, 2002). An example of “horizontal mapping” would be thinking of categories that the word would be included in.

Using concept or semantic mapping is considered a visual representation of a word and provides a visual reflecting how different meanings connect. Students engage in learning when the student can visually see the connections. Teachers need to
encourage students to recognize more about words through daily instruction by developing those connections.

**Picture-Word Inductive Model (PWIM).** PWIM concentrates on beginning reading and writing. This model has been present since 1976 but is becoming more popular as the need for vocabulary development continues to rise (Lane & Allen, 2010; Loh, 2010). Loh (2010) states, “PWIM is 'multifaceted' in that it utilizes the 'visual image', the spoken and listening vocabularies of the children, and the children's own lived experiences to aid them in their learning.” (p. 165). A PWIM model encourages students to recognize the visual and auditory component of vocabulary and then translate it to the written form. The students make connections between the details of a picture and detailed sentences or writings from that picture.

If the use of PWIM allows students to make a visual connection to a word, how can a teacher construct a PWIM within the classroom? Loh suggests the teacher selects a picture to become the model for students to learn words (Loh, 2010). The following is an example of how Loh recommends developing a PWIM activity. Initially, the teacher chooses a picture that fits the content of the class instruction. The teacher plans time for students to discuss what is seen in the picture. During the discussion, when a student suggests a word that represents content in the picture, the teacher would label the picture by drawing a line from the identified object or area, state the word and write the word. This process of labeling the children’s words identifying parts of the picture is what Loh refers to as having the words “shaken out” (Loh, 2010, p.161). These beginning words would be broad. For example: flower, tree, or home. As more of the general words are found, more specific words are drawn upon as the students become comfortable with the
procedure. The tree might become an apple tree. The flower becomes a rose, whereas the home might remain as home. As this procedure evolves into more detailed words, the students would be encouraged to use those words within their own writing.

There is no research to support the instructional approach of having students learn vocabulary effectively by being given a long list of words. Instead, research suggests that with fewer words and more focus on the appropriate language use of the chosen words (along with decoding skills), students are able to understand vocabulary at a greater depth by understanding the context and meaning of a word (Kinloch, 2010). Learning a smaller amount of words per week can be beneficial in increasing the amount of retained word knowledge. This idea of learning fewer words in a richer context across multiple exposures to the word takes time and takes effective planning by the teacher. “Learning a word is not an ‘all or nothing’ kind of thing. It is more like a dimmer switch that gradually produces a greater supply of light” (Kinloch, 2010, p. 114). Often teachers and parents forget that learning a word requires practice and repetition. When teaching early elementary students, it is important to introduce new words throughout the curriculum and take advantage of all the teachable moments. In addition, instructors of older students need to take the opportunities to add depth to their students’ vocabulary skills and knowledge.

Technology and Vocabulary Instruction

The United States as a society is becoming more technologically based and students become more intrigued with the knowledge that is gleaned and the opportunities that materialize when using technology (Dalton & Grisham, 2011; Reinking & Watkins,
As instructors within classrooms with technological demands, classroom instruction is beginning to incorporate more strategies revolving around the use of technology. This is true for vocabulary instruction as well (Dalton & Grisham, 2011; Jackson, Tripp, & Cox, 2011; Narkon, Wells, & Segal, 2011). 

**Interactive and electronic word walls.** The complexity of vocabulary word usage can be enhanced through students' writing and reading. Teachers need to explore ways to make vocabulary accessible across reading and writing activities. Narkon, Wells, and Segal (2011) suggest introducing word walls to students in order to provide support for vocabulary. "A word wall itself does not teach vocabulary" but is often used to provide students with initial exposure to new vocabulary," (Narkon, Wells, & Segal, 2011, p. 40). Narkon, Wells, and Segal (2011) believe electronic word walls allow students to view, listen to, read, and write words and sentences that contextualize new vocabulary (p. 40). 

Currently, many teachers have word walls that utilize a whole wall in their classroom. Narkon, Wells, and Segal (2011) encourages educators to explore using a simple power point program to enforce a new approach to an old strategy. They argue that this new approach will be more engaging for students and allows multiple ways of repetition of a word. Narkon Wells, and Segal (2011) explain by utilizing a simple power point program, students could view a letter and words that begin with that letter. Each word begins with a particular letter would be listed and would contain a listening component that would allow the student to hear how the word is pronounced. Once this is established a teacher could add additional components for a student to read and hear how the word is used in a sentence. If the word had a visual component, the teacher could place that information next to the definition of the word.
Another variation is the use of an interactive word wall. Jackson, Tripp, and Cox (2011) used an interactive word wall to incorporate vocabulary for content areas. Jackson et al. (2011) state a word wall that is aligned to content area vocabulary is good but adding visual cues to help students define the words create an even more meaningful experience which results in an interactive word wall (p. 46). These word walls provided students with the independence and confidence to participate in discussions and make connections with content-area vocabulary (Jackson, Tripp, & Cox, 2011). The word wall gave students a visualization of how to organize and understand the information presented in class and helped teachers organize thoughts when presenting lessons as well (Narkon, Wells, & Segal, 2011).

**Technology and Self-Discovery**

Dalton and Grisham (2011), challenge educators to step into the lives of the students to see what strategies really benefit the students. Educators are inspired to ask this question: Are the students’ needs met and challenged to increase academic achievement as they move on to an educational career?

Kinloch (2010) stated, “Self-discovery is another significant component for engaging students in learning.” (p.113). Technology is a wonderful venue to increase engaging students in self-discovery, as well as organized learning. “As literacy educators, we need to use the tools that 21st century technologies afford us,” (Dalton & Grisham, 2011). With current financial limits, in the present day, academic funds are not always as abundant as administrators would like the funds to be. Dalton and Grisham (2011) provide multiple strategies that can be implemented with minimal use of
funding. Dalton and Grisham (2011) encourage teachers to use websites that incorporate different vocabulary activities that help promote learning.

**Web submissions.** Wordle ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)) provides students with the opportunity to create "word clouds" (Dalton & Grisham, 2011, p. 308). Word clouds are created from words that are connected by meaning, topic, or significance. The students are able to manipulate the words into different layouts, fonts, and colors. When using this resource, there are key components to share with students before they explore the website. Dalton and Grisham suggest it is important to inform the students that the word’s definition won’t be shown, so they need to make sure the word is relevant when putting it in the word list. Otherwise the definition won’t be clearly represented to the audience. The website is a strategy for teachers to use to get students to recognize different words within texts. While using Wordle, the words appear in a crossword puzzle view and this encourages students to separate the words, then organize the words to figure out how the words are connected. The main idea could be a word which is incorporated within the puzzle as well.

Besides organizing information, playing games is exciting for students. Dalton and Grisham (2011) advise teachers to use [www.vocabulary.co.il](http://www.vocabulary.co.il) and [www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com). These websites are designed for student use, therefore, allow students to explore vocabulary words through different games and strategies. The games within these websites provide practice for tests or review of vocabulary skills. Other challenges for students are to create multiple words from only eight letters. These activities enable students to discover vocabulary through their manipulation of letters and
sounds, of combining syllables and small words, to develop a sense of vocabulary knowledge through their exploration of words.

Technology is becoming a focal point in society and there are many resources for teaching vocabulary available on the Internet today. Even though so much can be done on computers and smart boards, teachers need to plan instruction that supports students' technological and academic needs. These websites and activities can be a wonderful addition to vocabulary instruction in the classroom.

**Vocabulary Journals**

Besides implementing technology to learn vocabulary, there are other strategies that could be added to the curriculum to encourage the students to be self-discoverers. Kinloch (2010) suggested using a vocabulary journal as a reference for students. Kinloch suggests the students create a vocabulary journal from a simple notebook. In this notebook, the students would write words that were interesting or important to them. The students would write the word’s definition following the word. The notebook would be considered the student’s personal dictionary of words to reference when writing. Eventually, as the students grew more familiar with the words, the students' dependence on the journals would decrease.

Another strategy that encourages exploration of words and language is the Personal Vocabulary Journal (Wood & Taylor, 2005). Wood and Taylor (2005) instruct teachers to start personal journals with the students by: (1) questioning the students to see if they have every inquired what a word might have meant when they were reading before, (2) demonstrating a sample entry by thinking aloud the process students would
use to select and record their word entries, (3) making copies of the personal journal master and hand out to the class, (4) This will be carried through other subjects as well as the reading block of our day, (5) the words chosen can be words that are interesting to the students and not just words associated with the topic of study, (6) students can be appointed to small groups to share words from their vocabulary journals and can act out words when appropriate. For an assessment option, Wood and Taylor (2005) give teachers the option of allowing the students to select two or three of the words in their personal vocabulary journals for a weekly or unit vocabulary test.

Even with a conscientious effort to provide students with a range of strategies to learn vocabulary some students still struggle. “Educators must be prepared to provide additional instruction when initial instruction doesn't allow all students to reach mastery.” (Sobolak, 2011, p. 22). Teachers have the responsibility to decide when the initial instruction isn't enough for the students. Researchers agree that educators need a measurement tool to recognize when students are succeeding with vocabulary words and when the students are unsuccessful (Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007; Kearns & Biemiller, 2010).

**Vocabulary Assessment**

“Vocabulary and comprehension are multidimensional, incremental, context dependent, and develop across a lifetime” (Stahl & Bravo, 2010). Currently, vocabulary skills are not easily assessed like the other reading development skills, therefore, vocabulary makes testing difficult. Stahl and Bravo (2010) stress the importance of truly understanding a word extends beyond the word definition. The context of a story
provides a deeper knowledge of a word with help from the word’s definition and more experience using the word.

**Informal assessments.** Educators’ time can be very limited especially when assessing students. Feezell (2012) reminds teachers to give the students a choice to be involved with their learning and indirectly it assists teachers to understand what the students are beginning to understand. For instance, Feezell (2012) asks the students to submit interesting words into a small shoe box. Within this shoe box, are small pieces of paper or sticky notes which the students are asked (a) to put their name on, (b) to write the word, and (c) to find and write the sentence from the text that contains the word (p. 234). After realizing which students are consistently adding words to the box, this allows the teacher to have a small conference with those that are not. During these conferences, the students and teacher discuss the books they may be reading and what words might be considered interesting or possibly challenging to the student.

The words in the word box would be separated according to difficulty and then later would be pulled out to be explained in a short whole group discussion which would complete day one of this informal assessment. On day two, Feezell (2012) instructs the students in a modified writers’ workshop that involves teacher-developed prompts to help guide students’ writing. Feezell (2012) has the students join in a whole group discussion about the words and their word definitions. During this time, the students, as a group, develop sentences using the words from the vocabulary box. Eventually, the students will separate into smaller groups to develop a story according to a writing prompt that is developed by the teacher to encompass a specific topic that easily addresses the vocabulary.
On day three and four, Feezell (2012) encourages students to use the current word wall, which contains words from previous and current lessons. Informal assessments are then developed using that word wall collection. One assessment involves individual selection of words to be represented in visual form. “Students choose a word from the word wall to illustrate. Their classmates must identify the word from the picture.” (p. 236). The teacher would begin by instructing the students to look at the word wall that is present in the classroom. The students would be asked to choose one word and the teacher would pass out a half piece of paper. On the half piece of paper, the students would begin drawing an illustration that would explain the word that they chose. After they completed their drawings, the teacher would pair the students and have the students exchange their pictures to see if the other student could guess their picture. When they are finished, the students could write their names on the back of their illustrations and turn them in for grading. For the teacher, the illustrations will initiate whether the students understand what the word really means or if they are still unsure about the word’s meaning.

Besides the first assessment, students could play a version of tic-tac-toe. Tic-tac-toe on a 3 by 3 grid could be another informal assessment for vocabulary. Feezell (2012) asks students to select nine words from the word wall and write each in a square. Each student is selecting his/her own set of nine words to be included on the board. The definitions for all the words on the word wall are written on scraps of paper and placed in a box. When the cards and definitions are completed, a student draws a definition from the box. As the student reads a word’s definition, the students cross out the word on the tic-tac-toe board. This game is a tic-tac-toe format but with a BINGO
game because the students draw different definitions instead of numbers. In order for the students to win, they must get three X's in a row. The X's can be up and down, side to side, and diagonal.

Another assessment Feezell (2012) shares is choosing “two words that have similar meanings” and splitting the class by the definitions of the words (p. 236). Feezell suggests the teacher shares a sentence that would require using one of the two words chosen. For example, if we had the words “resemblance and mimic,” the teacher could read a sentence “The parrot _________ his owner's voice” (p. 236). The students who chose resemblance would move to the left and the students who chose mimic would move to the right. If the students weren't sure what the difference between the words were, they could remain in the middle of the room. This quick strategy could give the teacher feedback about how the students are doing with the new vocabulary presented or even words that were presented previously. If the teacher would like to record the results of the game, he/she could develop a checklist that contains the names of the students in the class. On the checklist, the teacher could put a check mark next to their name if they didn't understand the meaning of the word and the amount of check marks by the student's name would reveal how well they were doing with the vocabulary words.

Feezell (2012) suggests another informal assessment that allows “one student to stand in the spotlight” (p 236). First the teacher would need to prepare a set of cards for each student. The set would need to include a green, yellow, and red card. To begin this assessment, the teacher selects a student to come to the front of the classroom. This student could feel like they were being assessed individually but really the other students sitting in the crowd would be the assessed. The student would stand in the front of the
group and ten questions would be asked for the student to answer. The questions would be about words from the word wall. The students sitting in the group would have sets of different colored cards. As the student was answering the question presented by the teacher, the students sitting in the crowd “would raise green, red, or yellow cards based on whether they agree, disagree, or are unsure” with the student’s answer (Feezell, 2012, p. 236). When all of the students revealed their card color, it would be important to remember to clearly explain any conflicts the students may have about the questions being discussed.

When assessing the students, these informal assessments aren’t the only way to assess them. There are more assessments like multiple-choice assessments that allow for students to show their knowledge at their own pace. Students are different and learn in different ways. Sometimes it is very difficult for students to process in a short time span and so using the next few assessments would allow students with slower processing skills to express how much they know.

**Multiple-choice assessments.** Other forms of assessments have dated back to 1977 when students used a list of words and found the meanings before they attempted to read the text (Pearson, Hiebert, and Kamil, 2007). After the 1970s, vocabulary assessment evolved to multiple choice testing, which has become a popular way to assess vocabulary. These assessments require students to understand definitions and how to use the word in context. Stahl and Bravo (2010) reported “We have vocabulary treated as a separate subtest or isolated set of words distinct from each word’s role within a larger construct of comprehension, composition, or conceptual application” (p. 569). An issue with isolating vocabulary is that it becomes disconnected from the text, which makes the
meaning of words less applicable to readers. If students are expected to understand a word, the students need to practice embedding it into daily language or writing (Stahl & Bravo, 2010). As a result of the research done by Stahl and Bravo (2010), more teachers are experimenting with checklists that allow educators to track how often a student uses the vocabulary words over a period of time. The checklists would be an easier method for teachers to track the amount of words the students are using and how often they were using them. The more check marks listed by a word, the more the students felt confident using that word within their daily language. Researchers continue to research different ways that will allow for teachers to assess students without a rigorous routine or wasted time going over never ending results (Stahl & Bravo, 2010).

**Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.** The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test has portions of the text that are a type of multiple choice test that uses visuals or visual discrimination assessment of letter combinations for word spelling. This assessment provides choices that help students pick the meaning of a word besides using a multiple-choice test, other educators administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary assessment for primary grades (Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007; Kearns & Biemiller, 2010). This assessment provides pictures for the students to point to after hearing a word from the administrator. This test is targeted for primary grades where basic reading skills are being developed. However, it is an individual assessment tool, and educators would not have enough time in a day to test each student individually. Another outcome using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – III (PPVT-III) would be that all of the words used in the assessment must have a picture representation (Pearson et. al., 2007). However, many of the vocabulary words that students do not understand
are those words that do not have a visual representation, and are more abstract rather than concrete (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010). Besides the issue of questionable results stemming from this assessment, price can become an issue as well. District funding is decreasing and this assessment requires districts to pay for the initial cost of the testing materials and continued yearly costs for the recording sheets. If this assessment was adopted, the cost and budgeting would need to be addressed to ensure the best possible outcome for those assessed with this tool.

**Two-Question Vocabulary Method.** Kearns and Biemiller (2010) reported a new type of test: the Two-Question Vocabulary Method (TQVM). The TQVM is a "vocabulary group testing method that could be used quickly in primary classrooms" (p. 34). Within this assessment, the students would be asked different questions using the each word in two different contexts. The students would simply respond "yes" or "no" to the questions. Once the student had responded, the evaluator would circle the correct response and then review the answers after the testing was completed.

The positive aspect of this test is that the test is given within a whole group setting. This evaluation gives a student a question such as: Do you do things by yourself when you are alone? The students are given a sheet that either allows them to answer "yes" or "no". Even though this assessment might be a time-saver, its validity is questioned. After comparisons between the PPVT-III and TQVM, PPVT-III scores seemed relatively higher than those of the TQVM (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010). Researchers expected these results because of the amount of oral and written context that is featured in the TQVM. For primary students, visual connections can be easier to concentrate on rather than something read aloud. According to Kearns and Biemiller
another factor is the grade that is planning on conducting these assessments. PPVT-III might take more time, but for Kindergarten students its validity seems more realistic than using the TQVM test. Negative factors for this age group would be (1) the amount of exposure to a testing style like the TQVM and (2) the amount of oral compared to visual cues. Kindergarten students seem to appear to have little experience with the test structure of the TQVM, which is expected because of their limited time in a classroom setting. This creates a problem when assessing the students because they don’t realize what is expected from them when sitting down for the exam. This exam can be extremely difficult because the exam focuses on oral cues and not visual cues. The students are expected to listen to the questions and then mark the correct answer. The language used is foreign to the students because of the limited amount of experience with an exam like this. At this age level the students depend more on visual cues and are developing an understanding of oral cues. Oftentimes, they are unable to focus their attention on an exam that focuses primarily on skills that they are still acquiring or have very limited knowledge of. Kearns and Biemiller (2010) recommend a training session to allow the students to ask questions or understand what the test format will look like before giving the actual exam. At the conclusion of the test, an educator would need to review the data and then proceed to reassess students that continued to have difficulty with the exam (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010). Kearns and Biemiller (2010) recommend the assessment could be completed in small groups or individually upon the teacher’s discretion. For First and Second grade students, either test could be sufficient to use (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010).
Conclusion

Research by Biemiller and Boote (2006) propose that a minimum of 400 new words can be learned every school year. Students in the primary grades can obtain more vocabulary through instructional interventions. With these interventions, the connection between increased vocabulary and improved comprehension is reflected in the decrease of comprehension failure rates of students in grades 3 and 4 (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). In fact, vocabulary rich instruction needs to begin in the primary grades in order to help students' performance across all aspects of literacy. Kucan (2012) states:

Students need vocabulary instruction that allows them to build rich representations of words. Such instruction cannot only be incidental. Teachers need to plan and implement vocabulary lessons that can support students in developing the kind of high-quality lexical representations that will endure and be available for reading and writing. (p. 366)

The word knowledge students need to get them where they need to go in life depends on the instruction the students receive throughout their educational careers. "Improving students' vocabulary is an area of urgent need if we are to develop the advanced literacy levels required for success in school and beyond" (Dalton and Grisham, 2011, p. 306). Research suggests that effective literacy involves students understanding the world around them. The ongoing question stands: Throughout the primary grades, can the importance of words be taught through lessons and techniques that might not be centered on their developing reading skills (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010)? Until more data can be collected from thorough vocabulary assessments, questions like these will remain
unanswered. There is a critical need to encourage curiosity about words and word structure for students of all ages. Fien, Santoro, et. al. (2011) on their work with vocabulary instruction found

Vocabulary interventions that have demonstrated promising effects on comprehension have three main characteristics: (a) they include both definitional and instructional information of words, (b) they encourage deep processing of words, and (c) they provide multiple exposures to words. (p. 308)

In vocabulary instruction, quality is more important than quantity and is more powerful for student learning. As the instructor, it is important to create understanding of vocabulary within a student's reading skills. The strategies mentioned in this review focus primarily on word meaning and word structure. Vocabulary instruction thrives on recognizing word structure and meaning. Students will eventually recognize through daily routines and exposure through planned lessons, that vocabulary is the heart of their learning. If the students don't understand the words or word parts they are reading, there are valuable learning moments that are tossed to the side and wasted.
THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to introduce staff development on different instructional approaches for vocabulary learning and how increased vocabulary knowledge improves reading comprehension. The project is organized into five main professional development sessions (see Table). These presentations are given in August, November, January, March, and May of the academic school year. There are follow-up professional development meetings monthly between the main professional development sessions. Handouts for the participants will be the PowerPoint slides in handout form (see Appendices A – K).

Table 1

Schedule for Professional Development Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 1 – August</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Hours</td>
<td>Read Aloud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up – September</td>
<td>In-Depth Read Aloud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hour</td>
<td>Data/Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions/Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up – October</td>
<td>In-Depth Story Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hour</td>
<td>Data/Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions/Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 2 – November</td>
<td>Becoming Word Conscious</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Hours</td>
<td>Visual Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up – December</td>
<td>Revisit Visual Supports/Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hour</td>
<td>Questions/Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 3 – January</td>
<td>Informal Assessments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up – February</td>
<td>Discuss Informal Assessments/Data Questions/Answers</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshop 4 – March</td>
<td>Cloze Procedure</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Hours</td>
<td>Vocabulary Journals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Vocabulary Journals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactive Word Walls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up – April</td>
<td>Discussion about implementations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Hour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 5 – May</td>
<td>Formal Assessments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Hours</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Follow-up sessions are teacher driven.*
**Professional Development Session: Introduction, Read Aloud and Story Innovation**

Session 1 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with an overview of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for strategies to use within their classrooms. The session would be held in August, see Appendix A for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** In the August professional development, I will introduce myself to the staff. *My name is Amy Bries. I have been in education for five years and spent those years within a first grade classroom. I am a wife of two years and a mother of a ten month old daughter. I have spent most of my career finding ways to help my students succeed.* I would be here as a supportive colleague to help implement new vocabulary strategies to help with reading comprehension skills. I am not here to criticize and I am looking forward to learning new things from them just as I am hoping they will walk away learning new things that will help them and their teaching styles.

Our first steps as a group will be to begin observations, set goals, discuss meeting periods, and continue professional development periods throughout the school year. If we are going to be successful, we do not need to become overwhelmed with all of the information in the beginning but rather it will be introduced throughout the school year.

The staff will be asked to reflect upon how and what approaches they are taking in regard to reading comprehension and vocabulary development. After the reflection period and discussion, I will begin setting up the beginning strategies to focus on. We will begin a list that shares how the staff feels they are incorporating vocabulary instruction. Hopefully, one of the chosen strategies that we are discussing will be
included within that list. The staff will be introduced to two strategies, the read aloud strategy and story innovation. The educators will be asked to reflect on their knowledge of read aloud periods and how they might be developed. Eventually, the educators will be introduced to how to incorporate even more vocabulary than what they might have already been doing in their read alouds.

The teachers will then become familiar with the study by Andrew Biemiller and Catherine Boote (2006). Throughout this study, there were two controlled groups and one classroom used repeated readings with direct instruction of vocabulary and the other classroom just used repeated readings without the direct instruction. While looking at the results from this study, it was proven even though the classroom without direct instruction had some incidental exposure gains, the classroom with direct instruction showed significant improvement from the beginning of the school year. This study, conducted in 2006, is an example of how we could be incorporating the direct instruction strategy. With the implementation and focus of the vocabulary strategy within an everyday instruction, the purpose of the vocabulary is clear and the students achieve success using the chosen vocabulary within all subject content.

What can we do? At this point, we would read and discuss the article, “Effective content vocabulary instruction in the middle: Matching students, purposes, words, and strategies.” by Flanigan and Greenwood (2007). Within this article, the authors share that teaching vocabulary word in groups allows students to read, gain meaning, and make connections before moving on. This process allows students gain a deeper meaning of words without memorizing of the vocabulary words. Throughout the slides in the PowerPoint presentation (Appendix A), Flanigan and Greenwoods’ research (2007)
encourages educators to group vocabulary words into four groups: "critical 'before' words, 'foot-in-the-door' words, critical 'after' words, and words not to teach" (p. 229-230). The before words are words students need to know before they read a piece, these words are taught with the most amount of time and are very in-depth.

"Foot-in-the-door" words are just taught with minimal teaching time. The "after" words are words that need to be explained even more after the reading is finished. The amount of time spent depends on the purpose of the lesson and the focus words of the lesson. These might be content words that do not affect the understanding of the passage. If the students do understand these words, it is considered a bonus. Finally, the "words not to teach" should not be addressed at all at this point. This research helps educators understand the process of producing a positive learning environment for a read aloud by listing the steps to follow within the process of choosing the vocabulary for the stories.

After the staff are provided with an example of a read aloud, I move on to introduce story innovation. Christ, Wang, and Chiu (2009), suggest implementing story dictations by: **asking questions about unknown word meanings, give definitions while reading, repeat words after giving the definitions, and then gradually release responsibility to the students.** This article orients educators to consider student background knowledge because teachers often don't realize every student's background knowledge. Sometimes, it will be beneficial to stop reading while reading aloud and give the students a definition of a word if they are unsure of the word's meaning, in light of what we know of what our students know. This will allow them to gain more understanding while being a part of the read aloud portion, even though some of us have been taught not to stop reading once we have begun. If we think about the memory span
of many of the primary age students, they get so wrapped up in what they are doing that they might get distracted by the one word they are trying to remember, making them lose the meaning from the whole story because they cannot focus on the story but only the unknown vocabulary word. Christ, Yang, and Chiu (2010) state the teacher’s role as: *they need to provide repetition of a word, question, check for understanding, check the word context, prompt, and give feedback to the students.* The next slides can be read as reflections for the staff members.

Finally, we discuss the goal for the next meeting. I will ask the staff to select one or both of the strategies to introduce into their classroom learning environments. We will meet again in September and October for short follow-up meetings to discuss these strategies again and to share how they have used the strategies in their own classes. Any questions that may arise can be answered during this time.

**Follow-Up Activity:** At the completion of the professional development, the staff members would be asked to implement the read aloud strategy. This strategy will be discussed in the follow-up meeting in September.

**Session Evaluation:** At the conclusion of the professional development, the audience will be asked to fill out a simple evaluation of the information shared and the instructor that gave the presentation (see Appendix B). The evaluation will involve some rating scales to answer questions and will leave plenty of space to write short comments as well. The feedback will be used to begin the next professional development session or as means of improving the professional development if it was presented again.
Professional Development Follow-up Session: Read Alouds

Session 2 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with a review of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for the read aloud strategy within their classrooms. The session would be held in September, see Appendix C for the PowerPoint presentation.

Session Content: This meeting would be held in September of the academic school year. I will begin with a review of what a read aloud looks like. We will review the Biemiller and Boote study from 2006. On slide two, there is a quote from Biemiller and Boote. “Thus, if appropriate word meanings could be taught at a successful rate and continued to do so for 3 primary years, a child could acquire 1,000-1,500 additional word meanings” (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 55). This quote is unbelievably shocking. When I read this statement the first time I read through the article, I was amazed at how much of an impact I could truly have on a student in the matter of a school year. Do I want to be the teacher that allows the students to reach beyond our expectations to learn more word meanings or am I the teacher that stumps the student's growth? Those were the questions I began asking myself. So now I set those questions in front of you. What can we do to make the difference? We would review the four categories that Flanigan and Greenwood acknowledged within their article. Flanigan and Greenwood (2007) encourage educators to group vocabulary words into four groups: “critical 'before' words, 'foot-in-the-door' words, critical 'after' words, and words not to teach” (p. 229-230).

The groups of words are thought of as this, the before words are words students need to know before they read a piece, these words are taught with the most amount of time and are very in-depth. “Foot-in-the-door” words are just taught with minimal teaching time.
The "after" words are words that need to be explained even more after the reading is finished. The amount of time spent depends on the purpose of the lesson and the focus words of the lesson. These might be content words that do not affect the understanding of the passage. If the students do understand these words, it is considered a bonus.

Finally, the "words not to teach" should not be addressed at all at this point.

Once the review is completed, any questions teachers may have would be acknowledged and answered. Questions might include: *How do you find enough time to incorporate all of the components?* *What if the students are not responding as you might expect?* *How does a teacher decide what words are important and should be acknowledged?*

If there are no questions at this point, the discussion will continue with teacher experiences or data collected. During this discussion, teachers share how read alouds are used in their classrooms and the approach they have been using to include more vocabulary strategies. This could also open the floor for other teachers to question each other or schedule observations with other staff members.

When the staff members understand what is expected of them for a read aloud session, I will provide a quick review of what story dictation and innovation is. We will discuss the articles by Christ, Yang, and Chiu (2010) and the article from Griffith and Ruan (2007). Basically, we need to continue to question students about words and eventually after prompting and guidance the students will take responsibility for their learning and the learning of others around them. Using story innovation involves the teacher producing a read aloud opportunity and then changing the plot, setting or
characters on purpose. This review will lead into the follow-up activity for the staff.

**Follow-up Activity:** I will review the strategy of story innovation. The staff members will be asked to begin implementing story innovations in their classrooms. The next meeting will discuss how story innovations are being used in the classroom and answer any questions about implementing a story innovation.
**Professional Development Follow-up Session: Story Innovations**

Session 3 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with a review of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for the story dictation and innovation strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in October, see Appendix D for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** This follow-up meeting would be focused on story innovations. At the beginning, I will complete another short review about story innovations as evidence of slide three and four of the PowerPoint (Appendix D). We would read and discuss the article, "Story Innovation: An Instructional Strategy for Developing Vocabulary and Fluency by Priscilla Griffith and Jiening Ruan (2007)." A basic story innovation results in the teacher deleting words within a text and challenging the students to figure the word out from context clues in the story. The other way to incorporate story innovations is to provide the students with a story like Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type by Doreen Cronin. The students could use the same story structure from the story, but perhaps the teacher would change the setting from the farm to the zoo. The students would have to use the context clues from the story to build a new story that would incorporate their background knowledge of a zoo instead of a farm.

The staff will bring data or professional experiences which will be influenced by using story innovations with the students. I would continue by asking the staff about experiences within their classrooms. If they did not have anything to share yet, we could continue to brainstorm ideas of stories that we could use this strategy with in our classrooms. This meeting includes a short introduction about story innovations and then
a discussion about staff findings and comments through a discussion hour.

**Follow-up Activity:** After this follow-up meeting the staff will be asked to continue to implement story innovations and read aloud lessons. The staff will also be asked to set up observation periods to enter other classrooms in the school to see how they develop lessons supporting these two strategies. The next workshop will be held in November and will focus on more vocabulary strategies.
**Professional Development Session: Visual Support & Technology**

Session 4 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with an overview of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for visualization and technological strategies to use within their classrooms. The session would be held in November, see Appendix E for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** During the November professional development, I will be revisiting items of the past as a review of what goal the staff is working towards and how we are going to achieve that goal. This professional development would include introducing how to make students more word conscious, how to use semantic or concept mapping within instruction, using the PWIM model, creating a Wordle image, and other useful vocabulary websites.

When discussing becoming word conscious, the staff will be reminded that learning vocabulary can be because of incidental exposures but there should be more purposeful instruction. This purposeful instruction needs to bring the students' attention to words they are reading for meaning. It helps to expose students to new words and familiar words that are used in different contexts. Lane and Allen (2010) express the importance through their article about how important it is to be purposeful when presenting new vocabulary. It is important to remember to make it real life for them and not something necessarily extra to the learning they are already doing. For instance, two examples that I really enjoyed through this article were the weather watcher and Affable Annie. When Lane and Allen introduced the two strategies they made sure to give credit to the teachers they were observing at the time. The authors were observing different
classrooms and wanted to make sure to encourage teachers not to "dumb down" their language according to the students age group but rather strive for more from them no matter their ages. One teacher in this article, began the beginning of the year providing different jobs for the students and one was the weather watcher. As the year continued, the teacher began to go into more depth with their every day jobs and instead of having the title *weather watcher*, the teacher changed the title to *meteorologist*. This added even more excitement to the position and also taught the students another important vocabulary word that they will recognize in their daily lives. Another example from the article incorporating vocabulary was Affable Annie. The students were coming together for the first days of school and learning names of the students in their class. The teacher challenged the students to use a thesaurus to find a word that describes a student in their classroom. They would need to learn a little about them and then remember their name to present their information to the rest of the class. The students would take a simple word like nice and find a stronger word that would provide the same information about the person they were introducing. These are just two examples of gaining students' interest to learn more about words.

Visual components help to support students by visually organizing words and their meanings. Semantic and concept mapping allows students to organize their thoughts and then see connections between words so they can recall those connections later. Foil and Alber (2002) provided an article which reminded teachers of the importance of connections while reading and building understanding. Concept maps and semantic maps have the opportunities to give a visual representation of words and their word meanings. They allow students to take a group of words and organize them into
smaller groups that entail more meaning than just the large group. These maps could include different shapes and possibly different colors to organize the information.

The Picture-Word Inductive Model (PWIM) is another visualization model that connects a picture with words. The teacher will post the picture in the classroom. The students will label simple words at the beginning. In the beginning, the students will label objects in the picture and then will reveal more the descriptive words later on. When the PWIM is completed, it is not only a way to recognize words from objects but also allows the students to write because of their curiosity from engaging with the picture. Many say “a picture is worth a thousand words” and when using the PWIM model students are allowed to inquire about those stories behind the picture. Why was the picture taken? What are the characters doing? What is going to happen next or what had already happened?

The final visual representation is a Wordle. A wordle will take a cluster of words that have one common theme. The common theme might be a larger font or color from the rest. To access a wordle, the teacher will need to use the www.wordle.net website. The process to follow is located on slide 12 of the Power Point in appendix A. The diagram will provide students with the opportunity to explore what the words have in common and then explore synonyms of different words as well. It is a fun way to manipulate words in a different format than the traditional paper and pencil.

The websites would include user-friendly websites for the students to utilize or use to create or assist their learning. The websites that would be introduced would be www.vocabulary.co.oil and www.vocabulary.com. These websites are available for
students to access games and information regarding different vocabulary. The website: www.vocabulary.co.il is a wonderful website for the primary grade students. It is brightly colored and the icons are very user-friendly for younger students. The website: www.vocabulary.com is targeted for the upper elementary grades. This website asked the student a question and then gives a multiple-choice question to figure out the answer. It is very user-friendly, however, not very colorful and eye-catching as the other website for younger children. The other user-friendly sites would be Natural Reader and Balabolka. These references will allow students to read into a microphone and then the students can listen to what they just read. This could help with fluency and proof reading skills for students. These resources allow students to understand what written text sounds like and allows the teacher to create different texts verbally for the students to listen to and comprehend in another way.

Whatever time remains would be used for further explanation and instructions for the follow-up activity.

**Follow-up Activity:** The staff members will be asked to implement and explore at least two strategies before the December follow-up meeting. If the staff have any questions, the questions will be directed to me. During this time, I will be doing observations and being available for anything else that might be needed during the next month.

**Session Evaluation:** At the conclusion of the professional development, the audience will be asked to fill out a simple evaluation of the information shared and the instructor that was giving the presentation. The evaluation will involve some rating
scales to answer questions and will leave plenty of space to write short comments as well (Appendix B). The feedback would be used to begin the next professional development sessions or as a means for improving the professional development if it was presented again.
**Professional Development Follow-up Session: Becoming Word Conscious, Visualizations and Technology.**

Session 5 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with a review of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for the visualization and technological strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in December, see Appendix F for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** During the month of December, I will continue to do classroom observations. During the follow-up session, I will continue to review the strategies that were taught in November. We will review Lane and Allen's article about becoming word conscious. We will do a quick review about using appropriate language and to use terms the students will eventually hear. It is important to remember that the students are sponges and we want them to gain as much knowledge as they can while they are with us. We need to challenge ourselves to use strong vocabulary so that our students will become curious about other words around them and have the tools to figure those words out on their own.

We will continue to discuss concept mapping. It is important to remember that students need to produce connections while learning. The more connections to background knowledge or new knowledge, the more the students might remember what it is that they are learning. Same goes with using the website resources. They are another way to present the information we want the students to eventually understand. Perhaps, we would use a wordle model to begin a discussion around something as simple as plants. We could brainstorm different words related to plants and then offer the word cloud to the
students. When the students are presented with the information, maybe they are prompted to discuss the reason for receiving this piece of paper. This could start the students thinking about background knowledge that they might have with words that are contained within that word cloud. Eventually, my hope is that they will make connections between the words that make them realize that this is the next topic we are going to discuss within our Science unit.

If there are questions resulting from the new strategies to implement, those will be addressed. Discussions resulting in the implementation of the multiple strategies explained will be the majority of this follow-up session. Some questions discussed might be: Which strategy have you decided work well in your classroom? What evidence do you have to support your findings? Were there any strategies that did not support your students needs in your classrooms? Were there any other accommodations that you need from me regarding the information presented? Why would you recommend any other the strategies that you have experimented in your classroom.

**Follow-up Activity:** The teachers will be asked to continue to plan using visual supports and websites within their instruction. The staff will be asked to step out of their reading curriculum and bring these strategies into other subject areas as well. We are trying to develop vocabulary-rich classrooms and vocabulary is part of comprehending all subject areas and so we need to keep in mind that these strategies are not only for our language arts curriculum but across all of our curriculum.
**Professional Development Session: Informal Assessments**

Session 6 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for informal assessment strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in January, see Appendix G for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** This workshop will be held in January. This professional development would begin by answering any questions about previous strategies.

After questions are addressed, I will begin discussing informal assessments. At this point, the staff is beginning to implement strategies to promote more purposeful vocabulary instruction, however, they do not have the necessary tools to explain how they might assess the students’ vocabulary skills. Some might be using the traditional strategy of flashcards, however that is just promoting memorization and not a deeper meaning of the words. The informal assessments selected might include games, daily work examples, presentations, or even just daily discussions. These are just suggestions and are not limited to only these informal assessments. These assessments were selected because of the time constraints and simple implementation processes. These assessments were taken from the article “Robust Vocabulary Instruction in a Readers’ Workshop” written by Freezell (2012).

Games like Tic-Tac-Toe or “Get Off the Bus” might be simple enough to allow teachers to understand whether students understand word meanings. These games would incorporate some of the new vocabulary that the teachers are introducing. If the students were playing Tic-Tac-Toe, the game could be incorporated in a whole group setting or in
partners. Either way, nine words would be selected from the word wall and written into the grid or grids. One student would give a sentence which would have a blank that would incorporate one of the student's words. If the student could guess the word correctly, then the student gets to cover the space with his/her symbol. This would continue until someone would get Tic-Tac-Toe or three in a row. For the game "Get Off The Bus" the students would stand in one single-file line. The teacher would hold up her left hand and say a word and then lift her right hand and say another word. The teacher would use a sentence that required using one of the words and the students would have to move right or left to the correct answer.

Another assessment could be used during a classroom discussion about a book or story we are reading. During the classroom discussion periods, the teacher could develop green, yellow, or red cards. The student's response to a word would let the teacher know if the students were understanding the meanings or if they were depending on others for answers. One student could be selected to come forward and be the speaker and the others could decide if they agreed with him or not. The cards could be used in response to what the student speaker says.

While completing daily work, students could be completing a simple informal assessment strategy. For instance, the students could be asked to look at the word wall and choose a word that they may know or think they know. The word they chose would have to be written down on a piece of paper. The student could then decide whether to draw a picture to show the meaning or write a sentence to explain the word meaning. When the students are finished, the top 10 words or examples could be shared with the class to review the words or possibly reteach some of the words.
Using an altered writer's workshop could assist the students with purposely adding new vocabulary terms within their writing pieces because of the prompt the teacher had given. In a traditional writer's workshop, the student would have the independence to choose the topic they wanted to write about. In an altered writer's workshop, the teacher would choose the topic so that the students would purposely be able to add the majority of the new vocabulary they have been discussing.

**Follow-up Activity:** The teachers will be asked to implement an altered writer's workshop and one other strategy. The staff will be asked to bring writing samples and anecdotal notes regarding the informal assessments they give in their classrooms. The data will be reviewed at the follow-up meeting in February.

**Session Evaluation:** At the conclusion of the professional development, the audience will be asked to fill out a simple evaluation of the information shared and the instructor that was giving the presentation. The evaluation will involve some rating scales to answer questions and will leave plenty of space to write short comments as well (Appendix B). The feedback will be used to begin the next professional development session or as a means for improving the professional development if it was presented again.
Professional Development Follow-up Session: Informal Assessments

Session 7 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with a review of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for informal assessment strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in February, see Appendix H for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** This follow-up session would be in February of the academic school year. This follow-up session could result in some review as the slides in appendix H do, but the majority of this will go over the data that many staff members are collecting at this point.

During this follow-up session, the teachers will be asked to bring data or their experiences with the informal assessments. Questions that could be asked are: *How were the students doing with them? Were the students showing any growth with the words that were introduce?* The teachers will share writing samples that would include the targeted words or evidence that the targeted words were avoided or replaced. As they are sharing their data, others will be asking questions resulting in how that data was achieved and what strategies were implemented in their classrooms. In the end, the teachers will be asked to give what they believe would be the next step with the data they are presenting. For instance, if there is a student that was able to draw a word meaning but did not incorporate any of the new vocabulary in their writing...what would the teacher suggest to do next? Different scenarios will appear throughout this session and those will be discussed so that teachers will understand how to use the data to structure lessons.
Follow-up Activity: For the next workshop, the staff would be asked to continue collecting data. While they are collecting data, the staff could continue to bring it to me for any questions otherwise the teachers can reteach lessons that the students might not understand from the involvement in those assessments.
**Professional Development Session: Cloze Procedure, Vocabulary Journals and Interactive Word Walls**

Session 8 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for the Cloze procedure, vocabulary journals, and interactive word wall strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in March, see Appendix I for the PowerPoint presentation.

**Session Content:** This professional development session will be in March of the academic school year. This professional development will include a review of informal assessments: *what is working or what is not?*

I will introduce more vocabulary strategies after a short discussion. The strategies that would be introduced would be the Cloze Procedure, vocabulary journals, personal vocabulary journals, and interactive word walls. Once again, these strategies allow for the more traditional classroom and the technology integrated classroom.

I will begin by discussing how to implement the Cloze Procedure. Through Kesler’s (2010) research, getting students to become word conscious might amplify their abilities recognize and learn unknown words on their own (p. 272). First, the teachers would need to select a text that gave a wonderful example using context clues. Kesler (2010) suggests the teacher begins using the Cloze Procedure by choosing a book for a read aloud. The teacher continues by introducing some chosen vocabulary words. When the teacher reads aloud the story, the teacher chooses to remove those words. Instead of reading the words, the teacher leaves the sentence with a missing word. The missing word would be filled in with other words which the students disclose from the
clues from the story. This strategy gets the students using context clues and synonyms to create possible words that finish the missing part of the sentence. As Kesler (2010) continued reading, he gradually gave phonetic clues which enabled the students to trim their choices and eventually figure out the original word (p. 273). The students would give evidence to share from the text what made them come to the conclusion of the word they chose. Slides 5 and 6 include adaptations for the primary grades and upper elementary grades.

Vocabulary journals are another way to help students learn new vocabulary words and have them at their desks whenever they might need them to write. Kinloch (2010) suggests using a vocabulary journal as a reference for students. I will explain that these are items which might be more beneficial through the first semester of the school year and might not be so depended upon the second half because the students will be so comfortable with the words that they would not have to look them up as often. This could vary depending on the vocabulary the students become more aware of in the second semester of the year. Some students might be more dependent on the journals than others. The goal of these is to get the students writing and using the words that the students find interesting while reading or the teacher selects as notable words within a text. Personal vocabulary journals are very similar to vocabulary journals and would cover similar data. The personal vocabulary journals would have a specific format for the students to follow instead of using a regular notebook. The template would be handed out to the students and then once the students would place a word into a blank and then the students will be given time to complete the definition and other notes and then will share their words with others in a small group setting.
Interactive word walls are a turn on a traditional word wall. I will begin by asking the teachers to think about what they use for a word wall in their classrooms. What do those word walls look like? “One study reported that scores on high-stakes test increased across all student groups when teachers used interactive word walls and provided opportunities for students to encounter and use science vocabulary in authentic and engaging ways” (Jackson, Tripp, & Cox, 2011, p. 45). I will continue by stating the teacher's role to create an interactive word wall. The teacher could develop a word wall that will be computer based. The word wall will be made from a simple PowerPoint program and could be accessed by the students. Each letter could reveal different words. The words could have a picture, if applicable. The teacher will share a sentence that properly uses the sentence. After the sentence is typed, the teacher can add sound that will allow the student to hear and read the sentence. Another strategy for an interactive word wall could be to have it just be about the most important vocabulary words involved with the current lesson or unit. The students could produce a picture of a plant and then label the most important parts of a plant and then post that as a word wall for the unit. Jackson, Tripp, and Cox (2011) provide other examples about possible word wall suggestions. There will be a short period of time left for any questions that the staff members might have.

**Follow-up Activity:** The staff will be asked to implement two of the strategies mentioned today. They will be asked to bring observations, data, and other discussion items with them to the follow-up meeting in April.

**Session Evaluation:** At the conclusion of the professional development, the audience would be asked to fill out a simple evaluation of the information shared and the
instructor that was giving the presentation. The evaluation would involve some rating scales to answer questions and would leave plenty of space to write short comments as well (Appendix B). The feedback would be used to begin the next professional development sessions or as a means for improving the professional development if it were presented again.
Professional Development Follow-up Session: Cloze Procedure, Vocabulary Journals and Interactive Word Walls.

Session 9 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with a review of the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for the Cloze procedure, vocabulary journals, and interactive word wall strategies within their classrooms. The session would be held in April, see Appendix J for the PowerPoint presentation.

Session Content: This professional development meeting will be held in April of the academic school year. I will explain more about the vocabulary strategies mentioned in March: the Cloze Procedure, vocabulary journals, personal vocabulary journals, and interactive word walls.

I will be prepared to answer any questions that might be arising. These follow-up meetings are to help minimize the negative mushrooms that could arise during a time of change. These meetings are not to criticize but to support the teachers and to give them a better understanding of what is expected from them. They need to realize that they are not alone and even though it is close to the end of the year, there is still work to be completed before next fall.

After I list the different strategies that were explained in March, I will begin with a quote from Narkon, Wells, and Segal. Narkon Wells, and Segal (2011) state, “a word wall 'itself does not teach vocabulary' but is often used to provide students with initial exposure to new vocabulary.” (p. 40) With this thought in mind, staff members will be asked to discuss what is occurring in their classrooms? What changes are they seeing from the beginning of the year until now? What is changing after experimenting with
the new strategies this last month? Are there any suggestions, feedback, or comments for me?

Let us take another look at the data we are collecting. Are we seeing any patterns? What seems to be the most difficult for our students? What seems to be the easiest? Is there anything? “Educators must be prepared to provide additional instruction when initial instruction doesn’t allow all students to reach mastery.” (Sobolak, 2011, p. 22) I will leave the teachers with this thought before closing for the day. We need to be thinking about what we can do for the children and not what they can do for us. We are here because and for them...we need to strive for all of them to succeed. Our classrooms are moving towards a gradual release of responsibility from us to empowering our students, and so we need to make sure we are teaching students problem solving skills, even in our reading curriculum.

**Follow-up Activity:** Before the next professional development workshop in May, the teachers are going to be asked to bring a goal that they have for themselves and the whole group for next fall and vocabulary development. The staff will be asked to continue to implement the journals and word walls in their classrooms this final month. The May workshop will discuss formal assessment styles.
Professional Development Session: Formal Assessments

Session 10 of the professional development sequence provides teachers with the purpose of vocabulary instruction, and provides support for formal assessment observations for their classrooms. The session would be held in May, see Appendix K for the PowerPoint presentation.

Session Content: In May, the final professional development session is underway. This final presentation will wrap-up what the year was all about and the successes from the strategies being implemented. I would begin by asking the staff how they felt the school year went? Are you able to see any vocabulary growth for your students? Are there any remaining questions, comments, concerns?

This professional development also starts explaining formal assessments. I chose two assessments that are well known within the vocabulary community. We will explore the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Assessment and Two Question Vocabulary Method assessment. The teachers have the opportunity to see the negative and the positive outcomes from the two assessments and which they feel would support their needs, if any. Explanation or evidence would be expected when an opinion or finding was being shared. Clarification about how to use the collected data would be given to the staff and goals for the next school year would be addressed or composed during this session.

To begin this professional development, I will explain what a formal assessment is. Why do we use them? We use them as another assessment tool for our students that has been tested and has met state and national standards. These assessments are conducted in a particular manner that combine students' results after being introduced to
the same manner and style of testing. The results allow teachers to compare and gather students' results to verify how well the students can apply their vocabulary knowledge.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test has portions of the text that are a type of multiple choice test that uses visuals or visual discrimination assessment of letter combinations for word spelling. This assessment provides choices that help students pick the meaning of a word besides using a multiple-choice test, other educators administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary assessment for primary grades (Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007; Kearns & Biemiller, 2010). At this point I would share part of the test with the teachers and walk through a quick example of how a student might take this assessment. After the example, I would ask teachers what they see as benefits from this testing style and what might be considered negatives with this assessment? After a short discussion, I would reveal what Pearson, Hiebert, and Kamil believe are positive and negative components of using this assessment (See slide 6 in Appendix K). Another idea to keep in mind is many of the vocabulary words that students do not understand are those words that do not have a visual representation, and are more abstract rather than concrete (Kearns & Biemiller, 2010).

Kearns and Biemiller (2010) reported a new type of test: the Two-Question Vocabulary Method (TQVM). I would begin by informing the staff what the TQVM is. What does this assessment measure and how? This assessment is a question based assessment to measure vocabulary knowledge. Within this assessment, the students would be asked different questions using the each word in two different contexts. The students would simply respond “yes” or “no” to the questions. Once the student had
responded, the evaluator would circle the correct response and then review the answers after the testing was completed.

After the assessment is introduced, the teachers will become the students and I will perform a portion of the assessment with them so they can understand how easy this assessment is to conduct. We will break into a short discussion about positive and negative components of this test and then we will move to slide 9 (Appendix K) to give other observations which may or may not have been stated in our discussion. These are two assessments which we are looking to purchase, however, if there are other vocabulary assessments which you feel might be worth looking into, please let me know. Would there be one assessment that you feel would be better for our district than the other?

Moving on to the data we are collecting in our classroom. Let us review the type of assessments we are using in our classrooms currently. What are we doing with that data? Questions to ask are presented on slide 12 (Appendix K). This will be a discussion period and a list will be compiled of what testing strategies would give us the best results of our students' knowledge. At the end of this presentation, I would read the following quotes from slides 13 and 14 on the power point presentation. "Improving students' vocabulary is an urgent need if we are to develop the advanced literacy levels required for success in school and beyond." (Dalton & Grisham, 2011, p. 306) Fien, Santoro, et. al. on their work with vocabulary instruction found: Vocabulary interventions that have demonstrated promising effects on comprehension have three main characteristics: (a) they include both definitional and instructional information of words,
(b) they encourage deep processing of words, and (c) they provide multiple exposures to words. (p. 308)

After the staff is given a couple of minutes to think about those quotes, we will finish by discussing the next academic year goals. We will continue to implement vocabulary strategies and research new strategies or assessments. As a school, we are hoping to improve students' writing with developing vocabulary skills and continue to communicate with colleagues about new findings within our classrooms.

**Follow-up Activity:** Continue to think about ways throughout the summer that would allow the staff to incorporate more vocabulary strategies into their daily teaching styles and across all subject areas.

**Session Evaluation:** At the conclusion of the professional development, the audience will be asked to fill out a simple evaluation of the information shared and the instructor that was giving the presentation. The evaluation will involve some rating scales to answer questions and will leave plenty of space to write short comments as well (Appendix B). The feedback will be used to begin the next professional developments or ways to improve the professional development if it was presented again.
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this project was to identify specific vocabulary strategies and to present the information in an organized manner. These strategies are to assist staff members with implementation and eventually increase reading comprehension skills because of these strategies.

The project begins with presenting vocabulary strategies which are already implemented within the staff classrooms. The extent and details to which the strategies are being developed and planned would be detailed to incorporate vocabulary development. Sessions and follow-up meetings are organized to present research-based strategies and to permit time for the strategies to be implemented, data gathered, and then discussions developed from using those strategies. The follow-up meetings are not to be used as another introduction session but rather a question/answer meeting or a review about a strategy that was previously introduced.

Limitations

This study and project was limited in that vocabulary strategies and development was a small part of the literacy program at the University of Northern Iowa but more of a topic of interest. As the district continues to strive for improved reading comprehension skills for the staff, the topic will become requested.

Recommendations

Further study for staff on the impact of vocabulary in the primary grades and beyond will shine a light on the importance and impact on a student's reading comprehension. For future professional development, allowing time during the school day for teachers to observe other teachers using the strategies will allow for clarification
of the research-based strategies and will give the teachers confidence to implement the strategies on their own.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

August Professional Development
**Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension**

**Who Am I?**

- In education for five years.
  - Special education
  - General education
- Mother and Wife
  - Married for two years
  - Mother of a little lady

**Our School Reading Goal**

- Continue to build our students reading comprehension scores.
- Introduce the vocabulary component into reading instruction.

**Why?**

- Our past circumstances...
- Showing improvement...but what else can we do?
- Reading takes a large chunk of our day...now even more?

**Over the past several years research has shown that vocabulary develops more rapidly after grade three, but the primary grades need to begin with a strong literacy foundation.**

(Blumler, 2003, 2006)

**Current Practices**

- What are we doing in our classroom to practice vocabulary?
How Can We Help Continue Students' Learning?

- Over the year, we are going to implement strategies together.
- I am here to assist and learn with you.

What is My Role?

- I am here to support you....
- I am a colleague not a boss.
- I am willing to share with the work load...I can share strategies and assist you to help improve reading comprehension with vocabulary instruction.

Our First Steps...

- Observations
- Individual Goals
- Collaboration Meetings
- Continuous Professional Development

Our Read Aloud Strategy

- Biemiller and Boote Study
- What can be done?
- Flanigan and Greenwood

Biemiller's and Boote's Study

Through the study, one classroom used repeated readings with direct instruction of vocabulary words and the other classroom used repeated readings without direct instruction of vocabulary words.

Samuel (1997) stated, "As less attention is required for decoding, more attention becomes available for comprehension. Thus rereading both builds fluency and enhances comprehension." (p. 378)
“Thus, if appropriate word meanings could be taught at a successful rate and continued to do so for 3 primary years, a child could acquire 1,000-1,500 additional word meanings” (Biemiller & Boote, p. 55).

**What Can We do?**

Using a read aloud strategy with purposeful vocabulary instruction embedded within the activity, allows teachers to expand beyond their half hour language arts period to use read alouds with vocabulary instruction throughout other subject areas.

**Flanigan and Greenwood**

Flanigan and Greenwood (2007) have found that students relate to learning vocabulary when the target words are clustered so the students can make connections to the reading.

**Flanigan and Greenwood**

Flanigan and Greenwood acknowledged four different groups of words that students come across in their learning, "critical 'before' words, 'foot-in-the-door' words, critical 'after' words, and words not to teach" (p. 229-230).

**Flanigan's and Greenwood's Process**

- Set goals for instructional purpose while reading aloud.
- Select words and place in lists.
- Place words in categories to introduce.
- Begin the read aloud.

(using Flanigan & Greenwood, 2007).
Read Aloud Conclusion

With this process of read alouds and embedded vocabulary instruction, read aloud instruction becomes an effective strategy for vocabulary learning.

Story Dictation

Even though a read aloud can be beneficial, using story dictation in pre-primary grades can be even more meaningful.

Story Dictation – Implementation

- Ask Questions about unknown word meanings.
- While encountering words, give definitions.
- Have students repeat words after they are given the definition.
- Gradual Release of Responsibility

- Christ, Wang, and Chiu (2009)

Teacher’s Role

- Provide repetition of a word
- Question the students (broad and specific)
- Check for understanding of the word
- Check the context in which the word is being used by the child as the story is being dictated
- Prompt to help support the student’s story
- Give Feedback

- Christ, Wang, and Chiu (2009)

If a child is motivated, learning becomes less of a chore and more of an exciting hobby.

Christ, Wang, and Chui (2009) found through using story dictation, children were able to take their learning into their own hands and experiment with something that was important to them.
Our Goal

• By our next meeting in September, we are hoping to begin the observation stage.

• Select one or both of the strategies mentioned today and incorporate it into your classroom.

Next Meeting

• Bring comments of how the implementations and observations are going?
• Areas of improvement?
• Positive remarks.
• Other observations we are noticing about vocabulary development.
• Next Meeting: October Follow-up
Appendix B

Professional Development Evaluation
### Professional Development Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Was the information organized?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the presenter knowledgeable about the information presented?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the information presented influence your instructional planning?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the information assist your subject area planning?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What went well with the presentation today?**

**What suggestions would you have for the presenter?**

**Additional comments:**
Appendix C

September Professional Development
Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension

Follow-up Meeting September, 2014

Amy Bries
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"Thus, if appropriate word meanings could be taught at a successful rate and continued to do so for 3 primary years, a child could acquire 1,000-1,500 additional word meanings" (Biemiller & Boote, p. 55).

Flanigan and Greenwood

Flanigan and Greenwood acknowledged four different groups of words that students come across in their learning, "critical 'before' words, 'foot-in-the-door' words, critical 'after' words, and words not to teach" (p. 229-230).

Flanigan’s and Greenwood’s Process

• Set goals for instructional purpose while reading aloud.
• Select words and place in lists.
• Place words in categories to introduce.
• Begin the read aloud.

What Can We do?

Using a read aloud strategy with purposeful vocabulary instruction embedded within the activity, allows teachers to expand beyond their half hour language arts period to use read alouds with vocabulary instruction throughout other subject areas.

Discussion

• Does anyone have any questions?
• What experience have you been having?
• Any Observations?
**Story Dictation – Implementation**

- Ask Questions about unknown word meanings.
- While encountering words, give definitions.
- Have students repeat words after they are given the definition.
- Gradual Release of Responsibility

- Christ, Wang, and Chiu (2009)

**Our Goal**

- By our next meeting in October, we are hoping to begin implementing story innovation and a read aloud.

**Teacher’s Role**

- Provide repetition of a word
- Question the students (broad and specific)
- Check for understanding of the word
- Check the context in which the word is being used by the child as the story is being dictated
- Prompt to help support the student’s story
- Give Feedback


**Story Innovation**

- Change a part of the story and allow the students to create the story with new vocabulary.

- Parts of the story to change:
  - Characters
  - Plot
  - Setting
Appendix D

October Professional Development
Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension

Follow-up Meeting October, 2014

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Read Aloud Follow-up

• With more implementing portions of the read aloud strategy...what are your classrooms beginning to look like?
• How many read alouds have you implemented?
• What are the students reactions?

Story Innovation

• Griffith and Ruan request educators “use the structure of a sentence to create a semantically new one through word substitutions.” (p. 334)

Discussion

• Class Examples
• Questions
• Discuss Observations
• Schedule Observations

Next Workshop

• Becoming Word Conscious
• Visual Supports
• Technological Ideas
Appendix E

November Professional Development
Becoming Word Conscious

Current Actions:
- Implementing
  • Read Aloud Strategy
  • Story Dictation

• “We know that there is a wide range in students’ word knowledge and that as early as age 5, there is a 30-million-word exposure gap between “haves” and “have nots.”

Lane and Allen (2010) stated, Promoting incidental learning and word consciousness through frequent and deliberate modeling of sophisticated vocabulary can add substantial breadth to students’ vocabularies” (p. 362).

The Weather Watcher & Affable Annie

• Basically, the teacher took simple jobs or introductions to incorporate more difficult vocabulary as the year progressed.
• This can be done with many lessons we do with the students. Don’t “dumb down” the vocabulary.
• Foil and Alber (2002) argue that understanding vocabulary words and how they relate to other ideas and concepts is a critical subskill that influences reading comprehension (p. 131).

**Why Use Concept Maps?**

• These maps allow students a visual representation to organize their thoughts.
• These could be used before or after reading a text.
  - Foil and Alber, 2002

**How to use Concept Mapping...**

• Create a middle circle (contains main thought)
• Outer circles contain words that connect to the main idea.
• Circles beyond that might describe the next set of circles in more detail, which inevitably describe the initial word.

**Wordle**

• www.wordle.net
• This website allows educators and users to present words in a creative format.
• Wordle is a form of "word cloud."

**How to create a Wordle?**

1. Click on "create"
2. Type the desired words in the blank box.
3. Click on "go"
4. When it is formed, you can change the style and effects to fit your needs.
How to Implement in a classroom?

- Introductions to Units
- Vocabulary Review
- Discussion Starters

Other Helpful Websites:

- www.vocabulary.co.il
- www.vocabulary.com
- Natural Reader
- Balabolka

Vocabulary Websites

- www.vocabulary.com
  - This is directed to an older audience.
  - The vocabulary words are used in context and the students need to figure out what they mean.
  - An option to create vocabulary lists or search for them according to upcoming tests.

Natural Reader

- www.naturareaders.com
  - Can help students with reading, comprehension, and focus because of listening to text.
  - Helps with understanding fluency and flow of reading what is written.

Creating a Natural Reader

- First “Download” trial
- Type words into the text box.
- Click on the “Play” button to listen to the text written.
Balabolka

- Text to Speech application
- Changes pitch and rate of the reader
- Another option like Natural Reader

Wrap-up

- Remember:
  - Even though you don't think you can use all of these strategies...
  - You have different levels of students within your classroom walls.
  - Challenge them and yourselves. Be creative.

Implementing Balabolka

- Download the program
- Enter text to be read aloud
- Save and listen to it by selecting play.
- Can be recorded in many different languages.

Our Goal Until We Meet Again...

- Introduce at least one traditional strategy and one technology orientated strategy for vocabulary instruction.

Wrap-up

- Today, we discussed new techniques to use with your students.
- We have learned a mix of technology strategies and how to become more word conscious.
- Some you might think are easier to use than others.
Appendix F

December Professional Development
**Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension**

Follow-up Meeting
December, 2013

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**How to be Word Conscious...**

- Through Lane and Allen's article, they introduce two everyday strategies to promote vocabulary development in classrooms.
  - The Weather Watcher
  - Affable Annie

---

**How Can We Become More Word Conscious?**

- Lane and Allen (2010) stated, Promoting incidental learning and word consciousness through frequent and deliberate modeling of sophisticated vocabulary can add substantial breadth to students' vocabularies" (p. 362).

---

**Why Use Concept Maps?**

- These maps allow students a visual representation to organize their thoughts.
- These could be used before or after reading a text.

  - Foil and Mair, 2002

---

**Example:**

![Concept Map Example](image)

---

**Wordle**

- www.wordle.net
- This website allows educators and users to present words in a creative format.
- Wordle is a form of "word cloud."

  - Dalton & O'Shaughnessy, 2011, p. 368
**HOW ARE YOU USING THESE TOOLS?**

- Quick discussion with those around you.
- List of ideas...

**How to Implement in a classroom?**

- Introductions to Units
- Vocabulary Review
- Discussion Starters

**Comments about websites...**

- What are you noticing?
- What are your students noticing?
- Which do you prefer?

**Our Goal Until We Meet Again...**

- Keep introducing strategies....
- Challenge yourself...Challenge your students...

**Other Helpful Websites:**

- www.vocabulary.co.il
- www.vocabulary.com
- Natural Reader
- Balabolka
Appendix G

January Professional Development
Learning a word is not an 'all or nothing' kind of thing. It is more like a dimmer switch that gradually produces a greater supply of lights.”

Kinloch, 2010

On Notecards:
- What are you finding successful with our past professional developments and integrations?
- What are some items that seem unclear?
- Other comments...

Informal Assessments
- Games
- Daily work
  - Presentations
  - Daily discussions

On Notecards:
- How can you put into practice the strategies you learn?
Games

- What can we do to incorporate practicing vocabulary development?

Tic-Tac-Toe

- Begin by making a 3 by 3 grid on a piece of paper.
- Use the word wall...
- Allow the students to write nine words on the grid. One word for each square.

“Get Off The Bus”

- Teacher chooses two words with similar meanings...

- For example:
  - Mimic and resemblance

  - Feezell (2012), p. 236

Tic-Tac-Toe

- Once everyone has their grids filled in, the teacher or another student start reading a word off of the word wall.
- As the students hear the word, if they have the word they cross it off on their grid.
- The first one with a tic-tac-toe wins.

Get Off The Bus

- The teacher develops different sentences that would use one of the words.
- For instance -
  - “The Parrot ________ his owner’s voice.”

  - Feezell, 2012, p. 236
**Daily Work**

- The students can choose a word from the word wall.
- Once they have a word, they draw a picture that correlates or defines the word.
- Finally, they share the picture with a partner and guess each others' photo.

**Daily Discussions**

- The teacher presents 10 questions.
- The teacher begins by reading them aloud for a student to guess the answer.

**Daily Work**

- According to Lane & Allen (2010), teachers can use incidental learning and intentional modeling of vocabulary to add to students' vocabulary knowledge.

**Daily Discussion**

- The other students have cards:
  - Green = agree
  - Yellow = unsure
  - Red = disagree

**Daily Work--Examples**

- The Weather Watcher
- Affable Annie

**Altered Writer's Workshop**

- To use intended vocabulary, the teacher chooses the prompt(s).
- The students are guided to use the new or intended vocabulary.
- Allows practice of implementing new vocabulary into students long-term vocabulary.
Your Goal:

• Incorporate at least one of these informal assessments.
• Bring items or results to talk about at our February follow-up.
Appendix H

February Professional Development
"Learning a word is not an 'all or nothing' kind of thing. It is more like a dimmer switch that gradually produces a greater supply of lights."

- Kinloch, 2010

Informal Assessments
- Games
- Daily work
  - Presentations
  - Daily discussions

Daily Work
- According to Lane & Allen (2010), teachers can use incidental learning and intentional modeling of vocabulary to add to students' vocabulary knowledge.

Daily Work—Examples
- The Weather Watcher
- Affable Annie

Daily Discussions
- The teacher presents 10 questions.
- The teacher begins by reading them aloud for a student to guess the answer.
**Daily Discussion**

- The other students have cards:
  - Green = agree
  - Yellow = unsure
  - Red = disagree

**NEXT TIME...**

- Continue to implement the strategies.
- Collect data from your students.
- Any questions, please let me know.

**YOUR FINDINGS...**

- What are you finding as you are implementing these strategies?
- What does your data look like?
- What are you learning from your students?

**NEXT TIME...**

- More strategies:
  - The Cloze Procedure
  - Vocabulary Journals
  - Personal Vocabulary Journals
  - Interactive Word Walls
Appendix I

March Professional Development
Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension

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On Notecards:

- What are you finding our successful with our past professional developments and integrations?
- What are some items that seem unclear?
- Other comments...

The Cloze Procedure

- How do you use the Cloze Procedure?

Example

Adaptations:

- Primary Grades:
  - Read books above current students reading level
  - Begin with an introduction to draw upon background knowledge
  - Don't hesitate to reread if the text is full of new vocabulary!

More Strategies

- The Cloze Procedure
- Vocabulary Journals
- Personal Vocabulary Journals
- Interactive Word Walls

Adaptations:

- Upper Elementary
  - Read books from more challenging genres
  - Encourage students to become the readers

- What is a vocabulary journal?

Vocabulary Journals

- Journals are a simple notebook which the students keep interesting words or story vocabulary in with definitions.
- These are references for students.

Personal Vocabulary Journals

1) Inquire if students have noticed words that they might not have known or skipped over while reading.
2) Display a blank vocabulary form for students to use.
3) Demonstrate how to use the form.
4) Make copies of the Personal Vocabulary Journal master and hand out to students.
5) Students can be assigned to small groups to share words.
6) Assessment option

“Educators must be prepared to provide additional instruction when initial instruction doesn’t allow all students to reach mastery.”
(Sobolak, 2011, p.22)

Interactive Word Walls

- What do we use now as word walls?
- Would technology allow us to enhance those walls?
Interactive Word Walls

- "A word wall 'itself does not teach vocabulary' but is often used to provide students with initial exposure to new vocabulary."

Narkon, Wells, & Segal, 2011, p. 40

Interactive Word Walls

- Provide Students-
  - View words
  - Listen to words
  - Read words
  - Write words and sentences

• Kinloch (2010) stated, "Self-discovery is another significant component for engaging students in learning." (p. 113)

Interactive Word Walls

- How can we produce interactive word walls?

- Also allows visuals and word usage for the students.

Our Goal for May

- Implement 1 – 2 strategies that you learned today.
- I will continue observations and provide support for all of you.
Appendix J

April Professional Development
Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension

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More Strategies
• The Cloze Procedure
• Vocabulary Journals
• Personal Vocabulary Journals
• Interactive Word Walls

Data Review
• What are we learning from the data?
• Are we using anecdotal notes for informal assessments and strategies?
• Observations?

Interactive Word Walls
• “A word wall itself does not teach vocabulary’ but is often used to provide students with initial exposure to new vocabulary.

Narkon, Wells, & Segal, 2011, p. 40

WHAT HAS BEGUN?
• What is everyone noticing after implementing any of these strategies?
• Questions?
• Comments/Suggestions
• Feedback?

“Educators must be prepared to provide additional instruction when initial instruction doesn’t allow all students to reach mastery.”
(Sobolak, 2011, p.22)
• Kinloch (2010) stated, “Self-discovery is another significant component for engaging students in learning.” (p. 113)

NEXT TIME...

• Continue to implement strategies and technology
• Bring Data
• Discussing Formal Assessments
Appendix K

May Professional Development
**Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension**

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On Notecards:

- What are you finding our successful with our past professional developments and integrations?
- What are some items that seem unclear?
- Other comments...

Formal Assessments

- What can we learn from them?
- How can we use the data received?

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

- What type of exam is this?
- How do educators use it?

**PPVT - Discussion**

- What can we use from this assessment?
- What are the benefits?
- What could be considered negatives?

**PPVT - Conclusion**

- Provides Visuals
- Ideal for Primary Grades
- Only concrete words that can use pictures are used
Two Question Vocabulary Method

• What type of exam is this?
• How could educators use this?

Two-Question Vocabulary Method

• What can we use from this assessment?
• What are the benefits?
• What could be considered negatives?

Flash card assessments
• Curriculum – connected story vocabulary selection tests
• Other informal assessments from January PD

TQVM – Conclusion

• Questions have simple “yes” or “no” answers.
• Completed in a timely manner
• Can be given in a whole group
• Validity is questioned

How Are We Using the Data?

• Is it collecting dust?
• Is it present in lesson structure and plans?
• Do we know how to use it?
• What is our next step?
“Improving students' vocabulary is an urgent need if we are to develop the advanced literacy levels required for success in school and beyond.”

(Dalton & Grisham, 2011, p.306)

Fien, Santoro, et al. on their work with vocabulary instruction found:

Vocabulary interventions that have demonstrated promising effects on comprehension have three main characteristics: (a) they include both definitional and instructional information of words, (b) they encourage deep processing of words, and (c) they provide multiple exposures to words. (p. 308)

Next Year Goals

- Continue implementing vocabulary strategies
- Improve students' writing with developing vocabulary skills
- Communicate with colleagues about our classrooms