Meeting academic needs through explicit vocabulary instruction

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Meeting academic needs through explicit vocabulary instruction

Abstract
This project focused on meeting the academic needs of students through explicit vocabulary instruction. The project consisted of nine professional development sessions delivered over one academic year and targeted reading teachers and Language Arts Resource Specialists (LARS) in a Midwestern suburban school district. Participants engaged in collaborative and interactive sessions that included colleague visits to aide in implementation of at least one method of explicit vocabulary instruction. Through a series of two different questionnaires, participant responses were used to assess background knowledge, teacher beliefs and practices, teacher perceptions, implementation, and relevance regarding explicit vocabulary instruction.

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MEETING ACADEMIC NEEDS THROUGH EXPLICIT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

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
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ABSTRACT

This project focused on meeting the academic needs of students through explicit vocabulary instruction. The project consisted of nine professional development sessions delivered over one academic year and targeted reading teachers and Language Arts Resource Specialists (LARS) in a Midwestern suburban school district. Participants engaged in collaborative and interactive sessions that included colleague visits to aide in implementation of at least one method of explicit vocabulary instruction. Through a series of two different questionnaires, participant responses were used to assess background knowledge, teacher beliefs and practices, teacher perceptions, implementation, and relevance regarding explicit vocabulary instruction.
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Introduction

The academic achievement gap between students of differing socioeconomic statuses (SES) is one of the most persistent and frustrating problems facing educators today. Despite years of research and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the achievement gap continues to widen, especially for African-American male students (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Research indicates that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with overall reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Rationale

As a reading teacher in an elementary school with a diverse population and high percentage of struggling readers, narrowing the academic achievement gap is a constant challenge. During the 2007-08 academic year, this diverse school population was composed of 530 students. Of these 530 students, 56% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch, 61% of students represented racial minorities, and 16% received special education services. In addition, approximately 28% of all students came from bilingual households. A total of 44 students qualified for supplemental English language learner (ELL) services. With additional reading support, many of our school’s diverse students who struggled initially with reading were able to decode and comprehend primary level texts by the end of second grade. A majority of these students were unable to maintain this growth when challenged by the increased complexity of academic vocabulary found in textbooks and standardized tests. My primary concern is how to increase struggling students’ academic vocabularies from diverse backgrounds. These diverse students are English language learners (ELL) or speak dialects of English that differ from the type of English promoted and used in school and on high stakes tests.
Purpose

This literature review is a necessary prerequisite for developing a series of professional development workshops. Through this process, I will be able to synthesize research on teaching strategies that promote vocabulary acquisition and develop the content for the sessions. The primary focus of my literature review is to locate research based journal articles, government publications, and books that address vocabulary acquisition in relationship to good readers, struggling readers, and the academic achievement gap. Since diverse students bring their own rich, cultural dialect or language to school, my secondary focus will be on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and how students acquire academic vocabulary (Cummins, 2003).

Currently my school district does not have a unified approach to vocabulary instruction. This literature review provides information on the theoretical foundation and rationale prior to implementing an integrated and comprehensive approach to vocabulary instruction. My project goals are to develop and present a series of professional development sessions over the course of one academic year to the reading teachers in my school district. These sessions will provide reading teachers with information and tools to implement an integrated and comprehensive academic vocabulary program for diverse learners. Additionally, reading teachers will be prepared to coach classroom teachers in implementing an integrated and comprehensive academic vocabulary program across content-areas in their classrooms.

Terminology

Before implementing an integrated and comprehensive academic vocabulary program, educators must share a common understanding of how young learners acquire
vocabulary. For the purpose of this literature review, vocabulary refers to “the words we must know to communicate effectively” (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p. 34).

Diverse learners, as defined by Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui (1995), are students who bring additional requirements to traditional instruction by virtue of their instructional, experiential, cognitive, socioeconomic, linguistic, and physiological backgrounds. This definition will be used to encompass the complexity of backgrounds represented by struggling readers in my elementary school.

What is the difference between good readers and struggling readers? Good readers are proficient at comprehending grade-level texts and are able to infer the meaning of many unknown academic words (Nagy, 1988). Flood (2006) defined a struggling reader as a student who lacks the skills to comprehend grade-level texts. According to Moats (2001) struggling readers often have word poverty, which reflects students' confusion over word meanings and a general gap in vocabulary knowledge. Stanovich's (1986) Matthew Effects demonstrated how good readers become better readers because they read more challenging texts, but struggling readers do not make the same progress because they read less often.

Diverse students bring their own home dialect or language to school, which may not contain the academic vocabulary necessary to comprehend texts beyond the primary grades. Cummins (2003) defined CALP as the academic style of language used in classrooms and contains the academic vocabulary, structure, and syntax found in textbooks and high stakes tests. Academic language, as defined by Collier and Thomas (1989), refers to the complex network of knowledge and language and cognitive skills required for successful academic performance each succeeding year. When a language or
dialect learner chooses or switches to the style of language appropriate to the setting and purpose, this is called *code switching* (Wheeler, 2005).

When choosing useful and important words for explicit instruction, Beck, McKeown and Kucan, (2002) designed a three-tier method. *Tier 1* words are basic words that require no instruction and are usually in students' daily oral language. *Tier 2* words consist of high-utility words encountered in a variety of contexts and require explicit instruction to aid comprehension. Lastly, *Tier 3* words are technical and specialized and only require instruction if the word is critical to comprehension of the passage.

*Research Questions*

The review of literature was guided by the following primary question: How do young learners acquire vocabulary? From this primary question, there were three secondary questions: (1) how do good readers use and acquire vocabulary?, (2) how do struggling readers use and acquire vocabulary?, and (3) why is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) important for all learners?.


Review of Literature

The academic achievement gap between students of differing socioeconomic statuses (SES) is one of the most persistent and frustrating problems facing educators today. Researchers identified limited academic vocabulary as an important contributing factor to the widening academic achievement gap on standardized testing (Becker, 1977; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Vocabulary is important because readers must know what the majority of the words mean before they can comprehend what they are reading. To improve educational outcomes, educators must understand how diverse learners acquire vocabulary.

Who Are These Diverse Learners?

Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui (1995) defined diverse learners as students who bring additional requirements to traditional instruction by virtue of their instructional, experiential, cognitive, socioeconomic, linguistic, and physiological backgrounds. Students from low SES homes, English language learners (ELL), minority students, special education students, dialect learners, and students that transfer schools frequently are represented by this definition. If this definition were applied to public schools in the Midwestern United States, a majority of students would be considered diverse, and they would require more than traditional instruction. To understand these additional requirements, this literature review focused on three important questions: (a) How do good readers use and acquire vocabulary, (b) How do struggling readers use and acquire vocabulary, and (c) Why is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) important for all learners?
Vocabulary refers to "the words we must know to communicate effectively" (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p. 34). The four types of vocabularies that researchers often refer to are (1) listening vocabulary, (2) speaking vocabulary, (3) reading vocabulary, and (4) writing vocabulary. Children learn the meanings of most words indirectly by engaging in daily oral language, listening to adults read to them, and by reading themselves (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn). Children, who come to school with larger vocabularies, generally find reading easier, read more widely, and do better in school. In contrast, students with limited vocabularies find reading more difficult, resist reading, learn fewer words, and consequently struggle academically (Stanovich, 1986). To compound the situation, Becker (1977) observed that early gains in reading were difficult to sustain without an adequate vocabulary to meet the academic demands after the primary grades.

The vocabulary gap widens rapidly between good readers and struggling readers. Along with the quality of education students received, students' SES played an important role in their vocabulary development (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Chall & Jacobs, 2003). White, Graves, and Slater (1990) investigated reading vocabulary size and growth differences between students in grades 1 through 4 from two low SES elementary schools and one middle SES school. The researchers found students from the low SES schools acquired about 3,500 new words per year while the middle SES students increased their vocabulary size by approximately 5,200 words per year. Students from low SES schools made significantly less annual growth in their reading vocabulary size compared to students from middle SES schools demonstrating the additional requirements low SES students bring to traditional instruction.
How Do Good Readers Acquire Vocabulary?

Good readers are proficient at comprehending grade-level texts and are able to infer the meaning of many unknown academic words (Nagy, 1988). These students are able to increase their vocabulary by engaging and actively participating in conversations, reading independently, and listening to a wide variety of books every day. Biemiller and Boote (2006) concluded literate children take more responsibility for their learning and are able to stop reading to ponder or ask the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Good readers acquire a large amount of new vocabulary through reading and talking about what they have read (Nagy, 1988). Good readers reread books over and over which leads to deeper meaning and greater inference of partially known vocabulary (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). This produces the Matthew Effects discussed by Stanovich (1986) where the good readers become better readers because they read more challenging texts, but struggling readers do not make the same progress because they read less often and less challenging materials (Stahl, 1999).

Differences in reading proficiencies increase as students move into the intermediate grades. Becker (1977) concluded teaching diverse children to successfully decode words was insufficient to have them reach reading comprehension beyond grade level two. This difference, or “fourth grade slump”, is attributed to academic vocabulary, which is increasingly technical, abstract, and more difficult to comprehend than the vocabulary encountered in primary grade texts. Students are required to do more “reading to learn” in content-areas and use vocabulary that is not part of their oral vocabularies (Block & Mangieri, 2006).
**How Do Struggling Readers Acquire Vocabulary?**

Struggling readers often have difficulty acquiring vocabulary. Lapp, Flood, and Flood (2006) define a *struggling reader* as a student who lacks the skills to comprehend grade-level texts. In 2000, the National Reading Panel reported struggling readers, who experience problems with fluency and comprehension, often have a limited vocabulary (National Reading Panel, 2000). Compounding their limited vocabulary with possible physical, psychological, neurological, socioeconomic, linguistic, and educational factors that interfere with their learning, the struggling reader requires more than incidental learning to narrow the achievement gap. The struggling reader often demonstrates superficial understanding of words but does not recognize or understand multiple meanings (Block & Mangieri, 2006). By fourth grade, many students struggle with the more complex text encountered in school, even if their decoding skills are good (Moats, 2001).

The linguistic demands of school quickly change after third grade as well. No longer is conversational vocabulary adequate to meet the academic demands. As students move beyond the primary grades and as the vocabulary used in textbooks and on assessments becomes increasingly technical, abstract, and harder to comprehend, differences in reading proficiencies expand (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Many students may appear to be progressing well according to reading assessments in the early grades because tests at this level have relatively simple words and content (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003). Hirsch (2001) reports if a child knows about 95 percent of the words in spoken or written speech, he or she can infer the other 5 percent. Now compare this to the child with a limited vocabulary who
does not understand enough of the book language to make meaning from the context and quickly loses interest and motivation to participate. All students, especially linguistic and cultural minority students, require instruction in CALP if they are to succeed in the classroom and on high stakes tests (Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2005).

Why is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) important for all learners?

Learners acquire academic language through instructional activities that actively promote language development in the context of learning intellectually challenging content (Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2005). “A good teacher incorporates social and academic language development into every lesson” (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006, p. 129). The importance of this is highlighted by the use of high stakes testing and pressure to improve test scores. High stakes tests, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, require a higher level of English proficiency and understanding of content. Diverse students, who speak dialects of English that differ from institutional English promoted and used in school, and ELLs are especially at-risk for failure on high stakes tests (Bielenberg & Fillmore). Typical tasks on high stakes tests contain vocabulary that are increasingly precise and complex in structure and include more Latin and Greek root words. Words are used to express abstract ideas and concepts. Students who struggle with academic language and CALP will most likely struggle on these tests.

Cummins (2003) defined CALP as the academic style of language used in classrooms. This formal register of English contains the academic vocabulary, structure, and syntax found in textbooks and high stakes standardized tests. Payne (1996) reports a majority of minority students and low SES students cannot use nor do they have access to
formal register at home. She argues formal register needs to be explicitly taught to diverse students.

Wheeler’s (2005) research on language transfer provides educators with powerful tools for vocabulary acquisition. Contrastive analysis allows students to compare and contrast their conversational vocabulary and grammar patterns with academic vocabulary and formal register. This method enables teachers to validate and demonstrate acceptance of students’ home speech while helping students become consciously aware of the differences between their home speech and academic speech. Through modeling and practice in a supportive environment, students learn how to successfully code-switch and add academic vocabulary and formal register to their linguistic toolboxes. Code switching occurs when a language or dialect learner chooses or switches to the style of language appropriate to the setting and purpose (Wheeler, 2005).

Vocabulary instruction should be meaningful (Stahl, 2003) and teach students the skills they need to continually expand their own vocabulary. To do this, Block & Mangieri (2006) recommend planning word instruction based on the texts students are expected to read and choosing words that are critical to comprehending that text. They recommend using a three-tier method (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002) when choosing useful and important concept words for explicit instruction. Tier 1 words are basic words that are usually in students’ daily oral language and require no instruction. Tier 2 words consist of high-utility words encountered in a variety of contexts and require explicit instruction to aid comprehension. Lastly, Tier 3 words are technical and specialized and only require instruction if the word is critical to comprehension of the passage.
Secondly, teachers must consider the depth of word knowledge needed and the complexity of the word when planning instruction. Students in classrooms will vary widely on their knowledge of vocabulary words chosen for instruction. Dale, O'Rourke and Bamman (1971) identified four degrees of knowing a word. They were (a) never saw the word (b) heard the word before, but do not know what it means (c) recognize the word in context, and (d) know and can use the word. Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) offer a similar continuum with four degrees of word knowledge. They were: (a) know it well, can explain it, can use it; (b) know something about it, can relate it to a situation; (c) have seen or heard the word; and (d) do not know the word. By pre-assessing student’s knowledge of vocabulary words, teachers can effectively plan which words will require explicit and direct instruction of unknown words and arrange for multiple encounters with the targeted word.

To meet the needs of today’s diverse learners, teachers must be prepared with a wide repertoire of teaching strategies. There is no single mode of vocabulary instruction that is uniformly beneficial to diverse learners (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Teachers must be critical consumers when commercial vendors offer complete vocabulary programs in a box. Traditional teaching methods required students to copy a list of words, look them up in a dictionary, memorize the definition, and write sentences using the words (Anderson & Nagy (1992). Learning words one at a time is both inefficient and ineffective (Nagy, 1988). Anderson and Nagy (1992) estimate students must learn approximately 3,000 words a year to maintain adequate yearly progress; therefore, vocabulary instruction should not be an isolated event during the school day. It must happen every day, in all grades, across content areas.
Struggling readers benefit from instruction that connects vocabulary and strategic reading instruction. The problem-solving processes required to monitor, infer, and learn new vocabulary are directly related to activating prior knowledge, predicting meaning, and gradually refining that meaning making (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2002). Blachowicz & Fisher (2002) recommend integrating vocabulary instruction with prereading activities, which improve the prediction process. This enables the teacher to quickly assess students’ prior knowledge to determine if additional prereading concept development is necessary. Researchers suggest using a knowledge rating before reading as a prereading tool to help students self-monitor and analyze their level of word knowledge (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2002).

Word learning strategies are important for students as they build a generative system of acquiring vocabulary. In addition to learning how to use dictionaries and reference materials, students benefit from explicit instruction on how to use word parts to help determine meanings of words (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). Fillmore & Snow (2000) emphasize the importance of teaching English language learners how to use morphologic analysis or structural analysis. Structural analysis draws the student’s attention to the word parts that comprise a word (Blachowicz, Fisher, & Watts-Taffe, 2005). Word parts include morphemes, prefixes, suffixes, base words, and root words. Morphemes are the smallest unit of meaning in language. Spanish speakers can be taught how to parallel English and Spanish nouns that are similar to quickly expand their English vocabularies (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Beck & McKeowen (2007) concluded very young learners whose environments do not include extensive interactions with language could learn and acquire the
vocabulary of literate, language users. Through a series of refined studies in low SES, urban schools, the researchers studied the effects of teaching sophisticated words from read aloud trade books. Tier 2 words (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002) were chosen based on their usefulness in the children’s everyday lives, ease of explanation, and visual distinction. Teachers were provided with on-going professional development on the More Rich Instruction methodology. After the lessons, words were placed on charts with tally marks added each time a child used the word during the school day. The results demonstrated significant gains in vocabulary by students receiving More Rich Instruction.

Juel & Deffes (2004) studied which method of vocabulary instruction produced greater gains for students with word poverty. Moats (2001) coined the term word poverty to reflect students’ confusion over word meanings and their general gap in vocabulary knowledge. Juei & Deffes (2004) studied the effects of direct analytic vocabulary instruction and contextual vocabulary instruction in the early elementary grades. Direct analytic vocabulary instruction incorporated the anchored word instruction method (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker & Deffes, 2003), which included studying words in context, connecting to students’ background, plus actively engaging the students in exploring how the words look, sound, and are written. Contextual vocabulary instruction, during read-alouds of children’s books, involved oral discussion during reading and providing incidental instruction of word meanings. The researchers concluded students receiving the analytic and anchored word methods significantly outperformed on post-tests those students receiving only contextual vocabulary instruction.
Chapin, O’Connor, and Anderson (as cited in Bielenberg & Fillmore, 2005) demonstrated English language learners and other under-achieving students from a low SES, urban school were able to develop and use the academic vocabulary and discourse when taking high stakes testing. Using a research-based math program called Project Challenge, teachers focused on building and expanding students’ academic vocabulary through scaffolded conversations that clarified, modeled, and promoted critical thinking. Using *revoicing*, a technique that requires the teacher to repeat some or all of what student had just said, the teacher is able to clarify and model academic vocabulary and academic language (Collier & Thomas, 1989). Students engaged in rich discussions using academic language to share their problem-solving processes and strategies. Students were encouraged to revoice other students’ comments to reinforce their learning. Over time, students became increasingly adept at reasoning, explaining their thinking, and using academic vocabulary. After just one year in the program, 57 percent of the students were scoring at the advanced or proficient level on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

In order to improve comprehension of text, Nagy (1988) supports using methods that provide integration of new and important words with familiar concepts and experiences. Instructional strategies that connect and highlight relationships among words and their meanings include semantic mapping, semantic feature analysis charts, hierarchical arrays, linear arrays (Nagy), and comparison charts of examples and non-examples (Block & Mangieri, 2006). Semantic mapping deals with words in groups based on related meanings or relationships. They are used to activate students’ background knowledge and are usually used during pre-reading activities. Teachers are
able identify and assess specific background knowledge of students so new vocabulary words are related to meaningful experiences. Semantic feature analysis is an instructional method that explicitly works with relationships among word meanings by using a matrix design or Venn diagram. Hierarchical arrays represent relationships among word meanings. Nagy (1988) reports hierarchical arrays carry the advantage of having students actively engaged in generating vocabulary items and explaining the word meanings and relationships and are beneficial in thematic units. Linear arrays are useful in displaying sets of words that vary in degrees and can be arranged in a sequence according to size, intensity, position, or numerical value. This allows for visual comparison and contrast as students explore the relationships among the targeted words (Nagy). Comparison charts of examples and non-examples of Tier 2 words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) helps students analyze and practice important characteristics of target words. The target word is defined and a contextual example is provided followed by a question using the Tier 2 word. The same format is followed for a non-example. By working with the word in context and through discussion, students develop a deeper understanding of the subtleties of its definition (Block & Mangieri, 2006).

Finally, teachers should strive to foster word consciousness. Word consciousness is described as an awareness of and interest in the power of words and their meanings (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). This can be accomplished in many ways. Teachers can raise word consciousness by modeling a natural curiosity about words and approaching vocabulary instruction with a positive attitude. Connor et al. (2005) reported students whose teachers were more warm and responsive and who spent more time in academic activities demonstrated stronger vocabulary and decoding
skills by the end of first grade. During book discussions, teachers can call attention to the way authors choose words to convey a particular meaning or feeling. They can provide older students with opportunities to play with words by reading riddles, completing crossword puzzles, using puns, experimenting with palindromes. Researching of the origin or history of an interesting word (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001) generates deeper understanding of the English language. Bulletin boards and word walls of academic vocabulary that appear in books encourage and remind students to use those words everyday as they discuss and share (Jago, 2005).
Methodology

The methodology section includes three key areas: introduction, design, and planning. The introduction provides an overview of the project goals. The design describes the elements used in creating and designing the project. Planning provides an overview of how the project was planned and developed.

Introduction

For this project, a series of professional development workshops was developed to improve student achievement in reading. Nine workshops, with 11.75 cumulative contact hours, were scheduled throughout the academic year with a focus on vocabulary acquisition research and explicit vocabulary instruction. These sessions were designed for elementary reading teachers and district Language Arts Resource Specialists (LARS). Six professional development goals were identified.

- The district reading teachers and LARS will build a common, shared theoretical understanding about explicit vocabulary instruction.
- The reading teachers and LARS will validate the purpose and rationale for using explicit vocabulary instruction to improve student achievement.
- The reading teachers and LARS will engage in professional, collaborative practice to improve student learning and outcomes.
- The reading teachers and LARS will implement at least one form of explicit vocabulary instruction during their reading groups.
- The reading teachers and LARS will participate in one colleague visit focused on the implementation of explicit vocabulary instruction using reflective practice and evidence based discussions.
• The reading teachers and LARS will synthesize and demonstrate their learning through a vocabulary acquisition project focused on classroom teacher education and/or parent education.

Design

Both content and presentation format were directly influenced by participant questionnaire responses, district standardized test scores, district and Title I building Continuous School Improvement Plans (CSIP), and consensus of need agreed upon by district reading teachers. The Iowa Professional Development Model (Iowa Department of Education, 2005), Iowa Teaching Standards (Iowa Department of Education, 2002), and Student and Teacher Quality Program Legislation (Iowa Senate File 277) served as guiding principles for the overall design process and summative and formative assessments.

Planning

The initial planning phase represented a collaborative effort with the district’s Director of Instruction, a Title I principal, and a LARS. Together we discussed sentinel research, district data, current theories, district resources, goals, and sequencing of learning sessions. An unanswered question was what background knowledge and beliefs do district reading teachers possess about vocabulary acquisition? To answer this question, the Vocabulary Questionnaire Fall 2007 (Appendix A) was developed and distributed at the beginning of the school year. Anonymity was provided so teachers could freely provide honest answers. Feedback from completed questionnaires was used to plan and design sessions that recognized strengths, built on teacher background
knowledge, clarified confusions, answered questions, and helped teachers meet their individual goals.

Each session utilized a common meeting design to support professional learning (Regents of the University of California, 2007). This professional learning design included four components:

1. Connecting—The first component included building community, reflecting on previous learning, and linking to prior experience.
2. Learning—This component included developing new skills, refining skills, providing new knowledge, applying new skills and knowledge, reflecting upon current practice, and planning.
3. Managing—The third component involved reviewing and clarification of the new information.
4. Closing—The final component included a process for debriefing and setting next steps.

This structure allowed for routines to be established and consistency throughout the sessions. The four components facilitated my planning and presentation.

During each session, I recorded anecdotal notes of teacher questions, comments, concerns, and discussion points. These notes helped me track areas of need, concern, confusion, and progress. These records kept me focused on issues that were relevant to the participants’ current practice. I also met regularly with an experienced LARS to debrief after each workshop and to adjust the next workshop’s agenda based on the previous session’s outcomes and anecdotal notes. She served as a mentor, coach, and proofreader to assure accuracy, clarity, and consistency in my materials. In order to
compile the resources for each workshop, I utilized university library resources, electronic search engines, professional journals and books, observations of experienced teachers, audio video materials, and graduate course notes.
The Project

The Explicit Vocabulary Instruction staff development project involved nine sessions over one academic year. This staff development was implemented during the 2007-2008 school year for an entire suburban school district in the Midwest. The workshops were designed to build upon each other both from the literature-based practices and the feedback from the participants.

During the initial workshop session, participants were provided with an empty binder to collect and organize materials throughout the year. Group norms were established as well as routines to facilitate organization and efficiency. Detailed, pre-punched materials were provided at the beginning of each session. Teachers previously indicated they did not like Power Point® presentations and preferred an interactive format that required little note taking. Materials included interactive components that required collaboration, reflection, discussion, and goal setting. The binder of materials served as a resource for implementation, further study, and classroom teacher education. At each session, a variety of pertinent professional materials, such as books, journals, and teaching tools, were available for browsing and sharing.

Workshop Series

The first session focused on vocabulary theory, research, and word choice. This session provided important common language and forged a shared theoretical knowledge base for subsequent sessions. During the word choice portion, teachers were introduced to what it means to know a word and the concept of tiered words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Teachers generated lists of tier two words for frequently used trade books.
The second session introduced the My Word Tools methodology. This methodology was based on Feldman and Kinsella’s (2005) instructional protocol for developing academic expressive vocabulary. Greenleaf & Medd (2007), in their ICCSD ELL Professional Development Packet 1, described Feldman and Kinsella’s (2005) explicit vocabulary instructional protocol and outlined My Word Tools. Medd, a district ELL teacher, shared the My Word Tools instruction protocol and explained how the district’s ELL teachers implemented its organizational format and components. She explained the instructional moves, modeled the protocol, showed a video of a My Word Tools lesson, and then shared student artifacts. Using the tier two word lists generated during the first session, participants generated My Word Tools lesson plans for guided reading groups. These lesson plans were converted to electronic files and distributed to all participants for immediate use. The reading teachers then developed personal action plans, set goals for implementation, and identify any additional support required to achieve those goals and improve student outcomes.

The third session began with reflection and debriefing over My Word Tools. The group shared artifacts and outcomes from completed lesson plans, discussed what facilitated or hindered implementation, and celebrated successes. Next, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan’s (2002) Robust Approach to vocabulary instruction theory and methodology was presented. This was followed by short video clips and interactive demonstrations of recommended robust activities for engaging students in dealing with word meanings. Teachers compared and contrasted the My Word Tools protocol and the Robust Approach. At the conclusion of this session, teachers anonymously completed a Mid-year Questionnaire (Appendix B) that reflected on the first three sessions presented.
The fourth session occurred after a two-week winter break. Using three short video clips featuring Beck (2006) and Duke (2006), teachers were provided with a quick review of the first three sessions. This allowed participants to refocus on the purpose and goals of the professional development sessions. In order to facilitate implementation of at least one explicit vocabulary instructional method and improve student outcomes through collaboration, reading teacher colleague visits were initiated. Teachers were assured these visits were not to evaluate each other but were to focus on student response to an explicit vocabulary instructional method. A focused observation guide (Appendix C), which included an evidence-based discussion component, helped focus and guide these observations and evaluate the process. Next, teachers were presented with the opportunity to co-plan and prepare for their reading teacher colleague visits.

During the fifth session, teachers participated in their colleague visits. Each teacher was given release time to participate in both roles: observer/coach and teacher. Participants first held a planning conversation, recorded student responses to instruction on the focused observation guide during the lesson, and then engaged in an evidence-based discussion following the lesson. Teachers were encouraged to reflect and evaluate the process of the colleague visits following the experience.

During the sixth session, the reading teachers debriefed from their colleague visits. After a five-minute reflective quick-write, teachers joined small groups to share their observation guides and personal experiences. Groups were instructed to identify any positive or negative outcomes related to their practice or students as a result of their colleague visits. Then during large group discussion, charts were created that reflected these discussions. Teachers unanimously voted to continue colleague visits next year.
Next the session turned its focus to word consciousness and how to help students develop a deep appreciation of words and value the power of words. Teachers were randomly assigned to small groups to demonstrate lesson models from Diamond & Gutlohn's (2006) *Vocabulary Handbook*. Teachers collaborated on how to creatively present their lesson model in an interactive format.

The seventh session was devoted to the Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) (Calhoun, 1999) and how it relates to explicit vocabulary instruction. On the Fall Questionnaire, two teachers reported their preferred method of vocabulary instruction was "shaking words" out of books. Using Calhoun's (1999) work and artifacts from a kindergarten teacher who has fully implemented PWIM in his classroom, teachers were exposed to the basic steps of the PWIM and how all the components interact together. A large group discussion focused on the strengths and weaknesses of PWIM. The teachers reached a consensus that simply "shaking words" out of a book was not a powerful method to teach vocabulary but could be a way to identify tier two words.

The eighth session explored assessment of vocabulary and its complexity. While the content appeared daunting, the teachers remained engaged by questioning their own assessment techniques and exploring new ways to improve their assessment tools or create new formats depending on the goal of their assessment. At the end of this session, teachers reviewed the district's Title One Parent Compact and the classroom teacher and parent education expectations outlined in the district's Reading Teacher Handbook. The guidelines for Vocabulary Acquisition Projects were presented as a way to meet those expectations while synthesizing their learning about vocabulary. Teachers were encouraged to be creative, to develop a project that met their needs and interests, and to
collaborate with teachers with similar interests. The reading teachers collaborated in small groups to design parent participation activities and/or teacher education materials that were focused on vocabulary and improving student outcomes. At the conclusion of the seventh session, the End-of-Year (Appendix D) and Vocabulary Questionnaire Spring 2008 (Appendix E) questionnaires were administered to assess any changes in teacher beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

The final session celebrated the participants' Vocabulary Acquisition Projects. Each group provided copies of their projects. A total of 12 collaborative projects were distributed to each participant. Projects ranged from Family Literacy Night plans, parent newsletters, bulletin board plans, classroom teacher staff development plans, and vocabulary games for school and home. Finally, Certificates of Attendance representing participation hours were distributed for their career portfolios (see Appendix F).
"The limits of my language are the limits of my mind. All I know is what I have words for." --Ludwig Wittgenstein

What do we mean by vocabulary?

In a general sense, vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Researchers often refer to four different types of vocabulary:

- **listening vocabulary**: the words we need to know to understand what we hear
- **speaking vocabulary**: the words we use when we speak
- **reading vocabulary**: the words we need to know to understand what we read
- **writing vocabulary**: the words we use in writing

Chall (1983) made the distinction between the two types of vocabulary needed for reading: **word-recognition vocabulary** and **meaning vocabulary**. Beginning readers have a much more difficult time reading words that are not already part of their oral language (National Institute of Child Health et al, 2001). Word recognition vocabulary consists of words that a student can pronounce when seen in print, whether by sight or word attack skills. Meaning vocabulary consists of words that a student can define or attach an appropriate meaning.

The Importance of Vocabulary Instruction

Research clearly indicates that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with overall reading achievement. A strong vocabulary promotes and predicts reading fluency, comprehension, and achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000). Therefore, readers who experience problems with fluency and comprehension often have a weak vocabulary (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Beck McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

* This session description and the following session descriptions were used in their entirety as handouts to the participants in this staff development project. The format of the handout was designed to be accessible and useful as a resource to the classroom teachers, including note taking space after key points. The integrity of this format is maintained in this project paper to reflect the authenticity of the original materials.
Reading is probably the most important mechanism for vocabulary growth throughout a child’s school-age years and beyond (Anderson & Nagy, 1992, Baumann & Kameenui, 1991). A comprehensive vocabulary development program that meets the needs of diverse learners should (a) teach words that are strategic to academic success and not typically acquired independently, and (b) include systematic procedures to make students independent word learners, primarily by helping them become voracious readers (Anderson & Nagy, 1992).

Did you know? Students from higher SES backgrounds across grade levels may know from two to four times as many words as those from low SES backgrounds (Corson, 1989; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990).

Hart & Risley (1995) found that students from low SES backgrounds know around 6,000 fewer words than their middle-class peers do when they start school.

Explicit and direct instruction of words: Teaching the words that matter the most

Traditionally, most language experts viewed vocabulary as something more “caught than taught” arguing there are simply too many words to feasibly teach and that incidental word learning through wide reading accounts for the majority of vocabulary acquisition (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985).

Today researchers report direct instruction in vocabulary influences comprehension more than any other factor (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Nagy, 1988). Many struggling readers often exhibit a superficial knowledge of words but do not possess an understanding of their multiple meanings (Shand, 1993).

Did you know? Seventy percent of the most frequently used words have multiple meanings (Lederer, 1991 as cited by Bromley, 2007).
A Big Problem: The Fourth Grade Slump

As students move beyond the primary grades and as the text-based vocabulary becomes increasingly technical, abstract, and harder to comprehend, differences in reading proficiencies expand (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Many students may appear to be progressing well according to reading assessments in the early grades because tests at this level have relatively simple words and content. But when these students reach the later grades, their lack of vocabulary knowledge becomes increasingly apparent (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003). This widening achievement gap is often referred to as the “fourth grade slump”.

Did you know? Research suggests that the vocabulary of entering first graders predicts not only their word reading ability at the end of first grade (Senechal & Cornell, 1993) but also their eleventh grade reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective vocabulary instruction is more than just:</th>
<th>Vocabulary experts recommend:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• looking up words in the dictionary</td>
<td>• wide reading of fiction and non-fiction texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• using written context to figure out word meanings</td>
<td>• direct teaching of important individual words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unplanned, spur of the moment vocabulary teaching</td>
<td>• teaching independent word learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• fostering “word consciousness” or an awareness of and interest in words, their meaning, and their power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feldmann & Kinsella, 2005

“Unlike phonics and morphological analysis, vocabulary instruction is a never-ending effort” (Biemiller, 2003, p. 330).

How do children add to their vocabulary repertoires?

Children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways:

1. **by engaging daily in oral language** The more oral language experiences a child has with adults equals more word meanings they learn through exposure and repetition.
**Did you know?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low-income child</th>
<th>Middle-income child</th>
<th>High-income child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of words heard at home per hour by 1- and 2-year-olds learning to talk:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income child</td>
<td>620</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-income child</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income child</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of spoken words exposed to by age 3 (and approximate vocabulary):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income child</td>
<td>10 million</td>
<td>(500 word vocabulary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-income child</td>
<td>20 million</td>
<td>(700 word vocabulary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income child</td>
<td>30 million</td>
<td>(1,100 word vocabulary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hart & Risley, 1995
2. *by listening to adults read to them* Especially when the reader pauses to define an unfamiliar word and then engages the child in conversations that connect and extend the concepts in the book to the child's prior knowledge and background.

3. *by reading extensively on their own* Children who read a lot learn about 8 words per day. That's more than 3,000 words per year! Those that don’t read extensively learn about 2 words per day or only about 700 words per year (Ohanian, 2002, as cited in Mahurt, 2007).

What does it mean to know a word?

Word knowledge is a complex concept. First, the extent of knowledge a person may have about individual words can range from a little to a lot. Secondly, there are qualitatively different kinds of knowledge. Full understanding and use of a word occurs only over time with multiple encounters (Carey, 1978).

Consider Dale's (1965 as cited in Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) description of the extent of word knowledge:

- Stage 1: Never saw it before.
- Stage 2: Heard it, but doesn’t know what it means.
- Stage 3: Recognizes it in context as having something to do with ________.
- Stage 4: Knows it well.
Continuum of word knowledge (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987):

- No knowledge
- General sense
- Narrow, context-bound knowledge
- Having knowledge of a word but not being able to recall it readily enough to use it in appropriate situations
- Rich, de-contextualized knowledge of a word’s meaning, its relationship to other words, and its extension to metaphorical uses

Cronbach (1942) described word knowledge as a continuum with qualitative dimensions—the kind of knowledge a person has about words and the uses to which that knowledge can be put (as cited in Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002).

- Generalizations: the ability to define a word
- Application: the ability to select or recognize situations appropriate to a word
- Breadth: knowledge of multiple meanings
- Precision: the ability to apply a term correctly to all situations and recognize in appropriate use
- Availability: the actual use of a word in thinking and discourse

While other researchers since 1942 have added elements to this continuum, it’s obvious that what it means to know a word is complicated and multifaceted!

“*You don’t know a new word until you no longer think of the definition when you read it*”

*(Anderson & Nagy, 1992, p. 18)*.

**You try it:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Know it well, can explain it, use it</th>
<th>Know something about it, can relate it to a situation</th>
<th>Have seen or heard the word</th>
<th>Do not know the word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tyranny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surreptitious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grapnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dubious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002
Choosing Words to Teach

Primary goals of instruction:
- Students will be able to use the instructed words to understand the text containing those words.
- Students will be able to recall the words well enough to use them in their oral language and writing.

All words can be divided into three tiers:

First Tier: Tier 1 words are basic words that rarely require instructional attention (telephone, child, sad, jump). Usually these words are already in the child’s speaking and listening vocabularies.

Second Tier: Tier 2 contains words that are of high frequency and high utility for mature language users and are found across a variety of domains. Often these words provide students with more precise and mature ways of referring to ideas they already know about. Because of the large role they play in a language user’s repertoire, a rich knowledge of words in this second tier can have a powerful impact on verbal functioning.

Third Tier: Tier 3 consists of words whose frequency of use is low and often limited to specific domains (molecule, lathe, islet). These words are best learned when a specific need arises during content learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some Criteria for Identifying Tier 2 Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Importance and utility: Words that are characteristic of mature language users and appear frequently across a variety of domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional potential: Words that can be worked with in a variety of ways so that students can build rich representations of them and of their connections to other words and concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conceptual understanding: Words for which students understand the general concept but the words provide precision and specificity in describing the concept.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002, p. 19

Examples of Tier 2 words:
accidentally drowsy pranced delighted envious decent
scorched brilliant abuse leisure prospect attractive
Guidelines for Evaluating Words for Instruction

- How generally useful is the word? Is it a word that students are likely to meet often in other texts or on standardized tests? Will it be of use to students in describing their own experiences? *(typical, dread versus portage, brackish)*
- How does the word relate to other words, to ideas that students know or have been learning? Does it directly relate to some topic of study in the classroom? Or might it add a dimension to ideas that have been developed?
- What does the word bring to a text or situation? What role does the word play in communicating the meaning of the context which it is used?
- Can the word be explained in known terms (everyday language)?

Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002, p. 29

You try it
Consider the following example. Which word would you choose to teach? Why?

Hannah admired the tuxedo’s lapel.

What if the book I am teaching doesn’t contain any Tier 2 words?

Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) recommend bringing in words whose concepts fit with a story especially for young children that are just learning to read and their books contain only the simplest words. Most of the words that appear in these primary-grade books are usually part of students’ speaking and listening vocabularies (Lapp, Flood, & Flood, 2006).

Example:
In a simple patterned text, Bella and Rosie try on several funny hats. Some are very big, but only two are exactly alike.

*Ideas of Tier 2 words to bring in:* identical, enormous, absurd
Now you try it:

1. Use a text or chapter that your students will be reading.
2. List all the words that are likely to be unfamiliar to students.
3. Analyze the word list:
   a. Which words can be categorized as Tier 2 words?
   b. Which of the Tier 2 words are necessary for comprehension?
   c. Are there other words needed for comprehension? Which ones?
4. Which words will you teach?
   a. Which words will need only brief attention?
   b. Which will you give more elaborate attention to?

Book/Chapter Title:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1 Words</th>
<th>Tier 2 Words</th>
<th>Tier 3 Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Basic Words)</td>
<td>(High Utility Words)</td>
<td>(Technical Words)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beck, McKeown, Kucan, 2002

Resources provided to the participants:


On-line resource provided to the participants:

Grant Wood AEA electronic journal search engine: [http://www.iowaaeaonline.org/](http://www.iowaaeaonline.org/) Click on “EBSCO” to search educational journals.
Session 2 builds on the collaborative work started in Session 1. Table 1 on the following page provides the list of Tier 2 words generated by the participants in the second session. These words were used by the teachers as resources to use in their development of lesson plans and in their instruction in the classroom during Session 2.

One goal of this project was to facilitate implementation of at least one method of explicit vocabulary instruction in their classrooms. At the completion of Session 2, the participants were given a Personal Action Plan: My Word Tools (see Appendix H). Participants were asked to privately reflect on today’s professional development workshop in relationship to their own teaching practice. Teachers then set personal goals for implementation of My Word Tools including the identification of any anticipated roadblocks or support needed.
# Table One

Generated List of Possible Tier Two Words from Session 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Possible Tier 2 Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father Bear goes fishing</td>
<td>persistent, persevere, patient, concern, excite, relief, provide, worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom is brave</td>
<td>distract, sympathy, brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hungry kitten</td>
<td>starve, reject,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lazy pig</td>
<td>asleep, motivate, lethargic, punctual, hungry, aroma, lazy, excited, enthusiasm, dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little bulldozer helps again</td>
<td>sink, yell, stuck, reject, depress, ignore, hero, patient, assist, persevere, heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey for Baby Bear</td>
<td>curious, safe, wonder, resourceful, relief,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poppleton in Spring</td>
<td>promise, decide, dump, choose,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog</td>
<td>fine, especially, slip, tug, wrap, wonder, worry, bored,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur’s Camp Out</td>
<td>study, collect, specimen, bored, difference, drift, tangle, protect,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinky and Rex and the bully</td>
<td>snicker, shrug, familiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby PM Animal Facts series:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lions and Tigers</td>
<td>pride, stripe, vision, hunt, pride, protect, camouflage,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroos</td>
<td>danger, heavy, marsupial, pouch, warn, protect, escape, safe, danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby PM Animal Facts series:</td>
<td>protect, obey, patch, pant, similarities, differences,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby PM Animal Facts series:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippos</td>
<td>danger, bull, underwater, protect, submerge, herd, danger,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Weather series:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blizzard</td>
<td>cope, adapt, predict, forecast, rescue, drift, collect,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tornado</td>
<td>cope, adapt, predict, forecast, rescue, twisting, common, huge,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunderstorm</td>
<td>cope, adapt, predict, forecast, rescue, powerful, heavy, regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurricane</td>
<td>predict, cope, adapt, forecast, rescue, mass, flood, crop, tropic, shelter, damage,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Freeze</td>
<td>predict, cope, adapt, forecast, rescue, freeze, area, harm, usually, rise,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life. --Mortimer Adler

Guest Speaker: Stacey Medd, ELL Teacher, Horace Mann Elementary

My Word Tools

My Word Tools (Greenleaf & Medd, 2007) is a methodology for vocabulary instruction that is based on the research by Feldman and Kinsella (2005). It offers a comprehensive, integrated approach for developing academic expressive vocabulary instruction that is used across content areas. Currently, the district’s ELL teachers use this methodology for explicit academic vocabulary instruction.

Word Choice

Diverse students bring their own home dialect or language to school, which may not contain the academic vocabulary necessary to comprehend texts beyond the primary grades. Cummins (2003) defined Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as the academic style of language used in classrooms and contains the academic vocabulary, structure, and syntax found in textbooks and high stakes tests.

Dialect speakers and English Language Learners (ELL) benefit from direct, explicit instruction of academic vocabulary. An effective means of addressing students’ CALP is to utilize Beck, McKeown, and Kucan’s (2002) Tier 2 words:

First Tier: Tier 1 words are basic words that rarely require instructional attention. Usually these words are already in the child’s speaking and listening vocabularies. Cummins referred to words used in everyday conversational English as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS).

Second Tier: Tier 2 contains words that are of high frequency and high utility for mature language users and are found across a variety of domains. Often these words provide students with more precise and mature ways of referring to ideas they already know about. Because of the large role they play in a language user’s repertoire, a rich knowledge of words in this second tier can have a powerful impact on verbal functioning. “Tier Two words are not only words that are important for students to know, they are also words that can be worked with in a variety of ways so that students have opportunities to build rich representations of them and of their connections to other words and concepts” (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, p. 20)

In My Word Tools, these words are also referred to as tool words or passport words. Students can use these words across different contexts and are necessary for comprehension, expression of ideas, and demonstrating their learning.
**Third Tier:** Tier 3 words consist of words whose frequency of use is low and often limited to specific domain. These words are technical and specialized and only require instruction if the word is critical to comprehension of the passage.

**My Word Tools Icons**

My Word Tools uses six icons on the Word Tool Sheet, and these are used as teaching tools on the board.

Example of My Word Tool bulletin board by S. Medd (October, 2007).
New Tool Word and definition

Kind of Tool

Synonym

Antonym (if appropriate)

Word family

Partner practice
Example of student's completed Tool Word Sheet:

Example from S. Medd's student artifacts (October 2007).
Example of student’s self-assessment survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The word</th>
<th>The word in the sentence</th>
<th>Using the word</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>filter</td>
<td>I want to eat more.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organism</td>
<td>He organized these items.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identification</td>
<td>I'm sick of this.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similarly</td>
<td>Just as I thought.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differentiate</td>
<td>Don't introduce me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference</td>
<td>I'm an idiot.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiate</td>
<td>One thought to make me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>I'm in control.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>I want to be there.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>Where I finished.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>I made this sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>I made this sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example from S. Medd’s student artifacts (October 2007).
Instructional Protocol for My Word Tools

1. Teacher posts word(s) and accompanying structure for viewing on board.

2. Pre-Assessment: Students complete a self-assessment using the word-rating tool for today’s word. (Use bottom self-assessment section on Word Tool Sheet or Unit Vocabulary Rating Sheet.)

3. Students copy new word and accompanying structure in “partner practice” section of Tool Word Sheet.

4. Teacher contextualizes word within lesson. (Today’s question is about .... )

5. Teacher says word then asks students to repeat word several times aloud--first chorally, then individually.

6. Class spells the word together.

7. Teacher provides an accurate, brief, accessible definition. (Use Longman Study Dictionary for definition.)

8. Students write definition on Tool Word Sheet.

9. Teacher provides two oral examples using varied, rich contexts. Teacher writes on board for all to see.

10. Students copy examples onto Tool Word Sheet.

11. Teacher tells or asks student what kind of word it is. Class decides, and circles correct part of speech. (What kind of tool? What does it help us do?)

12. Class generates synonym and antonym (if appropriate), and students copy onto Tool Word Sheet.

13. Class generates other words in word family using prefixes and suffixes.

14. Teacher engages students in activities using the word.
   - Show me a face that tells us how you would feel if ...
• Turn to your partner and tell them a time when you ...

• Examples and non-examples (If this sentence is an example of _____, then say the word.)

• Shout it out game

15. Students practice word with partner using provided structure.

16. Reinforce usage of word through conversation, reading, and writing.

17. Post-Assessment: At end of unit or book study, students self-assess their vocabulary acquisition by completing the bottom portion of Word Tool Sheet or completing the word stems in column 3 of the Vocabulary Rating Sheet.

18. Next, in column 4 of the Vocabulary Rating Sheet, students rate their current knowledge for each word.

Now You Try It:

1. Using the Generated List of Possible Tier 2 Words sheet, choose one book title and one Tier 2 word. These words were generated during the previous professional development activity.

2. Working together in small teams, collaborate to develop a lesson plan using the My Word Tools instructional sequence and student word tools sheet.

3. Then in small groups, one member will stay and share the original group’s lesson plan while the other members will rotate to new groups. In the new group, discuss the lesson plan and instructional decision-making. Collaborate to make revisions.

4. When your team is finished, turn in your completed lesson plan. All lesson plans will be compiled and duplicated for your use.

5. Please complete your personal action plan on the following page.
Additional Resources provided to the participants:


Session 3 Handout: ROBUST VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

At the conclusion of Session 3, participants were asked to anonymously complete a Mid-Year Questionnaire (Appendix B). This questionnaire was used to assess participants’ attitudes concerning explicit vocabulary instruction, their implementation of new learning, and the workshop’s format, relevance to their practice, and their implementation of explicit vocabulary instruction.

"Learning is what is left over after we forget what we were taught."

Albert Einstein

What is a Robust Approach to Vocabulary Instruction?

"A robust approach to vocabulary involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought-provoking, playful, and interactive follow-up" (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002, p. 2). It is vigorous, strong, and powerful in engaging students and is appropriate for students of all ages. These robust activities complement My Word Tools (Greenleaf & Medd, 2007) methodology.

Beck and McKeown (as cited in Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002), initiated Text Talk, a research and development project aimed at capturing the benefits of the sophisticated words found in books read aloud to young children. Text Talk had two main goals:

- Enhance comprehension through open-ended questions that asked students to consider the ideas of the story, talk about those ideas, and make connections among those ideas as the story progresses
- Enhance vocabulary development

Their research resulted in Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction (2002).
Robust Vocabulary Instructional Moves—Kindergarten and Primary Grades

Planning:

1. Generate a list of potential vocabulary words to focus on.
2. Select words needed for story comprehension during the read aloud.
3. Select up to four Tier 2 words.

During the lesson:

1. Read aloud the story, stopping briefly to explain selected words needed for story comprehension.
2. Contextualize the word. Repeat how the word was used in the story.
3. Ask the students to repeat the word so that they can create a phonological representation of the word. “Say the word with me.” “What’s the word we’re learning?” Point to word written on sentence strip or chart paper.
4. Provide a student-friendly definition and explain the word. De-contextualize the word by providing examples of the word beyond the context used in the story.
5. Direct students to interact with examples or generate their own examples.
6. Have children say the word again to reinforce its phonological representation. (What’s the word we’ve been talking about?)

Robust Vocabulary Instructional Moves—Intermediate and Upper Grades

Planning:

1. Generate a list of potential vocabulary words to focus on.
2. Select up to four Tier 2 words (you may want to include idiomatic phrase).

During the lesson:

1. Contextualize the word.
2. Explain the meaning in student-friendly terms
3. Direct students to say the word while you run your finger under the word
4. De-contextualize example beyond the context of the story. Students interact with more examples.
5. Students repeat the word again.
Robust Activities for Engaging Students in Dealing with Word Meanings

"Just providing information—rich, meaningful explanations—will not result in deep or sustained knowledge of a word. Multiple encounters over time are called for if the goal is more than a temporary surface-level understanding" (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002, p. 32).

The key to effective activities is to require students to attend to a word's meaning in context and then apply it meaningfully to an example situation. Get students actively involved with thinking about and using the meanings right away!

Word Associations

Have You Ever...?

Applause, Applause!

Idea Completions

Show Us

Questions, Reasons, and Examples
Making Choices

Word Wizard

Post and Tally

Relating Words

One Context for all Words

Using All the Words:

Resources provided to the participants:


Session 4 Handout: REVIEW AND PREPARATION FOR COLLEAGUE VISITS

During the second portion of the workshop, a Colleague Visit Observation Guide (Appendix C) was provided to each participant. This guide served as a recording tool, focused discussion guide, and evaluation of the process. An overhead of the Colleague Visit Observation Guide, coupled with role play, was used to demonstrate completion of the guide and an evidence-based discussion.

“How we talk about our students often reveals what we are focused on in our teaching.” Katherine Casey

Since Last Time: A Quick Review

The following are short video clips from the Iowa Department of Education’s Vocabulary: Overview, student-friendly explanations, and assessment (2006).

Vocabulary Instruction in a Comprehensive Reading Program

Dr. Nell K. Duke, Michigan State University

Vocabulary → READING → Textual Knowledge

World
Why Teach Vocabulary?
Dr. Isabel Beck, University of Pittsburgh

Teaching Specific Words: How to Choose Words
Dr. Isabel Beck, University of Pittsburgh

Co-Planning and Preparing for Reading Teacher Colleague Visits

"Get two colleagues together and listen to their ideas about priorities for this child and how they would achieve them. That exposes your assumptions to critical analysis. Keep in mind that the teacher at all times must decide the next most powerful strategic activity that could help this particular child to increase his processing of information in text."

(Clay, 2005, p. 43, Literacy Lessons, Part 1)

Between January 11 and February 15, 2008, ICCSD reading teachers and LARS will be participating in colleague visits.

The goal of our professional observations and collaborations is to enhance our own teaching and gain new perspectives on our students’ responses to instruction. Similar to the role of literacy coaches, the purpose of our colleague visits are as follows:

- collaborate and reflect on a challenging guided reading group,
- share our collective knowledge to promote student outcomes,
- strengthen our ability to make more effective use of new strategies, and
- support each other in implementing new research-based strategies.

Just as teachers support students working in their zone of proximal development (Clay, 2005), teachers can support each other as they move past their own comfort zone and into
their own zone of proximal development. Now is a great time to try My Word Tools or Robust Vocabulary activities from our professional development this year!

The focus is on student outcomes and needs and is not an evaluation of the teacher. Although note taking is often equated with evaluation, it is vital for the observing teacher to take notes so an evidence-based discussion can follow the lesson (Casey, 2006).

**Planning:**

Think about your guided reading groups. Is there one particular group that a colleague visit would be most beneficial? Which group is most challenging? Which group do you want feedback about implementation of a new strategy? Remember you will need to make arrangements so you have time to discuss what the observer will focus on during the lesson and then time to debrief after the lesson.

**Scheduling:**

Consider the needs and unique situations within your own building. Partner with another reading teacher to schedule a visit before February 15. If you are in a school with multiple reading teachers, it may be more convenient to plan your visits within your own building.

**Prepare:**

Meet today with your observing teacher to lay the groundwork for the visit. Begin planning the lesson by setting goals and how the observing teacher can support you as you work in your proximal zone.

**Maximize the Visitation Time:**

Use the observation guide to help you record your observations and wonderings, thoughts, or questions during the lesson.

**Debrief After the Lesson:**

Spend time discussing the observation and puzzling through your questions and wonderings. Keep the conversation focused on student responses, outcome, and the teacher’s decision-making process. What did you learn today about your students that will help you plan for future lessons? Brainstorm implications for each other’s teaching.

**Evaluate the Colleague Visit Process**

We will share our insights and reflections from these colleague visits on February 18. Here are some questions to consider:

- What did you take away from your colleague visit? What will you use in your teaching?
- How could this visitation process be improved?
- What do you have questions about?
- What more do you need for your learning?
Session 5: COLLEAGUE VISIT OBSERVATIONS

The goal of these colleague visits were to observe student response to explicit vocabulary instruction and the teacher's planning and decision-making processes. In addition, teachers could work together to puzzle out implementation concerns and suggest modifications based on student responses. Participants were granted release time to participate in one colleague visit during a six week period. Teachers were instructed to work in pairs or triads and schedule adequate time for travel, the planning conversation before the observation, the actual observation of an explicit vocabulary lesson, and the post-observation evidence based discussion.

Not all reading teachers and LARS participated fully in the colleague visits. Participants that did not teach guided reading groups, such as Reading Recovery® teachers, served only in the observer/coaching role and did not receive feedback on their own practice. During the reflective conversation during Session #6, participants' comments were overwhelming positive and reflected a desire to continue colleague visits next year. Teachers shared stories about implementing suggestions generated through their evidenced based discussions. One teacher brought a series writing artifacts that demonstrated student progress related to her implementation of My Word Tools. Several participants felt pressured by time constraints related to travel and difficulty in rearranging their teaching schedules.
Session 6 Handout: WORD CONSCIOUSNESS

Quick Write:

Take the next five minutes for a quick write about your thoughts, feelings, and reflections on your colleague visit experience. What did you take away from your colleague visit? What will you use in your teaching? How could this visitation process be improved? What do you have questions about? What more do you need for your own learning? Be prepared to share information about your colleague visit experience.

“Word consciousness—and especially understanding the power of word choice—is essential for sustained vocabulary growth.”

Judith Scott & William Nagy

Word Consciousness

Word consciousness is an awareness of words, an interest in words, and word meanings (Graves, 2006). A long-term goal of vocabulary instruction is to help students develop a deep appreciation of words and value the power of words. Graves (2006) reports all students are capable of developing word consciousness regardless of age or reading level.

Students who are word conscious demonstrate the following characteristics:

- know many words well
- enjoy investigating word origins and histories
- demonstrate an interest in words
- enjoy using words well
- find words intriguing
- enjoy seeing or hearing others use words well
- searches for new and precise words
- are aware of the power of words
- use words skillfully
- recognize and appreciates skillful word usage
- realize that word choice can lend clarity and understanding or create confusion
- are curious about language
- like to play with words

"A huge step toward fostering word consciousness comes from simply recognizing that we want to make students consciously aware of words and their importance."


What can teachers do to foster word consciousness in students?

- Develop a word-rich environment
  - classroom filled with word resources,
  - word games,
  - Scrabble,
  - crossword puzzles,
  - joke books, poetry,
  - word walls,
  - Dictionaries, etc.

- Practice adept diction by modeling the skillful use of words in speech and writing
  - draw attention to skillful use of words in books,
  - word of the day,
  - encourage students to expand their range and precision of word choices in their work, etc.

- Model the use of precise words
  - during classroom conversations,
  - Writer’s Workshop conferences, etc

- Engage students in recognizing skillful diction in texts
  - search for colorful phrases or words,
  - activities such as Word Wizard (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002) where students earn points for reporting their sightings of target words,
  - group discussion about an author’s use of language,
  - develop a “word hunter” role in literature circles, etc.

- Motivating students to extend their word learning outside of the classroom

- Raising awareness of how words are categorized and relationships among words
  - antonyms,
  - synonyms,
  - homographs,
  - connotations,
  - figures of speech,
  - sensory webs,
  - categorized words by instructional topics, etc.
Vocabulary 55

- Engage in word play
  - manipulation of meanings, arrangements, sounds, and spellings,
  - reading books using word play
  - vocabulary parade, etc.

- Research word origins and histories

"The teacher who is alert to opportunities for using sophisticated, interesting, and precise language is probably the most important element in a word-rich environment."


Lesson Models to Promote Word Consciousness

Working in small groups, you will be randomly assigned a lesson model from Diamond & Gutlohn's (2006) Vocabulary Handbook. Collaborate with your group on how to creatively and/or interactively present the lesson plan information to the large group. AV equipment and teaching supplies are available for your presentation.

Animal Idioms:

Latin & Greek Number Words:

Antonym Scales:

Web Word Web:
Five Senses Simile Web:

Poetry as Word Play:

Vocabulary Hotshot Notebook:

Resources Provided to the Participants:


Internet Resources Provided to Participants:

Between the Lions: Word Play http://pbskids.org/lions/games/wordplay.html
Word Spy http://www.wordspy.com
Words and Word Play http://thinks.com/words/
Quia Game—Homograph http://thinks.com/words/
Idiom Site http://www.idiomsite.com/
Word Origins http://www.wordorigins.org/
Session 7 Handout: PICTURE WORD INDUCTIVE MODEL

“Our journey into teaching and language literacy never ends.”

Emily F. Calhoun

Picture Word Inductive Model

What?

The Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) is “an inquiry-oriented language arts strategy that uses pictures containing familiar objects and actions to elicit words from children’s listening and speaking vocabularies” (Calhoun, 1999, p. 21). According to Calhoun (1999), the purpose of PWIM is to build students’ vocabulary and writing abilities while capitalizing on students’ ability to think inductively. Students are presented with a picture of a familiar scene or photograph of everyday items. Words are “shaken out” of the picture by identifying objects, actions, and qualities they recognize. These words are recorded with lines connecting the word to the picture.

Who?

It is generally used in K-6 classrooms, but the methodology is adaptable to small groups, pairs, or individuals. PWIM lessons range from 15 – 35 minutes in length. A unit lasts over a series of days.

Why?

Calhoun (1999) lists the following advantages and strengths of PWIM:

- Students hear words pronounced correctly many times.
- Picture word chart serves as an immediate reference.
- Students add sight words to their reading vocabulary.
- Students hear and participate in spelling words correctly.
- In writing sentences, grammatically correct structure is introduced and reinforced.
- Punctuation and mechanics are introduced, explained, and reinforced.
- Students increase their item knowledge and vocabulary.
- Students make connections between their oral language and written words.
- Teachers promote and build word consciousness.
How?

Basic Steps of the Picture Word Inductive Model

1. Select a picture.

2. Ask students to identify what they see in the picture.

3. Label the picture parts identified by the students.

4. Read and review the picture word chart

5. Ask students to read the words and to classify the words into a variety of groups.

6. Read and review the picture word chart again.

7. Add words to chart and word banks.

8. Assist students with creating a title for the picture word chart.

9. Ask students to generate a sentence, sentences, or a paragraph about the picture word chart depending on grade level. Classify sentences. Model putting the sentences into a paragraph structure.

10. Read and review the sentences and paragraphs.
The pumpkin is on the vine.
(Tara)

We see many things up in the air. We see trees with leaves, poles with flags, and the sun too. We also see roofs with chimneys. The houses have electricity that comes from the electricity boxes that are on the poles. The boxes give power to the lights on the poles too. The lights make shadows just like the sun does. We can see the shadows from the flags on the poles on the ground. The shadows come from the sun in the sky. The sky is blue today as we play at the playground. We love playing on sunny days!
Give 1 to Get 1  
Picture Word Inductive Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One thing I already knew about PWIM...</th>
<th>I still wonder about...</th>
<th>I want to be sure to remember...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One question I have about PWIM is...</td>
<td>An interesting thought I have about PWIM is...</td>
<td>One thing I think Emily Calhoun wants me to believe or think is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think one way I can make PWIM successful for me is to...</td>
<td>I’m concerned about this aspect of PWIM...</td>
<td>Here’s how I plan to share this information with classroom teachers at my school...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources Provided to Participants:**

Session 8 Handout: ASSESSMENT OF VOCABULARY

Near the conclusion of this session, participants were asked to anonymously complete the End-of-Year Questionnaire (Appendix D) and the Vocabulary Questionnaire Spring 2008 (Appendix E). These questionnaires were used to assess any changes in teacher beliefs, practices, and attitudes. Participants were asked to privately place completed questionnaires in a box near the exit.

"The first reason that vocabulary instruction often fails to produce measurable gains in reading comprehension is that much of the instruction does not produce a sufficient depth of word knowledge."

- W. E. Nagy

Assessment of Vocabulary

Educators need ways of assessing students' vocabulary knowledge to help plan effective instruction and inform their teaching. According to Biemiller (2004), the difficulty in assessing vocabulary achievement may be one reason why vocabulary instruction receives so little attention in the primary grades.

Five Aspects of Complexity

"Vocabulary knowledge is complex (Collins Block & Mangieri, 2006, p. 167). Nagy and Scott (2004) report five aspects of complexity that have implications for instruction and assessment of students' vocabulary knowledge. They are:

1. **Incrementality**: Word learning occurs over time. Consider the different continuums of knowing (refer to your 09/27/07 professional development materials).

   ![Incrementality Continuum Diagram]

   - Unknown knowledge
   - Partial knowledge
   - Complete

   - Receptive: Understands word in print
   - Expressive: Uses word in own speech and writing

   Mahurt, S. F., Powerpoint® presentation RRCI 2007
2. **Polysemy:** Words have multiple meanings. Context clues are used by the reader to determine the specific meaning of a word with multiple meanings.

3. **Multidimensionality:** There are three different kinds of word learning tasks:
   - learning new words for familiar concepts
   - learning unknown words for known concepts
   - learning new words for new concepts

   Vocabulary learning follows four stages according to Dale’s (1965) description of the extent of word knowledge. They are as follows:
   - Stage 1: Never saw it before.
   - Stage 2: Heard it, but doesn’t know what it means.
   - Stage 3: Recognizes it in context as having something to do with…
   - Stage 4: Knows it well.

4. **Interrelatedness:** Interrelatedness refers to the process of linking the target word to familiar words and concepts, parts of speech (noun, verb, etc.), and developing word associations (*baseball*: *homerun*, *pitcher*, *diamond*).

5. **Heterogeneity:** “The kind of word to be learned is important in defining what it means to know that word. There is a difference between learning the meaning of high-frequency function words such as *the*, *that*, and *if* and learning the meaning of a word like *circumference*” (Block & Mangieri, 2006, p. 168). This idea has important implications for assessment since knowing the definition of a word does not assume the student truly knows the word.
Evaluative Categories

Block and Mangieri (2006) recommend words students should know at specific grade levels are probably best determined by the demands of the curriculum and the classroom. They offer four evaluative categories to help assess all word-meaning clues and vocabulary building strategies:

1. Student’s knowledge of lists of high-utility words
2. Student’s knowledge of words they encounter in conversations or in specific content areas
3. Student’s knowledge of the meanings of word parts and structures
4. Student’s knowledge of root words and word etymology

General Principles of Assessing Vocabulary

The reason for assessing will determine the type of assessment that should be used. Clear goals and purposes should be set before choosing or developing the assessment tool.

1. Norm-referenced standardized assessments:

2. Criterion-referenced tests:

3. Authentic Measures:

Formal Assessments

Most formal assessments of vocabulary are norm-referenced, group-administered survey tests, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, and are usually timed. They allow for comparison of students to other students across the state and nation. Other formal assessments of vocabulary are administered individually by reading specialists, speech therapists, child psychologists, and other education specialists.

Six limitations of formal assessments:
1. Many formal assessments do not measure the depth of word knowledge (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).
2. If the assessment requires the reading of a passage and completion of a multiple choice answer, the teacher has no way of knowing if the error reflected a problem with vocabulary, decoding, comprehension, or a combination of all three (Block & Mangieri, 2006).
3. Some students may not be able to finish the test in the allotted time.
4. Vocabulary words on the tests may not be a representative sample of the words the student knows.
5. Norm-referenced tests do not provide the diagnostic information that will inform teaching decisions or help implement an effective vocabulary program for individual students (Block & Mangieri, 2006).
6. Some norm-referenced tests require special training for administering and interpreting, and they can be time consuming to administer.

Informal Assessments

When designing or choosing assessment tools, the teacher should think about the goal and purpose of assessment as well as the range of difficulty required by the task and how the tasks probe for depth of word knowledge and student application of word learning strategies. This range of assessment enables teachers to differentiate or adjust instructional decision making.

Authentic Measures

- Informal interviews and observations
- Checklists or rubrics
- Instructional strategies as assessment tools:
  - Self-evaluation tasks: My Word Tools uses a self-assessment rating tool before and after explicit instruction.

Different Formats for Informal Testing

Block & Mangieri (2006) offer many different formats for informal testing and assessing depth of word knowledge. They are as follows:

Contextual
Students use context clues to identify words. Context clues are best used to determine the meaning of high-utility words. Cautions: Some text does not provide enough context clues for students with limited knowledge of the topic.

Multiple Choice:
Applied Definition

According to Block & Mangieri (2006), assessments that have students apply definitional knowledge are important and yield important information about students’ depth of word knowledge. Students must move beyond simply memorizing the definition and make inferences, synthesize, analyze, and/or evaluate depending on the task.

Retell:

Synonyms:

Examples/Non-examples:

Drawing/Dramatization:

Combination of Contextual and Definitional Tasks

Definitions:

Morphological

Morphological Identification:

Morphological Closure:
Categorical/Relational

Analogy:

Graphic Organizers/Semantic Webs:

Oddity:

Brainstorming:

Three-Minute Pause

- Summarize with your partner the information that was discussed.

- Tell your partner what was most interesting about the information shared.

- Identify anything that is confusing and try to clear it up or prepare a question to ask the group.
Vocabulary Acquisition Projects

As a final outcome to this year's professional development, reading teachers will collaborate to design parent participation activities and/or teacher education materials that are focused on vocabulary and improving student outcomes. Our Title I parent compact emphasizes the importance of parent involvement in their child's education.

"Meetings are planned to inform and educate parents about reading strategies, engage parents and their child in working cooperatively on reading and writing activities and provide materials for parents to use at home to help their child develop reading and writing skills" (ICCSD Reading Teacher Handbook, 2007, p. 24).

These projects will be shared during our final reading teacher meeting on June 4, 2008. Teachers are asked to provide copies of their projects for distribution so every reading teacher will then have several prepared educational tools for next year.

Be creative and think about what would benefit students, other teachers in your building, and you! What are your interests? What type of project would deepen your understanding of vocabulary? What would be most beneficial to your parents and students? What are the needs in your building? Look back through your binder to jog your memory. You may wish to partner or form small groups according to areas of interest.

Possible projects:

- Organize plans for professional development on how to build word consciousness for classroom teachers
- Design and write monthly parent education newsletters on how to help build academic vocabulary at home
- Plans for a literacy night using word games and tips on vocabulary
- Develop different bulletin boards highlighting vocabulary
- Develop a book study for teachers that includes an outline for chosen book, group norms, and timeline
Presentation Reminders:

- If you need AV equipment to present your project at our last meeting, please let me know at least one week in advance.
- In order to distribute copies of your project, please bring at least 30 copies to share. Also please include names of all group members on your documents and cite any references you used.

Resources Provided to Participants:


Session 9: VOCABULARY ACQUISITION PROJECTS AND PRESENTATIONS

During the final workshop session, participants shared and celebrated their vocabulary acquisition projects using a presentation format. These projects represented a synthesis of participants’ learning and provided practical and useful materials to enhance participants’ professional practice. A total of 12 collaborative projects were presented. Each participant was provided with project information and copies of materials and games. Participants also shared electronic versions of newsletters, parent education materials, lesson plans, and building level staff development plans. At the conclusion, each participant was presented with a certificate of attendance (Appendix F) for their professional portfolio.
Results

The focus of this results section is on the participants' response to the sessions. All workshop sessions were well attended. Thirty-three teachers participated in at least one workshop session. Thirty-three percent attended all workshop sessions, and 70 percent attended 7 of 8 workshops. In order to include teacher responses in the project, an Institutional Review Board application was filed with the University of Northern Iowa (Appendix H).

Before the first workshop, an open ended Vocabulary Questionnaire Fall 2007 (Appendix A) was distributed to all elementary reading teachers and LARS in the district. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously and return it in the self-addressed envelope via campus mail. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather teacher feedback in order to plan and design the workshop series. Eighteen responses were received. These responses were used to assess background knowledge, teacher beliefs and practices, personal goals, concerns, and teacher perceptions of what hinders or facilitates his or her ability to address vocabulary in his or her daily lessons. After the ninth session, the same open ended questionnaire (Appendix E) was re-administered to all participants to assess changes in their beliefs, practices, personal goals, and teacher perceptions. Eleven completed questionnaires were returned. The majority of responses reflected an overall deeper understanding of vocabulary acquisition and explicit vocabulary instructional methods. This was demonstrated through the participants' word choices and comments used to describe their beliefs and practices. For example, one teacher replied she now focuses on teaching tier two words that were generative. Ninety-one percent of the participants indicated they achieved their personal goal for
professional development. All participants listed “time” as the greatest hindrance to addressing vocabulary in their daily teaching. Participant comments reflected several time issues.

- inadequate planning time,
- lesson times were too short to include all guided reading components,
- explicit vocabulary protocols take too long,
- entire process was too time consuming, and
- not enough time for necessary repetition.

A second questionnaire using a Likert scale format was also used to assess change over time in the reading teachers’ attitudes concerning explicit vocabulary instruction, their implementation of new learning, and the workshops’ format, relevance to their practice, and their implementation of explicit vocabulary instruction. Participants responded to the questionnaires following the third and eighth workshops. Twenty-two responses from the Mid-Year Questionnaire (Appendix B) were compared to the sixteen responses from the End-of-Year Questionnaire (Appendix D). To analyze the Likert-scaled data, participants’ responses were transformed to a five-point scale in the following manner:

Strongly agree was scored a 5,
Agree was scored a 4,
Neither agree or disagree was scored a 3,
Disagree was scored a 2, and
Strongly disagree was scored a 1.
Following the transformation of participants' responses to the questionnaire, mean scores for each statement were calculated for both the Mid-Year Questionnaire and the End-of-Year Questionnaire. In both the Mid-Year and End-of-Year Questionnaires, participants chose either strongly agreed or agreed to most statements. Mean scores by item for both questionnaires are reported in Table Two. The greatest improvement in mean scores occurred with item number six. This improvement reflected the direct value of the detailed workshop materials on the teachers' ability to lesson plan for explicit vocabulary instruction. Item eight demonstrates the majority of the participants utilized at least one of the collaborative My Word Tools lesson plans and indicates at least one method of explicit vocabulary instruction was implemented during guided reading groups. This feedback validated the interactive presentation format, value of material presented, impact on teacher practice, alignment with Iowa Teaching Standards (Iowa Department of Education, 2002), and focus on improved student outcomes.

All six professional development goals were achieved. Over all, participants responded favorably on all 13 items indicating the professional development items were relevant to their professional development needs. Items four and eight demonstrated the profound influence of the colleague visits on their ability to implement at least one explicit vocabulary method in their classroom.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mid-Year</th>
<th>End-of-Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel the sessions are beneficial to my teaching practice.</td>
<td>M 4.77</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel I am more aware of teaching opportunities to expand my students’ academic vocabulary.</td>
<td>M 4.82</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.39</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel better prepared to plan vocabulary lessons using Tier 2 words.</td>
<td>M 4.77</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have implemented at least one new vocabulary method in my classroom this fall.</td>
<td>M 3.81</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think the information presented was directly applicable to my teaching practice.</td>
<td>M 4.62</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I used the session handouts to help plan my instruction.</td>
<td>M 3.64</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I liked the interactive and collaborative group activities.</td>
<td>M 4.36</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I have used at least one of the collaborative My Word Tables lesson plans.</td>
<td>M 3.29</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.81</td>
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</table>
The professional development sessions were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mid-Year</th>
<th>End-of-Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Aligned with the Iowa Teaching Standards.</td>
<td>M 4.82</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.39</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Focused on research-based strategies</td>
<td>M 4.91</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.29</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Based on the professional development needs</td>
<td>M 4.86</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of reading teachers.</td>
<td>SD 0.35</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Focused on improved student outcomes.</td>
<td>M 4.86</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.35</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Included, theory, demonstration, collaboration, and reflection.</td>
<td>M 4.82</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.39</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

I gained several insights during the process of developing this project both as a staff development facilitator and as a reading teacher. First, I developed a deeper understanding of vocabulary acquisition and how to explicitly teach vocabulary. I believe I am a better reading teacher as a result. During the past year, I implemented the My Word Tools protocol, used many Robust Vocabulary activities, and focused on teaching generative Tier 2 words. As a reading teacher, I found it difficult to budget time for explicit vocabulary instruction; however, my students demonstrated positive outcomes by their increased word knowledge demonstrated through their writing and retelling.

Secondly, I learned how important it is to keep professional development sessions interactive, collaborative, and relevant to the participants’ needs. It was important to set group norms, establish a purpose, and set clear goals and expectations for the year. Through the collaborative activities, small and large group discussions, and questionnaires, the workshops kept teachers highly involved and active in their own learning. Teachers built a shared, common background of knowledge that helped elevate the level of their discussions and raised expectations for future professional development plans. The colleague visits allowed participants time to implement at least one explicit vocabulary protocol and receive valuable feedback based on their students’ response to instruction.

Lastly, I gained insights on how to use the Iowa Professional Development Model (Iowa Department of Education, 2005) to effectively plan a sequence of workshops. Putting the model into practice gave me valuable leadership experience and challenged me to constantly reflect and refine my vision while maintaining a laser-like focus on a
single initiative. It was important to monitor participant verbal and non-verbal feedback, keep the material relevant and useful to all participants, adjust my pacing, and convey that I valued their time and input.
Recommendations

I recommend providing a review session at the beginning of the next school year. It will be important to provide a brief overview of learning to refresh and regenerate enthusiasm for explicit vocabulary instruction. Since all participants cited a lack of time as a major hindrance, it will be important to emphasize why all teachers must budget time for daily explicit vocabulary instruction.

Secondly, I recommend providing this workshop series to all district teachers. I believe all elementary, special education, and secondary teachers would benefit from this professional development. Through greater awareness of the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction, more teachers would implement daily explicit vocabulary instruction in their lessons. In turn, I believe our district standardized test scores would demonstrate a true increase in student achievement.
References


Teaching Assignment: Mark all that apply.

___Full-time ___Part-time ___Reading Recovery ___Small group ___Other

I teach English Language Learners: ____yes ____no

Do you feel like you have opportunities to address vocabulary in your daily teaching? If yes, as you reflect on your daily teaching opportunities, describe typical activities you use related to vocabulary.

Describe what hinders or facilitates your opportunities to address vocabulary in your daily teaching.

Regarding vocabulary instruction, what do you feel is the most appropriate age(s) to teach vocabulary?

When do you feel is the best time to teach specific vocabulary words during a lesson? Is there a sequence of instruction you prefer?

Describe how you decide which words to teach.
Briefly describe your understanding of how children acquire new vocabulary.

What are your personal goals for this year's professional development (focus on vocabulary instruction)?

Additional questions or areas of concern you want to share.

Please send completed questionnaire via campus mail to: Ann Langenfeld at Grant Wood Elementary by Friday, September 14. Thank you!
Teaching Assignment: Mark all that apply.

___ Full-time ___ Part-time ___ Reading Recovery ___ Small group ___ Other

I teach English Language Learners: ___ yes ___ no

Please reflect on the three professional development sessions presented this fall. Presentation topics included Vocabulary: Theory, Research, and Word Choice, My Word Tools, and Beck’s Robust Vocabulary Instruction. Thank you for your feedback!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Since participating in these professional development sessions, ...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel the sessions are beneficial to my teaching practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I am more aware of teaching opportunities to expand my students' academic vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel better prepared to plan vocabulary lessons using Tier Two words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have implemented at least one new vocabulary method in my classroom this fall.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the information presented was directly applicable to my teaching practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used the session handouts to help plan my instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the interactive and collaborative group activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have used at least one of the collaborative My Word Tools lesson plans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The professional development sessions were:

- Aligned with the Iowa Teaching Standards.
- Focused on research-based strategies.
- Based on the professional development needs of reading teachers.
- Focused on improved student outcomes.
- Included theory, demonstration, collaboration, and reflection.

Please provide additional comments that will help me understand your thoughts:
### Colleague Visit Observation Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Teacher:</th>
<th>Visiting Teacher:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; Time of Visit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Group Information:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Observation: What should I look for? Lesson goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations:</td>
<td>Wonderings/Thoughts/Questions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence-Based Discussion After the Lesson:

Keep the conversation focused on student responses, outcome, and the teacher’s decision-making process. Brainstorm implications for each other’s teaching. What’s next for this group of students? What did you learn today about your students that will help you plan for future lessons?

Evaluate the process:

- What did you take away from your colleague visit? What will you use in your teaching?

- How could this visitation process be improved?

- What do you have questions about?

- What more do you need for your learning?
Appendix D

**ICCSD Reading Teacher**

**End-of-Year Questionnaire Spring, 2008**

Teaching Assignment: Mark all that apply.

___Full-time___Part-time___Reading Recovery___Small group___Other

I teach English Language Learners: ___yes___no

Please reflect on the seven professional development sessions presented this year. Presentation topics included Vocabulary: Theory, Research, and Word Choice, My Word Tools, and Beck’s Robust Vocabulary Instruction, Colleague Visits, Vocabulary Instruction in a Comprehensive Program, Word Consciousness, PWIM, and Vocabulary Assessment. Thank you for your feedback!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Since participating in these professional development sessions, ...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used at least one of the collaborative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Word Tools lesson plans.

The professional development sessions were:

- Aligned with the Iowa Teaching Standards.
- Focused on research-based strategies.
- Based on the professional development needs of reading teachers.
- Focused on improved student outcomes.
- Included theory, demonstration, collaboration, and reflection.

Please provide additional comments that will help me understand your thoughts:
Appendix E

ICCSD Reading Teacher

Vocabulary Questionnaire Spring, 2008

Teaching Assignment: Mark all that apply.

___Full-time ___Part-time ___Reading Recovery ___Small group ___Other

I teach English Language Learners: ___yes ___no

Do you feel like you have opportunities to address vocabulary in your daily teaching? If yes, as you reflect on your daily teaching opportunities, describe typical activities you use related to vocabulary.

Describe what hinders or facilitates your opportunities to address vocabulary in your daily teaching.

Regarding vocabulary instruction, what do you feel is the most appropriate age(s) to teach vocabulary?

When do you feel is the best time to teach specific vocabulary words during a lesson? Is there a sequence of instruction you prefer?

Describe how you decide which words to teach.
Briefly describe your understanding of how children acquire new vocabulary.

What were your personal goals for this year's professional development (focus on vocabulary instruction)? Did you achieve them?

Additional questions or areas of concern you want to share.

Thank you!
Community School District
Certificate of Attendance

is hereby granted to:

Ann Langenfeld

For participation in 2007-08 Reading Teacher
district professional development workshops

"Vocabulary Acquisition" Series
11.75 hours of participation
September 27, 2007 through June 4, 2008

Carmen Dixon, Evaluator License #3
Hi, Ann, thanks for writing. I'm sorry for the delayed response, I've been out of town and unusually busy when home, which has led to my being absurdly behind on email.

As long as your uses are not-for-profit, I am happy to give you permission to use the comic as you described. If that is not the case, let me know and we can discuss further.

Thanks again,
Dan

If you're not reading my daily blog, you're missing HALF THE FUN! Cartoons, art, photos, comments, stories and MORE!

http://bizarrocomic.blogspot.com/

On Jul 25, 2008, at 5:35 PM, Tom & Ann Langenfeld wrote:

Dear Mr. Piraro:

I am a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa and a big fan of yours. My main area of study revolves around literacy education and vocabulary acquisition. I would like to use and cite your September 7, 2007, Bizarro cartoon in one workshop handout and also cite it in my master's paper. This particular cartoon depicts a little boy that is confused by the multiple meanings of "play date".

Thank you for your consideration,

Ann Langenfeld

57 Charles Dr

Iowa City, IA 52245

langenfeld@mchsi.com
A Personal Action Plan focuses on goal setting. Reflect on today's *My Word Tools* professional development presentation and lesson planning. Next, take the next few minutes to complete a Personal Action Plan.

What is an important learning, strategy, or idea you want to use? Be specific!

When and how will you use your new learning, strategy, or idea? Be specific!

What support will you need to help you apply your learning, strategy, or idea?

What criteria will you use to determine if the learning, strategy, or idea you implemented is making a difference in your teaching?
Ann Langenfeld
57 Charles Drive
Iowa City, IA 52245

Re: IRB 08-0113

Dear Ms. Langenfeld:

Your study, Staff Development: Meeting Academic Needs Through Explicit Vocabulary Instruction, has been approved by the UNI IRB effective 11/10/08, following a review performed by IRB member, William Clohesy, Ph.D. You may begin enrolling participants in your project.

Modifications: If you need to make changes to your study procedures, samples, or sites, you must request approval of the change before continuing with the research. Changes requiring approval are those that may increase the social, emotional, physical, legal, or privacy risks to participants. Your request may be sent by mail or email to the IRB Administrator.

Problems and Adverse Events: If during the study you observe any problems or events pertaining to participation in your study that are serious and unexpected (e.g., you did not include them in your IRB materials as a potential risk), you must report this to the IRB within 10 days. Examples include unexpected injury or emotional stress, missteps in the consent documentation, or breaches of confidentiality. You may send this information by mail or email to the IRB Administrator.

Expiration Date: Your study is Exempt from continuing review.

Closure: Your study is Exempt from standard reporting and you do not need to submit a Project Closure form.

Forms: Information and all IRB forms are available online at www.uni.edu/osp/research/IRBforms.htm.

If you have any questions about Human Participants Review policies or procedures, please contact me at 319.273.6144 or at anita.kleppe@uni.edu. Best wishes for your project success.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Anita Gordan Kleppe, MSW
IRB Administrator

cc: Deborah Tidwell, Advisor