

Common Core Vocabulary Instruction

The following materials are based on: *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (2002) by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan, Guilford Press.

- They suggest that a student's vocabulary should increase by 2,000-3,000 words a year and advise doing so through "robust vocabulary instruction."
- The key features of robust vocabulary instruction are:
 - Selection of Tier 2 words (words used by mature language users that students do not usually include in their everyday conversation and writing).
 - Introduction of a set of 5-7 Tier 2 words each week with student-friendly definitions
 - Daily analytic activities that engage and support students in thinking about and using the words in a variety of formats and contexts
 - End-of-week assessment
 - Maintenance activities
- Vocabulary should be taught both **indirectly** and **directly**.
- **Indirect Instruction:**
 - Wide reading in a variety of texts
 - The more students read, the more words they learn; multiple exposures and encounters with words are necessary.
 - Listening to Teacher Read Alouds
 - Discussing and teaching new word meanings (*Text Talk*)
 - Clarify the context. Use the context of the story to introduce the word.
 - Pronounce the word. Write the word on the board. Then, facing the students, pronounce it, enunciating the sounds clearly. Then say: "Let's say the word together." Provide another opportunity for students to say the word by asking: "What's the word?" For ELLs, write the word on the board, dividing it into syllables and placing a stress mark, such as a dot, over the stressed or accented syllable.
 - Give a student-friendly explanation. Student-friendly explanations use comprehensible, accessible language. Student-friendly explanations help students make connections between the new word and their prior knowledge.
 - Provide different contexts. The teacher uses the word in other contexts than the story.
 - Actively engage students in activities using the word. Examples of active vocabulary engagement include:

- **Active Engagement Activity 1:** Provide a sentence starter so students have to think about a new word in an expanded context. This can lead to a, “Turn and tell your partner...”
 - **Active Engagement Activity 2:** Provide several scenarios or situations that include the vocabulary word. Ask students to respond with thumbs up/down, yeas/boos, or response cards to indicate whether a stated situation is an example of the word.
 - Pronounce the word again. Students need to practice saying words over and over to reinforce their phonological properties and meanings:
- Fostering word consciousness
 - Inviting students to become curious about words through approaches such as word walls and word graveyards
 - Word Wizard Notebook
 - Students write down their vocabulary words each week by providing their own “child-friendly” definitions, a “4 or more” sentence for each word, and any artistic representation or connection.
 - Artistically Representing the Words
 - Students choose a word each week to artistically represent and put up on Word Wizard Wall (divided by parts of speech)
 - Reward students for using Word Wizard Words in oral and written language
- **Direct Instruction:**
 - Teaching Tier 2 Words
 - Characterize the word
 - Explain the meaning in everyday life
 - Engage in analytic activities/exercises
 - Analyzing Word Structure (Prefix-Root-Suffix)
 - Teach students to use their knowledge of word parts to determine an unknown word
 - Draw students’ attention to meaningful units of the word (morphemes)
 - Using Context clues
 - “Dictionary” Usage
- **What kinds of words are most important to teach?**
 - They believe in dividing up words into a three-tiered system, with teachers chiefly addressing Tier Two.

- **Tier One** (Basic words, well known, often used)
- **Tier Two** (High frequency words used by mature language users across several content areas)
- **Tier Three** (Low-frequency words, often limited to specific content areas)
 - Tier Three vocabulary words play a critical role in understanding expository texts and content-area subject matter (e.g., chronological, denominator, habitat).
 - Tier Three words are not used as frequently as Tier Two words and have specialized meanings related to a specific subject, domain, or topic.
 - Understanding the meanings of these words is crucial if students are to understand, learn, and remember content or related information from textbooks and other reading materials.
- Criteria for Identifying Possible Words to Study:
 - How generally useful is the word?
 - Is it a word that students are likely to encounter in other texts?
 - Will it be of use to students in describing their own experiences?
 - Is it a word that students do not know, completely and accurately?
 - 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?
 - 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 in which it is used?
 - What role does the word play in relation to the mood and plot of a story?
- **Levels of Word Knowledge (What does it mean to know a word?)**
 - Level One: Do not know the word
 - Level Two: Have seen or heard the word
 - Level Three: Know something about it, can relate it to a situation
 - Level Four: Know it well, can explain and use it

Analyzing Word Structure

- The bulk of Vocabulary Standards are now included in the Language Strand of the Common Core Standards. Greek and Latin affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and roots are key components of five of the grade level Standards. Interestingly, the CCSS vocabulary Standards dealing with Greek and Latin affixes and roots begin at 4th Grade and end at 8th Grade.
- **Common Core Greek and Latinates**
- **L.4.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.**
 - Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *telegraph*, *photograph*, *autograph*).
- **Why is it important to study Greek and Latin word parts?**
 - Over 60% of the words students will encounter in school textbooks have recognizable word parts; and many of these Latin and Greek roots (Nagy, Anderson, Schommer, Scott, & Stallman, 1989).
 - Latin and Greek prefixes, roots, and suffixes have predictable spelling patterns. (Rasinski & Padak, 2001; Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnston, 2000).
 - Content area vocabulary is largely Greek and Latin-based and research supports this instruction, especially for struggling readers (Harmon, Hedrick & Wood, 2005).
 - Many words from Greek and Latin word parts are included in “Tier Two” and “Tier Three” word that Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) have found to be essential to vocabulary word study.
 - Knowing Greek and Latin word parts helps students recognize and gain clues to understanding of other words that use known affixes and roots (Nagy & Scott, 2000).
 - “One Latin or Greek root or affix (word pattern) aids understanding (as well as decoding and encoding) of 20 or more English words.”
 - Only 20 prefixes account for 97 percent of prefixed words that appear in printed school English (Graves, 2004; Stahl, 1999).
 - “Since Spanish is also a Latin-based language, Latin (and Greek) can be used as a bridge to help Spanish speaking students use knowledge of their native language to learn English.”
 - Learning Greek and Latin affixes and roots may help reduce the literacy gap.