Getting Vocabulary to Stick

Using Essential Words to Build Content Knowledge

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Advancing Improvement in Education (AIE) Conference
Who Are We?

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The Middle School Matters Story

George W. Bush Institute education reform initiative

Institute of Education Sciences research study
Our Focus

PD practices & instructional materials based on high-quality research

Teacher perspectives and professional wisdom

PD that works for middle schools

READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS
What It’s All About

research
practice
Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Learn the research base for explicit vocabulary instruction
- Receive an overview of the Essential Words strategy
- Develop a sample lesson
- Leave ready to share the strategy with your colleagues
According to Research...

- Vocabulary is highly correlated with what other component of reading?
- What percent of instructional time is typically devoted to vocabulary instruction?
- How many exposures to words do students need to fully learn their meanings?
- What does vocabulary instruction typically look like in classrooms?
According to Research…

- Vocabulary is highly correlated with **reading comprehension** – as high as .8 and correlations increase as students get older (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Torgesen & Wagner, 2006; Torgesen et al., 1997).

- **5% to 10%** of instructional time is typically devoted to vocabulary (Durkin, 1978/79; Roser & Juel, 1982; Scott, Jamieson, Noel & Asslin, 2003).

- Researchers estimate it could take **as many as 17 exposures** for a student to learn a new word (Ausubel & Youssef, 1965).
What Does Vocabulary Instruction Typically Look Like?

- Copying vocabulary definitions from textbook glossary = 18.3% of class time in 8th grade Social Studies classrooms (Swanson, Wanzek, Vaughn, Fall, Roberts, Hall, & Miller, 2017)

- Definitions, context clues (Watt, 1995)

- Rarely observed (Watt, 1995):
  - Multiple exposures
  - Activation of prior knowledge
  - Strategies for independent word learning

REFLECT:
- How does this compare to your campus/district?
- How would you like to see vocabulary taught?
The Essential Words Routine

Teachers *pre-teach* the meanings of *important* words using a
(1) simple graphic organizer and
(2) instructional routine

- Research-based (really!)
- Strategy Guide developed with teachers
Why is the Essential Words Routine Effective?

- Explicit
- Brisk pace
- Careful word selection
- Engaging
- Immediate student practice
- Activates background knowledge
- Used across content areas
How Do We Know its Effective?

- Part of teacher-directed explicit instruction, which research indicates has an influence on vocabulary acquisition (e.g., Elleman et al., 2009; Harmon et al., 2005)

- RCTs with three cohorts of students who received social studies instruction instruction with a vocabulary map/explicit vocabulary routine outperformed students receiving typical instruction on measures of vocabulary. (STRIVE Project: https://www.meadowscenter.org/projects/detail/strategies-for-reading-information-and-vocabulary-effectively-strive)
Let's Try It
Moofing

- Mobile Out of Office-ing
- Away from the office but in touch via cellphone and email

Synonyms: multitasking, working on-the-go

Example Sentences
1. Moofing has been made possible by technology such as smartphones and tablets.
2. Many professionals feel that moofing has changed their work-life balance.

Turn and Talk
1. When you are at a conference, do you engage in moofing? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of moofing.
What Did You Notice?

- What did the teacher do?
- What do the students do?
How is it Done?

How is it done?

**Step 1:** Teachers select the most essential words students need to know for the unit or the passage they are about to read.

**Step 2:** Teachers prepare a graphic organizer, called a “vocabulary map,” for each word.

**Step 3:** Teachers show the vocabulary map to students and use it as a guide to present important information about each word.

**perspective (perspectiva)**
A way of looking at things or thinking about something; “walking in someone else’s shoes”

Synonyms:
point of view, interpretation, opinion

**Example Sentences**
1. Max’s perspective on going to the swim party changed when he found out that his friends weren’t going.
2. The Diary of Anne Frank describes what it was like during World War II from the perspective of a 13-year-old Jewish girl living in the Netherlands.

**Turn and Talk**
1. Tell your partner one way that you have a different perspective from someone in your family.
2. How do you think Anne Frank’s perspective of World War II is different from a soldier’s perspective?

https://gomethmiddleschool.org/loc/lib/reading/vocabulary-maps/
Why Is It Helpful?

- Activates students’ background knowledge to increase comprehension
- Prepares students for learning new information
- Provides the Velcro that allows new information to stick
The word (+ cognate/translation)

student-friendly definition

Synonyms:
words that students are likely to know already

picture: the simpler, the better!

Example Sentences
1. Simple sentence containing the targeted word.
2. An excerpt from the text you’re reading that contains the word.

Turn and Talk
1. A question to spark students’ discussion that is something relatable to their prior knowledge or experience
2. A question to spark discussion that relates the word to your course content

https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/
Student Expectations

Students:
- Track the teacher
- Respond to prompts
- Participate in Turn and Talks

Students do **NOT**:
- Take notes
- Guess at the definition
- Make their own vocabulary maps
And after that...? (The Big Picture)

- Students read their text (or engage in another learning activity)
- Students use what you’ve already taught them to help them learn
- Students engage in additional opportunities to practice these essential words

**REMEMBER:**

- Essential Words Routine is ONLY used to PRETEACH important vocabulary before reading/learning!
- It is a BEFORE READING activity.
IMPLEMENTATION
Digital Materials

- Essential Words Strategy Guide
- Blank vocabulary template
- Notes page
- Google Image search tips

[greatmiddleschools.org/words]
Step 1: Select Words

Ask yourself:
- What is most important for my students to learn?
- What are the main learning objectives for this unit or passage?
Selecting Words

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING WORDS

Words to Choose
- Essential to understanding the main idea of the text or unit
- Used repeatedly or frequently encountered
- Not part of students’ prior knowledge

Words NOT to Choose
- Concepts NOT central to the text or unit
- Proper nouns or Latin names
- Specific to a certain situation or topic (e.g., discussed only once in the unit)

Examples
- tyranny
- conflict
- tactic
- equation
- inequality
- conserve
- mutate

Non-examples
- any proper noun
- excommunicate
- mercenary
- onomatopoeia
- coordinate plane
- allele
- autotroph
## Sample Words

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<th>Math</th>
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<td>tactic</td>
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How Many Words Should I Pick?

- Single reading passage = 2 or 3 words
- Entire unit = up to 5 words

You know your students best, so adjust accordingly!
Step 2: Develop Vocabulary Maps

Tools available

- GreatMiddleSchools.org/words
  - Template
  - Instructions for finding images

TIP: Divide and conquer!
A Note on Visuals

- The simpler the better
- Search and copyright issues—see handout
- Try synonyms
**compassion (compasión)**

Showing great care or concern

**Synonyms:**
tenderness, sympathy

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**Example Sentences**

1. The Red Cross workers showed great compassion toward the people of Haiti after the earthquake struck by providing food and shelter to many homeless people.

2. Mahatma Gandhi is known throughout the world for his compassion, dedication to peace, and commitment to nonviolence.

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**Turn and Talk**

1. Tell your partner about a time you showed compassion toward others.

2. Why do you think that Gandhi is known for his compassion?

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https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/
Step 3: Deliver Instruction

- Display the vocabulary map and deliver instruction one word at a time.
- Students:
  - Should NOT take notes
  - Should track the teacher
  - Respond to prompts and show understanding during turn-and-talks.
- Teach with a brisk pace (3-5 minutes per word).
Set the Purpose for Instruction

Today I am going to teach you some important words before we read this chapter in our novel.

Today I am going to teach you some important words and concepts for our unit on the American Revolution.

When preteaching essential words before reading a text

When preteaching essential words before starting a new unit
Turn-and-Talks

HOW TO STRUCTURE TURN-AND-TALK ACTIVITIES

1. Provide a prompt for students to discuss. It should be relatable for students so that they can draw on their prior knowledge or life experience.

   Example: Brainstorm some words that would provide imagery to your reader if you were describing your favorite food.

2. Have students turn to their partner and discuss the prompt (10 to 20 seconds). Monitor students’ conversations to check for understanding.

3. Select students to share thoughts and ideas from their discussion with the whole group (30 seconds).

4. Repeat steps 1 to 3 with a second prompt that sparks discussion related to your course content.

   Example: How does the narrator probably feel, and how do you know?
In Closing

- This is just the first step!
- Provide additional practice opportunities—See Strategy Guide
  - Warm Ups
  - Frayer Model
  - Writing Prompts
- Greatmiddleschools.org/words