

Robust Vocabulary Instruction

by Dr. David W. Moore

Instruction that helps middle grades students develop broad and deep vocabulary knowledge is crucial for their literate, academic, and occupational success. For striving readers and students who are learning English, such instruction is imperative (Cummins, 2003; Nation, 2001; Torgeson et al., 2007). According to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010):

To be college and career ready in language, students must have extensive vocabularies, built through reading and study, enabling them to comprehend complex texts and engage in purposeful writing about and conversations around content. They need to become skilled in determining or clarifying the meaning of words and phrases they encounter, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies to aid them. (p. 51)

Research in promoting middle grades English learners and striving readers' vocabularies (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006; Graves, August, & Mancilla-Martinez, 2013; Harmon, Wood, & Medina, 2009; Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012; Lesaux, Kieffer, Fuller, & Kelley, 2010) indicate that effective instruction includes four components.

Rich and Varied Language Experiences

Most word learning occurs through meaningful oral language and wide reading of diverse materials (National Reading Panel, 2000). The oral language that young children hear and participate in at home is their major source of word learning. Once children begin school, the ways in which they use language to interact with teachers and classmates become especially important contributors to vocabulary growth. Teachers increase this growth when they support students' oral language centered about academic purposes, structures, and terminology.

Rich oral language experiences are essential to students' vocabulary growth; however, as students move through school, reading becomes a principal source of new words (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Indeed, some researchers consider the amount of reading that students do to be the most powerful influence on their vocabulary development (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). When students read a

range of print materials—trade books, textbooks, reference sources, periodicals, web sites, and multimedia presentations—they gain access to the meanings of unfamiliar words along with information about how familiar words are used in different ways in different contexts.

To make new words their own, students benefit from frequent and varied activities that allow them to use the words as they read, write, speak, and listen (Marzano, 2004). Engaging students in collaborative content-rich tasks, regularly prompting them to elaborate their ideas, and supporting their efforts are all rich language experiences associated with vocabulary growth.

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Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides informative nonfiction and fiction selections that present new words through a range of oral and written language experiences. The selections shed light on many fascinating topics and are grouped in topical units so that students encounter ideas and information that relate to and build on each other. The selections also grow in difficulty, which allows students to encounter words in a logical sequence. Instructive videos introduce the selections, embedding the new words and

concepts in stunning displays. Instruction related to the selections and videos leads students to interact with the materials meaningfully throughout each unit.

Direct Teaching of Specific Words

Complementing rich and varied language experiences with the direct teaching of specific words is important. Direct teaching of specific words helps students develop in-depth knowledge (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008; Graves, 2009). Such instruction is especially valuable for students who do not read or understand English well enough to acquire vocabulary through reading and listening alone.

Directly teaching specific words well requires choosing particular words for instruction, then bringing them to life in ways that allow students to gain permanent ownership of them. It means explaining word meanings so that students form connections with what they already know, detecting relationships as well as distinctions among known words. It means modeling correct usage of the words and providing numerous opportunities for students to see and use the words in active meaningful contexts.

Key Vocabulary The program directly teaches specific words before each major reading selection. Key Vocabulary are words that are essential to understanding a unit concept, central to comprehension of a selection, valuable for students in classroom discussions, and highly useful for future academic studies. Directly teaching these words helps students unlock meanings of both the words and of related words they will encounter in the future.

Introductions to each word follow a consistent pattern that calls for students to assess their knowledge of the word, pronounce and spell it, study its meaning, and connect it to known words. Student friendly definitions, striking photographs, and explanatory links between each definition and photograph accompany every key word.

Academic Vocabulary Along with Key Vocabulary, *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* focuses on academic vocabulary, words such as *function* and *transform* that make up the distinctive language of school (Coxhead, 2000; Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Academic terminology typically is bundled together more densely in the materials students read inside school than outside of school, and it typically is more abstract. Despite differences between academic and general vocabulary, shared principles of instruction apply to both. For instance, students benefit from rich and varied language experiences along with direct and meaningful teaching of academic as well as general vocabulary.

Vocabulary Routines Throughout the *Inside* units, instructional routines offer extended opportunities to engage students in word study. Routines lead students to gain control of specific words through actions such as graphically organizing them, comparing them with synonyms and antonyms, and using them orally and in writing. Students connect the words to their lives and to the selections' and

units' topics. Twelve vocabulary routines are featured in the Teacher Editions and used throughout the levels. Regular use of these routines helps students internalize the habits of thinking about, exploring, and connecting words. Additionally, students' knowledge of the words directly taught is assessed regularly throughout the program to inform instructional decisions.

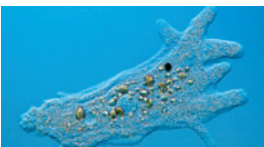



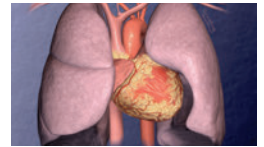

Instruction in Word-Learning Strategies

Proficient readers apply independent strategies to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). As the CCSS make clear, college and career ready students independently determine the meanings of unfamiliar words through contextual analysis, morphemic analysis, and the use of specialized reference materials.

Contextual Analysis Analyzing the context of an unfamiliar word to clarify its meaning involves actively using the text and illustrations that surround the word (Baumann, Edwards, Boland, & Font, 2012; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Proficient readers use contextual analysis when they determine that they do not know a word (e.g., "I don't understand *hitched* in 'They got hitched.'"). They then look back in the selection, rereading for clues to the word's meaning they might have missed, and they look forward, reading on for new information that might help. They search the surrounding words for particular types of clues, such as definitions, examples, and restatements that clarify word meanings. They adjust their rates of reading, slowing down or speeding up, to find clarifying information.

Morphemic Analysis Analyzing an unfamiliar word's morphemes, its meaningful parts such as prefixes, bases, roots, and suffixes, plays a valuable role in word learning (Bowers, Kirby, Deacon, 2010; Carlisle, 2010). Proficient readers use morphemic analysis by first noting an unfamiliar word's use in context ("Distances among the stars are just *incredible!*"). They break the word into parts (*in + cred + ible*) and assign meaning to each part (*in* = not, *cred* = believe, *ible* = can be done). Then they combine the word-part meanings ("cannot be believed") and see if this combination makes sense in the selection.

Proficient readers also use morphemic analysis to identify words that are derived from a common base word (e.g., *night* as in midnight, nightly, night-shirt) or root (e.g., *cred* as in credit, credible, credence) to determine word meanings. Second-language learners who are proficient readers in their first language use morphemic analysis to identify morphemes in words that have first-language cognates in English (e.g., English-Spanish pairs: continent/continente, history/historia) (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Key Words		
<p>cell (sel) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>A cell is the smallest working part of a living thing. People are made up of millions of cells. Related Word: cellular</p>	<p>circulate (sur-kū-lāt) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 279</p>  <p>When something circulates, it moves along a path that returns to the place it started. Blood circulates throughout your body. Related Words: circle, circuit</p>	<p>examine (ig-zam-un) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>When you examine something, you look at it very closely. A doctor examines you to make sure you are healthy. Related Words: examination, exam</p>
<p>involve (in-vahlv) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 276</p>  <p>To be involved means to be part of something. A team involves people working together. Related Words: include, involve</p>	<p>organ (or-gun) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>An organ is a body part that has a certain job to do. Your heart and lungs are important organs.</p>	<p>oxygen (ahk-si-jun) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 276</p>  <p>Oxygen is the air we breathe. We use extra oxygen to exercise.</p>

Striking photographs, student friendly definitions, and links between each photograph and the definition accompany every word.

Specialized Reference Materials Information about words and their meanings is available in numerous references. Students can consult print and digital dictionaries, glossaries, and thesauruses; personal productivity software and knowledgeable people are other possible references. Students who meet an unfamiliar word that is difficult to figure out through its context or morphemes do well to look it up in a word meaning reference and confirm its proper meaning.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content teaches multiple aspects of independent word-learning strategies. Each unit begins with a Focus on Vocabulary section that explicitly teaches a word-learning strategy and how to use it. The strategy is then carried through the unit in a scaffolded instructional plan. In each selection teachers first model the strategy explicitly, guide students in using it, then provide opportunities for students to apply the strategy on their own.

Fostering Word Consciousness

Students who are conscious of words habitually examine their meanings and uses (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Scott & Nagy, 2004). In line with the CCSS, these students interpret figurative language, analyze word choice, and note word relationships.

Figurative Language Students who interpret figurative language make sense of word meanings that go beyond literal definitions. They understand figures of speech such as allusions (*self evident truths*), idioms (*make ends meet*), metaphors (*Life is a rollercoaster.*), and personification (*The wind screamed.*). Students interpret such figurative language in context, and they grasp its role in shaping the meanings of texts.

Word Choice Analyzing word choice involves nuances in words' literal meanings. For example, students notice how particular words' connotations (*steady, monotonous*) affect texts' messages. They appreciate particularly striking word usage (*Parting is such sweet sorrow*). They realize that technical words in different disciplines often convey different meanings (*positive electrical charge, positive emotional appeal*). In general, they follow the impact of a text's specific wording on its cumulative meaning and tone.

Word Relationships Word relationships are meaningful connections among words that students can use to understand and remember each word. To

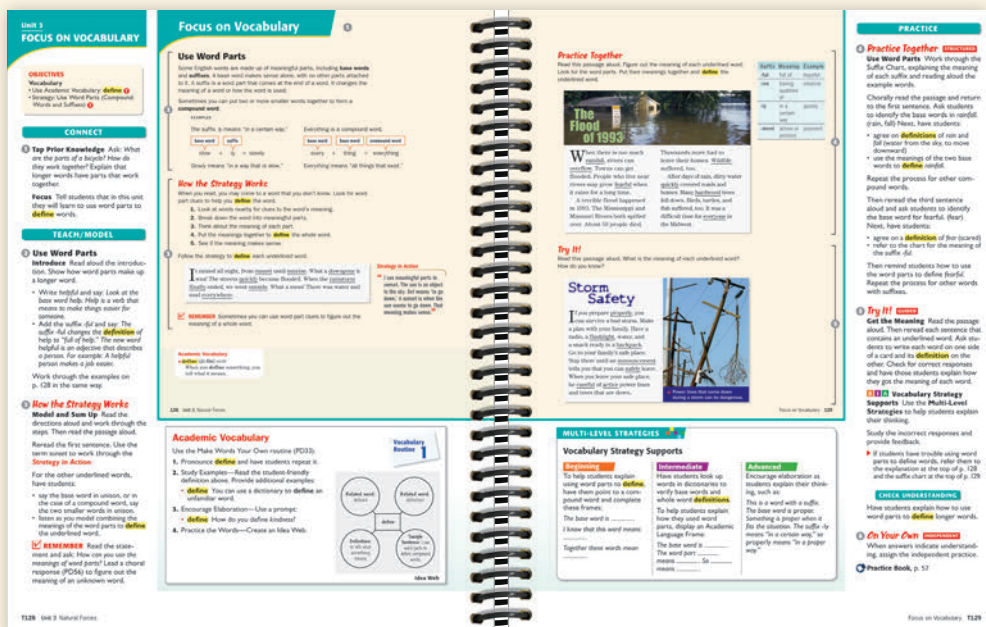
cement their word knowledge, students draw on relationships such as antonyms (*remember, forget*), examples (*empire, Roman*), semantic family members (*nature, natural*), and synonyms (*shy, bashful*). They also make use of terminology that signals such relationships in texts (*including, similarly*).

Students are encouraged throughout **Inside Language, Literacy, and Content** to explore and become excited about words, to notice their shades of meaning, and to use them with increasing skill. Structured discussions of authors' word choices regularly draw attention to figurative and connotative word meanings and guide students' judgments about how well certain words fit particular contexts. Inquiries guided by Guiding Questions (*How do decisions affect your identity? How can one individual make a difference?*) focus students on the ways different authors refine the meanings of significant terms. Vocabulary routines involving notebooks, study cards, word maps, and word sorts highlight word relationships.

Students also are encouraged to respect and value the word knowledge they bring with them from outside school. They are led to connect new word meanings with what they already know. Literature selections include many examples of young people valuing their linguistic heritages. All of these instructional supports help striving readers and English learners develop their awareness of and interest in words.

Conclusion

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content's vocabulary instruction consists of interactive components that support one another. Engaging middle school English learners and striving readers in rich and varied language experiences, direct teaching of specific words, instruction in independent word learning strategies, and word consciousness encouragement lead to them becoming college and career ready.



Each unit begins with a Focus on Vocabulary that explicitly teaches how to use a word-learning strategy.