



New York State Education Department  
Office of Special Education  
**Educational Partnership**





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# Best Practices in Explicit Vocabulary Instruction



Developed by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Academics



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# Today's Facilitators

Name

# Best Practice in Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

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## Introduction & Objectives



# Learning Expectations (In Person)

## BE RESPONSIBLE

Make yourself comfortable

Take care of your needs (water, food, restroom, etc.)

Action plan to implement what you are learning

Follow through on your action items

## BE RESPECTFUL

Turn cell phones off or to vibrate

Listen attentively while others are speaking

Have only the training materials up on your computer/table/phone

## BE ENGAGED

Ask what you need to know to understand and contribute

Contribute to the group by sharing relevant information and ideas

# Introductions



NAME



ROLE



DISTRICT



SCHOOL



POPULATION  
SERVED



# Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities



## Self-Advocacy

Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.



## Family Partnership

Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.



## Specially-Designed Instruction

Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.



## Research-Based Instruction

Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.



## Multi-tiered Support

Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.



## Inclusive Activities

Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.



## Transition Support

Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.



# Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to explain the importance of robust vocabulary instruction for students in the elementary grades.

Participants will understand how explicit instruction can be applied to vocabulary instruction.

Participants will be able to describe key features of vocabulary instruction and identify ways to incorporate vocabulary instruction into different parts of the school day.

# Best Practice in Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

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## Introduction and Key Terms



# Definition

Vocabulary

"Vocabulary refers to the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication."

**Defining**

**Key**

**Terms**

**Activity**

**Receptive Vocabulary**

**Productive/Expressive  
Vocabulary**

# Vocabulary

## Receptive Vocabulary

Words we recognize.

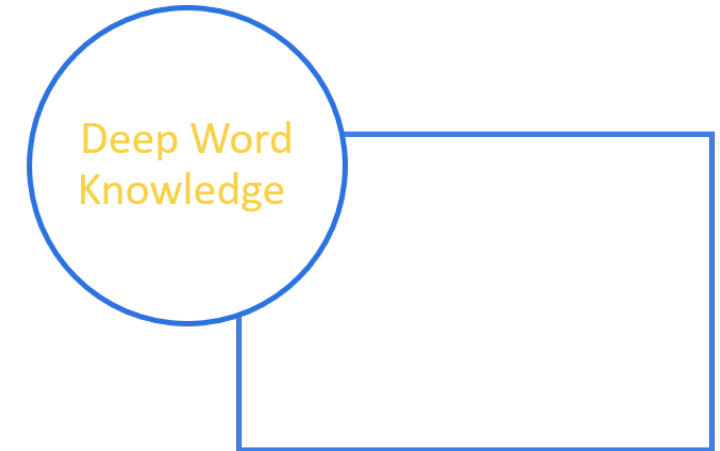
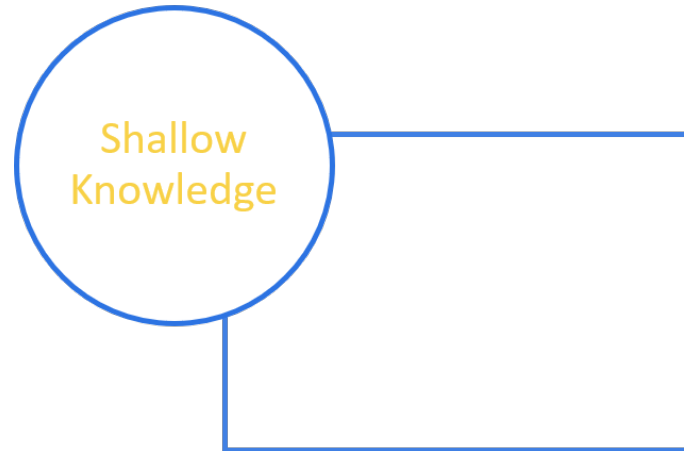
## Productive/Expressive Vocabulary

Words we use.

# Why Teach Vocabulary Explicitly?

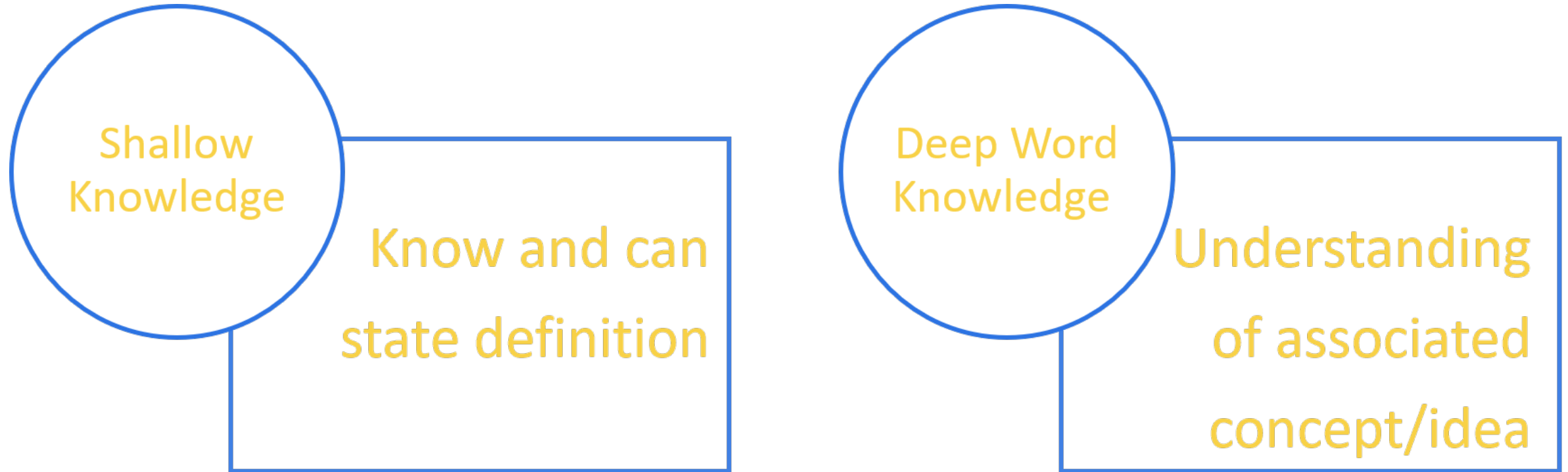
- A student's breadth and depth of vocabulary is strongly linked to critical student outcomes, including:
  - Reading Fluency and Prosody
  - Reading Comprehension
  - Writing Production and Sophistication
  - The most vulnerable students fall the most behind in their vocabulary development, often to a stunning degree. To close the gap, such instruction must be persistent, occur early, and be infused across areas.

# Levels of Vocabulary Knowledge Activity





# Levels of Vocabulary Knowledge

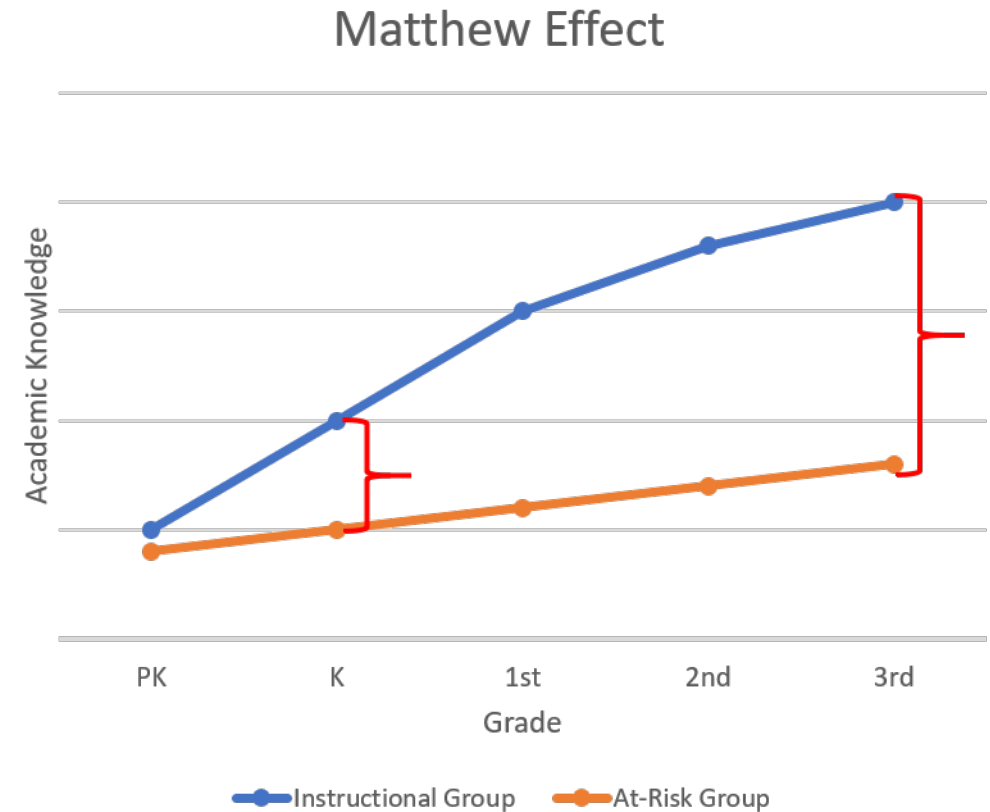


# Continuum of Word Knowledge



# When Should Vocabulary Instruction Occur

- Vocabulary gaps have been demonstrated to occur in children as young as three years old.
- Exposure to large amounts of unknown words typically begins midway through first grade, when there already is a big difference between students.
- To close the gap, vocabulary instruction is needed from Pre-K onward!



# Best Practice in Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

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Engaging in Instruction



**Refresh -  
Defining  
Explicit  
Instruction  
Activity**

Who: ?

What: ?

When: ?

Where: ?

Why: ?

# Explicit Defining Explicit Instruction

**Who:**

- Diverse students across all grade levels
- Frequently an important component of Specially Designed Instruction for students with disabilities

**What:**

- An evidence-based instructional model developed over the course of over 50 years of research and implementation.

**When:**

- Teaching both academic and non-academic subjects

**Where:**

- General and Special Education classrooms

**Why:**

- Supported by a substantial body of empirical research

# Defining Explicit Instruction

- **structured, systematic, unambiguous** and **scaffolded** (Archer & Hughes, 2011).
- based upon the Direct Instruction model developed by Siegfried Engelmen and Wesley Becker in the 1960's.
- an important component component of Response to Intervention (RTI) instruction (Fien et al., 2015) across all tiers.
- identified as a “High-Leverage Practice” in special education by the Council for Exceptional Children (McLeskey et al., 2017)
- included in Institute of Education Science (IES) Practice Guides (Gersten et al., 2009; Kamile et al., 2008)



# Components of Explicit Instruction

1. Break down complex skills
2. Help students attend to key features of the content
3. Promote engagement and systematically fade support
4. Provide opportunities to respond and give feedback
5. Allow for practice opportunities

# How Should Vocabulary Instruction Occur?

*“We need both teachable moments and planned, systematic instruction to ensure long-term reading performance.”*

*(Neuman & Roskos, 2012)*

- Teachable Moments vs. Planned Instruction
- Age-appropriate methods
- Repetition and multiple opportunities for exposure are key

# Selecting Words for Instruction

Unknown Words

Important Words for Understanding Content

Reappearing Words

Difficult-to-Learn Words.

# Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary - I

- Words can be sorted into one of three categories of instruction:
- Tier 1: Common conversational words that do not need to be taught.
- Tier 2: Unknown words that are closely related to or are synonyms of known words.
- Tier 3: Infrequent content specific words.

# Reactions to Word Selection Activity

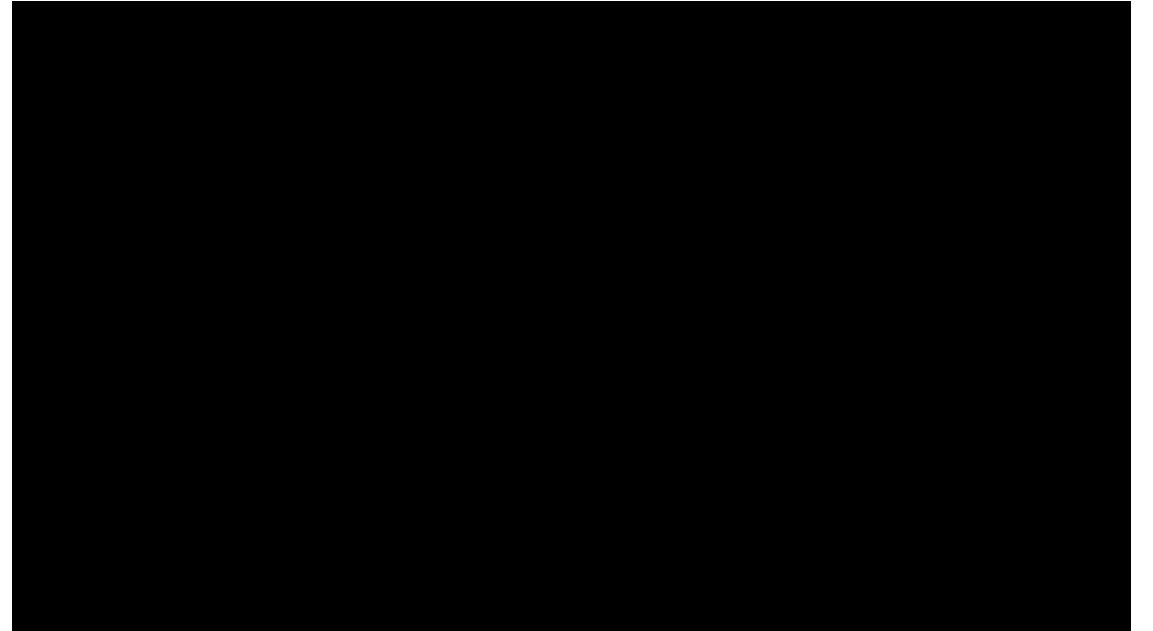
How have you typically  
selected words for  
vocabulary instruction?

# Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary - II

- Planned v. Incidental Instruction
  - **Planned** – Words specified to be introduced in the lesson plan, often in alignment with the curriculum.
  - **Incidental** – Using opportunities that present themselves in instructional activities to introduce or reinforce Tier II/III words.

# Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary - III

1. State the meaning of the word in a student-friendly manner
2. Provide examples that clearly illustrate the meaning of the word
3. Have students generate examples and engage in relevant activities
4. Allow for multiple opportunities to respond and provide feedback





# Vocabulary Instruction: Steps

1. Review the word in context

2. Provide a student-friendly explanation

3. Have students say the word aloud

4. Provide examples

5. Have students generate examples

6. Review the words taught during the lesson

**Reflecting  
on Explicit  
Instruction  
Activity - I**

I'll model first.

The word is “sneaky.”

**Reflecting  
on Explicit  
Instruction  
Activity - II**

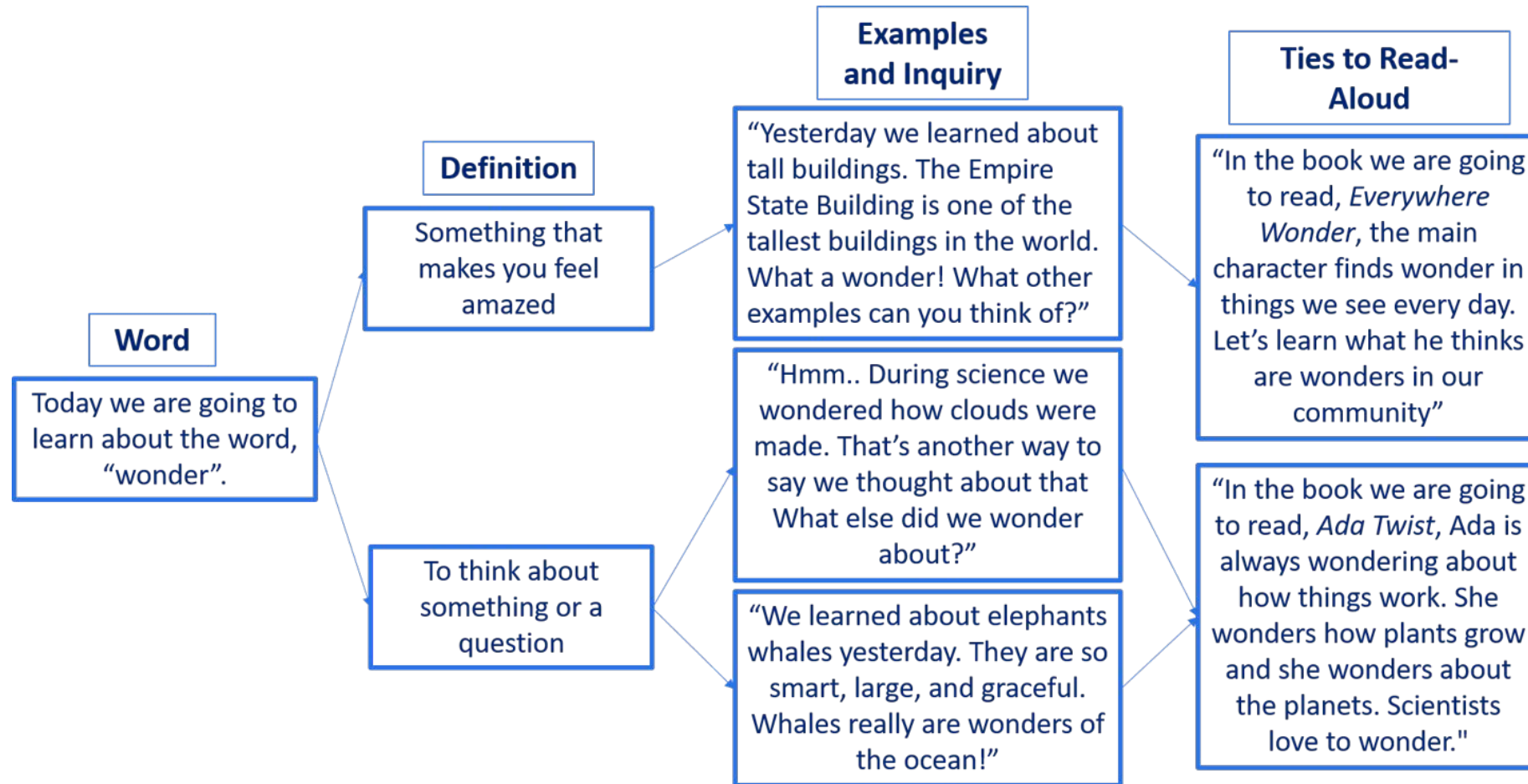
Now let's model one together!

The word is “primary.”

# Reflecting on Explicit Instruction Activity - III

1. The word is “wonder” – a Tier II word.
2. Write down a definition of this word.
3. Write down two grade-level (1st) examples of how this word could be used.
4. What two brief activities could you implement to emphasize various uses of the word “wonder”?
5. What books might be used to emphasize these definitions?

# Reflecting on Explicit Instruction IV



# Break

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# How many words at a time?

Recommendations vary in number

Within one week, teach 6 to 10 words

Within one lesson, it is recommended to introduce 3 to 5 words

# Vocabulary Instruction: Initial Steps

## DO

Start with the word in context.

Provide a student-friendly explanation

## DO NOT

Ask students: “What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean?”

Rely on dictionary definitions



# Student-Friendly Explanations

- ✓ Capture the meaning based on common uses of the word
- ✓ Use words that students know in your explanation

Example: "Strange describes something different from what you are used to seeing or hearing."

**“Student-Friendly”**

**Explanations**

What is a student-friendly explanation for “exhausted”?

What is a student-friendly explanation for “amusing”?

**“Student-Friendly”**

**Question**

**Answers**

“Exhausted means feeling so tired that you can hardly move.”

“When people are amusing, they are usually funny or they make you happy to watch them.”

# Provide and Generate Examples

- ✓ Use items, places, and contexts that are familiar to students

- ✓ Ask students to think about their own experiences

Example: When was a time that you felt exhausted?

Encourage students to say the word when responding

# Best Practice in Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

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## Reinforcing Initial Instruction



# Activities Following Initial Instruction - I

## Word associations

- Which word goes with undercover? (covert)
- Which word comes to mind when you hear the word magic? (illusion)

## Have students explain whether a sentence makes sense.

- Sally, a novice soccer player, started playing two weeks ago.
- Sally, a novice soccer player, has been playing for many years.

## Ask how, when or why questions.

- If you were a novice soccer player, you would need to practice. Why?
- How would you act if you were being cautious? Why?

# Activities Following Initial Instruction - II

## Say a sentence with a word missing.

- The paint color gave the \_\_\_\_\_ that the room was much smaller than it actually was. (illusion)

## “Have you ever...?”

- Talk about a time that you felt exhausted.
- Describe a time when you had to be cautious.

## Sentence starters.

- In order to be cautious when I crossed the street, I...
- I felt inspired when...

# Vocabulary Instruction: Long-term Retention

- ✓ Plan for repeated exposure and repeated use of words
- ✓ Keep track of the words you have taught
- ✓ Pick out words to revisit throughout the year
- ✓ Be aware of how words may be used in or applied to new texts
- ✓ Consider how words can be incorporated into writing assignments



# Vocabulary Instruction: Generalization

- ✓ Provide examples that vary in context

Example: I gave my dog a command to sit.

Example: The student listened to the teacher's command and began working.

- ✓ Encourage students to look for ways they can use their new words throughout the day at school and at home

Example: When walking by artwork in the hallway, you can make a comment using a vocabulary word: "That painting is remarkable!"

# Integrating Vocabulary Instruction into the Curriculum



**Integrating  
Vocabulary  
Instruction  
into the  
Curriculum**

Identify one key point made by Dr. Curtis in the video.

Can you think of a past lesson that did not go as planned due to students' unknown lack of Tier 2 word knowledge?

# Integrating Vocabulary Instruction into the Curriculum

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## Planning Your Instruction



# Lesson Plan: Word Selection

Take out the book you brought with you.

Review the guidelines for selecting words.

Read through the book and select 2 to 3 words for instruction.

# Lesson Plan: Student Friendly Explanations - 1

For each word, determine how you can explain the word to your students.

Remember to use words that are familiar to your students in your explanation.

# Lesson Plan: Examples

Develop 2 to 3 examples you can provide to show how to use each word.

Identify 2 to 3 questions or statements that will prompt students to generate their own examples for each word.

# Lesson Plan: Activities

Identify two ways you can review each word in the following days.

Refer to the list of potential activities included in your handout as needed.



# Assessment Methods

Ask students to provide or identify a definition

Ask students to generate examples

Multiple choice and true-false question formats are often used

Ask questions with a yes/no answer format

Encourage students to explain why they chose a specific answer

# Summary

Vocabulary is an important part of reading and academic success.

Students benefit when vocabulary words are explicitly taught.

Use student-friendly explanations when introducing words.

Teachers should provide multiple exposures to vocabulary words. How many depends on the learner!



# Ticket Out the Door

What is one way you will modify your vocabulary instruction based on the content you learned today?

Name one way you can select words for vocabulary instruction.

# Contact Us



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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
*Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity*



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