NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

LEARNING

This document is provided by
National Geographic Learning / Cengage

NGL.Cengage.com/School | **888-915-3276**

Robust Vocabulary Instruction

by Dr. David W. Moore

INSTRUCTION THAT HELPS students develop the kind of broad and deep vocabulary knowledge they must have to achieve reading and academic success is important for all middle school students. For striving readers and for students who are learning English, it is essential (Carlo et al., 2004; Cummins, 2003; Cunningham & Moore, 1993).

Analyses of more than two decades of research (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; Baumann & Kame'enui, 2004; Graves, 2006; Nation, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen et al., 2007) indicate that to be most effective in promoting students' vocabulary growth, instruction must include four key components.

1. Rich and Varied Language Experiences

Most word learning occurs incidentally through experiences with rich oral language and wide reading of varied materials (National Reading Panel, 2000).

For young children, quite naturally, the oral language that they hear and participate in at home is the major source of word learning. Once children begin school, the teacher talk they hear and the ways in which they are encouraged to use language to interact with teachers and classmates throughout the day become especially important contributors to vocabulary growth (e.g., Dickinson & Smith, 1994). When teachers use oral language that includes academic language structures and content-related words to talk with students, they contribute to this growth (e.g., Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004).

Rich oral language experiences are essential to students' vocabulary growth. However, as students move through school, it is reading that becomes the principal source

> **"A wide range of vocabulary activities and routines . . . involve students in content-rich collaborative tasks."**

of vocabulary knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Indeed, some researchers consider the amount of reading that students do to be the most powerful influence on their vocabulary development (e.g., Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Stahl, 1999). When students read a range of print materials—trade books, textbooks, reference sources, periodicals, web sites, and multimedia presentations—they gain access both to the meanings of unfamiliar words and information about how familiar words are used in different ways in different contexts.

To make new words "their own," students benefit greatly from frequent and varied activities that allow them to use the words as they speak, read, and write (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 that are associated with vocabulary growth.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides informative nonfiction and fiction selections that present key vocabulary 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 teacher and the materials meaningfully and repeatedly throughout each unit.

A wide range of vocabulary activities and routines that involve students in content-rich collaborative tasks are included in *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*. Routines encourage students to elaborate ideas and extend their use of words in ways that lead to consistent vocabulary growth.

2. Direct Teaching of Specific Words

Although instruction that includes rich and varied language experiences leads to vocabulary growth for many students, it is not the most effective way to teach meanings of specific key words that students need to gain full comprehension of a selection or concept. Direct teaching helps students to develop in-depth knowledge of these words (e.g., Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). Such instruction is especially valuable for students who do not read or understand English well enough to acquire words through reading and listening alone.
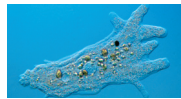
To teach specific words directly requires carefully choosing the words for instruction, then bringing them to life in ways that allow students to gain permanent ownership of them. It means explaining word meanings so that students form connections with what they already know, detecting relationships as well as distinctions among known words. It means providing models of the correct usage of the words and repeated practice with variety that allows students to see and use new words across multiple contexts.

Key Vocabulary *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* directly teaches specific words in its reading selections. Key Vocabulary, words that are essential to understanding a unit concept, appear before each reading selection. Key Vocabulary words are central to comprehension of the selection; they are also words that have personal value for students in classroom discussions and have high utility for future academic growth. Direct teaching of these words helps students to unlock meanings of both the words and of related words they will encounter in upcoming selections. Student friendly definitions and corresponding photographs accompany every key word.

Introductions to the words follow a consistent routine that calls for students to assess their knowledge of a word, pronounce and spell it, study its meaning, and connect the word to known words.

Academic Vocabulary Along with key words, the program also focuses on the direct teaching of **academic vocabulary**, words such as *sequence* and *transform*, that make up the distinctive language of school (Hyland & Tse, 2007).

Vocabulary Routines Throughout the units, instructional 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 are used repetitively throughout the levels. Repetitive use of these routines helps students internalize the habits of thinking about, exploring, and connecting words. Students' mastery of Key Vocabulary and Academic Vocabulary is also assessed regularly throughout the program.

Key Words

cell (sel) *noun* ▶ page 273

A **cell** is the smallest working part of a living thing. People are made up of millions of **cells**. *Related Word:* **cellular**

circulate (sur-kū-lāt) *verb* ▶ page 279

When something **circulates**, it moves along a path that returns to the place it started. Blood **circulates** throughout your body. *Related Words:* **circle, circuit**

examine (ig-zam-un) *verb* ▶ page 273

When you **examine** something, you look at it very closely. A doctor **examines** you to make sure you are healthy. *Related Words:* **examination, exam**

involve (in-vahlv) *verb* ▶ page 276

To be **involved** means to be part of something. A team **involves** people working together.

organ (or-gun) *noun* ▶ page 273

An **organ** is a body part that has a certain job to do. Your heart and lungs are important **organs**.

oxygen (ahk-si-jun) *noun* ▶ page 276

Oxygen is the air we breathe. We use extra **oxygen** to exercise.

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

3. Instruction in Independent Word-Learning Strategies

Proficient readers know many more words than the ones they are taught directly (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). They learn these words independently by applying strategies that help them to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar words they encounter as they engage in rich and varied language experiences. *Contextual analysis* and *morphemic analysis* are two powerful independent word-learning strategies that proficient readers use (Harmon, 2000; Lubliner & Smetana, 2005; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006).

Contextual Analysis Analyzing the context of an unfamiliar word to clarify its meaning involves the active use of the text and illustrations that surround the word (Edwards, Font, Baumann & Boland, 2004; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Proficient readers begin to 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 that they might have missed, and they look forward, reading on for new information that might help. They search the context 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 the information that they need.

Morphemic Analysis Morphemes are meaningful word parts, such as prefixes, bases, roots, and suffixes. Knowledge of morphemes plays a valuable role in word learning because it provides readers with information they can use to examine unfamiliar words and figure out their meanings (Edwards, Font, Baumann & Boland, 2004; Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

Proficient readers use morphemic analysis in several ways. They begin by noting a 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 use the word-part meanings to put the word together again ("cannot be believed") to see if this meaning 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*, *nightshirt*) or root (e.g., *cred* as in *credo*, *credential*, *incredible*) 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 (e.g., English-Spanish pairs: *continent/continente*, *history/historia*) (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Direct Instruction in Word-Learning Strategies
Inside Language, Literacy, and Content teaches a wide range of independent word-learning strategies, including contextual and morphemic analysis. Each unit begins with a Focus on Vocabulary that explicitly teaches a word-learning strategy and how to use it. This strategy is then carried through the unit in a scaffolded instructional plan. In each selection the teacher first models the strategy explicitly, guides the students in using it, and then provides opportunities for students to apply the strategy on their own. Strategies developed in the program include Using Word Parts, Relating Words, Using Context Clues, Using Context for Multiple Meaning Words, Going Beyond the Literal Meaning, Using Word Origins, and others.

4. Opportunities to Promote Word Consciousness

Word consciousness is an awareness of and interest in words, their meanings, and their various uses (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Scott & Nagy, 2004). Students who are conscious of words regularly note them in different settings and grasp their individualities. They enjoy and play with words and eagerly learn new ones. Helping students to develop an interest in words goes far in promoting both their vocabulary growth and their lifelong reading success.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content promotes word consciousness in many ways. It regularly calls attention to interesting word origins. It presents homographs and homophones as well as borrowed, blended, and clipped words. It highlights the multiple meanings of many words, focusing often on the ways figurative language and idioms go beyond words' literal meanings. Dictionary use is encouraged, but is presented in authentic situations. Students are encouraged throughout the program to explore and become excited about words and to use them with increasing skill. They are also encouraged to respect and value the word knowledge they bring with them from the world outside of school. Literature selections include many examples of young people valuing their diverse linguistic heritages. Instructional activities include many opportunities for students to talk and write about what they know, to produce personal dictionaries, and to relate their personal experience to academic work. All of these features support striving readers in connecting with the vocabulary they learn in school and developing the habit of exploring and enjoying words.

Bibliography

Anderson, R. C., & Nagy, W. E. (1992). The vocabulary conundrum. *American Educator*, *16* (4), 14–18, 44–47.

August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baumann, J. K., & Kame'enui, E. J. (Eds.) (2004). *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Blachowicz, C. L. Z., & Fisher, P. J. L. (2000). Vocabulary instruction. In M. J. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (vol. 3) (pp. 503–523). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carlo, M. S., August, D., Snow, C. E., Dressler, C., Lippman, D. N., Lively, T. J., & White, C. E. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly, 39*, 188–215.

Cummins, J. (2003). Reading and the bilingual student: Fact and friction. In G. G. Garcia (Ed.), *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. (1998). What reading does to the mind. *American Educator, 22*(1), 8–15.

Cunningham, J. W., & Moore, D. W. (1993). The contribution of understanding academic vocabulary to answering comprehension questions. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 25*, 171–180.

Edwards, E. C., Font, G., Baumann, J. F., & Boland, E. (2004). Unlocking word meanings: Strategies and guidelines for teaching morphemic and contextual analysis. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 159–176). New York: The Guilford Press.

Graves, M. F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Graves, M. F., & Watts-Taffe, S. M. (2002). The place of word consciousness in a research-based vocabulary program. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed., pp. 140–165). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Harmon, J. M. (2000). Assessing and supporting independent word learning strategies of middle school students. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 43*, 518–527.

Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2007). Is there an academic vocabulary? *TESOL Quarterly, 41*, 235–253.

Lubliner, S., & Smetana, L. (2005). The effects of comprehensive vocabulary instruction on Title I students' metacognitive word-learning skills and reading comprehension. *Journal of Literacy Research, 37* (2), 163–200.

Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Nagy, W. E., Berninger, V. W., & Abbott, R. D. (2006). Contribution of morphology beyond phonology to literacy outcomes of upper elementary and middle-school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 134–147.

Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health.

Scott, J. A., & Nagy, W. E. (2004). Developing word consciousness. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 201–217). New York: The Guilford Press.

Stahl, S. A., Nagy, W. E. (2006). *Teaching word meanings*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Torgesen, J. K., Houston, D. D., Rissman, L. M., Decker, S. M., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Francis, D. J., Rivera, M. O., & Lesaux, N. (2007). *Academic literacy instruction for adolescents: A guidance document from the Center on Instruction* (p. 3). Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. Retrieved May 3, 2007 from [online: www.centeroninstruction.org].
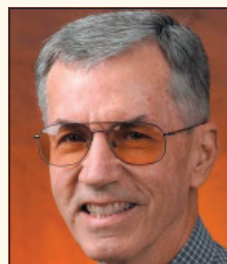
David W. Moore, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

Dr. Moore taught high school social studies and reading in Arizona public schools before entering college teaching. He currently teaches secondary school teacher preparation courses in adolescent literacy.