

Vocabulary Instruction

Research points to four practices that teachers can use to expand students' vocabularies and improve their reading. Blachowicz & Fisher

Reading comprehension depends on a strong base of oral language and concept development. School curriculum should expose students to rich oral language experiences, give students scaffolded opportunities to use and get feedback on language, and engage students in word exploration.

Develop word awareness and love of words through word play.

- Word walls
- Play word games

Deliver explicit, rich instruction to develop important vocabulary.

STAR Model – Select, Teach, Activate, and Revisit

- Select: using a story or text map and select 4-6 words that students would need to summarize the text. Also, choose words that the students are likely to encounter in the text.
- Teach: vocabulary instruction that students may need before, during, and after reading. Research suggests including definitional, contextual, and usage information when explicitly teaching words.
- Activate: Reinforce word mastery of the selected words by connecting them to what students already know. Use writing assignments and other tasks to ensure that students hear, read, and write, and use these words.
- Revisit: Activities for review such as games, writing and word books.

Build strategies for independence

- Learning words from context is an important part of vocabulary development but single contextual exposures will not be adequate for complete familiarization of the word meanings for the students.
- Research also suggests that focusing on structural analysis or morphology (the learning of word parts such as Greek roots tele- and graph)) can help students learn new words while reading.
- Supportive instruction on using the dictionary is an important tool when word learning.

Engage students actively with a wide range of books

- Book clubs, literature circles, guided reading, independent reading, and library time
- Read alouds – reading and interacting with students rather than reading only as a performance is shown to build students' vocabulary. You may have the students predict to keep them engaged, ask students to use words in re-telling or acting out the story, or other engaging playful word use.
- Re-reading the same book, story, or poem helps cement new word meanings