



Improving Vocabulary

Instruction

When teaching vocabulary, instruction should be:

❖ Explicit and direct

- Direct instruction should occur for new vocabulary words through teaching the word along with a visual, discussing the part of speech as well as the definition, and then brainstorming synonyms and antonyms.
 - Learning what a word is not can sometimes be as important as learning what a word is.
- The teacher should provide an example of the targeted word and then allow time for the students to provide their own examples. This is important for assessing their understanding of the definition following instruction. In addition, it allows the students to make the word individually applicable.

❖ Linked to visuals

- Visual associations allow students to view the definition through a visual model. These visual associations are oftentimes easier to remember than definitions and allow increased access to those definitions.
 - The teacher should present the new word along with a visual and then ask students to draw or create their own visual.

❖ Easy to understand and remember definitions

- Definitions should always be presented in such a way that a student is able to access in terms of concepts, word choice, and readability.

❖ Word associations

- Encouraging students to find a word or phrase that either summarizes the definition, reminds them of the word, or has a connection to the word or definition can make remembering the vocabulary easier.
- For English Language Learners, new vocabulary words should be connected to previously understood words and concepts in their native language.

❖ No more than 8-10 words a week

- This is the ideal number in order for students to appropriately engage with and understand new vocabulary in a manner that will allow them to retain those words and definitions.

❖ Frequently reviewed and practice

- Students should receive ample time for practice and review. During that time, activities should vary in terms of skills addressed. Sample activities are discussed in the linked attachment under Strategies to Download.



Landmark Teaching Principle™ #2

Choosing Words

Careful consideration should go into which words you choose to highlight through direct instruction. First and foremost, the teacher should consider the purpose of teaching these new words. If the purpose is simply so that the student will understand the sentence/question and will most likely not see that particular word again, the teacher should just provide the definition or direct the student to a dictionary. Direct instruction for vocabulary should only occur for words that are commonly existing and that the students will encounter several more times either in the content area, the particular unit, the novel, or in general life scenarios.

What to Focus On:

- ❖ Morphology: students with good comprehension tend to have higher morphological knowledge
 - inflectional (-s) and derivational (-ful) endings
 - 60 % of words come from Greek and Latin roots
- ❖ 70 % of words are multiple meaning words

Adapted from Knoell, Donna L. Ph.D., Teaching and Intervening to Help All Students Develop Their Vocabulary and Communication Skills.