Vocabulary Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is understanding the meaning of words or phrase units such as *elbow* or *shopping list*. Students who have the vocabulary knowledge related to a particular academic task will have a greater chance to comprehend the material and critically engage with it. For example, if a student does not know what *election* means, she/he will not understand the sentence, “People stood in line to cast their vote in the city election.” Strong vocabulary skills are important so that students can comprehend the texts they read or listen to, and it also helps students to communicate more clearly and expressively in their writing. Vocabulary knowledge is a necessary component of reading comprehension.

Vocabulary knowledge is not a constrained, or limited, skill such as learning the 26 letters of the alphabet. For all intents and purposes, there are a limitless number of words to be learned, and people of all ages continue to learn new words throughout their lives. The more words people know, the greater potential they have to access more complex reading material and subjects. Students whose vocabulary resources do not match the content of the school curriculum may be missing a lot of the intended learning going on in their classrooms because they do not understand many of the word meanings. For this reason, it is important for teachers to embed vocabulary instruction into each lesson in the classroom, and be especially sure that students understand the meanings of key conceptual words in their texts and academic subjects.

This vocabulary intervention is designed to be a “second dose” for students in your classroom who have been identified as needing vocabulary support. There are several ways that you can identify students who will profit from a vocabulary intervention: 1) Informally assess your students’ writing to notice the extent of their written vocabularies, 2) Informally assess your students’ oral language as they talk in groups or contribute to classroom discussions, 3) Following the completion of a lesson or read-aloud experience, ask students to write or share about the new words they learned, and take note of their use of the vocabulary, 4) Conduct a formal or informal vocabulary assessment with students and note which students score at the lower levels.

The vocabulary intervention outlined in the next section of this manual is designed to be used across a week of instruction, and should be based on a narrative or non-fiction text that you have used with your whole class, ideally the week after the text has been introduced. The text should have ten words that are important to know for your students’ access to grade level materials, and the words should not be so esoteric as to not be encountered regularly in class. For example, the word graph would be an excellent choice in first or second grade, but not the word lattice, since students are unlikely to see that word regularly or use it in their grade-level material. Once you have selected a text and its ten important words, the directions included here will guide you through implementation of the intervention.

This section contains:
- Vocabulary Intervention Sequence
- Getting Started: Planning for the week
- Intervention Protocols
- Intervention Fidelity Checks