



Promoting Vocabulary Development

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Importance of Vocabulary

OResearch demonstrates the importance of vocabulary to students’ literacy success. “Few things have greater impact on how well one listens, speaks, reads and writes than the depth and breadth of one’s vocabulary knowledge.” (Green, 2004) The development of vocabulary has been shown to boost comprehension, improve achievement, enhance thinking, improve communication, promote fluency, and enhance self-esteem (Bromley, 2006). In the *Literacy Place for the Early Years* resource, you will find helpful ways to integrate vocabulary instruction into your classroom.

A. Indirect Instruction

Indirect learning occurs through exposure to everyday oral and written language. Primary teachers can promote indirect vocabulary learning by:

- providing many opportunities for oral language (see Nov. 20 Tip of the Week)
- reading aloud daily from quality fiction, non-fiction and info-fiction texts
- encouraging students to read on their own and note new vocabulary

We know that reading aloud to students expands and refines vocabulary development and oral language usage. Using high-quality children’s literature and engaging students in dialogue about words found in the literature promotes a culture of word awareness within the classroom. As you read the various texts from the Read Aloud collections in *Literacy Place*, encourage students to be “**word detectives**” in search of sophisticated language. You might have students listen for words that they think are “**Wow Words**”— great, big words. After discussing the word meanings, these words can be recorded on class charts for student reference during conversations and when writing.

Another way to promote awareness of vocabulary related to a specific text is to create an **Alphaboxes Chart**. As you read aloud, students listen for vocabulary that is important to the text and it is recorded on an organizer. The example below is from the Grade 1 book, *The Emperor’s Egg*:

Text: The Emperor’s Egg					
A Antarctica	B	C chick	D	E Emperor Penguin	F female
G	H hatching huddling	I island	J	K krill	L
M male mate	N	O	P penguin pouch	Q	R
S squid	T trundles trumpeting	U	V	W waddled whistle	XYZ



B. Direct Instruction – Working with Words

The direct instruction of new words can have a huge effect on vocabulary development. “Research suggests that it is possible to directly teach children between three and five hundred words a year (eight to ten words per week)” (Diller, 2007). Traditionally, methods such as spelling programs, memorized word lists, and weekly spelling dictations were used to help students learn new words. However, the effectiveness of these methods to increase vocabulary was limited. Current research tells us that word learning and sound vocabulary instruction includes investigation into how words work through active exploration of word parts, patterns, and meanings. Word study needs to be explicitly taught and embedded into daily instruction for students to develop their vocabulary.

In the Literacy Place resources, direct instruction occurs during Working with Words opportunities included in the Read Aloud, Shared Reading, and Guided Reading teaching plans. The Working with Words Guide, in particular, offers detailed lessons for teaching high-frequency words, word solving and building, language predictability, and offer suggestions for enhancing fluency. These interactive and engaging activities provide students with rich information about words and their uses and many opportunities to play with, and use, new vocabulary.

Note – Stay tuned for next week’s Tip of the Week for further information on Working with Words!

Green, Chris Laura (2004, April). *Bilingual word power – research-based vocabulary strategies for English language learners*. IDRA Newsletter by the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Bromley, Karen (2006, May). *Transforming Vocabulary and Comprehension Instruction: What Research Says About Teaching*. Institute #10, International Reading Association Conference.

Diller, Debbie (2007). *Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All*. Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, Maine.

If you have a question you would like answered, please email your request to: workshops@scholastic.ca.