Illinois CENTER for SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

LEARNING SNAPSHOT

Academic Vocabulary Instruction

- Teaching and learning academic vocabulary and language are critical to student success in all content areas. Vocabulary instruction is included in multiple Illinois Learning Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

- Teaching specific terms in a specific way is the strongest action a teacher can take to ensure that students have the academic background knowledge they need to understand the content they will encounter in school (Marzano & Pickering, 2005).

- The work of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) provides a conceptualization of vocabulary in the following three-tier model:

  - **Tier 1:** basic words that are often recognized and used with ease by most native speakers of English (e.g., book, girl, happy, he). English language learners face a special challenge and need vocabulary instruction also targeting these words.

  - **Tier 2:** general academic words that tend to be more complex and may have multiple meanings. Some of these words travel across content areas (e.g., origin, system, table) and have different meanings depending on the context.

  - **Tier 3:** domain-specific words that are critical for understanding the subject matter of the instruction (e.g., photosynthesis, circumference, expedition).

- The Common Core suggests it is important to target specific instruction on Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words to help students develop deep understanding that cannot always be acquired through independent reading.

- Frey and Fisher (2009) provide a framework for learning words "inside and out." To look *inside* a word, students are taught to identify root words, prefixes, suffixes, or word parts of compound words they recognize. Students also should look *outside* the word and try to figure out the meaning from the sentence or paragraph where they came across the word or look for any illustrations or other visuals that could help determine word meanings.

Instructional Practices

- Implement a schoolwide, sequential, and structured process to teach vocabulary (Marzano & Pickering, 2005).

- Systematically introduce individual words, and teach word parts and reference this learning while reading in various content areas.

- Cultivate word consciousness in the classroom, and encourage students to be conscious of words outside the school setting.

- Provide opportunities for incidental learning of vocabulary through independent reading.

- Provide opportunities for reading, listening, speaking, and writing across genres.

- Use templates or similar tools to teach vocabulary systematically (see Resources).

- Use notebooks, journals, and foldables as methods to teach vocabulary (see Resources).

Resources

Adolescent Literacy Website explains the Frayer Model template used in teaching academic vocabulary.

http://www.adlit.org/strategies/22369/

Additional Information on the Frayer Model

http://oame.on.ca/main/files/thinklit/FrayerModel.pdf
https://interactive-notebooks.wikispaces.com/Frayer+model+vocabulary

Illinois State University Website includes the Academic Vocabulary Shift Kit.

http://education.illinoisstate.edu/casei/ela/vocabulary/

Foldables Videos: Extending Vocabulary and Foldables for Spanish-English Cognates

Author Dinah Zike provides teaching strategies for extending vocabulary learning with notebooking.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xi4JuRYYRc8
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ku22n3GpQs&list=PLYmYDLb2oJqGjk3_OhIJXLSQ6IZSmixRg

ASCD Book: Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools

Author Robert Marzano shows how a carefully structured combination of two approaches—sustained silent reading and instruction in subject-specific vocabulary terms—can help overcome the deficiencies in background knowledge that hamper the achievement of many children.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/104017.aspx

***Educational Leadership* Article: Six Steps to Better Vocabulary Instruction**

Robert Marzano presents research about a six-step strategy for teaching vocabulary that works at every grade level, from kindergarten to high school.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Six-Steps-to-Better-Vocabulary-Instruction.aspx

ASCD Book: Teaching Basic and Advanced Vocabulary: A Framework for Direct Instruction

Author Robert Marzano provides strategies to help build general background knowledge of instrumental vocabulary by introducing terms in semantic clusters. This approach is designed to maximize students' understanding of new words by creating a framework of meaning through context.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/309113.aspx

The PocketMod Website provides ideas about how to use nothing more than a piece of paper to create foldable learning and organizational tools.

http://pocketmod.com

Read Write Think: Classroom Resources Website provides a plan for using academic language in the high school English language arts classroom.

http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/

Science Notebooks Website provides resources for using foldables in science notebooks in K–12 classrooms.

http://www.sciencenotebooks.org/

Vocabulogic Blog: Bridging the Verbal Divide is a research-based blog on vocabulary.

http://vocablog-plc.blogspot.com/?_sm_au_=iVVk5LTqp4KLQnVF

Word Generation Website, a supplementary curricular resource, provides dilemmas for student discussion and is designed to promote students' academic language and argumentation skills.
http://wordgen.serpmedia.org/

Teaching Channel Video: Kick Me showcases how to make vocabulary lessons interactive in the classroom.
https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/making-vocabulary-lesson-interactive

ASCD Video features Robert Marzano's Building Academic Vocabulary Series.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oVQjt_H2SQ

References

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2009). *Learning words inside & out: Vocabulary instruction that boosts achievement in all subject areas.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2005). *Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards.* Washington, DC: Authors.