

VOCABULARY

At a Glance



What is vocabulary?

Vocabulary refers to the knowledge of individual word meanings in a text and the concepts conveyed by those words. Vocabulary knowledge is not just a definition but also structure (morphology), use (grammar), meanings (semantics), and links to other words (word/semantic relationships). The extent of a student's vocabulary significantly influences their ability to decode accurately and comprehend what they read. Simply put, the more words a student knows, the easier it becomes to understand written text and content. Research consistently demonstrates that vocabulary knowledge serves as a predictor of reading comprehension and overall academic achievement. Vocabulary instruction is a fundamental component of daily literacy lessons, especially considering students typically enter school with varying levels of vocabulary knowledge.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Prioritize teaching academic vocabulary through varied activities.
- Dedicate part of literacy instruction to explicit vocabulary instruction.
- Provide students with explicit, student-friendly definitions.
- Follow an evidence-based routine when teaching new vocabulary words.
- Ensure repeated exposure to new words in diverse contexts to allow ample practice.
- Encourage using new vocabulary through discussion, writing and extended reading.
- Pre-teach high-leverage words to enhance retention.
- Model rich vocabulary consistently.
- Read texts aloud with rich vocabulary to stimulate discussion.

Evidence of these instructional practices should be present in High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs). When gaps are identified, supplement to ensure all recommendations are carried out.

Alignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing

Fostering a strong vocabulary is a priority for students. They are expected to utilize academic and domain-specific vocabulary when engaging in reading, writing, speaking and listening (L.4). Leveraging their ever-growing vocabulary becomes essential to construct meaning (L.5). Starting in grade 2, students are tasked with employing this vocabulary to comprehend texts (L.3). A robust vocabulary enables students to more easily apply their decoding skills while deriving meaning from a text (RF.3). Additionally, students utilize their knowledge of words and phrases to comprehend both literary and informational texts (RL.4 and RI.4); this proficiency is crucial for accessing grade-level texts independently (RL.10 and RI.10). Understanding grammar requires a solid grasp of morphology, taught through vocabulary instruction (L.1). Demonstrating a broad vocabulary is integral in writing tasks across the composition strand. Vocabulary is also a common thread through the Interdisciplinary Literacy Practices. A student's vocabulary influences their development of schema and impacts their literacy experiences through both receptive and expressive language arts (ILP2, ILP3, ILP4, ILP8).

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