

Academic Vocabulary

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Essential Questions

- Why focus on vocabulary instruction?
- What are the links between vocabulary and reading comprehension?
- What is *academic vocabulary* and why is it important?
- What are the components of effective vocabulary instruction?

Some vocabulary practices...

Unreliable Practices

- Asking students, “Does anyone know what _____ means?”
- Numerous independent activities without guidance or immediate feedback
- Directing students to “look it up” then use it in a sentence
- Relying on context based guessing as a primary strategy

Research-based Practices

- Teacher directed, explicit instruction
- Provide opportunities to practice using words
- Teach word meanings explicitly and systematically
- Teach independent word learning strategies (i.e., contextual strategies & morphemic analysis)

Vocabulary is

- Oral and written
- Productive and Receptive

Why focus on vocabulary instruction?

“Of the many compelling reasons for providing students with instruction to build vocabulary, none is more important than the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension. Indeed, one of the most enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students’ vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension.”

(Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Baumann, Kame’enui, & Ash, 2003; Becker, 1977; Davis, 1942; Whipple, 1925)

So many words...

- How many words do we **expect** students to learn?
- How many words can students **actually** learn and what teaching methods are most effective?
- How can we increase student knowledge of words.

So, which words do we teach?

- Useful words (Tier 1):
clock, baby, happy
- High-frequency words (Tier 2):
coincidence, absurd, industrious
- Specific domain words (Tier 3):
isotope, lathe, peninsula

*From: **Bringing Words to Life - Robust Vocabulary Instruction** by Isabelle Beck, Margaret McKeown, & Linda Kucan*

Instructional Routine for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

- Introduce the word.
- Introduce the meaning of the word with a *student friendly explanation*.
- Illustrate the word with *examples* and *non-examples*.
- Check for student understanding.

(Anita Archer, 2008)

Why Teach Academic Vocabulary?

- Students need to learn the language of written text and academic content areas through direct, explicit instruction.
- Most students do not come to school prepared to comprehend academic language therefore it must be taught explicitly with students having access to numerous practice opportunities

Academic Vocabulary Examples

- *analysis* *concept* *environment*
- *approach* *consistent* *established*
- *area* *constitutional* *estimate*
- *assessment* *context* *evidence*
- *assume* *contract* *export*
- *authority* *create* *financial*
- *available* *data* *formula*
- *benefit* *definition* *function*

<http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/awlinfo.shtml>
(Academic Word Lists)

Intentional Teaching of Academic Vocabulary

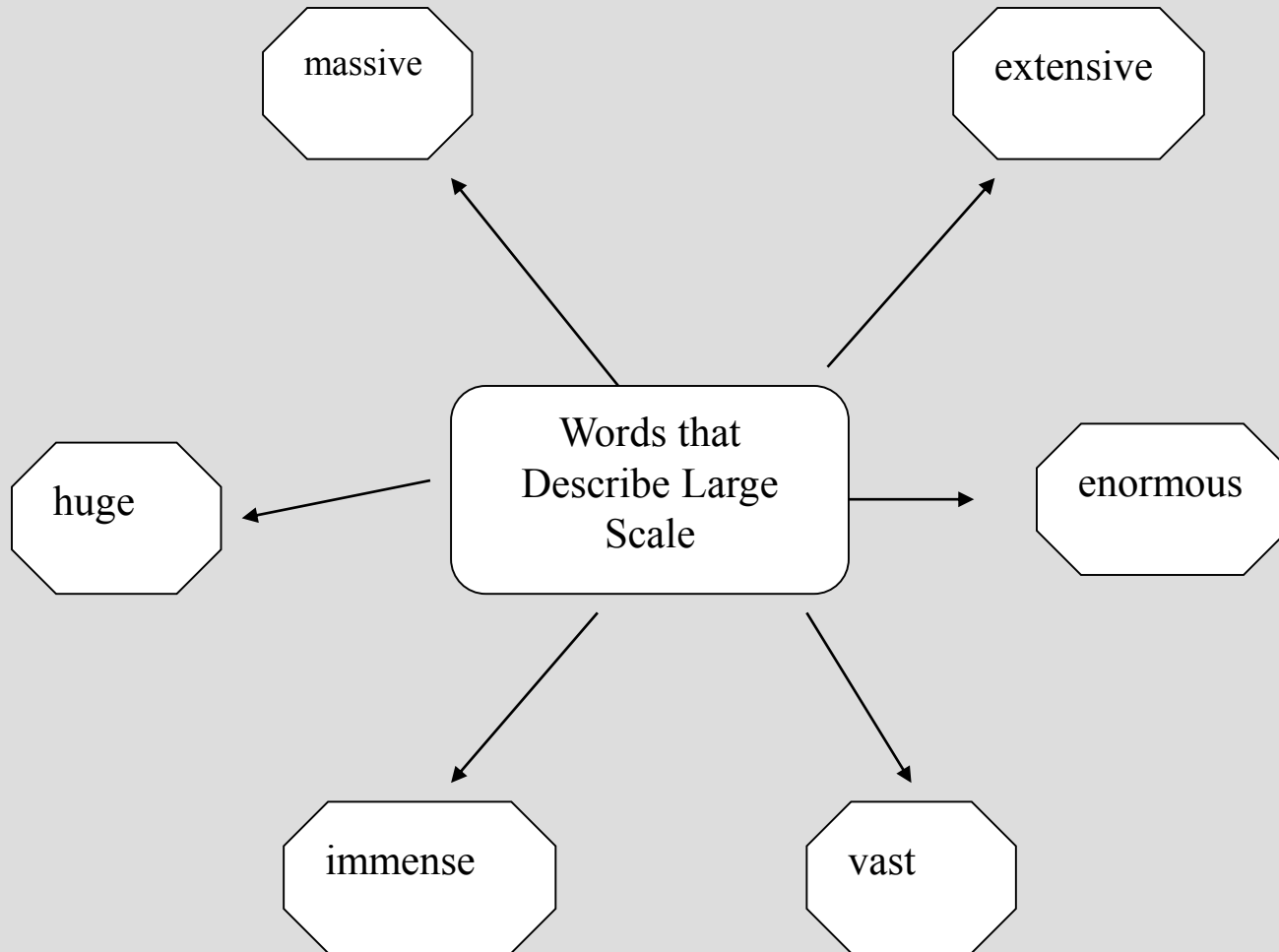
- Structure academic conversations by providing sentence starters:
 - I predict _____.
 - I predict _____ because _____.
- Encourage students to use “smart” words:
 - *delighted* instead of happy
 - *accurate* instead of good
 - *hypothesize* instead of guess
 - *illustrate* instead of draw
 - *comment* instead of tell
 - *seek* instead of find

Academic Vocabulary Learning

In **general** vocabulary learning, to go from 80% understanding to 86% understanding would require students to learn 2,000 more word families

In **academic** vocabulary learning, to go from 80% understanding to 86% understanding would require students to learn 570 more word families

Grouping



Summary

4 Principles of Vocabulary Learning

- Students should be **active** in developing their understanding of words and ways to learn them
- Students should personalize their word learning
- Students should be immersed in words
- Students should use multiple sources of information to learn words through repeated exposures