Vocabulary and Academic Language in the CCSS—Grades K–5

Nancy Frey
To acquire a new language, you must use it, not merely listen to others using it.

Academic language is a new language. Treat your students as language learners.
Common Core State Standards and Academic Language

"Fewer, Clearer, Higher"

Vocabulary’s Impact on Learning

Significant predictor of reading comprehension

Vocabulary size in kindergarten serves as a strong predictor of reading comprehension level in later grades.


Context-embedded vocabulary instruction promotes language acquisition for second language learners


• “Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases …”
• “Explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings …”
• “Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts …”

—NGA Center & CCSSO, Common Core State Standards, 2010
Vocabulary is Essential

- Role in text complexity
- Predictive of student difficulty
- Tier 2 words often overlooked in favor of Tier 3
- Difference between “words worth knowing” and those that are “essential to understanding”
- Difference between knowing the definition and knowing the meaning

Children Build Schema Long Before They Begin Reading

- Authentic experiences
- Close observation
- Dialogue with others

These are the same conditions that contribute to vocabulary development.
An Intentional Vocabulary Initiative

- Make it intentional through word selection and intentional instruction.
- Make it transparent through teacher modeling of word solving and word learning.
- Make it useable with collaborative learning.
- Make it personal by fostering student ownership.
- Make it a priority with schoolwide practices.

(Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boosts Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)

Step 1: Make It Intentional With Careful Word Selection

Our Purpose

| How do students acquire and extend their academic vocabulary across the school day? |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Interest instruction: | Vocabulary instruction: |
| Words are identified using a framework for selection, including general, specialized, and technical vocabulary, and used in subject and across grade levels. | All grade levels select a range of general, specialized, and technical vocabulary by subject, but these are only shared within the grade level. |
| Some words have been selected by applying a framework for selecting vocabulary, although these are driven by subject. These are not linked primarily technical vocabulary. | Individual teachers have identified words using the technical term vocabulary, and there are not known to others in the grade level and school. |

How does your school select vocabulary for instruction? (Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boosts Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)
**Possible Vocabulary to Teach**

More and more garbage! Every day people throw more trash away. As the world population increases, more people throw trash away. Garbage trucks come to pick it up, but where does all this trash go?

- **Blue** = general vocabulary


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**Possible Vocabulary to Teach**

More and more garbage! Every day people **throw** more trash away. As the **world** population increases, more people throw trash **away**. Garbage trucks come to pick it up, but where does all this trash **go**?

- **Blue** = general vocabulary
- **Green** = specialized vocabulary


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**Possible Vocabulary to Teach**

More and more garbage! Every day people **throw** more trash away. As the **world** population increases, more people throw trash **away**. Garbage trucks come to pick it up, but where does all this trash **go**?

- **Blue** = general vocabulary
- **Green** = specialized vocabulary
- **Red** = technical vocabulary

The Problem:
Too Many Words!

Must be narrowed, but how?

Questions for Selecting Vocabulary

1. Representative
2. Repeatability
3. Transportable
4. Contextual analysis
5. Structural analysis
6. Cognitive load

- Is it critical to understanding?
- Will it be used again?
- Is it needed for discussions or writing?
- Can they use context to figure it out?
- Can they use structure?
- Have I exceeded the number they can learn?

(Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boosts Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)
General Understandings in Kindergarten

Retell the story in order using the words beginning, middle, and end.

Step 2: Make It Transparent With Modeling

Check Your Rubric

How do you model your vocabulary thinking?

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Look Inside the Word: Morphology

- Affixes
- Root words
- Derivations
- Cognates for English learners
- Beware of false cognates! (embarrassed/embrazada)

Look Outside the Word: Context

- Definition/explanation
- Restatement/synonym
- Contrast/antonym
- Inference/general context
- Punctuation

Look Outside the Word: Resources

- Peer resources from productive group work
- Dictionaries
- Bookmark Internet resources.
- Model how you use these.
Vocabulary in Kindergarten

How does the author help us to understand what cocoon means?

There is an illustration of the cocoon, and a sentence that reads, “He built a small house, called a cocoon, around himself.”

Step 3:
Make It Useable by Collaborating With Peers
How do you foster peer collaboration to allow learners to consolidate vocabulary knowledge?

(Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boost Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)

Check Your Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usable Instruction: Peer talk and small group collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral language practices are schoolwide and all teachers integrate peer talk and small group collaboration daily. Some grade levels use oral language daily and are emerging as skilled practitioners. Some grade levels are planning ways to integrate peer talk and small group collaboration into daily practice. There are individual teachers who use peer talk and small group collaboration but there has not been an opportunity to work with others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you foster peer collaboration to allow learners to consolidate vocabulary knowledge?

Learners need to use vocabulary in meaningful exchanges with others.

What better way than with word games?

Clues Developed by Student Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Groups</th>
<th>Whole Grains</th>
<th>Things to Avoid</th>
<th>Dark green vegetables</th>
<th>Meat and Beans group</th>
<th>Ways to stay healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Oils</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils</td>
<td>Brown rice</td>
<td>Fats</td>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Use the pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Whole wheat flour</td>
<td>Refined sugar</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Avoid oils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and Beans</td>
<td>Processed grains</td>
<td>Collard greens</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>and fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black beans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nuts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$25,000 Pyramid

Ways to Stay Healthy

Types of Dark Green Vegetables

Members of the Meat and Beans Group

Food Groups

Types of Whole Grains

Things to Avoid

Shades of Meaning

Graham's Grade-2 Science Vocabulary

- freezing
- cold
- warm
- hot
What is one food that gave him a stomach ache? What is one food that did not give him a stomach ache?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods That Did Not Give Him a Stomach Ache</th>
<th>Foods That Gave Him a Stomach Ache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Chocolate cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plums</td>
<td>Pickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Swiss cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>Salami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green leaf</td>
<td>Lollipop</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cherry pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cupcake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watermelon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 4: Make It Personal With Individual Activities
Check Your Rubric

Personalize instruction: Independent and individual learning

Students schoolwide consolidate their understanding through activities that promote spiral review and metacognition.

Grade levels are collaborating to build professional knowledge with colleagues.

Some grade levels have developed a plan for how students increase vocabulary metacognition and spiral review.

Individual teachers are becoming skilled at personalizing instruction, although there is no mechanism for sharing practice.

How do you use independent learning of vocabulary to promote spiral review and metacognition?

(Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boost Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)

Generative Sentences

The teacher states a condition for a sentence, and students compose orally and in writing.

Use the word “hungry” in the third word of your sentence.

Opinions and Intertextual Connections in Kindergarten

Narrative
Is this a happy story or a sad one? How do you know?

Informational
How are these two books similar? How are they different?
Writing Frames

Students integrate academic language with vocabulary knowledge about animal habitats:

I knew that ______ live in ______.
I learned some new facts about ______. I learned that ______ live in ______. I also learned that ______ do not like to live ______. Another fact I learned was ______. The best thing I learned was ______.

A–B
Bald eagle
Bell
America the Beautiful

C–D
Dollar
Capital building
Declaration of Independence

E–F
Flag

G–H

I–J
Jefferson Monument

K–L
Lincoln Memorial
Liberty Bell

M–N
Mount Rushmore
National Anthem

O–P
Pledge of Allegiance

Q–R

S–T

U–V–W
White House
Washington Monument

X–Y–Z

Students assess themselves to see their own progress.
Step 5:  
Make It a Priority  
by Creating a Schoolwide Focus

Check Your Rubric

How could you use a schoolwide approach  
for promoting vocabulary learning?

(Frey & Fisher, Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary Instruction That Boost Achievement in All Subject Areas, 2009)

Use English, science, and social studies content to make the most of vocabulary instruction.
Use gateway affixes to increase access to unfamiliar vocabulary.

- s, -es, -ed, and -ing account for 65 percent of all suffixed words.

Re-, dis-, un-, in-/im-account for 50 percent of all the prefixed words readers will ever see.


Words of the Week

• Five words a week (Port: to, out)
  – airport, transport, portable, port, report
• Group them by affix or derivation.
• Grade levels propose words.
• The goal is to build vocabulary and teach patterns for unfamiliar words.
• Consider creating separate K–2 and 3–6 lists.
• Primary lists can draw from Dolch and Ogden basic English word lists.

Ideas for Extending WOW Efforts

• Post the words on classroom word walls.
• Give extra credit for using WOW words in writing.
• Post words each week on school website and in newsletter.
• Use words in games. (Bingo, Password, Concentration)
Incidental Learning Through Wide Reading

2,250 words per year vs. 300–500 directly taught
(Mason, Stahl, Au, & Herman, “Reading: Children’s Developing Knowledge of Words,” Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts, 2003)

Learning Words Inside and Out

Intentional Word Selection
Transparent Modeling

Learning Words Inside and Out

Personalized Individual Activities
Priority on Content

Useable Through Peer Collaboration

To schedule professional development at your site, contact Solution Tree at (800) 733-6786.

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### Fostering a Schoolwide Vocabulary Initiative

**How do students acquire and extend their academic vocabulary across the school day?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intentional instruction: Words identified by subject and/or grade level</th>
<th>Transparent instruction: Teacher modeling and think-alouds</th>
<th>Useable instruction: Peer talk and small group collaboration</th>
<th>Personalize instruction: Independent and individual learning</th>
<th>Prioritizing vocabulary: Words of the week and wide reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Words are identified using a framework for selection. Word lists include general, specialized, and technical vocabulary by subject, and are shared across grade levels. All grade levels select a range of general, specialized, and technical vocabulary by subject, but these are only shared within the grade level.</td>
<td>All teachers have received professional development in modeling and use it daily in their instruction. They share their practices with one another.</td>
<td>Oral language practices are schoolwide and all teachers integrate peer talk and/or small group collaboration daily. Some grade levels have received professional development in modeling and are using it daily.</td>
<td>Students schoolwide consolidate their understanding through activities that promote spiral review and metacognition.</td>
<td>The school has implemented the plan, and teachers receive regular professional development to refine practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some words have been selected by grade level and subject, although these are driven by textbook lists (primarily technical vocabulary). Individual teachers are applying a framework for selecting vocabulary, although these are not being shared outside of the grade level.</td>
<td>Some grade levels have received professional development, but it is not yet being regularly implemented.</td>
<td>Some grade levels are planning ways to integrate peer talk and small-group collaboration into daily practice.</td>
<td>Grade levels are collaborating to build professional knowledge with colleagues.</td>
<td>The school has created a plan for schoolwide vocabulary and wide reading (SSR and independent reading).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Individual teachers have identified words using the textbook (technical vocabulary), and these are not known to others in the grade level and school.</td>
<td>Individual teachers are sharing their modeling practices with one another through peer visits.</td>
<td>There are individual experts using teacher modeling, but there is no opportunity to share practices with others.</td>
<td>Individual teachers are becoming skilled at personalizing instruction, although there is no mechanism for sharing practice.</td>
<td>The school has created a plan for either schoolwide vocabulary OR wide reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instruction is dominated by whole-group lectures followed by silent, independent work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The school is studying schoolwide vocabulary and wide reading for future planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no plan, and no current initiative to examine these schoolwide practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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