Understanding Vocabulary Development
Definitions of Vocabulary

Simple definition:

**Words known by an individual**

- Two kinds of vocabulary
  - **Recognition vocabulary**
    - Words one can pronounce and understand when encountering them in print.
  - **Meaning vocabulary**
    - Words one knows the meaning of even if one cannot yet recognize them in print.
• Both recognition and meaning vocabularies develop at the same time as students learn to read and write.

• The recognition vocabulary becomes the student’s sight vocabulary.
Research

- Research plainly establishes a strong relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension

- Students must learn 2,700 to 3,000 new words per year (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Nagy & Herman, 1987) or about 7 new words per day to achieve the 40,000 vocabulary words of an average high school student.
How do students acquire this vocabulary?

• Four major positions of vocabulary acquisition (Beck & McKeown, 1991)
  – Students develop vocabulary through extensive reading opportunities. (Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1986; Nagy & Herman, 1987)
  – Students learn vocabulary from context, but must have instruction about the use of context clues. (Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki, 1984; Sternberg, 1987)
• Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries as an aid to acquiring new word meanings in addition to instruction in using context.
  (Schatz & Balkwin, 1986)

• Students profit from direct instruction in vocabulary,
  (Beck, McKeown, & Omanson, 1987; Graves, 1986, 1087; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986)

  — though it is not as powerful a tool as promoting wide independent reading.
  (Nagy & Herman, 1987)
Direct Teaching of Vocabulary

• If the following conditions are met, direct teaching of vocabulary may lead to improved comprehension.
  
  (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)
  
  – A few key words are thoroughly taught in meaningful context.
  
  – Words are related to students’ prior knowledge in ways that actively involve them in learning.
  
  – Students are given multiple exposures to the words.

• Direct teaching of vocabulary involves providing activities in which information about the meanings of words is made explicitly clear to students.
• Effective direct instruction of vocabulary:
  – Only a few key concept words from the text are taught.
  – Words are taught in meaningful contexts that address the meaning of the words as they relate to the text.
  – The teaching of vocabulary is related in some way to the student’s prior knowledge.
– Simply presenting definitions is not sufficient to increase students’ vocabulary.
  • The words must be related to one another or the students’ experiences.
– Students are exposed to the word many times over in a variety of situations, such as reading and writing, before ownership of the word is achieved.
– Students are active learners, verbalizing what they are learning and how it relates to their lives.

• Direct teaching of vocabulary must be thorough and over an extended period of time.
  – This limits the number of words a teacher can directly teach.

  – Thus, extensive reading opportunities are suggested for vocabulary development.
(Selecting vocabulary words from text)
Vocabulary Strategies

“The ultimate goal of all vocabulary development is to help students become independent learners who have strategies for inferring the meanings of unknown words when they encounter them in reading. These students will have extensive vocabulary knowledge that they are able to use in constructing meaning through reading and writing.”

# Vocabulary Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferring meaning from context</td>
<td>Help students learn independent strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of definition (word maps)</td>
<td>Teaches elements of a good definition; a word map helps students visually depict the elements of a given concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic mapping</td>
<td>Integrate prior knowledge and vocabulary learning; a visual representation of a particular concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic feature analysis</td>
<td>Develop word knowledge by comparing words; visual grid depicts how related words differ and how they are alike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preview in context</td>
<td>Use text context to develop word meanings</td>
</tr>
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</table>
KWL Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K - What I know</th>
<th>W - What I want to know</th>
<th>L - What I learned?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

name: ____________________
date: ____________________
Semantic Map
### Semantic Feature Analysis Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>insects</th>
<th>features</th>
<th>6 legs</th>
<th>3 body parts</th>
<th>has wings</th>
<th>lays eggs</th>
<th>bites</th>
<th>stings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bees</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>ants</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mosquitoes</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wasps</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cricket</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading Aloud to Students

Read alouds are an excellent way for students to expand their oral vocabulary, which is the foundation for all other vocabulary learning.


- The reader stops periodically at interesting, unusual or fun words.
- Students can participate in discussion groups afterwards to talk about interesting or new words.
Word Banks

• These are a student’s personal record of words learned or words of interest.
  – The word is recorded on a student’s computer or on a card.
  – The student writes a sentence using the word and relating it to some prior knowledge.
Writing Analogies

Analogies are one of the most difficult vocabulary processes because students must develop a broad sense of the meanings of words through comparisons.

- Gasoline:automobile::electricity:computer
Dictionary Use

The dictionary is very useful when students have tried all their skills and strategies, but still cannot decipher the meaning or pronunciation of an unfamiliar word.
But keep these dictionary cautions in mind:

• Don’t require students to look up isolated words in the dictionary just to write their definitions.
• Don’t use the dictionary as punishment by making students copy pages of the dictionary.
• Don’t assign students the task of looking up and copying the definition of each and every word on the week’s spelling list.
Idioms

• The English language has hundreds of idioms which are unique to it.

• Those idioms make English a very difficult language to learn.
• An **idiom** is a sequence of words that has a meaning beyond the meaning of the component words.
What do these mean?

• Raining cats and dogs
• There’s a frog in my throat
• Jump the gun
• Pay the piper
• Break a leg
• Two components of teaching idioms:
  – Explain the idiom’s specific meaning
  – Promote the student’s understanding by providing examples of the idiom used in context.
Proverbs

- **Proverbs**, also called adages, are meant to:
  - share wisdom
  - teach us how to act
  - provide information from which we can learn something

- Most proverbs are passed orally from one generation to the next as part of the culture.
• However, very famous writers put their proverbs to paper.
  – The most famous United States writer of proverbs was Benjamin Franklin.
  – They can be found in the Bible, or in works by Virgil, Voltaire, Dante, Cervantes and Tolstoy.
Interpreting proverbs is an excellent means for encouraging discussions and critical thinking about language.
What do these proverbs mean?

• Too many cooks spoil the soup.
• Out of the frying pan and into the fire.
• Two heads are better than one.
• Leave sleeping dogs lie.
## English Words From Other Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>bayou</td>
<td>waffle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomato</td>
<td>depot</td>
<td>cookie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tornado</td>
<td>boutique</td>
<td>coleslaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barbeque</td>
<td>chauffeur</td>
<td>boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattress</td>
<td>hamburger</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>kindergarten</td>
<td>pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>numeral</td>
<td>ecology</td>
<td>espresso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>waltz</td>
<td>broccoli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations from other languages

- The most common is the French RSVP.
- Et al.
- Etc.
Two good sites for tracing the origins of words and phrases:

- Wordwizard.com
- Wordorigins.org