Support #1: Volume of Reading

Excerpt from the Guidebooks 2.0 Reading Guide

Volume of Reading in the Guidebooks

The background knowledge a reader possesses directly affects how well that person is able to understand a complex text. For example, according to research by Recht and Leslie in 1988, knowledge of the topic of the text (in this case, baseball) has a greater impact on the ability of the reader to understand the text than having a higher reading level. What the researchers found is that students with lower reading ability but more knowledge of baseball performed better on questions about a baseball passage than did students with higher reading ability but less knowledge about baseball. Thus, the general world knowledge students bring to a text impacts their ability to understand it. Knowledge is gained through experiences and text (print and nonprint). Students who read a wide variety of texts about different topics gain information about the world when travel or other experiences are not possible. Knowledge can also be gained by watching informational videos about similar topics being read. For example, the guidebooks include **Let's Set the Context videos** to support this knowledge development for diverse learners.

The size of a reader's vocabulary also directly affects how well that person can read a complex text. While there are multiple ways to learn **vocabulary**, research has shown that most vocabulary is learned through reading. Thus, those who can read well often do more reading, which helps them learn more words, thus making them better at reading over time. Conversely, those who don't read well often do less reading, which means they learn fewer words, thus making them worse at reading over time.[3] Therefore, it is essential that students are engaged in reading lots of texts throughout their K-12 experience, both during class and on their own.

Ensuring students are engaged in a volume of reading can be accomplished in several ways. For example:

1. Work with the school librarian to promote student reading for pleasure through reading clubs and **associations** and award programs (e.g., **Louisiana Young Readers' Choice** and **Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice**).
2. Schedule time in the school day for students to engage in independent reading (e.g., during club time).
3. Block ELA time (e.g., go from 45 minutes per day to 90 minutes per day) for teachers to have more time to engage students in independent reading.

It is important to note, however, that engaging students in a volume of reading works best when the following conditions are also met:

- Students select books which are of interest to them, as this increases the likelihood they will persist with reading a book that is complex.[4]
- Students read multiple books on the same topic (similar to how the guidebook units are designed), as this increases background knowledge and **vocabulary knowledge**.
- Students are held accountable for their understanding of what they read.

Accountability for independent reading is necessary, but it should also not be cumbersome for students, as one of the goals of engaging students in independent reading is to increase their enjoyment in reading. One way to hold students accountable is to ask them, at a few points in their reading, to talk or write about the text based on a grade-level standard. For an example, view an **independent reading log** from a grade 8 guidebook unit.

Support #2: Word Displays

The Basics

What? A display of vocabulary words that students can reference

When? As new words are encountered in texts

Why? Provides support for learning new vocabulary and creates a record of new words that can be referenced when students are reading and writing

Student Outcomes

This strategy helps students understand vocabulary as the read and refine their language skills in support of writing about texts.

How to Implement

1. Select an area of the classroom that is visible to all and large enough to display words
2. Prior to reading a text, select words from the text that will be the focus of vocabulary instruction and write them on the display.
3. Introduce and teach the words, engaging students in a discussion of the word meanings.
4. After reading the text, students may contribute additional words from the text that were not selected by the teacher.
5. Use the wall interactively throughout the year. Encourage students to use words from the display in their own writing and to continue suggesting additions to the display.

Resources for Additional Information

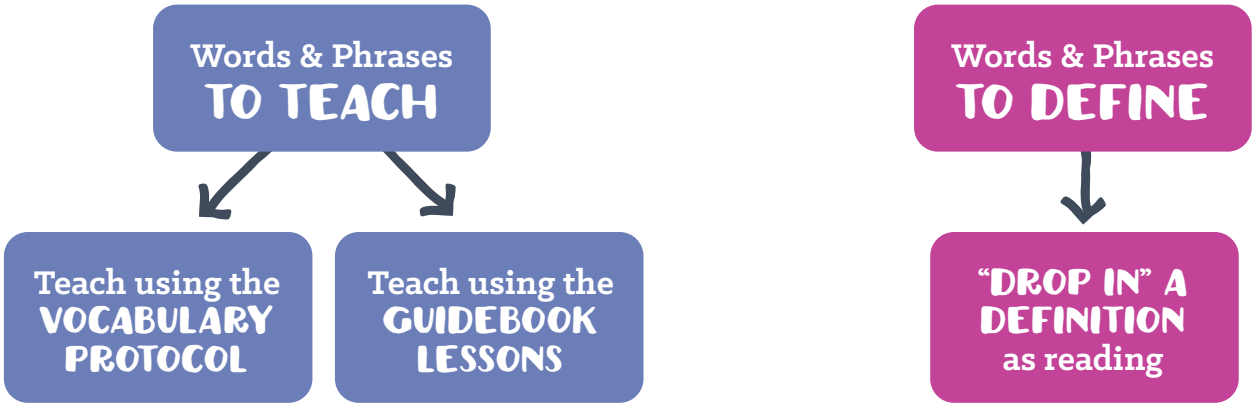
- Brief blog that describes this strategy in more depth
- Article which describes different types of word walls for content vocabulary
- Article from ReadingRockets.org that includes links to additional resources
- Examples of how to use in lessons: Grades 3-5, Grades 9-12

There are two sets of words and phrases in the guidebook units:

- Words and phrases to teach
- Words and phrases to define

Words and phrases to teach include words and phrases likely to appear in future texts students will read, important to understanding the text, not a commonly known synonym for a concept or idea most students know, and/or that have different senses or meaning in different contexts. For example "cling" is far more than a synonym for "hold" and should be taught. "Blemish" is both a skin condition and a negative action or event in a person's work history, so it is worth teaching explicitly.

Words and phrases to define are also important to students' ongoing language development, but they take less time to teach. These include words and phrases that are concrete, have a commonly known synonym, and/or can be easily explained in 2-3 words. For example, "accustomed" can be easily defined as "used to."



Identify vocabulary using the **Academic Word Finder** and/or the words identified for each unit.

General Protocol for Explicitly Teaching Vocabulary[3]

1. **Presentation**: Present the word or phrase in context.
2. **Definition**: Guide students to use context clues, word parts (i.e., prefixes, root words, suffixes), or word relationships (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, etc.) to develop a student-friendly definition.
3. **Explanation**: Ask students to explain the word or phrase orally or in writing with words and/or pictures.
4. **Connections**: Help students make connections. For example:
   a. Have students classify or compare the new word and phrase with other known words (e.g., identify synonyms or **word families** or write analogies).
   b. Show a short video that illustrates a real-life context.
   c. For English language learners, connect the word to the home language or identify **cognates**.
5. **Application**: Direct students to use the word or phrase in new contexts. For example:
   a. Ask students to answer questions about the text that require them to use the word or phrase.
   b. Have students participate in wordplay or games with the word or phrase, such as acting out the meaning.

3 Each step can be taught across several lessons or combined into a single lesson. Some of these steps, such as steps 3-5, can be completed for homework. Make decisions about how and when to teach vocabulary based on students' knowledge and vocabulary needs.

Support #4: Let's Set the Context Videos

Example from the Grade 8 Flowers for Algernon Unit

Flowers for Algernon: Let's Set the Context Videos

These instructional videos are for students who need extra support with the content and texts in advance of the unit.
Assign one or more videos to those selected students to watch on their own on any device.

These instructional videos are for students who need extra support with the content and texts **in advance of the unit**. Assign one or more videos to those selected students to **watch on their own** on any device.

- Students encounter stopping signs across the video when they pause to complete part of a handout.
- Students need a printed handout for each video.

Video 1

What is a Rorschach Test?

These instructional videos are for students who need extra support with the content and texts in advance of the unit. Assign one or more videos to those selected students to watch on their own on any device. Students encounter stopping signs across the ...

Video 2

The Character of Prometheus

These instructional videos are for students who need extra support with the content and texts in advance of the unit. Assign one or more videos to those selected students to watch on their own on any device. Students encounter stopping signs across the ...

Video 3

Characterization in Frankenstein

These instructional videos are for students who need extra support with the content and texts in advance of the unit. Assign one or more videos to those selected students to watch on their own on any device. Students encounter stopping signs across the ...

Support #5: Have Student Read Additional Texts on the Topic

Excerpt from the Supports Flow Chart

Ahead of the unit, assess students' knowledge of content and ideas not taught in the unit but needed to understand the unit texts. For students who demonstrate limited background knowledge, help them build background knowledge in advance of the unit. For example:

Ask students to read additional texts to demonstrate understanding.

- Texts on the unit topics but at their reading level (not leveled versions of unit texts)
- Texts about similar topics happening in other locations around the world (e.g., Prior to teaching the American Revolution unit, have students read a text about a revolution in a country in which they are familiar.)