

## VOCABULARY: A significant relationship with (and contributor to) comprehension

### Principles for Effective Teaching of Vocabulary and Associated Concepts (Stahl, 1986, 1999)

1. Students need to develop an understanding of both the context in which the words are used and the definitions of the words.

Example: SMOKE in the context of fire, in the context of cigarettes, in the context of someone's temper, in the context of car exhaust, etc.

2. Students must engage in "deep" processing of words/concepts.

Example: HONESTY

Define: "Honesty" means "telling the truth" (a memorized definition)

Give example: Describe a situation where you were honest.

Generate: Why is honesty important in politics?

3. Students need multiple exposures to words/concepts if they are to be remembered and used. Looking up a word in a dictionary, writing a definition, and using the word in a sentence does NOT count as multiple exposures to the word/concept. Words must be used and "grappled with" in order to be remembered – some researchers say as many as 40 exposures are necessary.

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### **Developing Effective Practices in Vocabulary Instruction**

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Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12 (pg. 107).  
Stenhouse Publishers. Portland, Maine. 1999.

<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Time for reading</li><li>➤ Use of varied, rich text</li><li>➤ Opportunities for students to hear or use words in natural sentences contexts</li><li>➤ Use of concrete contexts when possible (pictures, artifacts)</li><li>➤ Opportunities for students to use words in meaningful ways</li><li>➤ Opportunities for students to connect new words/concepts to those already known</li><li>➤ Study of concepts rather than single, unrelated words</li><li>➤ Explicit concept instruction and incidental encounters with words</li><li>➤ Teaching strategies leading to independent word learning</li><li>➤ Finding the word or concept that will have the biggest impact on comprehension rather than "covering" many words superficially</li><li>➤ Opportunities for inference</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Looking up definitions as a single source of word knowledge</li><li>➤ Asking students to write sentences for new words before they've studied the word in depth</li><li>➤ Notion that all words in a text need to be defined for comprehension</li><li>➤ Using context as a highly reliable tool for increasing comprehension</li><li>➤ Assessments that ask students for single definitions</li></ul>