



Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities



Many English learners do not have the chance to learn academic vocabulary words in a manner that allows them to use the vocabulary in reading, writing, and class discussions. This often leads to students struggling to understand text. The Common Core State Standards require students to learn, understand, and apply general and content-area-specific academic vocabulary. English learners must learn academic vocabulary as part of the core curriculum standards.



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Choose a brief, engaging piece of informational text that includes academic vocabulary as a platform for intensive academic vocabulary instruction.
2. Choose a small set of academic vocabulary for in-depth instruction.
3. Teach academic vocabulary in depth using multiple modalities (writing, speaking, listening).
4. Teach word-learning strategies to help students independently figure out the meaning of words.

Potential roadblocks

1. Schools may have specific conditions in place that do not allow teachers to select interesting or informational texts outside of the set curriculum.
2. Teachers may not have time to provide intensive vocabulary instruction.

Reference: Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., . . . Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/19>



How to carry out the recommendation

1. Choose a brief, engaging piece of informational text that includes academic vocabulary as a platform for intensive academic vocabulary instruction.

Interesting informational text may include articles from a newspaper or the Internet that align with the essential learning objectives. Pick texts that are appealing and captivating to students, contain academic vocabulary, provide adequate descriptions to enable comprehension, and allow for discussion from many viewpoints. Grade-level text should be utilized along with comprehension support through a read-aloud and a vocabulary discussion at the start of the lesson.

2. Choose a small set of academic vocabulary for in-depth instruction.

Choose a narrow collection of academic vocabulary words for intensive instruction over time so that students can develop a deeper understanding of words that are potentially the most useful for them throughout their schooling. Research suggests choosing five to eight words from the text for intensive vocabulary instruction. There are six criteria for choosing words for intensive instruction; the words must be essential to text comprehension, repeat throughout the text, appear in other subject areas, have more than one meaning, and have added prefixes and/or suffixes.

3. Teach academic vocabulary in depth using multiple modalities (writing, speaking, listening).

Exposing students to academic vocabulary in multiple ways will help them use new words in multiple ways. For explicit vocabulary instruction, be sure to define words in an accessible way and implement new words by connecting them to the text and explaining and strengthening definitions through illustrations, non-illustrations, and factual portrayals. Other exercises might include having students show knowledge of multiple uses and meanings of a word, facilitating discussions where students may use new words, assigning students written tasks where they must use new words, and immersing students in other tasks that allow them to use new words through oral and written language. Examples of these activities can be found on pages 18–21 of the practice guide referenced on the first page of this document.

4. Teach word-learning strategies to help students independently figure out the meaning of words.

It is crucial to increase independent reading skills for English learners by teaching methods for making sense of unfamiliar vocabulary when reading. Instructional focuses could include looking at parts of words (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.), finding context clues, and recognizing cognates. Sample activities and lessons can be found on pages 23–29 of the practice guide.

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Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Schools may have specific conditions in place that do not allow teachers to select interesting or informational texts outside of the set curriculum.</i>	Current English language arts standards require the use of complex, nonfiction texts. Proactive administrators support teachers in this transition by making it a schoolwide priority. Good sources for locating nonfiction, complex texts include core reading program materials, trade books, and public websites.
<i>Teachers may not have time to provide intensive vocabulary instruction.</i>	Collaboration between grade-level teams is an efficient time to identify essential vocabulary, build instructional models, and determine effective teaching methods. This collaboration is best implemented when the team has common planning time.



For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.