Language and Literacy Development in PreK–1st Grade: Words and More
About REL West

• 10 regions
• Bridging research, policy, and practice
• Funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
Speakers

Pamela Spycher
WestEd

Thea Fabian
Fresno Unified School District
Goals for Today’s Webinar

• Learn about how to boost young children’s academic language use, with a special focus on vocabulary and language-rich environments

• See an example of interactive academic vocabulary instruction to get ideas for your classroom

• Discuss ways to incorporate daily academic language learning in fun and engaging ways
Framing the Session: What we’ve heard from teachers...

- Will young dual language learner (DLL)/English learner (EL) children be confused if we try to teach them academic vocabulary? Shouldn’t we start with “basic” vocabulary first?

- I’m not sure how to support children to use more academic vocabulary when they speak and write.

- I teach my students vocabulary words but don’t hear them using them or see them in their writing.

- I wish I knew how to help my kids be more curious and excited about words.
The Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC)

Scaffolding thinking, discussion, reading, and writing

- Building the field
- Exploring the language of text types
- Jointly constructing texts
- Independently constructing texts
- Reflecting on own texts

Goal: Student Autonomy

What we learned about in our first webinar

What we’ll learn about today
- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Lots of exposure to new vocabulary

Adapted from Derewianka (2011), Gibbons (2015), Spycher & Linn-Nieves (2014)
Evidence-Based Practices in Focus Today

1. Provide interactive book reading experiences that support higher-order thinking and oral language development

2. Teach academic vocabulary words intensively and over time using a variety of approaches

3. Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills and daily time for students to write

Comprehensive Vocabulary Learning in PreK–1

- **Wide Exposure**: A wide variety of culturally relevant books, both fiction and non-fiction

- **Wide Reading**: Frequent interactive read alouds using complex texts

- **Promoting Home Language Vocabulary Development**

- **Explicit Vocabulary Instruction**

- **Wide Use**: Abundant opportunities to use new words in speaking and writing

- **Word Consciousness**: Language play
Vocabulary Development through Interactive Read Alouds

During the read alouds:

• New words are explained, and students say the word chorally, sometimes with a gesture

• Students are prompted to use the words as they discuss comprehension questions

• New words are charted and/or posted on a word wall

**Student Pair-share Questions:**

What does CJ encounter in his neighborhood?

CJ encounters _____.

---

**appreciate**

When you appreciate something, you feel happy or lucky to have it.

---

**LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET**

Words by Matt De La Peña
Pictures by Christian Robinson
After repeated readings, the children engage in scaffolded practice where they jointly retell the story, using the new vocabulary and other language.
Comprehensive Approach

Wide and incidental exposure to new words

PLUS

Explicit instruction in authentically using a select set of new words
Explicit Vocabulary Instruction: 3-Step Teaching Routine (1)

How to choose a word worthy of instruction:

Select a general academic vocabulary word that is:

• From the complex text, with which the children have already engaged at least once

• Useful for better understanding the text and topic

• Useful for effectively communicating about this and other texts and topics

Source: Spycher, Garegnani, & Fabian (2019).
Different Types of Words:

- Everyday (Tier 1) words: Basic, everyday words that most native English-speaking children know when they come to school (e.g., “chair,” “go,” “happy”)

- General Academic (Tier 2) words: High-utility academic words likely to be useful across disciplinary areas, such as “search,” “nibble,” and “describe”

- Domain-specific (Tier 3) words: Discipline-bound academic words that carry content meaning, such as “pollen” and “metamorphosis”
Some Words We Might Consider…

appreciate

surrounded

encounter

freedom

witness
Examples of “Encounter”
Anatomy of a Lesson Plan
General Academic Vocabulary Teaching Routine

- Introduce the Word: (2 min.)

- Children Use the Word Meaningfully: (5 min.)

- Check for Understanding & Develop Word Knowledge Over Time: (1 min. plus repeatedly over time)

Source: Spycher, Garegnani, & Fabian (2019).
Phase 1: Introduce the Word

Step 1: Say the word, and have students say it, and briefly tell students where they heard it

• Say the word, have students say it, write it or show a word card, clap the syllables

• Briefly situate the word in its original context

Step 2: Provide a student-friendly definition

• Say the definition twice, breaking up the sentence(s) into chunks, and then have the students echo the definition once

Step 3: Explain the meaning of the word more fully in the context of the text

Step 4: Provide examples where the word is used in other contexts. Include visuals or gestures
Phase 2: Have the Children Use the Word Meaningfully (the heart of the lesson)

Step 5: Students use the word meaningfully in a think-pair-share (T-P-S) conversation

• Ask the students a guiding question suggesting a scenario or context in which the word is used

• Provide THINK TIME and models

• Have students share with a partner using an open sentence frame
Phase 3: Check for Understanding & Develop Word Knowledge Over Time

Step 6: Ask short-answer questions to clarify and deepen understanding

• Check for understanding. If students don’t respond as anticipated, stop and clarify the word’s meaning in the context of the example

Step 7: Repeat the word chorally and challenge them to use the word frequently

• Today we learned a new word, and that new word is “__________” (students say chorally). I want you to try and use the word when you talk and write as much as you can this week, and when you go home, I want you to teach the word to someone in your family.
CJ and Nana was this
at the stop kision
CJ said I glad we're her Nana said
I glad I'm too.

CJ encounters The
music in The bus.

music ripts CJ up
The bus.
A book chock full of general academic vocab... ...and fun!
Selecting general academic words (and an occasional phrase/saying)...
Going through my candidates to select words for the general academic vocab lessons.
One of my winners: admire
Writing my script...especially in the beginning and when working as a team:

“We are going to learn a new word today and the word is admire. Say admire. Clap the syllables, ad-mire. In Spanish, this word is ‘admirar,’ which sounds almost the same.

The word admire comes from the book that we read this morning called “Wolf.” In the story the wolf was going to read the book every day and every night and he would read it so well that the other farm animals would admire him.”

This part can be super fun standing up as you transition them into the exercise and to introduce your special word of the day with energy, delight, and expression!
Gosh “student-friendly” ...what do you mean?

“When you admire someone, you think they are really great or wonderful.”

Make an “admire” gesture with hands around face
Repeat – prompt kids to gesture

“When you admire someone, you think they are really great or wonderful.
Repeat after me: When you admire someone”

Students repeat

...“you think they are really great or wonderful.”

Students repeat

“Let’s say it all together: When you admire someone, you think they are really great or wonderful.”

If it’s a verb:

• When you pounce..., you...
• When you concentrate..., you...
• When you demonstrate..., you...

If it’s an adjective:

• Someone who is impressive......
• Someone who is considerate...
• Something that is disruptive....
Show them where you found it and help them get the meaning!

“**Remember** when we read this story earlier? In the story, the wolf wanted to be like the farm animals and wanted them to like him, so he had to learn how to read. He thought if he learned how to read, they would think he is wonderful or would admire him. What did the wolf want the farm animals to do?”

*Gesture to students to repeat admire*
Examples

• I admire my teacher because she helps everyone to learn.
• I admire my grandma. She’s 85 years old and she takes salsa-dance lessons.
• I admire my friend Pablo because he always helps everyone.
• We admire people who do kind things for other people in need.
Things to remember

When planning this I...
• try to think of and write examples that the students can connect with quickly and that reinforce the meaning for the students.

When teaching this I...
• speak very intentionally and ask them to show me their thinking faces.
• watch their faces for signs of listening closely and processing.

When the students are familiar with the routine, I...
• prompt them with the gesture during or following the example for them to say the target word to add some miles on the tongue!
Selecting visuals that aid understanding and that are relatable and fun
“Why might you admire rescue workers?”

Give think time

Demonstrate that you are really thinking about this and think aloud in front of the kids:

“Hmm, I admire them because they help people.
Hmm, I admire them because they save people’s lives.
I admire them because...
I admire them because...
Let’s practice that together: I admire them because...

Now let’s take out our mini microphones (or your secret cave) and practice how we want to respond. If you need to, you can use one of my examples or think of your own!

Please turn to your partner and share.”
Notice how this second question can be more challenging linguistically.

“Why would/might you admire a friend?”

Give think time and model an example.

“I would admire a friend if he helped the teacher in class.

I might admire a friend if she is very kind.

I would/might admire a friend…”

Use mini microphones or secret cave practice when needed/wanted, then turn to your partner.

That second question is an opportunity to bring in even more rich language into the sentence frame so kids get an added benefit in building their academic language skills.
Play the game well!

Train your kids to hold their thoughts while your hand is held by your face or at your chest or mouth. When you release, then they can say “admire” with the gesture, or “not admire.” They will nearly burst with anticipation but everyone will get a chance to think!

- A boy who helps his teacher clean up a classroom every day
- A girl who throws trash on the floor
- Children who run a long race even faster than the grown-ups
- A child who pushes other children in line
- A student who sits on the carpet and keeps his hands to himself
Some things to keep in mind...

• This will feel slow...at first

• Kid-friendly definitions are hard to write...at first

• Keep interacting with the kids...everything’s a conversation

• Have fun and don’t worry too much over “doing it the right way.” Get the major components in there and get learning with your kids!

• Don’t underestimate the power of “Miles on the Tongue”

• Look for many opportunities to do this...once a day?
**Working Smart**

Make a plan for your shared work from the start that everyone can access and add to.

**Share the load**

Divide and conquer as a work team but create several together first and help each other figure it out.

---

**Files**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Modified</th>
<th>Modified By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Academic Vocab Lesson Templates</td>
<td>About a minute ago</td>
<td>Thea Fabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Academic Vocab Lessons A-C</td>
<td>About a minute ago</td>
<td>Thea Fabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Academic Vocab Lessons D-I</td>
<td>A few seconds ago</td>
<td>Thea Fabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Academic Vocab Lessons L-R</td>
<td>A few seconds ago</td>
<td>Thea Fabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Academic Vocab Lessons S-Z</td>
<td>A few seconds ago</td>
<td>Thea Fabian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Want to Learn More?

Visit our Leading with Learning website at https://leadingwithlearning.wested.org/
Let’s Continue the Conversation…
Join Our Facebook Community
The Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd provides scientifically valid research findings that help meet the education needs in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

Our staff draw from existing high-quality research, as well as conduct research and development projects and experimental studies. We also help stakeholders interpret evidence and build their own research capacity.

This webinar was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0012. The content of the presentation does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.