Vocabulary Instruction
Booster Session 2:
Defining Vocabulary Words
Grades 5–8
Acknowledgments

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**Introduction**

Explicit and robust vocabulary instruction can make a significant difference when we are purposeful in the words we choose to teach our students. Our goal in explicitly teaching these words is to help students gain ownership of the words by developing a deep understanding of them, improving students’ ability to comprehend text.

**Research Results**

*Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (2nd Edition)
By Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan
“Results of Frequent, Robust Instruction” (pp. 86–87)

Research was conducted wherein students receiving robust vocabulary instruction were compared to two additional groups of students—those not receiving instruction and those receiving traditional, definition-based instruction. Effects of frequency of encounters with vocabulary words were also compared.

Results showed that students receiving frequent, robust instruction did the following:

1. **Responded more quickly** to word meanings in timed tasks
2. **Better comprehended** stories containing target words
3. **Engaged in complex thinking** and knowledge of words being assessed
4. **Put target words into context**

Students receiving definition-based instruction could provide the basic definition of each word but could not make sense of all target words within the context of their reading.

Observations demonstrated “word ownership” for students who knew words well and used them easily and appropriately. These students appeared to take pride in their use of the target words and developed “word awareness” in both their environment and in general.
A Quick Note About Tier 2 vs. Tier 3 Words

The purpose of teaching Tier 2 words is to help students with reading comprehension. It is important to choose words to explicitly teach that will help students better comprehend text across multiple genres and content areas. Providing students with engaging deep-processing activities through which to explore a word allows students to develop a more fluid understanding of the word and its application in multiple contexts.

Often, people ask why we focus on teaching Tier 2 words through the explicit vocabulary routine learned during the Vocabulary and Oral Language Development training instead of focusing on Tier 3 words. The simple answer is that these words need to be explicitly taught, too! However, instead of teaching these words through the explicit vocabulary routine, Tier 3 words need to be taught in the context of classroom instruction. So, for example, when introducing the word *photosynthesis*, begin by saying the word and providing the definition. Then, students can make connections between this word and other concepts related to how plants convert light energy into food. This example shows how a student’s schema develops around a word in the context of the content being taught.

Tier 2 words are used often in written text, appear across a variety of domains, can be used in a variety of ways to connect to other words, and provide precision in describing a concept. For example, *convert* is a Tier 2 word that students see across a variety of contexts.

Tier 3 words are content-specific words. For example, *photosynthesis* is a Tier 3 word that students would study in science class.
Purpose

The following booster sessions were developed to support implementation of explicit vocabulary instruction of Tier 2 words, as presented during the Vocabulary and Oral Language Development training. The booster sessions break down the content learned during this training into manageable chunks that can be delivered to teachers as they begin the implementation process. Each session was developed by using classroom observation data and feedback from teachers to ensure that the explicit vocabulary routine and deep-processing activities are implemented correctly.

Booster Sessions

- Session 1: Choosing Words to Teach
- Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words
- Session 3: Examples and Nonexamples
- Session 4: Deep-Processing Activities

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction: Week at a Glance

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<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Activities:</td>
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<td>• Have students say the word.</td>
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<td>• Provide a student-friendly definition.</td>
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<td>• Use the word in a sentence.</td>
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<td>• Provide examples and nonexamples.</td>
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<td>• Provide an initial student engagement activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Post the word and its definition.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To build presenter background knowledge prior to delivering these sessions, read the following:

Vocabulary Instruction Booster Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words
Grades 5–8

This booster session will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

Presenter Materials

• Presenter handouts
• Chapter 3 of *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (2nd edition) by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan
• Chapter 3, pages 65–67, of *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* by Anita L. Archer and Charles A. Hughes
• Grade-specific text: *The Family Under the Bridge* by Natalie S. Carlson
• Computer with Internet access
• Document camera
• Bookmark
• Modeling Routine card set (see Preparation below) and paperclips

Participant Materials

• Bookmark (one per participant)
• Participant handouts
• Tier 2 words previously selected for instruction

Preparation

• Read Chapter 3 of *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Flag pages 44, 46, and 47 for presentation.
• Read pages 65–67 from *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*.
• Review the website [http://onelook.com](http://onelook.com).
• Ensure that the room you will use has a document camera and Internet access.
• Ask teachers to bring the Tier 2 words previously selected for upcoming instruction.
• Use the provided handout to create the Modeling Routine cards. Copy the first page on colored card stock and cut out the words; copy the following pages on white paper.
• Copy and distribute the bookmark (one per participant) and participant handouts.
• Affix to the inside cover of the grade-specific text a sticky note listing all of the words selected in the previous session.
Set the Purpose and State the Goal  

5 minutes

Materials: Bookmark

Before we get started learning this new content, let’s review what we learned about choosing words to teach, and I will answer any questions you have. As we all know, explicit and robust vocabulary instruction can make a significant difference when we are purposeful in the words that we choose to teach our students. Our goal in explicitly teaching these words is to help students gain ownership by developing a deep understanding of the words.

During the first booster session, we learned how to select appropriate words to use with the explicit vocabulary routine. Your bookmark is a handy tool that summarizes these criteria.

During today’s session, we will use the work of Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan in *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* to learn how to “develop initial word meaning information” that we can use when we introduce vocabulary words, using the explicit vocabulary routine.

By the end of today’s session, we should be able to help students develop initial word meaning by using a student-friendly definition, an illustrative sentence, and a student engagement prompt.

Let’s review the criteria for identifying Tier 2 words on your bookmarks.

Criteria for Identifying Tier 2 Words

**Importance and Utility**

Words that are used often in written text and appear across a variety of domains: *Is this a word students will see in a variety of texts?*

**Instructional Potential**

Words that are multidimensional and, therefore, can be used in a variety of ways to connect to other words and concepts: *Is this a word that can help students express themselves?*

**Conceptual Understanding**

Words that provide greater precision in describing a concept: *Is this a word that will allow students to more specifically describe a concept?*

Words that are important to the conceptual understanding of the selected text: *Is this a word that is critical to comprehending the text?*
Introduction

10 minutes

Materials: Computer, document camera, Dictionary Definitions presenter handout, flagged version of Bringing Words to Life, Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words participant handout

Why can we not just use the definitions in the dictionary? As an example, let’s look at how the word covert is defined in a few different dictionaries.

Display http://onelook.com on the computer and enter the word “covert.”

Onelook.com provides definitions from numerous dictionaries at once. When I enter the word covert, look how many different dictionaries I can choose from, each with various definitions of the word.

Display the Dictionary Definitions presenter handout on the document camera.

Here are five of the first definitions linked from the website. What do you notice?

The first thing I notice is that the definitions are very different from one another. Additionally, no definition seems to be all that helpful in ensuring that students understand the meaning of the word.

Use the document camera to display page 44 of “Bringing Words to Life.”

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan looked at dictionary definitions and how they can be confusing, identifying four features that detract from understanding meaning:

• **Weak differentiation:** The definition does not explain how the word is different from similar words. For example, in one dictionary definition, the word conspicuous is defined as “easily seen,” which is very similar to the definition for the word visible. A more accurate definition would be “something that appears to be inappropriate for a situation.”

• **Vague language:** The definition does not provide a specific explanation of the word—for example, using “being a type” to define the word typical.

• **More likely interpretation:** The definition does not explain the word in the way it is most often used. For example, the word devious defined as “straying from the right course” might lead a student to think that devious refers to someone getting lost.

• **Multiple pieces of information:** Some definitions provide a few similar words separated by semicolons but do not explain how the words relate to one another—for example, the word exotic defined as “foreign; strange; not native.” A better definition might be “something that is special or unusual because it comes from a distant place.”
Introduce the Steps

Today we will learn three steps for introducing students to a word. Your handout Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words lists these steps. You will use this handout throughout this session, so keep it handy.

Pause for participants to locate the handout.

The first step is to build a student-friendly definition.

In Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan identified two principles to employ when building a student-friendly definition:

- First, **highlight what is unique or particular** about the word. Ask yourself: “How is the word typically used? What do we try to communicate when we use this word?”
- Then, **use student-friendly language** to explain the meaning.

Let’s take a look at how the authors use these principles to define the word *covert*.

*Display pages 46 and 47 of “Bringing Words to Life.” Lead the group through the authors’ discussion of creating a student-friendly definition for “covert.”*

Let’s look at one more example.

*Display page 47 of “Bringing Words to Life” and lead the group through the authors’ discussion of creating a student-friendly definition for “improvise.” Then, review the remainder of Step 1 from the handout.*

Returning to the handout, the next step is to draft a sentence that you can share with students to demonstrate how the word is used.

The final step is to determine how students will initially interact with the word. Some examples include using think-turn-talk, thumbs-up and thumbs-down, and visuals. Let’s briefly look at each of those.

*Review the examples on the handout.*

I Do

**Materials:** I Do Activity participant handout, New York Times article key presenter handout, document camera

I now will model the steps for developing student-friendly explanations of vocabulary words.

For this activity, you will need your I Do Activity handout.
Pause for participants to locate the handout.

Imagine that I am a ninth-grade teacher preparing to read the article from last session from *The New York Times* as part of a nonfiction genre study. I have selected the following words to teach: *confined, stimulus, and subsequent*. For this activity, we will concentrate on explaining *subsequent*. First, read how the word is used in the article.

*Display the article key on the document camera. Pause for participants to read. Then, introduce Step 1 below.*

**Step 1:**

**Build a student-friendly definition.**

First, I locate a dictionary definition that best aligns with the contextual use of my word. I have used [onelook.com](http://onelook.com) to find the three definitions on your handout, which I will use to build my student-friendly definition. Here are the definitions:

- *Macmillan Dictionary*: “happening or coming after something else”
- *Collins English Dictionary*: “occurring after; succeeding”
- *Vocabulary.com*: “following in time or order”

Each definition provides the same meaning, though none would fully ensure that students understand the meaning of the word. So I will build one that is student friendly. Reviewing the three definitions, I see common words, such as *happening* or *coming after*, *occurring after*, and *following*. Common words will provide a good foundation for my student-friendly definition.

Remember, we want to highlight the uniqueness of the word. I think the *Macmillan* definition does that best.

Next, we want to be sure the definition uses student-friendly language, is easy to understand, and contains only known words. To do that, I review the definition to identify words that may be unfamiliar to my students, in much the same way as I would review text to identify words to teach. I do not think any of these words would be unfamiliar to my ninth-grade students.

Finally, I check whether the definition indicates how the word is used in the text and is anchored with one of the following words: *something, someone, or describes*. These components are not present in the *Macmillan* definition. Therefore, I have revised the definition. *Subsequent* is an adjective, which is used to describe a noun. As a result, I will add the word *describes* to the definition to indicate how the word is used. Adding this language also addresses the suggestion to anchor the definition with one of the following words: *something, someone, or describes*.

So, my student-friendly definition for the word *subsequent* is “describes something that happens or comes after something else.” In this case, my student-friendly definition is very similar to the *Macmillan Dictionary* definition.
Step 2:
Write a sentence that demonstrates to students how the word is used.

For subsequent, I have written this sentence: “When the dentist found a cavity on Monday, a subsequent appointment was scheduled for the following Friday to have the cavity filled.”

Step 3:
Determine how students will initially interact with the word.

For the word subsequent, I will have students respond yes or no by showing a thumbs-up or thumbs-down for the following examples:

1. Would the subsequent math lessons make more sense to Ariel after she went to tutoring? Why or why not?
2. If you failed a test, would you hope the teacher would make subsequent tests a little easier? Why or why not?

We Do 15 minutes

Materials: Grade-specific text, We Do Activity presenter and participant handouts, document camera, Modeling Routine cards

We will now use the words we previously selected from The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie S. Carlson to practice this process and the thinking behind it together.

For this activity, you will need your We Do Activity handout.

*Pause for participants to locate the handout. Display the list of words on the sticky note attached to the inside cover of the book.*

Imagine that I am a fifth-grade teacher preparing to read this book as part of our realistic fiction genre study. I have read the book and selected the words that I think will be unknown to my students, including the following: monsieur, cathedral, cowered, hidey-hole, hyacinths, can’t abide, dignity, Gypsy, fastidious, loitering, adventure, and quay. Of this list, I noted that the following are Tier 2 words: cowered, dignity, and loitering. I now need to develop student-friendly definitions to use as part of my explicit vocabulary routine for each of the words I selected. For this activity, we will focus on the words dignity and loitering.

First, let’s check some dictionary definitions. Like before, I used onelook.com to find the definitions on your handout. Let’s look at those now.

*Use the document camera to display only the definitions on the presenter handout. For now, cover the rest of the handout.*
Step 1: 
Build a student-friendly definition.

With a partner, you will use the definitions on the handout to develop a student-friendly definition for one of the words.

*Assign each pair one of the words, “dignity” or “loitering.”*

As a reminder, your student-friendly definition should do the following:

- Highlight the uniqueness of the word
- Be stated in everyday language that is easy to understand and that contains only known words
- Indicate how the word is used
- Be anchored with one of the following words: something, someone, or describes

*Provide time for partners to work.*

*When they finish, have partners share their definitions. Open the floor for comments and suggestions. Finally, display the student-friendly definitions on the presenter handout.*

Step 2: 
Write a sentence that will demonstrate to students how the word is used.

With your partner, write a sentence that shows how your assigned word is used.

*Provide time for partners to work.*

*When they finish, have partners share their sentences. Open the floor for comments and suggestions. Finally, display the sentences on the presenter handout.*

Step 3: 
Determine how students will initially interact with the word.

Now you will work with your partner to develop a student engagement prompt for your assigned word.

As a reminder, here are some examples of engagement prompts:

- Think-turn-talk: Provide a prompt for students to share their understanding of the word with a partner.
- Thumbs-up/thumbs-down: Provide strategic examples that engage all students in determining meaning.
- Visuals: Provide a visual to illustrate the student-friendly definition. Remember to be cautious about the visual you select. Use only visuals that clearly and accurately communicate the meaning when introducing a word.
Provide time for partners to work.

When they finish, have partners share their student engagement prompts. Open the floor for comments and suggestions. Finally, display the prompts on the presenter handout.

Model the Routine

Take out your Modeling Routine cards.

I will now model how I would introduce the words *dignity* and *loitering*, using the explicit vocabulary routine and my student-friendly explanations. You will be my students. Let’s begin.

Today we will learn two new words. The first word is *dignity*.

*Show the word card for “dignity.”*

Say it with me: *dignity*.

*Show the definition card and paperclip the word to the definition.*

The word *dignity* is a noun. Dignity is the ability to behave in a calm, respectful way, even in a difficult situation. For example: Jacob demonstrated dignity by not talking back to the opposing team, even though they were trash-talking.

Let’s talk with our partner about the word *dignity*. Discuss with your partner a time that you witnessed someone showing dignity.

*Call on a few participants to share their conversation.*

The next word is *loitering*.

*Show the card for the word “loitering.”*

Say it with me: *loitering*.

*Show the definition card and paperclip the word to the definition.*

The word *loitering* is a verb. To loiter is to stand or sit in a public place with no real purpose or reason. For example: The principal walks the halls between classes and tells students who are loitering to go to class.

Let’s practice our understanding of the word *loitering* by talking with our partner.

Are Girl Scouts loitering when they stand outside of stores, selling cookies? Why?

*Call on a few participants to share their conversation.*
You Do  

15 minutes

Materials: Tier 2 words that participants will use in upcoming instruction, You Do Activity participant handout

Now, take out the Tier 2 words you will teach next week.

*Pause for participants to locate their words.*

Working with a partner, select one word and complete the three steps for developing student-friendly explanations of vocabulary words. Fill out your You Do Activity handout with your ideas. Feel free to consult your handout that lists the three steps. I will come around to provide support.

*Provide time for pairs to work.*

*Then, call on some pairs to share their student-friendly explanation.*

Close the Lesson  

5 minutes

Materials: Computer

Today we used onelook.com to find dictionary definitions to help us build our student-friendly definitions. There are several other online dictionaries that may be helpful to you.

*If time permits, display and explore the following websites on your computer.*

- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: [www.ldoceonline.com](http://www.ldoceonline.com)
- Merriam-Webster Word Central: [www.wordcentral.com](http://www.wordcentral.com)
Presenter Handouts

Vocabulary Instruction
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(noun) the ability to behave in a calm, respectful way, even in a difficult situation
(verb) to stand or sit in a public place with no real purpose or reason
Choosing Words to Teach

Criteria for selecting Tier 2 words:
1. Importance and utility
2. Instructional potential
3. Conceptual understanding

Step 1
Highlight words in the text that are likely to be unfamiliar to your students.

Step 2
Circle the words that could be categorized as Tier 2 words.

Step 2a
Decide which of the Tier 2 words will need thorough attention.

Step 3
Underline additional words, other than the Tier 2 words you selected in Step 2a above, necessary for your students to understand the text. Decide how you will teach these words (e.g., pairing/parallel language, showing a picture). Add these notes to the text.

Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002).
### Dictionary Definitions

**covert (adj.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dictionary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language</em></td>
<td>Not openly practiced, avowed, engaged in, accumulated, or shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Collins English Dictionary</em></td>
<td>Concealed or secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vocabulary.com</em></td>
<td>Secret or hidden; not openly practiced or engaged in or shown or avowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Macmillan Dictionary</em></td>
<td>Secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary</em> (11th Edition)*</td>
<td>Not openly shown, engaged in, or avowed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Describes something that is done in a hidden or secret way”  
*(Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013, p. 47)*
The New York Times

Not Grass-Fed, but at Least Pain-Free

February 19, 2010
By Adam Shriver
Op-Ed Contributor

More animals than ever suffer from injuries and stress on factory farms. Veal calves and gestating sows are so confined as to suffer painful bone and joint problems. The high-grain diets provided in feedlots cause severe gastric distress in many animals. And faulty or improperly used stun guns cause the painful deaths of thousands of cows and pigs a year. Because the amount of red meat that Americans eat per capita has held steady at more than 100 pounds a year as the population has increased, we are most likely stuck with factory farms. But it is still possible to reduce the animals' discomfort—through neuroscience. Recent advances suggest it may soon be possible to genetically engineer livestock so that they suffer much less.

Scientists have learned to genetically engineer animals so that they lack certain proteins that are important to the operation of the anterior cingulate cortex, a part of the brain that senses pain. Prof. Min Zhuo and his colleagues at the University of Toronto, for example, have bred mice lacking enzymes that operate in effective pain pathways. When these mice encounter a painful stimulus, they withdraw their paws normally, but they do not become hypersensitive to a subsequent painful stimulus, as ordinary mice do.

Given the similarity among all mammals' neural systems, it is likely that scientists could genetically engineer pigs and cows in the same way. Because the sensory dimension of the animals' pain would be preserved, they would still be able to recognize and avoid, when possible, situations where they might be bruised or otherwise injured.

If we cannot avoid factory farms altogether, the least we can do is eliminate the unpleasantness of pain in the animals that must live and die on them.

If we cannot avoid factory farms altogether, the least we can do is eliminate the unpleasantness of pain in the animals that must live and die on them. It would be far better than doing nothing at all.

Adam Shriver is a doctoral student in the philosophy-neuroscience-psychology program at Washington University.
### We Do Activity Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Student-Friendly Definition</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Student Engagement Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| dignity (noun) | the impressive behavior of someone who controls their emotions in a difficult situation  
Macmillan Dictionary  
the state or quality of being worthy of honor  
Collins English Dictionary  
in the quality of being worthy of esteem or respect  
Vocabulary.com | the ability to behave in a calm, respectful way, even in a difficult situation | Jacob demonstrated **dignity** by not talking back to the opposing team, even though they were trash-talking. | **Think-turn-talk:**  
Discuss with a friend a time that you witnessed someone showing **dignity**. |
| loitering (verb) | standing or waiting in a public place for no particular reason  
Macmillan Dictionary  
to stand or act aimlessly or idly  
Collins English Dictionary  
to hang around a place with no real purpose, usually somewhere where you are not welcome  
Vocabulary.com | to stand or sit in a public place with no real purpose or reason | The principal walks the halls between classes and tells students who are **loitering** to go to class. | **Think-turn-talk:**  
Are Girl Scouts **loitering** when they stand outside of stores, selling cookies? Why or why not? |
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Participant Handouts
Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words

1. **Build a student-friendly definition.**
   - Highlight what is unique or particular about the word and identify its typical use.
   - Use student-friendly language to explain the meaning (Beck et al., 2013).
   - The definition should be “easy to understand, contain only known words, and indicate how the [word] is used” (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p. 65).
   - The definition should match how the word is used in the text from which it was selected (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).
   - Consider anchoring the student-friendly definition with one of the following words: something, someone, or describes.

2. **Write a sentence that will demonstrate to students how the word is used.**

3. **Determine how students will initially interact with the word.**
   Examples include the following:
   - Think-turn-talk: Provide a prompt for students to share their understanding of the word with a partner.
   - Thumbs-up/thumbs-down: Provide strategic examples that engage all students in determining meaning.
   - Visuals: Provide a visual to illustrate the student-friendly definition.

   **Note:** Be cautious about the visual you select. Tier 2 words usually do not have a concrete way to illustrate the meaning. Use only visuals that clearly and accurately communicate meaning to introduce a word. Use all other visuals later in the week (e.g., as a deep-processing activity) after students have had a few exposures to the word used correctly in context.
## I Do Activity

<table>
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<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Student Engagement Prompt</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subsequent</td>
<td>happening or coming after something else</td>
<td>describes something that happens or comes after something else</td>
<td>When the dentist found a cavity on Monday, a <strong>subsequent</strong> appointment was scheduled for the following Friday to have the cavity filled.</td>
<td><strong>Yes or No?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>occurring after; succeeding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>following in time or order</td>
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</table>

### Yes or No?

1. Would the **subsequent** math lessons make more sense to Ariel after she went to tutoring? Why or why not?

2. If you failed a test, would you hope the teacher would make **subsequent** tests a little easier? Why or why not?
### We Do Activity

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<td><em>Macmillan Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>the state or quality of being worthy of honor</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Collins English Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>in the quality of being worthy of esteem or respect</td>
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<td><em>Vocabulary.com</em></td>
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<tr>
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<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Student Engagement Prompt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>loitering (verb)</td>
<td>standing or waiting in a public place for no particular reason</td>
<td>to stand or act aimlessly or idly</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Macmillan Dictionary</em></td>
<td><em>Collins English Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>to hang around a place with no real purpose, usually somewhere where you are not welcome</td>
<td><em>Vocabulary.com</em></td>
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### You Do Activity

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References


Review Points
Planning Session 2:
Defining Vocabulary Words
Review Points Planning Session
for Booster Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words

The purpose of this planning session is to practice key concepts learned in Booster Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words with teachers who continue to struggle with introducing Tier 2 words by providing student-friendly definitions, illustrative sentences, and student engagement prompts and to help these teachers apply this knowledge to plan for upcoming instruction. It is anticipated that this planning session will include a small number of teachers. The decision to provide this planning session should be based on classroom observations of vocabulary instruction and discussions with teachers about helping students to develop an initial, meaningful connection with Tier 2 words introduced during the explicit vocabulary routine, as described below.

Observation of Tier 2 Vocabulary Instruction

Use the provided Vocabulary Instruction Observation Form to collect classroom observation data. Ideally, observe teachers on multiple occasions to determine the need for additional support. The three dotted sections below focus on the key concepts learned in Booster Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words.

---

Vocabulary Instruction Observation Form

| Teacher: _____________________ | Grade level: _____________________ | Date: _____________________ | Time: ____________________ |
---|---|---|---|

**EXPLICIT VOCABULARY ROUTINE**

- The teacher introduces the words: "Today we will learn the word _____.”
- Students say the words: "Let’s say the word together: _____."
- The teacher provides student-friendly definitions: "We will study a definition for the word _____.”
- The teacher provides examples and nonexamples of the words that help students connect the words to prior knowledge and experience: "An example of the word _____.”
- Students interact with the words: "Let’s talk with our partner about the word _____.”

**DEEP-PROCESSING ACTIVITIES**

Throughout the week, the teacher provides activities to deepen students’ understanding of the words by having students do the following:

- Use the words
- Explore facets of word meaning
- Consider relationships among words

---

**NOTES**

- Vocabulary Words Student-Friendly Definitions

Did the teacher use an illustrative sentence when introducing each word?

Write the student-friendly definition for each Tier 2 word in the space below. During your observation, note whether all students understood the student-friendly definition.

---

| Vocabulary Words | Student-Friendly Definitions |
---|---|
---|---|
Debriefing Sessions With Teachers About Tier 2 Vocabulary Instruction

Meet with teachers to determine whether they have a clear understanding of how to plan for introducing Tier 2 words through the explicit vocabulary routine. Use the following questions and the data collected on the observation form to facilitate this discussion:

- Using the student-friendly definitions you provided, did all students understand the meaning of the Tier 2 words? If not, how did you modify the definition(s) to ensure that students understood the meaning of the word(s)?

- How did you help students connect to the Tier 2 words you introduced during the explicit vocabulary routine?

Preparation

To prepare for this session, start by reviewing the content from Booster Session 2. Copy the handouts for distribution to each participant. Ask teachers to bring copies of the texts they will teach in the upcoming week. Ensure that teachers have access to the website onelook.com, which provides multiple dictionary definitions of words. Remember, the purpose of this session is to plan actual lessons for implementation in the classroom.

Decide how much time to spend on the session components, described below, based on your implementation data (approximate times are provided for each session component on the following pages):

- **Review of Key Concepts**: Review the key concepts from the booster session with participants prior to planning.

- **Planning**: The goal is to enable participants to apply what they have learned as they plan their explicit vocabulary instruction lessons for the week. Keep in mind that the participants should do most of the work, as they will plan actual lessons to implement in the classroom. As the presenter, your role is to ensure that participants understand the content, keep participants on task, and answer any questions regarding planning or implementation.
Defining Vocabulary Words

Review of Key Concepts

During the second booster session, we used the work of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) to learn how to “develop initial word meaning information,” including a student-friendly definition, illustrative sentence, and student engagement prompt, to use when introducing Tier 2 words through the explicit vocabulary routine.

*Ask participants to take out their Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words handout.*

*Read aloud and review the steps with participants. These steps are adapted from “Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction” (2nd Edition) and “Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching.”*

As an example, during the second booster session we developed a student-friendly explanation for the word *subsequent*, including a student-friendly definition, illustrative sentence, and student engagement prompt. Let’s review this process.

Take out your Model handout, which is a completed planning template for the word *subsequent*.

*Provide time for participants to locate the handout.*

**Step 1:**
**Build a student-friendly definition.**

The first step was to build a student-friendly definition for the word *subsequent*. Remember, the goal in developing a student-friendly definition is to ensure that all students have a clear understanding of the word—versus simply using the definition provided in a dictionary, which may be confusing to students.

We began by using onelook.com to locate a few dictionary definitions that aligned with the contextual use of the word to build our student-friendly definition. We looked for commonalities among the three definitions we identified. Common words included the following: happening or coming after, occurring after, and following. We used these words to provide the foundation for our student-friendly definition.

Next, we made sure that the definition highlighted the uniqueness of the word, used student-friendly language, was easy to understand, and contained only known words. To do that, we reviewed the definitions to identify words that could be unfamiliar to students—in much the same way that we would review text to identify words to teach—but did not find unfamiliar words.

Finally, we checked whether the definition indicated how the word was used in the text and anchored the definition with the word describes, as *subsequent* is an adjective used to describe a noun.

Our student-friendly definition for the word *subsequent* was “describes something that happens or comes after something else,” which, by the way, is very close to the definition in the Macmillan Dictionary.
Step 2:
Write a sentence that will demonstrate to students how the word is used.

Next, we wrote a sentence that we could use to demonstrate to students how the word is used. For *subsequent*, we wrote the following sentence: “When the dentist found a cavity on Monday, a *subsequent* appointment was scheduled for the following Friday to have the cavity filled.”

Step 3:
Determine how students will initially interact with the word.

Our final step was to determine how students would initially interact with the word. For the word *subsequent*, we planned to have students respond “yes” or “no” by showing a thumbs-up or thumbs-down for the following examples:

1. Would the *subsequent* math lessons make more sense to Ariel after she went to tutoring? Why or why not?
2. If you failed a test, would you hope the teacher would make *subsequent* tests a little easier? Why or why not?

Planning

Let’s apply what we just reviewed to develop student-friendly explanations for the Tier 2 words you have selected to teach in the upcoming week.

Take out the Tier 2 words you will teach next week, your Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words handout, and your Planning Template for Booster Session 2 handout.

*Provide time for participants to locate their words and handouts.*

Select one Tier 2 word that you plan to teach next week. Complete the Planning Template handout for your word by developing a student-friendly definition, drafting a sentence that you can share with your students to demonstrate how the word is used, and determining how you want students to initially interact with the word—for example, develop a prompt for students to share their understanding of the word with a partner.

Then, check your definition against the criteria listed in Step 1 of the Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words handout.

*Provide time for participants to work.*

Share with a partner the student-friendly explanation you created for your word. As one partner shares the definition, the other partner should ask the following guiding questions:

- Does the definition highlight what is unique or particular about the word and identify its typical use?
- Does the definition use student-friendly language to explain the meaning?
❑ Will the definition be easy for students to understand?

❑ Does the definition indicate how the word is used in the text?

Partners should answer “yes” to all of the questions. If not, discuss what would make the definition better. For example, you may want to consider anchoring the definition with one of the following words: something, someone, or describes.

Next, ask how your partner will have students engage with the word on the first day of instruction.

When the first partner is done sharing, switch roles.

Provide time for partners to work.

Did you find this process to be easy? If not, what did you find difficult?

Have partners share their responses, clarifying that it is important for teachers to work together to develop student-friendly definitions.

Continue the process until all Tier 2 words have student-friendly explanations.

Have partners use their completed Planning Templates to share with the group their student-friendly definitions, sentences, and student engagement prompts. The completed handouts can then be copied for each participant to use when planning for upcoming instruction.

Practice Introducing the Tier 2 Words, Using the Explicit Vocabulary Routine

You will now practice introducing to your partner each of the Tier 2 words you planned for today, using the explicit vocabulary routine.

First, let’s review that process. To introduce a Tier 2 word through the explicit vocabulary routine, do the following:

• Say the word.
• Have students say word.
• Provide a student-friendly definition.
• Use the word in a sentence and/or provide examples and nonexamples.
• Provide an initial student engagement activity.
• Post the word and its definition on a word wall.

Note to presenter: Depending on the needs of your teachers, you may want to prepare to model this process. If so, use the Modeling Routine card set included in the booster session.

Provide time for the pairs to introduce each of their Tier 2 words, using their completed handout.
Review Points
Planning Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words
### EXPLICIT VOCABULARY ROUTINE

- The teacher introduces the words.
  
  "Today we will learn the word _____."

- Students say the words.
  
  "Let's say the word together: _____."

- The teacher provides student-friendly definitions.
  
  "We will study a definition for the word ______."

- The teacher provides examples and nonexamples of the words that help students connect the words to prior knowledge and experiences.
  
  "An example of the word ______."

- Students interact with the words.
  
  "Let's talk with our partner about the word ______."

### DEEP-PROCESSING ACTIVITIES

Throughout the week, the teacher provides activities to deepen students’ understanding of the words by having students do the following:

- Use the words
- Explore facets of word meaning
- Consider relationships among words

### NOTES

- All vocabulary words and definitions are posted.

### Vocabulary Words

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<tr>
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Observation number: ________  Observed by: __________________________

Teacher: _____________________  Grade level: _____________________  Date: __________  Time: __________
Review Points
Planning Session 2: Defining Vocabulary Words
Steps for Developing Student-Friendly Explanations of Vocabulary Words

1. **Build a student-friendly definition.**
   - Highlight what is unique or particular about the word and identify its typical use.
   - Use student-friendly language to explain the meaning (Beck et al., 2013).
   - The definition should be “easy to understand, contain only known words, and indicate how the [word] is used” (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p. 65).
   - The definition should match how the word is used in the text from which it was selected (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).
   - Consider anchoring the student-friendly definition with one of the following words: *something, someone, or describes.*

2. **Write a sentence that will demonstrate to students how the word is used.**

3. **Determine how students will initially interact with the word.**
   - Think-turn-talk: Provide a prompt for students to share their understanding of the word with a partner.
   - Thumbs-up/thumbs-down: Provide strategic examples that engage all students in determining meaning.
   - Visuals: Provide a visual to illustrate the student-friendly definition.

   **Note:** Be cautious about the visual you select. Tier 2 words usually do not have a concrete way to illustrate the meaning. Use only visuals that **clearly and accurately** communicate meaning to introduce a word. Use all other visuals later in the week (e.g., as a deep-processing activity) after students have had a few exposures to the word used correctly in context.
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<tr>
<td>subsequent</td>
<td>happening or coming after something else</td>
<td>describes something that happens or comes after something else</td>
<td>When the dentist found a cavity on Monday, a subsequent appointment was scheduled for the following Friday to have the cavity filled.</td>
<td>Yes or No?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>occurring after; succeeding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>following in time or order</td>
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**Yes or No?**

1. Would the **subsequent** math lessons make more sense to Ariel after she went to tutoring? Why or why not?

2. If you failed a test, would you hope the teacher would make **subsequent** tests a little easier? Why or why not?
Planning Template for Booster Session 2

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