Four Practical Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction

By: Patrick Manyak, Heather Von Gunten, David Autenrieth, Carolyn Gillis, Julie Mastre-O'Farrell , et al.

Drawing on instructional materials, classroom images, and observational data from research, the authors illustrate these principles: establishing efficient, rich routines for introducing target word meanings; providing review activities that promote deep processing of word meanings; responding directly to student confusion; and fostering universal participation in and accountability for vocabulary instruction.

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Literacy researchers and teachers have shown an increased interest in vocabulary instruction over the past decade. In 2000, the National Reading Panel identified vocabulary instruction as one of the five essential components of reading instruction, and a large body of research indicates the critical role vocabulary knowledge plays in reading comprehension (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005; Baumann, 2009; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997, Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge is emphasized throughout the highly influential Common Core State Standards, with the word vocabulary occurring more than 150 times in the document. Specifically, the standards make the requirement to "Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, pp. 25, 51) an anchor standard at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Given this growing awareness of the importance of students' vocabulary development, it is unsurprising that scholars have recently published a number of useful volumes that seek to enrich teachers' knowledge and practice in the area of vocabulary instruction. Books such as Beck and McKeown's (2013) *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (2nd ed.), Kame'enui and Baumann's (2012) *Vocabulary Instruction: Theory to Practice* (2nd ed.), Blachowicz and Fisher's (2010) *Teaching Vocabulary in All Classrooms* (4th ed.), Stahl and Nagy's (2006) *Teaching Word Meanings*, and Graves's (2009) *Teaching Individual Words: One Size Does Not Fit All* are brimming with instructional activities for teaching word meanings and other facets of word knowledge.

We turned to these sources in our own vocabulary research, a federally funded project aimed at developing, implementing, and researching a comprehensive, multifaceted vocabulary instruction program (MCVIP) in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms (Manyak, 2010). However, during three years of observation in MCVIP classrooms, we identified an additional set of practical principles — principles that MCVIP teachers translated into everyday activities and actions — that enhanced the effectiveness of their word-meaning instruction. In this article, we draw on data from the MCVIP Project to describe and illustrate these principles in order to help other teachers maximize the benefits of their vocabulary instruction.

In the following sections, we briefly discuss basic premises related to vocabulary knowledge and general guidelines for effective vocabulary instruction and provide an overview of the MCVIP Project. We then offer a more thorough presentation of the four principles that are the focus of the article.

Pause and Ponder

- Think about your current word-meaning instruction. Do you teach a high number of target words, provide efficient yet rich introduction to these words, and review the words in ways that promote deep processing? Which of these elements could be improved based on the approaches presented in this article?
- How might you adapt the instructional examples in the article for the primary grades?
- The introduction of the article stresses the need for consistent emphasis on vocabulary instruction throughout the elementary grades. How might this article and the principles it presents promote schoolwide discussion and enhancement of vocabulary instruction at your site?

Basic premises about vocabulary knowledge and schooling

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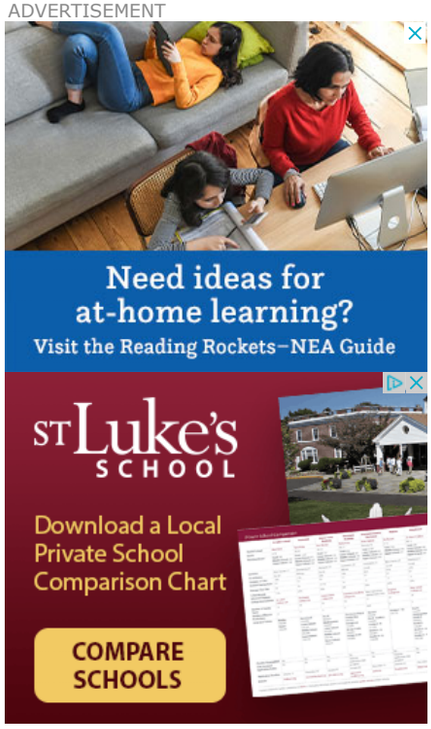

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A large body of research underscores four key facts about children's vocabulary knowledge. First, many children, particularly among those from low-income and non-English-speaking families, face a large deficit in English vocabulary knowledge upon entrance to and throughout the elementary school years (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Hart & Risley, 1995; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990). Second, schooling has largely been unable to eliminate this deficit (Biemiller, 2005; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990). Third, the continuing deficit in vocabulary knowledge experienced by many students represents a major obstacle to academic achievement in vital areas such as reading comprehension (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). Finally, the vocabulary deficit experienced by many students is so large that it will take a multiyear approach to vocabulary instruction to substantially impact it (Biemiller, 1999; Nagy, 2005). Taken together, these facts underscore that a limitation in vocabulary knowledge represents a key obstacle to long-term academic success for many students and point to the urgent need for teachers and schools to improve the quality of vocabulary instruction across grade levels.

General guidelines for vocabulary instruction

Research has produced several important general guidelines to aid teachers in developing effective approaches to voca-bulary instruction. We find three of these guidelines to be particularly cogent.

First, the fact that the average high school student knows about 40,000 words (Nagy & Herman, 1987) indicates clearly that students must learn many more word meanings than teachers can explicitly teach. Consequently, vocabulary instruction should be multifaceted, incorporating the teaching of individual words, the development of word learning strategies and the fostering of word consciousness (Baumann, Ware, & Edwards, 2007; Graves, 2006).

Second, teachers should vary their approach to teaching word meanings based on the nature of the target words (Graves, 2009; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Graves (2009) has stressed the idea that "one size does not fit all" with regard to teaching word meanings, given that words differ in nature, ranging from concrete nouns like peninsula that are easily represented by visual images to densely conceptual terms likedemocracy that require a great deal of knowledge-building to understand, and that goals for student learning for a given word may range from beginning awareness to mastery.

Third, reviews of research on vocabulary instruction stress the limited effectiveness of instruction that focuses narrowly on dictionary definitions and support instruction that presents words in a variety of contexts, provides multiple exposures, and promotes students' active processing of new meanings (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

These three guidelines provide general recommendations for planning vocabulary instruction. The books that we mentioned in the introduction go a step further, describing many instructional activities that teachers can use to operationalize these guidelines in classrooms. However, during the MCVIP Project, we found that optimal word-meaning instruction involved not just following general guidelines and implementing research-based activities but also applying a set of pragmatic principles that enhanced the feasibility, clarity, participatory nature, and accountability of word-meaning instruction.

The MCVIP Project: approach, setting, and research

The MCVIP Project, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences and led by James Baumann, Patrick Manyak, and Camille Blachowicz, was a three-year research study that focused on the design, implementation, and refinement of a multifaceted, comprehensive vocabulary instructional program in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms of mixed English learners and native English speakers. The research team believed that Graves's (2006) four-part framework for vocabulary instruction represented a starting point for developing a powerful vocabulary instructional program for these grades. Graves's framework consists of the following components: (a) providing rich and varied language experiences, (b) teaching individual words, (c) teaching word-learning strategies, and (d) developing word consciousness. Through close collaboration with participating teachers, ongoing observations of vocabulary instruction, and analyses of student assessment data, the team refined a set of teaching activities that collectively addressed these four components (Manyak,2010).

The pragmatic principles that we share in this article result from analysis of qualitative data collected at Highline School, a Northern Colorado school serving a population that consisted of 90% children who received free and reduced lunch and 50–60% Spanish-speaking ELs. Three of Highline's fourth- and fifth-grade teachers, David Autenrieth, Carolyn Gillis, and Julie Mastre-O'Farrell, participated in the project for three years; a fourth teacher, Elizabeth Irvine-McDermott, joined for the final year.

Over the course of the project, the researchers and teachers met roughly twice a month during the school year to discuss the project, and researchers observed in MCVIP classrooms weekly. In addition, students took pretests and posttests on general vocabulary knowledge and specifically taught words and on other aspects of word learning. Overall, quantitative findings were very positive, as students in all three years of the project showed more than expected growth on a standardized test in general vocabulary knowledge and very large positive effect sizes on specifically taught words (Graves et al., 2014).

We identified the instructional principles we describe in this article through reading and coding field notes of classroom observations and team meetings. They are highly influenced by the teachers' own commentary on their experience of MCVIP instruction. In Table 1, we succinctly outline the four principles that we found to enhance the quality of word recognition instruction in the Highline School classrooms. In the remainder of the paper, we describe and illustrate each of these principles in greater detail.

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Table 1. Four Pragmatic Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction

1. **Establish Efficient yet Rich Routines for Introducing Target Words**
   Intensive, multifaceted vocabulary instruction can take a significant amount of instructional time. Thus, efficient, rich routines for introducing word meanings are critical when teaching a large number of target words.
2. **Provide Review Experiences That Promote Deep Processing of Target Words**
   In addition to the need for efficiency in target word instruction, students benefit from active and deep processing of word meanings. Ongoing review should be used to provide students with multiple exposures to target words and to promote deep processing.
3. **Respond Directly to Student Confusion by Using Anchor Experiences**
   Students can easily become confused when learning new word meanings. Such confusion can spread from student to student, and teachers should thus respond directly to inaccurate usages by providing students with clear anchor definitions and examples.
4. **Foster Universal Participation and Accountability**
   Students with greater vocabulary knowledge can dominate word-meaning instruction, causing other students to become passive. Therefore, it is important to foster universal participation in vocabulary activities and to hold all students accountable for learning word meanings.

Establishing efficient yet rich routines for introducing target words

Within the first weeks of the MCVIP Project, the team realized that multifaceted vocabulary instruction could take up a significant amount of class time. By design, MCVIP included a diverse set of instructional activities aimed at a variety of vocabulary objectives, and it quickly became apparent that spending too much class time on any single activity made it difficult for the teachers to balance comprehensive vocabulary instruction with many other instructional necessities. In particular, we found that the teachers' introduction of target word meanings took much longer than we had anticipated.

In addition to calling students' attention to a wide assortment of words in many instructional settings, MCVIP teachers taught 12 high-priority target word meanings through focused instruction each week. Their basic approach to target word instruction involved a combination of rich introduction and ongoing review. In planning for MCVIP, we developed a model for introducing typical target words, based on Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2013) text talk approach, that would be fast-paced yet still provide students with varied exposures to and active engagement with the words. Table 2 provides an example of the six steps included in this model.

Table 2. The VP Model for Introducing Target Word Meanings

1. Present the **word in the context** in which it appears in text (whenever possible): "the attendants *insisted*…"
2. Provide a **kid-friendly definition:** *Insist* or, the past tense, *insisted* means someone tells you strongly that you have to do something, like my mother *insisted* that I do my homework before watching TV.
3. Provide **multiple examples of use:** I might say, "Our coach *insisted* we run the play until we got it right." Or, "I was hot, but my sister *insisted* I close the window." Or, "His mother *insisted* that he clean up his room before his friend came over."
4. Prompt **student use:** Think of all the things that your parents *insist* that you do. Who can share one? Make sure that you use the word *insist*, like "My mom *insists* that I…"
5. Show and briefly discuss a **visual image:** Look at this picture. Who can explain why I am showing you this picture for the word *insist*?
6. Conclude with a **thought question** and/or a **quick interactive activity:**
   - *Thought Question:* Do you think it is better for your reading when a teacher *insists* that you read challenging books or when you can choose any books you want? Try to use *insist* in your answer.
   - *Interactive Activity:* OK, ready for a little quiz? I am going to say a sentence. If someone in the sentence insisted on something, say *insist*. If not, don't say anything.My dad's boss told him he had to work late, even though my dad didn't want to.My teacher let us choose what we wanted to do for P.E.

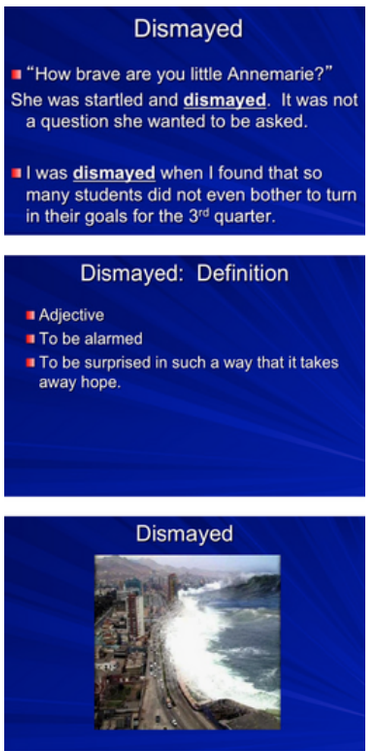
Our early observations of this routine revealed that the teachers had a difficult time moving efficiently through this sequence of steps, frequently making additions such as engaging students in a discussion of what they thought a word might mean before presenting the definition, discussing connections between the words and other texts or content that the class had studied, or elaborating on student example sentences and allowing students to engage in tangential discussion based on such examples. Although we recognized that many of these instructional moves could support the students' developing understanding of the word meanings, the overall effect of these additions was to substantially increase the time required for introducing word meanings. For instance, Patrick (first author) observed Carolyn (fourth author) spend 30 minutes introducing seven target words, a lesson that was targeted for 15 minutes (field notes, 2/16/10).

As the teachers gained more experience with the target word introduction lessons and the researchers prompted them to continue to focus on pacing, the routine became more efficient in each of the classrooms. Reflecting on this development, the teachers stressed that it was important for them to realize that the students would continue to interact with the target words through ongoing review and thus that mastery of the meanings did not need to occur in the initial introduction. This recognition freed the teachers to move briskly through the word introductions with the confidence that review sessions would allow for additional examples, further connections, and deeper learning.

Although the teachers utilized the six-step MCVIP model as a routine for introducing many target words, they found it necessary to diversify their instructional approaches in order to maintain student engagement and to address other aspects of vocabulary learning. However, the team continued to place an emphasis on efficiency as the teachers developed alternative approaches for introducing word meanings.

In one example, David (third author) developed a routine that prompted his students to practice using context clues to infer target word meanings. As illustrated in Figure 1, this routine involved three PowerPoint slides per word. The first slide presented the word as it appeared in the context of the reading selection (in this case, *Number the Stars* [Lowry, 1989]) and also a second example of use featuring more familiar context that David created. David asked the students to think about possible context clues in these examples and called on one or two students to come up and underline phrases that they felt offered insight into the meaning of the target word. David then asked several students to articulate possible meanings for the target word.

Figure 1. Target Word Meaning Introduction Emphasizing Context Clues



Next, he briefly discussed a second slide that provided the part of speech and a kid-friendly definition of the word. Finally, he showed the students a third slide with a visual image related to the target word and asked students to explain how it represented the word's meaning. Patrick observed this lesson, noting that David introduced seven words in 19 minutes (field notes, 1/10/11). Although this pacing was slightly slower than typical word introductions featuring the six-step model, Patrick and David noted that the instruction also provided students with valuable practice in inferring word meanings.

In this section, we emphasized the importance of efficiency in word-meaning instruction and shared two efficient routines that MCVIP teachers used to introduce target word meanings. Importantly, the teachers utilized these routines and a few others consistently throughout the school year. This consistency provided them the opportunity to streamline their implementation of the routines, reducing the amount of class time spent on the activity of introducing target word meanings. And, although the teachers established a brisk pace for these routines, the instruction still provided students with a relatively rich experience of the words that incorporated kid-friendly definitions, multiple examples of use, and active processing of meanings.

We believe that all teachers who commit to teaching a relatively large number of target word meanings will, like the MCVIP teachers, find it necessary to develop and refine a few efficient routines for introducing these words. Although we found that the two MCVIP routines that we have shared here were particularly effective in balancing efficiency and richness and would recommend them to any teacher, we recognize that there are many effective ways of introducing word meanings (Graves, 2009). But, regardless of the specific approaches that teachers may adopt, we stress that teachers should invest time in planning in order to streamline the word introduction routine, stick with a small number of routines and continually seek to refine them, keep instruction focused on providing students with a fast-paced yet varied set of experiences with the words, and plan for review experiences that allow students multiple opportunities to develop deeper understanding of the word meanings.

Providing review experiences that promote deep processing

Several reviews of vocabulary instruction research have pointed to the vital role of students' deep processing of new word meanings (Stahl & Fairbanks,1986; Beck & McKeown,1991). The MCVIP team identified deep processing experiences as those involving comparing and contrasting word meanings, teasing out nuances of meanings, using words in writing, or applying target words while analyzing texts, characters, and concepts. Given our concern for efficiency during the introduction of target words and the fact that such introductions typically involved a relatively large set of new words, we chose to facilitate deep processing of word meanings during review activities. Such activities typically focused on a small number of words and provided a task that caused students to actively use those words in thinking, discussion, or writing.

The research team asked MCVIP teachers to conduct at least two 15-minute target word review sessions a week. However, the teachers typically found time for brief vocabulary review almost daily. The MCVIP classrooms featured a vocabulary word wall (VWW) that included cards presenting a target word and a corresponding visual image. The VWW pictured in Figure 2 has the target words in categories (from left to right: words from class literature texts, high-frequency words, character trait words, and content words) with different colored backings. In interviews, the teachers underscored the critical nature of these VWWs and of the inclusion of visual images on the word cards, stressing that the students referred to the VWW for a variety of purposes throughout the day and frequently commented on the accompanying images.

Figure 2. Vocabulary Word Wall Used in Ongoing Review

Although the teachers utilized a wide variety of review strategies, the team found that four such strategies were particularly robust in promoting deep processing; thus, the teachers used these activities regularly. Here, we succinctly describe these deep-processing word review activities.

- **Connect Two** (Blachowicz, 1986): Students find two words on the VWW (or one from each of two short columns of 6–10 words from the wall that the teacher has prepared) that are connected and prepare to explain the connection. The teacher calls on students to explain the connection between their two words. Variations: Connect Three; Write the Connection ("*Muffled* and *hoarse* are connected because…"); Content Connect Two ("Look at our social studies word wall. Find a word in the Concepts column and a word in the Actions column that are connected and be ready to explain the connection.")
- **Two-in-One** (Blachowicz, 1986): Students write one or more sentences that use two or more VWW words. Several students read their sentences and the teacher asks others to evaluate the usage of the words in the sentence. Variation: Content Two-in-One ("Look at our science word wall. Find a word in the Concepts column and a word in the Parts and Things column and write a sentence that uses both words.")
- **Character Trait Writing:** Students select a target character trait word and write two to three sentences about how it fits a character in a current or past narrative text. Several students read their texts, and the teacher asks other students to evaluate their usage of the character trait words.
- **Concept Word Précis Writing:** Students select a word from the Concepts column of the VWW and explain it in writing, staying under a word limit set by the teacher (e.g., "Pick a word from the Concepts column and explain what it means in no more than 15 words"). Several students read their texts, and the teacher asks other students to evaluate their explanations.

To give a clearer sense of the deep processing of word meanings that occurred during these review activities, we offer two examples from MCVIP classrooms. The first interaction occurred during Character Trait Writing in Carolyn's class. The students chose one of two character trait words that the class had used to analyze a picture book about Martin Luther King Jr. and wrote briefly about how that word applied to the characters in the story.

Field Notes, 1/20/10, Carolyn's Fifth-Grade Class

Carolyn

> "Tell me why this character trait is important for the story or the character."

Carolyn moves over to a student and asks what word he circled. She says, "So we decided that Martin's dad was frank… Write about why that was important to the story."

Carolyn calls on a student to share. He reads, "I chose the word frank. Someone who was *frank* was Martin Luther King. I thought he was frank because he told the truth that he didn't like segregation."

Another student reads "I chose *dignified*. This character trait was important to MLK because he stood up and told the truth... Mr. Martinez [school principal] is also dignified because he does what is right."

In this brief activity, students focused on the target words *frank* and *dignified*, actively using them to analyze characters in the biography they had heard. Although students had previously engaged in this kind of analysis orally as a class, this was the first time the students were challenged with this writing task. The challenge was apparent, but the students who shared their writing all used the target words effectively.

Here is another example of deep processing that occurred in Carolyn's class, this time during the review activity Two-in-One.

Field Notes, 1/27/10, Carolyn's Fifth-Grade Class

At one table, three students are working individually. Student 1 shares with her neighbor:

> "'Some say the eagle is not a *suitable image* to *represent* our country.' Does that make sense?"

> Carolyn says that she is going to call on students to read their sentences. She states, "Help me evaluate the sentences. Do they keep the definition in the sentence?"

Student 2

> "Mr. Martinez was not showing *generosity* and *repealed* the law of wearing sandals every day to school."

Student 1

"Why was that not showing generosity?"

Student 2
"It was not showing kindness."

Student 3 (suggesting an alternative)
"Mr. Martinez was not showing *generosity* when he *repealed* the law about not bringing snacks."

Student 4 reading
"Martin Luther King *boycotted* for *freedom*."

Carolyn
"He boycotted what? You have to boycott something."

Student 5
"I have a suggestion. I think that he should have told us what he was boycotting. Like, 'Martin Luther King *boycotted* segregated schools for liberty.'"

This was a brief VWW review activity that included writing. The students were all highly engaged in the task, and most were able to produce a successful sentence. Importantly, Carolyn, aware that the task was challenging for students and that they might not use the target words accurately, prompted the students to evaluate the sentences that their peers shared. The students responded by identifying sentences that included incomplete meanings of the target words and suggesting revisions that attempted to improve such usages, thus attending carefully to the nuance of the word meanings.

These examples highlight the deep processing experiences with target word meanings that students in MCVIP classrooms experienced through brief review activities that complemented the efficient initial exposure to target word meanings provided by the introduction routines described in the previous section. We encourage teachers to envision word-meaning instruction as this combination of efficient introductory routines and review activities promoting deep processing.

With regard to the review side of this formula, we believe that the creation of an appealing VWW is an essential first step and suggest that teachers consider following the MCVIP teachers' lead in utilizing images and categorizing words to help students continue to process the word meanings. Next, we recommend that teachers schedule regular, brief review times, thus ensuring that the VWW maintains a "living" presence in the classroom and that students view it as a useful resource. Finally, although we encourage teachers to keep the word review time fresh by drawing on a wide variety of engaging activities, we believe that key activities that promote deep processing, like the four that we describe in this section, should constitute the backbone of ongoing vocabulary review.

Responding directly to student confusion with anchor experiences

Our observations of MCVIP activities underscored the difficulty that students often have learning new target word meanings and, significantly, the ways that confusion over or limited comprehension of such meanings can spread from student to student. A close examination of the struggles that students had grasping word meanings revealed that students frequently latched onto narrow, concrete, or tangential elements of a new meaning, failing to incorporate other aspects of the definition.

For example, during a character trait discussion in David's fourth-grade class, a student rejected the idea that the main character in story the class had read was *perceptive*, arguing that the other characters in the story could visually see what the character saw. The class had previously discussed *perceptive* as meaning "you see, feel, and understand things that other people don't," but the student equated the term solely with the visual act of seeing. David did not explicitly refine this limited meaning; instead, he pointed the students to a potentially more relevant event in the text. Significantly, later in the same discussion, another student used *perceptive* in the same limited way, referring to the physical act of seeing, in discussing another character.

Based on several observations like this that demonstrated how student contributions to discussions of new word meanings occasionally caused wider confusion, the MCVIP researchers encouraged the teachers to explicitly address inadequate word usages by taking students back to what we came to call "anchor experiences": particularly clear, kid-friendly definitions or examples of use. In the following example, David's class again struggled to apply the term *perceptive* in a character trait discussion. In this instance, David provided students with an anchor experience, a kid-friendly definition that the students had previously been given for the word.

Field Notes, 11/3/11, David's Fourth-Grade Class, Character Trait Discussion

The discussion focuses on the character Rosita, whose grandmother had recently died.

Student 1
"She's perceptive."

David
"Why?"

Student 1
"'Cause. I don't know. Pass."

David
"We are talking about the word *perceptive*. Why do we think that Rosita is perceptive?"

Student 2
"Because she felt it."

David
"You feel or sense things that other people don't."

Student 2
"She was the only one who felt her grandma."

Here, two students struggled to apply the term *perceptive* to a character. After an ambiguous response, David stepped in with an anchor definition. This prompted the second student to amplify her comment, more clearly illustrating why Rosita was perceptive.

The interactions in this section represent a common experience in MCVIP classrooms: students expressing incorrect or partial meanings for target words. Given that learning of word meanings is often incremental rather than "all or nothing" (Stahl & Nagy, 2006), this finding is not surprising. However, the examples underscore the importance of teachers directly addressing such misunderstandings. Without correction or amplification, these misunderstandings can spread. By providing students with anchor definitions or examples directly at the moment of need, teachers can support students' developing comprehension and use of novel word meanings.

Fostering universal participation and accountability

Fostering equitable student participation is always an important task for teachers. However, we found this issue to be especially vital during vocabulary instruction in the MCVIP classrooms. As researchers and teachers, we noted early on that we often concentrated on the excellent examples or applications of target words made by "vocabulary virtuosos," students who had more extensive vocabulary knowledge, and failed to recognize that many other students remained passive during vocabulary-oriented discussion. Over time, we began to sense that the non-virtuosos were less engaged in and felt less accountable for learning new word meanings. Consequently, MCVIP researchers stressed the importance of random turn-nomination during voca-bulary activities. This structuring of participation made clear that all students were capable of and responsible for learning and using the target words.

David was strongly committed to universal participation, using two strategies on a daily basis to ensure that all students engaged in vocabulary activities. First, he frequently prompted students to briefly discuss vocabulary in pairs prior to whole-class discussion. Next, he used random turn-nomination during activities, calling on students by picking playing cards and asking the student who had the matching card taped on his or her desk to respond. In the interaction below, David used these strategies while introducing a new set of target words.

Field Notes, 2/9/11, David's Fourth-Grade Class, Target Word Introduction

David

> "Who can tell me what people in our *society* like to do? In a good complete sentence. Tell a partner…" Students share with partners for about 30 seconds.

David asks for examples; drawing a card, he calls on Student 1, an EL student.

Student 1

> "In our society, all people like to go to a pool."

David picks another card and another EL student shares.

Student 2

> "People like to society in video…"

David

> "Close. In our society, people like to play video games."Student 2 "In our society, people (repeating like to play video games."David)

In this case, both students who shared were limited English speakers. When the second student clearly struggled with her sentence, David stepped in and revised her utterance, and she repeated him, resulting in a proper example. This student's willingness to share despite her very limited English illustrates the culture of participation that David established by consistently expecting all students to actively contribute to vocabulary discussions.

The MCVIP team also used formative assessment as another way to establish universal accountability for vocabulary learning. Each week, students filled in cloze sentences for a subset of the target vocabulary. Figure 3 provides an example of a weekly cloze assessment.

Figure 3. Weekly Target Word Cloze Assessment

Lesson 11: Fill-In Sentences

image	injustice	suit
suitable	represent	

1. The writer created a good _____ of the lion hunt.
2. A lion is an animal that really _____ fierceness.
3. It was a real _____ that John did all of the work on the project but didn't get the credit.
4. Spending every day playing outside is a _____ way to spend the summer.
5. I couldn't get the _____ of the car crash out of my mind.
6. The way that the settlers treated the Indians was a great _____.
7. Eating cake and ice cream is a _____ way to celebrate a birthday.
8. The swim team chose an image of dolphin to _____ themselves.

We found that this simple task added a needed dimension of accountability to target word instruction and provided the teachers with useful feedback on student learning. In conclusion, the combined use of techniques that promoted universal participation and of this kind of formative assessment made clear to students that MCVIP instruction was not just for a few vocabulary virtuosos, but rather that they were all responsible for learning new word meanings.

Based on these experiences in our research classrooms, we recommend that teachers plan to use simple strategies such as brief student–student discussion and random turn-nomination to ensure that all students have the opportunity and responsibility to participate in vocabulary discussions. However, as David's example illustrates, including all students in such discussions will likely require teachers to scaffold contributions from students who may have difficulty responding with appropriate examples or usages. So, teachers need to be "on their toes," ready to engage in brief, careful exchanges that enable students to make correct contributions to vocabulary discussions.

We also encourage teachers to consider simple forms of informal vocabulary assessment, such as the MCVIP cloze sentences, that they can use in the classroom on a regular basis. Such assessments not only provide formative feedback on the effectiveness of instruction but also create an atmosphere of accountability with regard to target word learning.

Concluding thoughts

The need for effective vocabulary instruction throughout the elementary grades is absolutely clear (Biemiller, 1999; Graves, 2006; Nagy,2005; National Reading Panel, 2000), and we could recommend several professional books that describe research-informed activities for teaching word meanings (Beck & McKeown, 2013; Blachowicz & Fisher; 2010; Graves, 2009; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). However, as we found out during the MCVIP Project, the use of such activities does not in and of itself guarantee efficient and effective voca-bulary instruction. Rather, such activities require high-quality implementation that maximizes student learning.

In this article, we have described four pragmatic principles that enhanced the quality of word-meaning instruction in the MCVIP classrooms at Highline School and provided examples and suggestions to help teachers incorporate the principles in their own classrooms. These principles were documented and developed during three years of ongoing collaboration among MCVIP researchers and teachers, and we are confident that they will enable teachers using a variety of instructional activities to enhance the effectiveness of their vocabulary instruction.

Take action!

1. Look over your lesson materials and texts for a week of instruction. Be sure to include the content area materials and texts. Select approximately 12 high-priority vocabulary words for the week.
2. Prepare introductions for each of these target words. Try using the MCVIP model for introducing target word meanings or another comparable efficient yet rich instructional routine.
3. Select images to pair with each of these target words and create word wall cards that include each word and an image.
4. Introduce the target words to students across the first day or two of the week. After you do so, begin a vocabulary word wall with your prepared word cards. Consider posting the words in categories as in the MCVIP example.
5. Plan at least two short periods of review of the words on the word wall for later in the week. Try using the MCVIP strategies such as Connect Two, Two-in-One, or Concept Word Précis Writing.
6. Prepare a cloze assessment that includes all or a portion of the target words and a simple spreadsheet to record student scores on a weekly basis. Have the students work on the cloze assessment on the last day of the week. Correct the assessment with students, discussing the proper word for each sentence. Record the student scores and analyze them to determine if the instruction effectively promoted student learning or if certain students need more intensive practice with the words.
7. Reflect on this trial week and consider what adaptations you might make for this kind of instruction to be more feasible or effective in your setting.

References

Patrick C. Manyak, Heather Von Gunten, David Autenrieth, Carolyn Gillis, Julie Mastre-O'Farrell, Elizabeth Irvine-McDermott, James F. Baumann, Camille L.Z. Blachowicz. (2014). Four Practical Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction. The Reading Teacher, 68(1), 13–23 doi: 10.1002/trtr.1299

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Great article.

Submitted by Tammy Farrens (not verified) on October 2, 2019 - 1:39pm

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I've been working with Marzano's 6 steps and creating literacy and vocabulary centers for middle school. I especially like the cloze assessment which gives the students opportunities to use the words in different ways.

Submitted by Lynn Callentine (not verified) on January 12, 2018 - 11:51am reply

Excellent description of strategies in a normally less understood approach.

Submitted by Ray Harris (not verified) on November 10, 2015 - 4:11am

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