

Weapons of Mass Instruction: Vocabulary Strategies Every Teacher Needs to Know

An optimal vocabulary program has four components:

1. it facilitates wide reading
 - books are good
 - remember the 3 Rs (read/read/read)
2. it teaches individual words
 - word lists
 - words taken from reading selections
 - words students know
3. it provides word-learning strategies
 - context cues
 - dictionaries (BEWARE)
4. it fosters word consciousness
 - games are good

Fast Facts

- Average students learn 3-4,000 words each year.
Source: Nagy, W. E. (1988). Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of verbal ability.
Source: Jensen, A. R. (1980). Bias in mental testing. New York: Free Press.
- Vocabulary difficulty strongly influences the readability of texts.
Source: Klare, G. R. (1984). Readability. In P.D. Pearson (Ed.), Handbook of reading research (pp. 681-744). New York: Longman.
- Teaching the vocabulary of a selection can improve students' comprehension of the selection.
Source: Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (1983). Learning words well: A program to teach vocabulary and comprehension. The Reading Teacher, 36, 622-625.

The Dreaded "Vocabulary" Test

Monday Morning
Study for the test!

Vocabulary Words	
1. firkin (n.)	a small wooden vessel or cask
2. straddle (v.)	to walk with legs spread apart
3. tractable (adj.)	easily taught; docile
4. piscatorial (adj.)	pertaining to fishing
5. immure (v.)	To imprison; to shut up in confinement

Friday Morning
Get ready for the test!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

an exercise in context...

Tayshaun's Stryte

Tayshaun blew hard into his stryte, when his sala fropped from downstairs, "Cut out that stryting. You'll bother the clypers." Tayshaun fropped back, "But I need to practice my stryte for the verpand, Sala."

Suddenly, Tayshaun's Wala fropped, "Listen to your Sala, or you'll get no blasurn after supper."

Tayshaun put down his stryte and dreamed of playing like his idol, Dizzy Gillespie. "Someday, I hope tons of folks come to my verpands to hear me play my stryte."

Vocabulary Songs & Chants

Remember to always sing before you take a test!

Take Our Test!

lyrics by Danny Brassell

based on the melody from "Be Our Guest" in Disney's Beauty and the Beast

Take our test! Take our test!
Put your name above the rest.
To the right you write the date there.
Who would ask for any less?
Use a pencil - make it sharp. You are now ready to start.
Read directions very slowly, One by one, part by part.
You'll do great! You'll impress!
You are heads above the rest.
And remember you're the student who's the best.
You're the smartest one.
Now come and have some fun.
Take our test!
Take our test!
Take our test!

Tayshaun's Stryte

*lyrics by Mrs. Gibson's 11th grade English class, Dorsey HS, South Los Angeles
based on "The Muppet Show" theme*

It's time to play my music. It's time to blow my stryte. It's time to practice stryting in my bedroom tonight.

My parents keep on fropping, "You mustn't blow your strytle! We know you love your bugle, but you can't practice tonight!"

My Sala and my Wala, they just don't understand. If I cannot rehearse here, I won't play a verpand.

Though clypers keep complaining, I'll loudly play my strytle. Even if I don't get blasurn. I like ice cream for blasurn.

I'll gladly skip my blasurn, & ignore the clypers, & ignore my Wala, & ignore my Sala who keeps on fropping, so I can play my strytle in a verpand!

** Gestures to songs reviewed during Danny's presentation.*

Part 1: Optimal Vocabulary Programs Facilitate Wide Reading

- FVR/SSR/USSR/DEAR = provide kids with lots of books and let them read them
- Teacher Read Alouds
- Brassell's Hypothesis : TR + CE + BT + LIB = SWLR
- Translated: Time to Read + Comfortable Environment + Book Talks + Lots of Interesting Books = Students Who Love Reading
- Find cool short book (adult, young adult & children's) recommendations at: www.lazyreaders.com
- Remember: The most important thing that you can do to enhance your students' vocabulary is to remember the 3 Rs: Read, Read, Read!

Part 2: Optimal Vocabulary Programs Teach Individual Words

- How do we choose what words to teach?
 1. Word lists (e.g. high frequency words)
 2. Words based on reading selections
 3. Ask students which words they know
- Ideas:
 - Environmental Print
 - Student Created Labels/Realia
 - Magnetic Boards
 - Word Construction Centers
 - Flannel Boards
 - Word Walls with Words
 - Synonym Squeeze
 - Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy
- Word learning is often situationally specific
- Word learning is incremental
- Words need multiple exposures in varied contexts

The Language Living Room

The English language is like a living room: it has accumulated quite a bit of “stuff” over the years. English has adopted, adapted, created and manipulated a variety of words.

With a partner, write down examples of:

- Blends (e.g. brunch)

- Clips (e.g. prep, plane)

- Abbreviations (e.g. NCLB)

- Acronyms (e.g. scuba)

Part 3: Optimal Vocabulary Programs Provide Word-Learning Strategies

Dictionary/map

- Sending students to dictionaries to learn words is ineffective unless they already know something about the words.
- Students need to learn how to choose appropriate entries and how to understand them.
- Understanding a word from a dictionary is a difficult metalinguistic task, especially since some definitions are more complicated than the words in question.
- Remember that different types of words require different types of instruction. Not all words are completely foreign concepts to students.

Context Cues

poliath

Tyson hates Fridays because his teacher always gives his class a poliath.

wamzenger

The other day I was at the mall when I saw a clown playing with a wamzenger. The wamzenger was bright blue and floated above his head. He attached his wamzenger to a string and tied it around his wrist so he would not lose it. The clown and I hit the wamzenger back and forth until my mom told me to go with her.

cacojar

The cacojar is down the street from Valerie's house. Sometimes she goes there with her mother. There are always lots of people standing in line, and the cacojar workers take a long time helping people. Valerie's mom says she would rather not go to the cacojar, but she needs to buy stamps.

- REMEMBER: Vocabulary is a living, growing thing. We are constantly expanding our vocabularies.
- More Ideas:
 - Analogies
 - Prefixes/Root Words/Suffixes
 - Student Created Aids
 - Word Relationships

The Know-It-All and His Two Dense Friends

* adapted from Dr. Rosalind Horowitz, UT-San Antonio

Rule #1

Nick: Larry hit a foul ball.

Nac: A what ball?

Nick: A *foul* ball.

Nac: Wait a minute. I have to look up *foul* in the dictionary. (*finds word*) Okay, now I know. Larry hit a ball that smelled really bad.

Know-It-All: Many words have several meanings. When you look up a word's meaning, you need to choose a meaning that makes sense in the context in which the word is used. You can't just take the first definition listed!

Rule #2

Nick: The new kid called me señor. What does it mean?

Nac: Look it up.

Nick: It says "Spanish word." Why would he call me a Spanish word?

Nac: Beats me, amigo.

Know-It-All: When considering a definition, we need to consider the full definition given and not just part of it.

Rule #3

Nick: I want to say the monster was *vile*. Does that sound right?

Nac: Look it up.

Nick: Perfect!

Know-It-All: Often, the dictionary works best when we have some idea of the word's meaning but aren't certain of it. This makes the dictionary useful when we want to use a word in our writing but are not certain of its meaning.

Part 4: Optimal Vocabulary Programs Foster Word Consciousness

- Word conscious students know a lot of words and know them well.
- Word conscious students find words intriguing and fun.
- translation: Mary Poppins was right!
- Games Are Good. Repeat: Games Are Good.
- Ideas:
 - Hink Pinks/Hinky pinkies
 - Perform as Book Characters
 - Crosswords
 - Scavenger Hunts
 - Coded Messages
 - Treasure Maps
 - Concentration
 - Hangman (Hang Person)
 - Scrabble/More Board Games
 - Author/Character Hot Seat
 - Songs & Chants
 - Favorite Character Dress-Up Day
 - Word Finds
 - Word Jumbles
 - Bingo!
 - Magnetic Letters & Other Hands-On Centers
 - Charades
 - Environmental Phoneme Games
 - TPR (aka Simon Says)
 - Slug Bug/Other Car Games
 - Beach Ball Learning
 - Student Stories/Plays
 - Student Spotlight
 - Word Riddles
 - Morphemic Analysis
 - Word Plays
 - Idioms
 - Clichés & Expressions

A Vocabulary Teacher's Mantra

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I make a difference
Everyday.
I change the world
In my own way.
I teach children,
And they teach me.
I am their teacher
And proud to be.

Shameless Self-Promotion

- This presentation was largely based on my book:

Brassell, D., & Flood, J. (2004). *Vocabulary strategies every teacher needs to know*. San Diego, CA: Academic Professional Development. ISBN: 0-9721637-3-5

- My latest book guides teachers, parents, older siblings and community volunteers how to work one-on-one with a struggling and/or reluctant reader for an hour a week over a six-month period. I think you'd enjoy it:

Brassell, D. (2006). *Readers for life: The ultimate reading fitness guide, grades K-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- *Both books are available on Amazon and make perfect gifts for that special someone.*

I hope you enjoyed my presentation "Weapons of Mass Instruction: Vocabulary Strategies Every Teacher Needs to Know." It is my goal to provide audiences with meaningful and inspiring presentations. Please think of me if your school, district or organization ever needs training, as I strive to present highly engaging, fun and informative workshops. You may contact me via my website at www.lazyreaders.com. All the best! – Danny ☺

LIST OF RELATED CITATIONS
“INCREASING STUDENTS’ VOCABULARY SKILLS”

PRESENTED BY
DR. DANNY BRASSELL

- Bear, D. B., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2006). *Words their way with English language learners: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford.
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- Tompkins, G. E., & Blanchfield, C. (2004). *Teaching vocabulary: 50 creative strategies, K-12*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.