Information Books and Vocabulary Development: A Perfect Combination

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California Reading Association, Riverside, CA, October 2015

Highlights

A Four-part Model to Vocabulary Instruction (Graves, 2006)
•Provide rich and varied language experiences -- through read-alouds, experiments, classroom discussion, field trips, etc.
•Teach individual words— focus of presentation -- examples below.
•Teach word-learning strategies -- such as learning how to use context to determine meaning and how to use morphology (prefixes, suffixes and root words) to figure out word meaning.
•Foster word consciousness -- involves teachers pointing out interesting use of language, unusual words, multi-meaning words in texts, and encouraging students to notice how language and words are used in reading and to use interesting words in their writing.

Teach Individual Words
Multiple exposures necessary
Child-friendly definitions
Examples and non-examples of concepts
Physical actions
Pictures
Discussion
Word walls

Decide Which Words to Teach
Identify all the academic vocabulary words in the text that students are likely not to know
Determine which ones are most important to either understanding or writing about the text
Decide whether the meaning of the word can be determined from the context
Think about whether the word could be used for future word study (such as useful prefixes or root words)

Talking Drawings (Paquette, Fello, & Jalongo, 2007)
Before reading, children create a diagram with labels of the topic that they are going to read.
After reading, they return to the drawing, correct misconceptions, and complete labeling.
Makes children aware of what they don't know.
Uses visual images to reinforce vocabulary

Motor Imaging (Casale, 1985)
After learning a definition for a new word, children each come up with a seated pantomime of the word's meaning.
After quickly looking around to see what the most common pantomime is, the teacher declares that as the movement for the new vocabulary word.
For the rest of the day, whenever someone uses that word, all the class responds with the pantomime.
Includes physical movement to help students remember vocabulary.

Four Square Vocabulary (Stahl & Kapinus, 2001)
Paper is divided into four squares.

Word to be defined is written in the upper left quadrant.
Examples (written or drawn) are in the upper right quadrant.
Non-examples (written or drawn) are in the lower right quadrant.
The student's own definition of the word is written in the lower left quadrant.

A sample of the four-square technique using the term *domestic animal*

Domestic animal (word)	dog cat goat horse cow chicken (examples of word)
An animal that is tame and lives around people (definition of word)	wolf zebra coyote lion tiger hyena (non-examples of word)

From: *Teaching Informational Text in K-3 Classrooms: Best Practices to Help Children Read, Write, and Learn from Nonfiction* by Mariam Jean Dreher and Sharon Benge Kletzien. Copyright 2015 The Guilford Press.

In the Media (McKeown et al., 2013)
Children find examples of words they are learning in school in their out-of-school lives (in books, websites, magazines, advertisements and other media). .
They bring them to class to share, filling out a "word deposit slip" giving the word, the context in which it was found, and how it was used. They earn point for each word slip; when they reach ten points, they are given a reward.
Connects new vocabulary with children's everyday lives.

Keep these principles in mind to create your own effective vocabulary instruction.

- Child-friendly definitions
- Examples and non-examples of concepts
- Physical actions
- Visual reinforcement
- Real-world applications

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