Strategies to Support Vocabulary Development in Middle School Content Area Classrooms

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STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL CONTENT AREA CLASSROOMS

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literacy Education

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Finally, to my kiddos at school, for reminding me every day why I do what I do.
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Introduction

How do you know the words that you know? How do you know how to say, use, and write those words? How have those words shaped your life? For most, these are not questions we consider on a daily basis. As an educator studying vocabulary development, I have thought about these questions often. Walter Petty, Curtis Herold, and Eraline Stoll are English teachers and authors who have studied vocabulary development. Their quote sums up why I am so passionate about studying vocabulary development:

The importance of vocabulary is daily demonstrated in schools and out. In the classroom, the achieving students possess the most adequate vocabularies. Because of the verbal nature of most classroom activities, knowledge of words and ability to use language are essential to success in these activities. After schooling has ended, adequacy of vocabulary is almost equally essential for achievement in vocations and in society. (Graves, 2006, p. 1)

The words that students know will directly influence their achievements in school and in life after formal schooling is over. My goal as an educator is to help students to achieve the highest level of success in life that I can, to give them the knowledge they need to be successful. I want to help students to be aware of the words they already know and have
the skills to continue to increase their vocabulary. Having a strong vocabulary will help them immensely in numerous ways.

This capstone is centered on the question: *What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* The goal is to explore the most effective ways to help students not only learn, but internalize the meanings of key vocabulary words in content areas. I have used research on best practice strategies and my experiences teaching middle school students to create a guide to distribute to teachers that includes the most effective strategies for vocabulary development in a middle school classroom. The guide is a tool that teachers can use to students not only increase their understanding of content area vocabulary, but also to get the most knowledge and understanding from the content area curriculum.

**My Personal Experiences with Words**

Growing up, my ability to read well was something I took for granted. I was read to from an early age, was an independent reader very young, and had shelves full of books to choose from. In our home someone was always reading a book, a newspaper, a magazine. Money was tight so cable TV wasn’t an option until my high school years, but there were always books to be read. Almost every room had a bookshelf and now that I have my own home, a room doesn’t quite feel right without one.

In my reading as a child, if I came across a word I didn’t know or understand, I asked. The answer was usually, “Look it up!” I would haul out the dictionary, look for the word, and labor over the complicated definition. The next phrase out of my mouth would usually be, “I don’t get the words in the dictionary!” and so one of my patient
parents would come and explain the word to me in a way I could understand. After that, I
could go back to my reading, knowing a new word. The excitement of learning a fancy
new word is something I still feel as an adult. It always seems that once I learn a word, I
hear and read that word everywhere. New words always have been and always will be
thrilling and fun for me. Frustrations would arise, however, when there were words
attached to concepts I just couldn’t understand, no matter how hard I might have tried.

In my elementary years, I recall struggling with math vocabulary in particular. I
didn’t feel the thrill or excitement of learning math and math vocabulary that I felt in
other subjects. In social studies or science, I felt I had some previous knowledge from
books I had read or movies I had seen. Math, however, was a whole new world. Words
like numerator and sum were words I didn’t have any experience with. Never mind that
the content and actually solving the problems the right way were confusing to me. I also
could not get the vocabulary words to stick in my head. It led to a strong dislike of math
that stemmed from frustration over not being able to learn the material as quickly as I felt
I should. To this day, math is something I struggle with. Knowing what I know now
about the importance of vocabulary development, I feel that more of a focus on the words
involved in math would have benefitted me greatly.

In high school, I relished learning the words in my more challenging classes like
Psychology and Civics. The words felt sophisticated and grown-up. I was learning about
words that I had heard on the news or read about in magazines or in books but had never
fully understood until I took those classes. The content was more difficult to learn and
remember, but I enjoyed the way the words sounded interesting and had complex
meanings. I had the opportunity to read more challenging books. There was research of
more complex topics. There were so many times I had to go to the old dictionary to find
meanings, but it was just as fun to me as when I was little. All these academic
experiences gave me the opportunity to learn lots of new words.

Several non-academic experiences in high school exposed me to unique words
and phrases. As an athlete, a swimmer, I learned the language of the pool. Each sport has
its own language and swimming is no different. Words like lap, set, descend, and block
are simple words that take on a whole new meaning when brought to the sport of
swimming. I interacted with these words on a daily basis. Years later, I became a swim
coach part time and knowing those words was crucial to my success as a coach. My
family and I were also able to travel every year when I was in high school, which
exposed me to lots of different places and lots of new words and phrases. These
experiences all helped to shape my success in college and beyond.

After graduation, I took myself out of my small, somewhat isolated hometown
and threw myself into another small, somewhat isolated town for college. Even though
the town and the college were small, I learned so much. I was surrounded by people who
were different from me, who had different backgrounds and life experiences and beliefs.
It was scary and exciting all at the same time. Now I had to learn the language of college.

There were so many things to know! I was fortunate enough to receive a liberal
arts education in my undergraduate career, which meant I had to take many different
types of classes. This exposed me to so many different concepts, ideas, and words. Gone
were the days when I felt challenged by a few high school psychology words. I struggled
from time to time, but I knew that I had the ability to learn these new words which would in turn help me to master these new concepts and ideas.

I learned so much in my undergraduate career, but most importantly I learned how to be a teacher. Honestly, when I started college, teaching wasn’t even really on my list of possible careers. It wasn’t that I was against the idea, but that I’d never even really thought about it. With the encouragement of a friend I registered for the prerequisite education course. Teaching swimming lessons as a summer job in high school was really enjoyable, so I figured I could give it a try. The class included a practicum experience in a third grade class. It was that experience that really sparked my passion for teaching. I was excited to incorporate my love for reading and words into my real life practice some day.

My Professional Journey Teaching Vocabulary

My first teaching job was started with enthusiasm, excitement, and nerves. I was ready to inspire a love of reading, a passion for writing, and an eagerness to learn all sorts of new words and ideas. Unfortunately, my sixth graders had different ideas and did not quite share the fervor for learning. While my students were usually excited to learn new things, many of them struggled academically.

The majority of the students I serve in my building come in with very low reading levels and many students lack understanding of even basic academic vocabulary. This basic academic vocabulary might be words or phrases like glossary, compare and contrast, illustrate, or index. Making sense of the higher-level content area words can be very difficult. For some students, reading can be a frustrating, confusing, and sometimes
boring task. Words don’t make sense, so reading doesn’t make sense. My students don’t always have the background knowledge, resources, or support to figure out those unknown words that slow their reading and limit their comprehension. That, partnered with sometimes minimal background knowledge or lack of connection with the content area subjects can make for low achievement levels and difficulties understanding. In classes like science and social studies, students who are well below grade level in reading are expected to read and learn from text written at or above grade level. Understanding, retaining, and applying content area concepts is very difficult. Students are expected to learn and apply key vocabulary terms, but they may still be struggling to comprehend the basic words.

Therefore, I am exploring the question: What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom? My interest in vocabulary development and strategies really started in my first year of teaching. For three out of the five classes, I was teaching English and reading. I felt confident in these classes. My undergraduate training was focused on English and language arts teaching. However, I also was tasked with teaching a section each of math and science, which I felt far less prepared for. Those two subjects had their own unfamiliar vocabulary and ways of thinking. It was a struggle to help my students to not only remember the meanings of the words, but also to apply the words in different contexts. Just taking notes with the definitions didn't work, but I didn't know what would work. To add to the struggle, the textbooks were outdated, didn’t relate to the lives of students, and the writing was well above most of their reading levels.
They weren’t getting it. Desperate, I searched and searched for different strategies, bought books on teaching vocabulary, scoured the internet, and asked coworkers for help. They couldn’t apply the words I had tried to teach them. The definitions weren’t sticking. In class, I would try something and if it didn't work the first time I'd abandon it, frustrated. Nothing seemed to work and I'm not confident in how much vocabulary my first batch of sixth graders actually walked away remembering. It was the best I could do, but I know that it wasn’t enough. Where did the understanding break down? Was it that they didn’t understand the words because they didn’t have the background knowledge in that content area? Were the words not sticking because the students didn’t have enough basic academic vocabulary? Was I not giving them enough support? Did I make the learning meaningful enough? How could I make them care about these words?

I needed strategies that I knew would work. Strategies that had been researched and tested in real classrooms with middle school kids like mine. What I needed were ways to make the content-area vocabulary words meaningful so that students could internalize the meanings and then apply them.

**Vocabulary Instruction in Content Area Classrooms**

In my building, very few students score as proficient or higher in reading and math. Test scores are not everything, but they show that students aren’t reaching their highest academic potential. In classes, students struggle on a day-to-day basis. There are many factors, both in and out of school, that contribute to this underachievement on
standardized tests and in regular classes. I believe that one of those contributing factors is the lack of both academic and content area vocabulary knowledge.

Teaching vocabulary is a struggle. I hear over and over from my colleagues that the students don’t remember the words they are learning and can’t apply the words in different contexts. Recently, I had a conversation with a science teacher about how she used over six different strategies for the three key words for the current chapter. She gave the kids a quick quiz on the three words and over half of the students did not pass the quiz. While I told her that maybe six was too many, I understood that she was doing her very best to try and help the students learn the words they need to know. Struggles with vocabulary learning are a major source of frustration building-wide.

I believe many of our students lack the background knowledge necessary to make connections to the new words. The majority of the students in our building come from low-income homes and have not had many opportunities for experiences that can help them academically. In discussions with my students, I have learned many of them were not read to as young children and literacy is not a high priority in their homes. Most have never taken a vacation or gone to a museum outside of a school field trip. Newspapers, books, and in some cases even internet access don’t exist in their homes. Because of this lack of background knowledge, learning in general can be more challenging for our students. They have trouble connecting to the topics and content area vocabulary that is necessary for true understanding of the curriculum material.
Next Steps

In order to help teachers and students with content vocabulary, I plan to make a usable resource guide for teachers. To create this guide, I will first find strategies that support vocabulary development. These strategies will be pulled from a variety of research-based sources. They need to, first and foremost, be effective tools for helping students learn and internalize key vocabulary word meanings. Each strategy must also be easy to apply in every content area and accessible for students at all academic levels.

Secondly, I will field test the strategies with my own students. It’s important that I personally use the strategies to be sure that they are effective. Collecting data on vocabulary knowledge before, during, and after using the strategies will allow me to find out if they are truly effective. Additionally, using the strategies in a variety of units and with students of different academic levels will truly test their effectiveness. Next I will compile the best strategies into a practical, usable guide. This guide will be a collection of the strategies that I have found to be most effective. It will be presented both digitally and in a hard copy format, in a binder. Directions for use, examples, sample lessons, tips and tricks, and online resources will all be included in the guide. Finally, I will provide training for staff and distribute the guide to content area teachers to implement the strategies. Research has proven that strategy use is much more effective when the strategies are used school-wide and using a common language. It will be crucial to get all staff using the strategies on a consistent basis. Continuing to monitor how well the strategies are positively impacting student achievement will be extremely important.
Using research based strategies to help build vocabulary development will, I believe, increase student achievement. When students know and understand the actual words, their understanding of the concepts and their ability to apply their knowledge in different contexts will increase.

In the literature review, I explore the research that has been done on vocabulary development for middle school students. I will seek to answer my capstone question, *what strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* I will strive to answer this question through three conceptual categories. The first category I will explore will be the literacy in the content area classroom. Secondly, I will identify the essential elements of vocabulary instruction in the content area classroom at a middle school level. Finally, I will pinpoint strategies that support vocabulary learning and the benefits of using strategies when helping students learn.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter will explore the literature related to my capstone question: *What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* I have reviewed the research around three focus areas. The first area of focus is literacy in the content area classroom. Vocabulary is closely tied to reading and writing, so looking at the broader picture of literacy in science, math, and social studies classes is important. The second area of focus is the essential elements of vocabulary instruction in the content area classroom at a middle school level. I want to discover and define what vocabulary instruction in a content area classroom should look like. Finally, I will explore the research around best-practice strategies that support vocabulary learning. These strategies will form the basis of a vocabulary support guide that can be used in content area classrooms at a middle school level.

Content Area Literacy

While the definitions of what a content area class is differs to an extent, for the purposes of this research, the phrase “content area” will be an umbrella term that includes social studies, science, and math classes. In the content areas, teachers need to create a
learning environment centered around reading and writing. Incorporating literacy into the content area is crucial. It increases vocabulary knowledge because the students are able to see the words used in real ways and are also able to use those words in meaningful writing assignments. It’s especially important that it is done in the right way.

There are many layers of new learning going on in the science, social studies, and math classrooms. Laura Robb (2003), who has done much research around vocabulary development, states that “science, math, and social studies all require reading and learning new information along with unfamiliar vocabulary” (p. 21). This new learning must be supported by teachers and must include high-quality reading materials to increase understanding. The text choice has great importance when supporting vocabulary learning. Edward Kame’enui and James Baumann discuss what kind of text should be used:

Vocabulary instruction in upper grades involved reading short, engaging nonfiction texts or portions of content-area textbooks. The text provided a context for the target vocabulary and facilitated discussion of the words and the academic content to which the words related. (2012, p. 292-293).

Several researchers and studies have proven that quality reading and writing instruction that works with best-practice vocabulary instruction increases student achievement. Integrating best-practice literacy strategies into the content area classroom helps students make meaning of the new and challenging vocabulary words. Robb (2003) examines this idea of literacy within the content area classroom, “Responsive teaching requires an ever-increasing knowledge of how students read and write…teachers use their
knowledge of the reading, vocabulary building, and writing strategies to support learning in social studies, science, and math” (p. 32). Robb’s use of the phrase “responsive teaching” suggests that including literacy in the content area classroom is really what’s best for students. Responsive teaching can be defined as a teacher’s process of going back and forth in a learning activity to support the needs of an individual student. Teachers must not just power through the content, but instead respond to the needs of the students, and those needs include reading and writing about content area topics with a special focus on the specific vocabulary tied to the topics taught in the content area.

Rudolf Flesh and Abraham Lass support the idea that reading is tied to vocabulary learning. They are quoted by Graves (2006), relating that:

You can’t build a vocabulary without reading. You can’t meet friends if you...stay at home by yourself all the time. In the same way, you can’t build up a vocabulary if you never meet any new words. And to meet them you must read. The more you read the better. (p. 38)

As teachers, part of our job is to give students those experiences with reading so that students can meet new words, interact with them, and build their vocabularies.

Focusing on vocabulary has a positive impact on reading and writing. Reading and writing that incorporates key vocabulary words can help support student learning. In one approach, students’ word consciousness is developed through reading and writing. This approach is described by Scott, Skobel, and Wells (2008):
Teachers immersed students in rich literature and encouraged them to examine authors’ use of words. The notion was that such a process would help students value the power of words in writing, leading to a wider vocabulary use and improved writing by the students. (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013, p. 142)

This approach highlights the benefits of incorporating vocabulary-focused reading and writing into content area classrooms. The approach has been successful, showing “more positive outcomes for word consciousness classrooms compared to control classrooms” (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013, p. 142). When the literacy elements of reading and writing connect to the vocabulary, the results for learning are powerful. In 1983 Karen Mezynski conducted a meta-analysis of eight different vocabulary training studies that had been specifically correlated to reading. She discovered that word knowledge had a positive impact on reading comprehension and that “all eight of the studies showed gains in overall word knowledge” (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013, p. 143). Not only does reading and writing help build vocabulary knowledge, but learning vocabulary also can help with reading and writing.

Reading and writing within the content area provides major support for students. Robb (2003) outlines just a few of the benefits of incorporating best-practice literacy strategies into the content areas:

Integrating reading and writing strategies into your teaching of science, social studies, and math prepares students to study new information, helps them learn new vocabulary, improves students’ comprehension of textbooks and trade books, and enables students to learn and think with new ideas, concepts, and facts. (p. 56)
Robb (2003) goes on to say, “One way to ensure that students get the most out of their reading is to focus on vocabulary” (p. 21). When teachers create a focus around vocabulary, the reading is easier and students are able to learn more from the reading.

Literacy in the content areas is so important that the Common Core Standards have titled the standards *Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects*. Opinions on the Common Core Standards (CCS) vary greatly, but they are the reality of what we as educators must push our students toward achieving. In terms of incorporating literacy into the content areas, the CCS provide support. A major goal is that students have the ability to read increasingly complex texts. Standards for grades 6-12 include benchmarks such as, “Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions” (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.2) and “Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic” (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.9). Acquiring these skills will help students apply the knowledge in many different ways. Without understanding the vocabulary included in those texts, however, students may not be successful. Vocabulary must be a priority in order to help students be able to meet those higher level standards.

The research clearly shows the importance of incorporating reading, writing, and vocabulary learning into the middle school content area classroom. Having explored the research on literacy in the content area classroom, I will now focus in and review the research on the essential elements of vocabulary instruction in the content area classroom.
at a middle school level. I will also clarify exactly what vocabulary instruction should look like in a middle school level content area classroom.

**Essential Elements of Vocabulary Instruction.**

Janet Allen (2007) explains that “understanding some content vocabulary is critical to comprehending a text” (p. 4). Without this understanding, very limited learning occurs. Students may struggle to fully comprehend text when they do not understand key vocabulary words. A lack of vocabulary knowledge gets in the way of learning. Allen reports:

Students agree with teachers that content vocabulary is a roadblock to learning content…students reported that one of their greatest challenges in reading these texts or completing writing assignments in content classes is that they don’t know the vocabulary words. (2007, p. 4).

Students are aware when understanding breaks down and difficulty occurs. It is the job of the content area teacher to support vocabulary learning which in turn supports content area learning. Learning in the content area can be hard enough and teachers must help students truly understand vocabulary in order to make content area learning easier.

In order to effectively plan a comprehensive vocabulary program in content area classrooms, it is important that the essential elements of vocabulary instruction are identified. From my research, I have determined that there are four essential elements of successful vocabulary instruction. Each of these elements are the responsibility of the content area teacher and will create optimal learning opportunities of vocabulary words. First, teachers must choose the words to be studied carefully. Second, teachers must build
background knowledge and connections between what is being learned and the lives of their students. The third element focuses on giving students information about words and how they are used. This information needs to be real and substantial to be truly effective. Finally, vocabulary instruction needs to give students lots of opportunities to think about and use these words. These four essential elements will provide the best vocabulary learning for students in content area classrooms.

Choose words thoughtfully. The first essential element of vocabulary instruction begins before any teaching even occurs. Content area teachers must determine which words are most important to the concept being learned. Robert Marzano (2012) outlines just how overwhelming content area vocabulary can be, “there are about 15,000 unique terms…that appear critical to a student’s understanding of general English vocabulary and the vocabulary necessary for basic literacy in the major K-12 subject areas” (p. 33). That number doesn’t even cover the terms needed to understand the information being taught in the content areas! Teachers must choose the vocabulary words that will be the focus of instruction carefully and thoughtfully. Important questions to ask include: Which words can we help students learn? Which are the most important? What words are key to understanding? The answers to these questions will vary depending on the grade level, the subject and the goals of the unit being taught, but they are important determinations to make.

In addition, content area teachers need to think of their content-specific vocabulary as its own language. Zhihui Fang (2006) explains that “Science is a form of culture with its own language” (p. 492). This is true not only of science, but of all the
content areas. Science, math, and social studies classrooms all have their own culture, language, and vocabulary. When in a content area classroom, students must have the vocabulary knowledge base to be able to fully participate in the learning.

Zhihui (2006) summarizes some of the vocabulary challenges in the content areas, “Not only does technical vocabulary pose comprehension challenges, ordinary words, when used in non-commensensical or metaphorical ways, can also be a source of reading difficulty” (p. 494). Teachers have the vocabulary of their specific subject to teach, but they also must contend with the fact that ordinary words may be used in very different ways than the students are used to. For example, the word crust will mean something very different depending on if the students are enjoying pizza in the lunchroom or learning about our planet in the science classroom. Pointing out and helping students navigate these differences is crucial.

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) make another point in terms of vocabulary as language learning, “Regarding vocabulary…the mathematicians and chemists alike noted the challenge of words that had both general and specific meanings” (p. 52). These word meanings in the context of the content area must be made clear by the teacher through strategy use or direct instruction. Kame‘enui and Baumann explain that “the process of word learning also requires moving from a process of overgeneralization to a more constrained and particular usage” (2012, p. 73-74). Teachers must take content-area words that will be a new language to many students, choose the words that are key, and move students to understand these words in terms of their specific content area.
How do teachers even begin this daunting task of pulling out the important vocabulary words? Marzano (2012) suggests a good way to get started, by “organizing the basic terms into clusters provides teachers with a scaffold infrastructure that can be used in instruction” (p. 32). These clusters of words can be learned and studied together, giving students connections between the words themselves and the between the words and the concepts being studied. Allen (1999) offers another suggestion, saying that teachers can “determine which words were critical to understanding the text…then decide which words could be connected to students’ prior knowledge or learned through context and which would have to be bridged with direct instruction” (p. 7). Merging Marzano’s idea of clustering like words together and Allen’s suggestion of determining which words connect to students’ background knowledge and which need more support could be a powerful strategy.

For example, in a sixth grade social studies unit, the textbook has eight key words it has determined to be important for the chapter. These words appear at the beginning of the chapter and are bolded with their definitions in the sidebars of the pages of the chapter. Using these words as the key words makes sense because much of the content is presented around these words. In the context of the chapter, immigrant, steamboat, and recruiter are words that can be grouped together to help students make better connections about Minnesota’s early European settlers. The other five words, US Congress, governor, state, constitution, and federalism, can be grouped together because they are centered around the same topic of the three branches of government. Teaching these words in groups instead of in the order that they are presented in the book will allow students to
make more meaningful connections and gain better understanding. Words like state and immigrant are words that the students will likely have background knowledge about. Using this background knowledge to make connections to the content engages students and increases their understanding.

When using a text from an outside source the words that are really important to the overall understanding of the article have not been provided. It is up to the teacher to make the determination of which words will need to be taught and which words may connect to a students’ prior knowledge. When teaching the novel Birchbark House by Louise Erdrich, English teachers supplemented the reading with an article about current Ojibwe harvesting wild rice. There were unfamiliar words that needed to be directly taught, such as attributes and implements. Other words like watercraft and legends were words that could be connected to students’ prior knowledge through strategy use. Important words were clustered together to help students make connections between their meanings and to make connections to the overall message of the text.

Determining which words are crucial to the overall understanding of a topic and then thinking of those words as a new language is an important first step to actually teaching students those words. It can be an overwhelming task, but organizing words into clusters can be extremely helpful. Identifying the words that connect to students’ prior knowledge is also a way that teachers can organize the large amount of content-area vocabulary words into meaningful groups. Teachers should consider the goal of the unit and time constraints when choosing just how many words to include. There is no magic
number, but if there are too many words to be learned and mastered, the task could become overwhelming.

**Activate and build background knowledge to make learning meaningful.** Best practice teaching calls for teachers to activate background knowledge and connect the new information to known information. This is especially important for vocabulary instruction:

First, instruction must relate newly acquired words to other words and concepts. Tied to schema theory, this feature suggests the importance of the interrelationships among words and the importance of connecting new learning with existing knowledge. (Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood, 2005, p. 266)

When teachers can guide students and help them access what they already know, vocabulary learning is much more meaningful. Connections between known words and concepts and new words and concepts will allow for deeper, more meaningful learning.

In many cases, however, teachers will have to help students build their background knowledge before moving to new concepts. Allen (2007) highlights that “students seldom bring background knowledge that will help them successfully negotiate their content reading” (p. 2). In the content areas of science, social studies, and math, students often will not come to class with adequate background knowledge. It’s important that teachers determine what background knowledge is present in order to know where to start the instruction. This determination can be made in a variety of ways. Informal conversations, quick writes, journaling, pre-tests or quizzes, and brainstorms are just a few ways teachers can find out what students already know. When students don’t have
the knowledge base needed to make connections, the learning breaks down. Teachers must offer support and background information in order to help students make connections to the new words being introduced.

When students cannot connect the learning to their lives, they disengage from the learning experience. The learning needs to be meaningful and teachers must be prepared to answer that familiar question of, “Why are we learning this?” Videos, pictures, stories, current events, and discussions are just a few ways to activate prior knowledge and make connections to make learning meaningful. Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (2011) support the idea that students must make learning their own. “Educators have long known that learning is an active process that requires the student to manipulate information in order to make it their own” (p. 347). The teacher must act as a guide through the textbook and must help students “connect new terms…to related ideas they understand” (Robb, 2003, p. 197). Vocabulary instruction and learning plays a big part in helping students make the overall content area learning meaningful. When students can make these connections, the learning will be meaningful and higher levels of learning will occur.

Provide rich information about words and their uses. The fourth essential element of vocabulary instruction is that students are given lots of real and rich information about words. Teachers should also give lots of information about word uses. Direct instruction is an important piece of this. McKeown & Beck (2004) state that “direct instruction is an important component in students’ vocabulary development” (p. 13). When teaching words, teachers must sometimes use direct instruction to give word meanings and other information. For example, a word like steamboat doesn’t need in-depth analysis. Students
can understand the meaning easily and quickly if shown a quick video or picture along with reading the definition and seeing it used in a sentence. Repeated exposure will help students remember the meaning, but a strategy is not really needed for this or similar words.

In my experience, often times content area teachers expect that students can pick up important word meaning from the context of the reading. Students, especially struggling readers, can’t be expected to learn word meanings from the context of the textbook. The book’s reading level is usually far above the students’ reading level, and paired with limited background knowledge, students struggle to even read the words on the page. Teachers should remember that:

Words are learned from context, but just how readily that learning takes place is still a question. Contexts are tricky; they are not always laden with appropriate information for deriving a word’s meaning” (McKeown & Beck, 2004, p. 14). Teachers should never assume that words will be easily learned in the context of reading an article or textbook. When in doubt, give students some extra support around those key words.

Teachers do not need to take lots of time to provide rich instruction for every vocabulary word they have chosen to teach. McKeown and Beck (2004) explain that “rich instruction is particularly important for words that seem necessary for comprehension or for words that turn up in a wide variety of contexts, or for words that are hard to get across with a brief explanation” (p. 18). The “rich instruction” that McKeown and Beck are referring to is vocabulary instruction that goes beyond basic
definitions. In order to give students rich instruction on a few words, teachers would use strategies with the words, pull outside text that includes the words used in real ways, and include the words in meaningful writing. McKeown and Beck go on to say that “more narrow instruction, such as a simple definition, can be efficacious for words that are easy to explain or words that do not need to be well known” (McKeown & Beck, 2004, p. 18).

It is important for content area teachers to keep these points in mind. If teachers were to take each word to be learned and give it deep and rich instruction, there would hardly be time for anything else! Some words, while still important, just require brief direct instruction on the definition. Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood (2005) elaborate on this idea:

The type of word learning tasks associated with content area vocabulary is another important consideration. In all content areas, students will confront new words for both known and unknown concepts. In both cases, some word meanings are easily explained, while others may require extensive time and effort to explain, especially if complete understanding is needed. (p. 265)

In addition to rich direct instruction when needed, teachers should give students chances to see and hear the vocabulary words in various other formats. Kelley, Lesaux, Keiffer, & Faller (2010) explain:

Language is social, and so are kids. To promote deep understanding, teachers need to structure ways for students to hear more academic language used, hear words analyzed in a fun way, and practice using academic words. (p. 9)

Exposing students to books, magazines, articles, and videos that use the words in ways that are different from the textbook is important. “The aim of rich instruction was to have
students engage in active thinking about meanings, about how they might use the words in different situations, and about the relationships among words” ((McKeown & Beck, 2004, p. 18). Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood (2005) elaborate, saying “teachers supported vocabulary by providing students with opportunities to consider word meanings in different contexts” (p. 265). When students can interact with the words in diverse ways, their understanding is deepened.

Provide frequent and varied opportunities for word exploration. For optimal vocabulary learning, classrooms should include lots of rich language exposure. Language rich classrooms include reading and writing with the vocabulary words being learned. Beck and McKeown (2004) explain that “the key to a successful vocabulary program is to use both formal and informal encounters so that attention to vocabulary is happening any time and all the time” (p. 21). Additionally, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan state that “one of the strongest findings about vocabulary instruction is that multiple encounters are required before a word is really known” (2013, p. 83). Teachers must keep students immersed in words in the classroom. Posting the words in the classroom, using the words in varied ways during instruction and conversation, and having students interact with different text formats that use the words in varied ways are all great ways to keep students immersed in the vocabulary words.

Creating meaningful reading and writing experiences around the vocabulary words will give students new connections and new ways to think about the words, which strengthens their understanding. Allen (1999) says that the teacher, “should be creating a language-rich environment with lots of reading, talking, and writing in which varying
levels of direct instruction occur” (p. 6). Harmon, Hedrick, Wood (2005) expand, stating that “students who engage in wide reading develop extensive vocabularies” (p. 264). Kame’enui and Baumann explain that “word learning happens incrementally, with each additional encounter with a word expanding the depth of understanding” (2012, p. 73). In the classroom, it’s important that teachers understand that they provide incidental word learning. This is achieved through listening, reading, discussion, and writing. Students will naturally learn words that are used in a variety of ways in the classroom environment, similar to how young children learn the language in their home environment. When students are able to interact with the vocabulary words by reading and writing, they are going to internalize the word meanings and become much more confident about using the words.

Two additional aspects of incidental word learning, listening and discussion, are also extremely important experiences involved in word exposure and exploration in the classroom.

Listening in this regard refers to when students are listening to the teacher speak. Graves (2006) explains to teachers that “your most powerful tool is the vocabulary you use in the classroom” (p. 39). Kame’enui and Baumann agree, saying that “one aspect of expanding the vocabulary of children should be obvious: Talk to them!” (2012, p. 76). Teachers should select and use words that may be unfamiliar to students. The words should be used frequently “by mature language users and that students are likely to encounter in the texts they read in upcoming years” (Graves, 2006, p. 39-40). When
students hear these words over and over in different contexts, they begin to incorporate them into their own bank of words.

Discussions are another important element of incidental word learning. “The key to having discussions that will prompt students to use more sophisticated vocabulary is to give them meaty and somewhat academic topics to talk about” (Graves, 2006, p. 42). Many topics in content area classrooms lend themselves well to these types of discussions. Small group discussions are particularly effective because they “provide a smaller, safer space...providing time for all children to express themselves” (Kame’enui and Baumann, 2012, p.81). Discussions about academic topics are a good way to promote incidental word learning. In order to encourage students to use the key vocabulary words in the discussions, teachers could write high level discussion questions that are centered around the words. For example, if one of the key words in a social studies unit is ‘pioneer’, a question could be: What qualities did you need to be a successful pioneer? Students will need to know who the pioneers were and what they did in order to have a meaningful discussion. Students who don’t have a strong understanding of the word may learn from their peers during this discussion as well.

Modeling a high level discussion and using the words within the model is another way teachers can encourage students to incorporate the words. Providing students with a high interest text that includes the key vocabulary words and then giving students time to discuss the text will also encourage true incidental word learning.
Teachers do have control over the incidental word learning that occurs in their classrooms, so it is important that the words being used when students are listening, reading, writing, and discussing are chosen thoughtfully and carefully.

**Strategies That Support Vocabulary Learning**

The final section focuses on the research around strategies themselves. First and foremost, I will define what a strategy is. Next, I will examine why strategy use is important when learning vocabulary. Finally, I will evaluate the research on how to best use strategies when learning new vocabulary words. Learning vocabulary is better achieved with strategy use, but there are things teachers must consider when choosing and using strategies for learning. The what, why, where, and how of strategy use are all significant components to consider.

**What is a strategy?** The Merriam-Webster Dictionary online describes a strategy as “a careful plan or method, the art of devising or employing plans toward a goal”. When vocabulary learning strategies are used in the classroom, they are just that: a plan or method employed toward a goal. The plan or method may take different shapes depending on the learning need, but the goal is always for students to learn and internalize the key vocabulary term’s meaning.

As teachers, it is tempting to try to learn and implement lots of different strategies in order to best meet the needs of our students. This thought process has all the best intentions, but strategies are most effective when implemented slowly, thoughtfully, and by teachers who are experts on the strategies themselves. “Teachers of academic vocabulary can gradually build a bank of word-learning strategies or structures, but it is
better to learn a few strategies well and to be patient’’ (Greenwood, 2010, p. 224). It is also very important that teachers in the content areas are aware of why strategies are used when learning vocabulary is the goal.

**Why use vocabulary strategies.** Vocabulary learning is a crucial piece of student success. Focusing on high-quality vocabulary instruction should be a focus for schools. Kelley, Lesaux, Keiffer, & Faller (2010) suggest “although research has shown that gaps in reading performance are often associated with gaps in vocabulary knowledge, attention to developing language is not occurring in most schools” (p. 5). Additionally, Kelley et al., (2010) state “research in urban middle schools has found that academic vocabulary, the specialized and sophisticated language of text, is a particular source of difficulty for students who struggle with comprehension” (p. 5). It is clear that vocabulary teaching in the content areas is needed to support student learning. Using well-chosen strategies is the best way to help students learn the words. Blachowicz, Fisher, & Ogle (2006) express:

> Although individual teachers may be successful in using a variety of strategies for vocabulary instruction, what is needed is a comprehensive, integrated, school-wide approach to vocabulary in reading and learning. By integrated, we mean that vocabulary is a core consideration in all grades across the school and in all subject areas across the school day. (p. 526-527)

Kelley, et al., (2010) examined the research around the benefits of a focused vocabulary program in content areas. They found that students who participated in a vocabulary instruction program did significantly better on standardized tests. They also
had greater comprehension of text as a result of the focused vocabulary instruction. Both benefits are just further evidence that vocabulary instruction and strategy use are so valuable for students.

Beuhl (2014) agrees “by integrating classroom strategies into our instruction, we foster the development of individuals who are purposeful thinkers and increasingly confident and proficient readers, capable of informing themselves in a 21st-century world” (p. 10). The benefits of strategy use for vocabulary instruction extend well beyond just learning new words. Strategy use can take students’ vocabulary knowledge beyond the classroom.

Where to use vocabulary strategies. School-wide exposure to just a few strategies is an excellent way to help students internalize word meanings. Staff must work together to agree on and use common strategies and language to increase student learning. When strategies are used in a focused, school-wide program, the benefits to students can be great. Goodman (2005) explains:

Students were expected to keep a record of the strategies they learned, when they used them across the curriculum, and their success with them. The power of the initiative was really felt when students randomly experienced the same strategy in their social studies, science, math, health, physical education, music, and other elective classes… Puzzled expressions reflected the surprise they felt as they experienced this unified approach across classes, and those of us who teach middle school students know how to build upon that kind of energy. To say the
least, the students were intrigued, and that meant the students were engaged. (p. 14)

Goodman’s findings clearly highlight the benefits of using a few focused strategies school-wide. She goes on to say “at the end of two weeks, the student had mastered this strategy through multiple exposures and practical, repeated practice” (Goodman, 2005, p. 15). From Goodman’s findings, we know that strategy mastery does not take a long time. It does take focus and direct instruction, but the payoffs of that focus are invaluable. Kelley, et al. (2010) supports this idea, “When deep word understanding is the goal, students need instruction, discussion, and lots of practice” (p. 5). When staff uses a common language around strategy use and all staff have the same goal of raising student achievement, the results can be really powerful.

**How to incorporate vocabulary strategies.** In order for students to know how to use a vocabulary strategy, they must be taught how to use it. Teachers cannot pass along a strategy and expect students to use it effectively. Graves (2006) explains, “Teaching students word-learning strategies...is tremendously important” (p.91). Harvey and Goudvis (2007) explain the gradual release method for strategy instruction. This method is a research-supported way to teach these word-learning strategies to students. There are five steps to Harvey and Goudvis’ gradual release method:

1. An explicit instruction of the strategy, when and how it should be used, and teacher modeling of the strategy in action.
   a. Teacher explains the strategy.
   b. Teacher models how to effectively use the strategy.
c. The teacher thinks aloud to show thinking and strategy use.

2. Guided practice
   a. Teacher purposefully guides a large group conversation that engages the students in a focused discussion that follows a line of thinking.
   b. Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience.
   c. Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, giving specific feedback and making sure students understand the task.

3. Collaborative practice
   a. Students share their thinking processes with each other during paired and small group work.
   b. Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.

4. Independent practice
   a. After working with the teacher and with other students, the students try practicing the strategy on their own.
   b. The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.

5. Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations
   a. Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
   b. Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines. (Fielding and Pearson, 1994; adapted by Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p.32-33)
This method of scaffolding and gradual release works extremely well when incorporating vocabulary strategies into the classroom. Students need this direct explanation the first time, and even perhaps the first few times, they are exposed to a strategy. Eventually students will internalize how to use this strategy and the direct instruction will not be needed. Just as important as teaching the strategy is choosing which words will be taught along with those strategies.

When choosing words for strategy use in the content area classroom, less is definitely more. Kelley, et al. (2010) encourage teachers to “limit the number of words you teach, choose high-utility academic words, and take twice as long to teach those words” (p. 9). Vocabulary instruction is not about teaching the most amount of words possible using the most strategies available. Kelley, et al. (2010) outline how vocabulary instruction should look:

Eight or nine academic words were the focus of each unit, which moved through oral and written vocabulary instructional activities that promote academic development in reading, writing, and speaking...additional instruction and practice, working on word knowledge from several angles and through several media. A less-is-more design carved out class time for focusing on breadth of word knowledge and increasing understanding and interest in words. (p. 9)

This could be an adjustment for many content area teachers who are used to teaching as many words as possible around a subject. It also connects back to Marzano and Allen and the need for choosing a small number of keywords to focus on. Kelley, et al. (2010) encourages teachers to think differently about vocabulary instruction:
We can’t possibly cover and teach all of the words that students need to learn, but we can choose a small set of high-utility academic words students need and then use those as a platform for teaching word learning, increasing academic talk, and promoting more strategic reading. Students and teachers need to learn how to think about language and how words work. The learning process is key and takes time. Instruction on a multitude of words within a lengthy text will not be as effective or rewarding as digging deeply into a short but substantive text and focusing on a thorough understanding of fewer high-utility words. (p. 8)

Within the content area classroom, focus is key. Keeping the focus on a few important words and a few high-quality strategies is crucial.

Strategies must be taught using direct instruction, not just handing students a black line copy and hoping they use the strategy correctly. Teachers must provide models of the strategy use and direct instruction to ensure the success of the strategy. Giving students lots of time for guided practice before they are expected to use the strategies independently is also very important. Kelley et al. (2010) states that “for many of these [struggling] learners, what is missing from class work is direct instruction focused on academic vocabulary that will support them as they read expository texts in their academic futures” (p. 5). Blachowicz et al., expands “students need to develop independent strategies for dealing with the new words they will meet in school, in work, and in other areas of life” (p. 529). Blachowicz, et al. (2006) goes on to explain:

Assuming that teaching a word-learning strategy is related to teaching a comprehension strategy … teachers need to be skilled in providing an explicit
description of the strategy including when and how to use it, modeling use of the strategy in action, structuring opportunities for students to use the strategy in collaboration with others, guiding student practice in strategy use with increasing levels of independence and, finally, encouraging and providing opportunities for independent strategy use. (p. 530)

When students are able to learn, practice, and internalize strategy use for word learning successfully, they will eventually be able to use these tools outside of the academic realm.

Summary

Vocabulary instruction in the content area is crucial to student success. Students cannot perform to their highest level of achievement when they struggle to understand the key vocabulary words in a subject area. I focused my research on the literature surrounding the importance of reading and writing in the content areas support vocabulary learning. Also, I looked at the essential elements of vocabulary instruction in the content area classroom at a middle school level. These essential elements are choosing words carefully, building background knowledge, giving students meaningful information about words, and allowing students opportunities to interact and use the words in a real way. Best practice strategies should be taught to students using direct instruction and scaffolded support.

The research clearly identifies the need for a strategy guide for content area teachers to support them in teaching vocabulary. The guide I created outlines best
practice strategies along with how to use each strategy in the content areas. Chapter three will outline my rationale and design for the strategy guide.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Paradigm and Rationale

My focus is on the question: *What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* Learning and understanding key vocabulary terms is crucial to success in any content area classroom. When students know the meaning of important words or phrases, they are able to better understand big ideas and concepts in a subject area. Many content-area curriculums provide the key vocabulary words needed for understanding. Look to the introduction pages of any chapter in most curriculum and you will find a list of “Key Terms”. These words are important, but the curriculum does not always provide the best strategies for helping students learn these key terms. Allen (2007) states that:

> Content vocabulary is a roadblock to learning content…students reported that one of their greatest challenges in reading these texts or completing writing assignments in content classes is that they don’t know the vocabulary words. (p. 4).

Since learning and understanding vocabulary is so crucial to student success, strategies are needed to support student learning. Therefore, in order to best support student learning of vocabulary words in the content area, I have created a supplemental
vocabulary strategy map that can be used in the middle school classroom. This map will include a wide variety of research-based best practice strategies that can be easily integrated into any existing content area unit. The guide will also include lesson plans for introducing each strategy will use the Gradual Release of Responsibility model from Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2007), based on the work of Pearson and Gallagher (1983). The gradual release model has been proven to work particularly well with strategy instruction because it gives students the direct instruction and model of what the strategy is and how to use it. It also gives students ample time to practice using the strategy under the guidance of the teacher.

The goal of the curriculum design is to provide support for vocabulary learning in content area classrooms. When students are able to use these strategies, their learning of the vocabulary will go much deeper than simply memorizing the definitions. This will allow students to internalize word meanings, use the words in real ways, and understand concepts that connect to the words. When students can achieve this higher level of understanding of the vocabulary, they will be able to continue to grow in their knowledge of that subject area.

Setting and participants

The district where I teach is just north of Minneapolis, Minnesota. It serves seven communities in ten elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. I teach in one of the middle schools, which serves approximately 1500 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Within my building, we have a high number of students from low-income families and a high rate of mobility compared with the other middle school in the
district. Fifty percent of our student qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. In the building we have a staff of around 150, including approximately 93 full-time teachers.

As a building we have faced many challenges in the four years I have been teaching there. A high turnover of teachers, changes in leadership, a sometimes overwhelming amount of programs we are told to implement, low test scores, and high behaviors have all lead to an environment that is not always easy. It is, however, never boring. There is never a lack of opportunity to use creativity to solve the academic and social challenges our students face.

As this capstone is centered on curriculum development, there will be no direct participants in a study or being researched. The goal is to implement the use of the strategy guide in all classes grades six through eight. The research shows that true academic gains are made when strategies are implemented in a focused way across an entire building. I aim to make this a reality in my building, as I believe it will dramatically increase student achievement.

The Strategy Map

My aim is to make the map very easy to use so that it can be integrated seamlessly into existing curriculum in any content area. I will gather best practice strategies from a variety of sources and streamline them into one guide. Each grade level will have two strategies that will be taught and practiced throughout the different classes in that grade level. There will also be one school-wide strategy that will be used to activate students’ prior knowledge about the vocabulary words being learned.
The strategy map includes several components. The first component in the guide will be a table of contents, which will contribute to ease of use. Second, there will be an introduction to the map for teachers. This introduction will outline the purpose of the guide. Next, there will be five sections that describe the details of the strategy map. These sections discuss who is responsible for and involved with the strategies, why they are being used, when the strategies should be used, how to best integrate the strategies including information on gradual release lessons, and finally what the strategies are. Each strategy has an explanation and a sample lesson.

Also included in the guide will be a roll-out plan for getting the map started in the building, additional considerations for teaching vocabulary, and resources and references for teachers, including websites, books, and other helpful information.

**Implementation**

I plan to share this guide through a few different avenues. First, I would like to lead professional development around the importance of vocabulary development. I will also request time to present during all-staff meetings. There I will be able to introduce the guide, provide a brief overview of what is available in the guide, and explain my rationale for the guide. Professional development and staff meeting presentations will allow time for me to answer questions about the guide and perhaps provide a sample lesson using a strategy.

Creating an electronic version of the guide will be extremely important. As a district, we have moved to storing much of our work on GoogleDocs. This format provides easy sharing of work and will give other teachers in my building easy access to
the guide. I also will create a hard copy of the guide contained in a binder. Having two formats will allow teachers to use the guide however best fits the needs in their classrooms. I also intend to use this guide in my own classroom. I teach English, so I could use vocabulary learning strategies when discussing figurative language, parts of speech, etc. Using the guide in my classroom will help me become more adept at helping others use it in their classroom. I will be available to model strategy use in a real classroom setting, provide work samples, and act as a vocabulary mentor on an as-needed basis.

Summary

The strategy guide will be a support for teachers in any classroom or subject. The best practice strategies will be easy to integrate into different units and will provide support for vocabulary learning. This capstone is intended to support vocabulary learning in the middle school setting and the guide is the practical element of that support system. It will include some key research, best practice strategies with examples and guidance on using the strategies, and resources and references for teachers. It will be practical, easy to use, and easy to implement. The guide is not intended to be another add-on for teachers, but instead it is meant to be a resource to help students learn important vocabulary words.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

In chapter three, I discussed the curriculum development product of a strategy map for vocabulary development, the rationale for designing the vocabulary map and the format it would take. This strategy map is designed around the question: *What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* My goal was to design a strategy map that would be effective and easy for teachers to implement into their existing curriculum.

In this chapter, I discuss the criteria used to chose the strategies included in the strategy map. I will outline the elements of the strategy map. Finally, I will lay out the plan for implementation and assessment of the map.

Criteria for Choosing the Strategies

When creating this strategy map, there were hundreds of research-based strategies that could have been used. When choosing a strategy to include in the map, it was important to consider the following questions:

1. Are the strategies research-based and best practice?

   It’s easy to type in “vocabulary strategy” into an internet search and use the first thing that pops up. For this map, it was crucial that the strategies came from a reputable
source and were truly best practice. The strategies came from three prominent researchers in the field of vocabulary learning and literacy: Janet Allen, Doug Buehl, and Michael Graves. All three of these researchers have several published works and all have been recognized by the International Reading Association.

2. Are the strategies developmentally appropriate for middle school learners?

Choosing strategies that would meet the unique needs of middle school learners was another important consideration. The strategy would need to be challenging enough to really push the thinking of the students, but not so challenging that using the strategy felt overwhelming. Academic experience and ability level were taken into account for each grade level’s strategy. Additionally, the strategy needed to be easily modified to differentiate for students at various levels in the classroom.

3. Are the strategies engaging and relevant?

The strategies included in the map take into consideration engagement levels and relevance to students. In order to learn best, students must actively engage with the strategy being used. They must also feel that the learning is relevant to their lives and will benefit them in some way, especially in a middle school setting. It was important that students could make personal connections when using the strategy.

4. Are the strategies easily transferrable between content areas?

Some vocabulary learning strategies work really well in only one or two specific content areas. For the purposes of school-wide integration of vocabulary learning strategy use, those strategies would not work. This map includes strategies that can be used in any
and all content areas. The sample lesson plans show the strategies in use in Math, Science, Humanities (Social Studies), and Gateway to Technology classes.

These questions were very useful when evaluating each strategy that could have been included. While there are many strategies that would meet these requirements, the seven that were chosen work well together as students move through the grade levels in the building.

Strategy Map

This map is intended to be used in a middle school setting, grades 6-8, however the strategies are flexible and could be modified for slightly younger or older age groups. The map outlines seven different strategies that support vocabulary learning in a middle school classroom. One strategy is given for activating prior knowledge, which is an important element of vocabulary instruction. A blank gradual release lesson plan is included along with sample lessons for each strategy. Student and teacher reflection is another important element of each lesson.

The map is intended to be used school-wide, which will create continuity and common language around the strategies. Goodman (2005) highlights the importance of this in her research report on school-wide strategy use, noting that students had mastered the strategy when exposed to it often and given multiple opportunities to practice. The map is not intended to be a curriculum replacement, but instead a supplement to existing curriculums and easily integrated into any content area. Appendix A contains the map as it will be presented to the staff of a middle school. The print copy of the strategy map can be found the Appendix.
The audience for the map is teachers. While the strategies themselves are intended for student use, the map and its references are to inform teachers. Research presented in chapter three tells us that when teachers in a building use common language around strategies and word learning, students are much more successful and knowing and understanding key vocabulary words. When strategies are taught and used in a variety of content areas, students are able to eventually apply those strategies independently when they encounter new words. Common strategies strengthen understanding across content areas and grade levels.

In addition to the strategies themselves, the map also includes information on the importance of vocabulary learning in classrooms, a gradual release lesson plan format to help teachers plan for strategy instruction, and sample lessons for every strategy in a variety of content areas. Also included is a roll-out plan to help schools implement the strategy map. Finally, the map offers additional vocabulary instruction considerations for teachers and a list of resources to enhance vocabulary learning.

**Implementation**

Before implementing the map school-wide, a few steps will need to be taken to ensure success. First, small and large group discussions should occur within the building about the importance of making vocabulary learning a priority. Teachers must buy-in to the fact that vocabulary learning forms the basis of learning big ideas and concepts in all subject areas. Administration shouldn’t overwhelm teachers with piles of research papers, but presenting a few well-chosen pieces of information can help with teacher buy-in.
Section Two in the strategy map can be a good resource for information to support vocabulary learning.

Secondly, teachers will need to be trained on the strategies themselves and on the gradual release model for instruction. It’s important that teachers have this training so they feel comfortable incorporating the strategies into their teaching. An optional step for training is to have teachers observe someone else teach the strategies using the gradual release model. Teachers need a good model too when learning something new.

Third, teachers will need to be given time to plan with their grade level group. This time can be used to determine who and when the strategies will be taught, reviewed, and practiced. Each grade level should work together to ensure that the strategies are included throughout the year and in each content area. Finally, once the grade level has agreed on how and when the strategies will be taught, teachers should have planning time with their subject area group. During this time, teachers can determine which words will be used and where the strategies will best fit within the curriculum. To choose words, teachers can take the following steps:

1. Look carefully at the summative or final assessment
2. Determine which words will be necessary for success on the summative
3. Decide which words need deeper study using a strategy and which words just need short, explicit definitions given.
4. Plan for strategy instruction using the decided-upon words.

It’s important that teachers agree on the words to be used when incorporating the strategies. This creates the important common language for the students and the teachers.
Assessment

There is no formal assessment for the vocabulary strategies for students, but their effectiveness can be monitored in other ways. During the lesson, teachers should monitor student engagement and the accuracy with which students are using the strategy. One benefit of the gradual release method is that it gives lots of in-class time for teachers to watch how students are using the strategy. After using the strategy, assessment can be done by getting student feedback on how well they believe the strategy is helping them learn the words. It’s important for students to reflect on their learning using the strategy and sharing these reflections with the teacher can provide the teacher with valuable information. Another way to assess the strategy is through word use in assignments and final tests or projects. If students show that they can use the words accurately outside of the strategy, then teachers can infer that the strategy worked to help the students know and understand the words.

A final important piece of assessment is teacher reflection. Teachers should reflect independently on how well the strategy instruction went in their classroom, using the informal assessments above to inform their reflection. Teachers should also meet with their subject area groups to discuss what went well and what could be improved for vocabulary strategy instruction. When teachers work together, strategy instruction is improved. As the school-wide strategies are rolled out, teachers should also meet as a whole group to reflect on how well the strategy map is meeting the needs of the students and incorporating into the curriculum.

Summary
When designing this strategy map, I used four criteria to determine which strategies were best to include. The strategy map needed to be comprehensive in design, including rationale along with practical information for use. Having a plan for implementation and assessment of the strategy map is also crucial for success. In the final chapter, I discuss major learnings, revisit the literature review, consider possible implications of the strategy map, discuss the limitations of the strategy map, present my plan for communicating the strategy map, and outline plans for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview of Chapters 1-4

Chapters one through four explored the question: *What strategies are available to support content area vocabulary development in the middle school classroom?* Chapter one gave my background and reasons for choosing this topic. Chapter two reviewed the literature and research surrounding vocabulary development and strategy use in the classroom. Chapter three outlined the plan for the strategy map, including the setting, participants, and audience for the strategy map. Chapter four detailed the strategy map. The criteria for choosing strategies and details about the implementation of the strategy map were given.

Learning new words has always been fun and exciting for me. Throughout my formal education and at home, I enjoyed finding a new word, discovering the meaning, and then being able to spot the word in new situations. As I moved into my career as an educator, I found that students didn’t always share my excitement for words. Teaching students the meanings of new words in ways that they could understand was a challenge. Many of my coworkers struggled with this as well. Combining my love of learning new words with the need for strategies that worked was the basis for this strategy map curriculum project.
The research around vocabulary learning in the content area classroom clearly shows that a strong understanding of the content-specific words leads to higher levels of achievement in the larger concepts of the class. When students understand the words being used to describe the content, then they in turn better understand the content. Additionally, the research on word learning is strongly supported by strategy use, especially when the strategies are used school-wide, creating a common language.

Literacy in the content area classroom is extremely important, so teachers should work to incorporate the key vocabulary words into as many writing and reading activities as they are able.

Creating a product that would work for my particular educational setting was very important. It needed to meet the specific needs of the staff and students in my building, and I’m confident that was accomplished.

The actual strategy map accomplishes many things. It provides background information for teachers, outlines the plan for implementation, gives example lessons for each strategy, and includes extra resources and information that can help teachers incorporate more vocabulary learning into their classrooms. The strategy map can be an extremely useful addition to existing curriculums, but it must be implemented and introduced in the right way in order to be most effective.

The strategy map has been a labor of love. Creating the guide and engaging in the research opened my eyes to many things. It also reinforced some old learnings for me, which was really thrilling and actually reignited some of my new-teacher excitement.
Major Learnings

I learned many things during my research and development of this strategy map. The first thing I quickly learned was that there is a lot more to vocabulary development than just learning words. Vocabulary development occurs on many levels and varies greatly between individuals. It was challenging for me to keep my focus specifically on middle school learners and strategy use because there is so much to learn about vocabulary development.

I also learned even more about how important creating a literacy-based classroom is for students. Even in a science or math class, using relevant text at the students’ level increases achievement so much. Incorporating the key vocabulary words into reading and writing activities in a real way in all classrooms can truly raise student achievement.

Last, I was enlightened on the effectiveness of the gradual release lesson plan model. I had heard the term ‘gradual release’ at various trainings, but never fully understood it until taking on this research. It’s now much clearer to me how important it is to scaffold student learning. The best part is, I feel I can actually effectively implement the gradual release model into my own teaching after working so closely with the model while developing the curriculum. It’s an exciting feeling and I hope it’s one my coworkers share as the strategy map is introduced to them.

Communication of the Strategy Map

The strategy map will need to be introduced to staff through meetings and collaboration time. It should not simply be passed out or emailed to staff. Teachers will need time to discuss and plan for using the guide. There will also need to be training
around using the gradual release lesson plan format and around using the strategies themselves. The map will be available in two formats: electronically via Google Docs and in hard copy. Presenting the map in two ways allows for teacher choice and ease of use. All teachers must implement the strategies with fidelity if the map is to be successful in helping students gain a better understanding of vocabulary. Communicating the goals of using the map, best practices for using the map, and offering support to teachers are major elements of this map’s success. There are many people involved in the success of the map, so communication and understanding between groups is crucial.

**Implications for Stakeholders**

When considering the strategy guide, it is important to bear in mind those who may have a stake in its effectiveness. The stakeholders involved in the success of this map should be aware of the role of one another when implementing and using the guide. It’s important that school and district administration communicate effectively with teachers and students about the map.

Teachers and students are the first group to consider, because those two groups are directly involved in using and benefitting from the strategy map. School and district administration would also have a stake in the strategy map. If used correctly, the map can help increase student achievement in the content areas, which in turn can affect test scores and other measures of success by the district. School and district administration also need to consider the financial aspect of implementing the map. Trainings may have to occur outside of school hours, meeting time will need to be arranged, possibly with substitute coverage needed. These meetings must occur in order for teachers to be
prepared for using the map. The map is only as effective as those implementing it, but even so it does have its limitations.

**Limitations of the Map**

The strategy map does have its limitations. There are several things that can impact how well this map works for students and their vocabulary development.

First, if the strategies are not implemented with fidelity by all teachers in a building, it will not be as effective as possible. All teachers must buy in to using the strategy map for maximum effectiveness. Secondly, there will be students who start in the school in seventh or eighth grade, or even part-way through any given year, which means they will may have missed the introduction of strategies. It’s especially important that teachers review a strategy every time it is used so that students remain familiar. If a student has no background with the strategy, it will be important for teachers to support that student’s strategy use until they feel comfortable using it. Finally, in our ever-changing educational world, the map may need to be updated to include new research findings or even more effective research-based strategies. New resources are continuously becoming available, so after a certain amount of time, the ‘resources’ section of the strategy map may become outdated.

**Future Research**

After completing the research and the strategy map, my mind was already buzzing with possibilities for future research. There is so much more to explore in the realm of vocabulary development, so many facets to look at. One area of research that I would love to dive into further is the effects of limited vocabularies in young students on future
learning. If students come to school with little or no exposure to books or other text in the home, how does that impact their learning in school? Additionally, what can teachers do to support the learning of these students and bring their exposure to the level of their peers?

Another area of research that I would like to explore combines the work that I have already done with strategy use but combines it with the impacts of using the strategies with English Language Learners. How can the strategies be scaffolded or modified to better support students who are learning English as another language?

A third area of research that sparks my interest is the effectiveness of instruction that focuses on Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes. How does explicit instruction with these elements impact word learning and understanding in the content area classrooms?

Summary

Throughout my research and completion of this project, I have learned so many things. Vocabulary development is a hugely important piece of learning for our students and it’s something that must be prioritized. Teaching our students to use strategies to increase their understanding of key vocabulary words allows students to become independent word learners. Knowing the key words for all their content area classes will strengthen their knowledge base for that class, allowing them to be more successful throughout their educational career. When teachers work together to make vocabulary an important piece of the learning, the students benefit greatly.
As I move forward with my teaching career, I don’t always know where my path might lead. I do, however, know that I will always have a love of words. My hope is that I can inspire my students to have that same love of words, to always be curious, and to always use what they know to seek out new knowledge throughout their lives.
APPENDIX

Strategy Map for Vocabulary Learning in the Middle School
Strategy Map for Vocabulary Learning in the Middle School

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere. 
~Chinese Proverb
Introduction

Welcome to the Strategy Map for Vocabulary Learning in a Middle School! Within this map, you will find everything you need for effective and essential vocabulary learning for your students. The guide is intended to serve as a supplement to your existing curriculum and will support the vocabulary earning needs of your students.

Learning vocabulary is an extremely important skill. When students learn new vocabulary, their minds are opened to all sorts of new learning possibilities. The information and strategies included in this guide are here to help your students reach their highest potential!

Before beginning building-wide strategy instruction, there must be a plan in place. Professional development around strategy use, time for collaboration, resources for vocabulary development, and time for meaningful reflection on the process. Teachers and administrators will need to take the information provided in this guide and determine how to best make it work for their building’s needs.

There are several elements to this map. Each section is detailed below:

- **Who?** Who is this map is for and what its intent is.
- **Why?** Reasoning and rationale behind this guide and research around the benefits of using school-wide common strategies.
- **When?** Timeline and map for the strategies.
- **How?** Guide for which words to choose when explicitly teaching vocabulary. Deeper explanation of the gradual release model. Assessment and differentiation information. Ideas for student reflection after using the strategies.
• **What?** Details of each strategy and includes sample lesson plans when introducing and reviewing the strategy. Two samples of each strategy: one with “teacher talk” included and one with a “student sample” example.

• **Roll-out plan:** the nuts and bolts of how to use this guide in a building.

• **Additional information:** best practice around word learning. Things to think about including into your classroom for even deeper word learning for your students.

• **Resources:** Book lists, online activities, etc.
Who is this guide designed for?

This guide has been written with the intent that it will be used in grades 6-8 in every subject. All students and staff will have knowledge and practice with these strategies so they can be used in any grade level, in any class, with the assurance that students will at least be familiar with the strategy.

The guide can be used in any middle school setting as long as there is a common goal of deeper vocabulary learning shared by all teachers. This guide could be modified to work in upper elementary grades (4th-5th grade) or lower high school level grades (9th-10th grade) but it’s truly designed to work best at the 6th-8th grade level.
Why use this guide?

Vocabulary learning forms the basis of all content area learning. In order for students to truly learn content area concepts at a deep level, students must understand the vocabulary that builds the concepts. High-quality vocabulary instruction should be a focus for schools. In addition, content area teachers need to think of their content-specific vocabulary as its own language. Zhihui Fang (2006) explains that “Science is a form of culture with its own language” (p. 492). This is true not only of science, but of all the content areas. Science, math, and social studies classrooms all have their own culture, language, and vocabulary. When in a content area classroom, students must have the vocabulary knowledge base to be able to fully participate in the learning.

Kelley, Lesaux, Keiffer, & Faller (2010) suggest “although research has shown that gaps in reading performance are often associated with gaps in vocabulary knowledge, attention to developing language is not occurring in most schools” (p. 5). Additionally, Kelley et al., (2010) states “research in urban middle schools has found that academic vocabulary, the specialized and sophisticated language of text, is a particular source of difficulty for students who struggle with comprehension” (p. 5). It is clear that vocabulary teaching in the content areas is needed to support student learning. Using well-chosen strategies is the best way to help students learn the words. Blachowicz, Fisher, & Ogle (2006) express:

Although individual teachers may be successful in using a variety of strategies for vocabulary instruction, what is needed is a comprehensive, integrated, school-wide approach to vocabulary in reading and learning. By integrated, we mean that
vocabulary is a core consideration in all grades across the school and in all subject areas across the school day. (p. 526-527)

When used school-wide, students will become master users of each strategy, able to use the strategies in a wide variety of situations.

School-wide exposure to just a few strategies is an excellent way to help students internalize word meanings. Staff must work together to agree on and use common strategies and language to increase student learning. When strategies are used in a focused, school-wide program, the benefits to students can be great. Goodman (2005) explains:

Students were expected to keep a record of the strategies they learned, when they used them across the curriculum, and their success with them. The power of the initiative was really felt when students randomly experienced the same strategy in their social studies, science, math, health, physical education, music, and other elective classes… Puzzled expressions reflected the surprise they felt as they experienced this unified approach across classes, and those of us who teach middle school students know how to build upon that kind of energy. To say the least, the students were intrigued, and that meant the students were engaged. (p. 14)

Goodman’s findings clearly highlight the benefits of using a few focused strategies school-wide. She goes on to say “at the end of two weeks, the student had mastered this strategy through multiple exposures and practical, repeated practice” (Goodman, 2005, p.
15). From Goodman’s findings, we know that strategy mastery does not take a long time. It does take focus and direct instruction, but the payoffs of that focus are invaluable.

Kelley, et al. (2010) supports this idea, “When deep word understanding is the goal, students need instruction, discussion, and lots of practice” (p. 5). When staff uses a common language around strategy use and all staff have the same goal of raising student achievement, the results can be really powerful. Beuhl (2014) goes on to say that, “by integrating classroom strategies into our instruction, we foster the development of individuals who are purposeful thinkers and increasingly confident and proficient readers, capable of informing themselves in a 21st-century world” (p. 10). The benefits of strategy use for vocabulary instruction extend well beyond just learning new words. Strategy use can take students’ vocabulary knowledge beyond the classroom.

The goal of this guide is that when students have mastered all seven vocabulary learning strategies, they will be able to use them outside of the classroom. When encountering an unknown word, students should be able to self-select a strategy that will help them learn and understand that word.
When do we teach and implement the strategies for vocabulary learning?

The map will outline where each strategy will be introduced, practiced, and mastered so that each teacher knows where the strategies need to be introduced. Each grade level will be responsible for incorporating two strategies into their curriculum, with a specific content area introducing the strategies (as determined by the grade level team). The strategies increase in complexity in each grade to best match the learning level of students in each grade. Ideally, by the time a student has gone through all three grade levels, they will be familiar with six different vocabulary learning strategies that they can then implement into their independent learning.

Additionally, the map will help teachers be aware of what students will be expected to know at certain points in their middle school experience. As a grade level, teachers will have to decide which subject area teachers will be introducing the strategy initially, when the strategies will be introduced, and where it is planned to be practiced throughout the year. Communication and common planning within grade levels and across subject areas are crucial to this strategy guides’ success.

Reference this map before choosing to include a strategy into your lesson plans to ensure students have been introduced to it. For example, sixth grade teachers should not try and have students use a strategy that they won’t learn until eighth grade!

Additionally, seventh and eighth grade teachers should loop back to the strategies taught in lower grades. Review and reteach might be necessary, so teachers should assess student knowledge of the strategy rather than assuming they are ready to use it independently because it was taught in a previous grade. Teachers should also be mindful...
of students who may have experiences at other buildings and that those students may not be aware of all strategies. Below is the outline for which strategies will be taught in which grade levels. The strategies are outlined in much greater detail in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE LEVEL</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>All grades</em></td>
<td>• From the New to the Known (Allen, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Grade 6* | • Vocabulary overview guide (Buehl, 2014)  
• Student-friendly vocabulary explanations (Buehl, 2014) |
| *Grade 7* | • Frayer Method (Graves, 2006 and Buehl, 2014)  
• Analysis Map (Allen, 1999) |
| *Grade 8* | • Semantic mapping (Graves, 2006)  
• Context → Content → Experience (Allen, 1999) |

There will be one strategy that will be taught and used in all three grades. The strategy comes from Janet Allen (1999) and is called “From the New to the Known”. This strategy activates prior knowledge for students and gives teachers a way to informally assess that prior knowledge. This strategy can be used in a variety of ways but works particularly well for activating knowledge about vocabulary words.
How do I teach the strategies?

Essential elements

There are four essential elements of successful vocabulary instruction. Each of these elements are the responsibility of the content area teacher and will create optimal learning opportunities of vocabulary words. These elements are:

1. Teachers must choose the words to be studied carefully.
2. Teachers must build background knowledge and connections between what is being learned and the lives of their students.
3. Given students information about words and how they are used. This information needs to be real and substantial to be truly effective.
4. Vocabulary instruction needs to give students lots of opportunities to think about and use these words.

Choosing words

The first step, choosing the words to be taught through a strategy can be the trickiest part of using a strategy. Not every word is critical to learning the content of the unit being taught. Important questions to ask include:

- Which words can we help students learn?
- Which are the most important?
- What words are key to understanding?

The answers to these questions will vary depending on the grade level, the subject and the goals of the unit being taught, but they are important determinations to make. The words that are used for each strategy should be determined by the PLC of the grade level subject
area teachers so that each student in the grade level is getting deep instruction on the same words. For each unit taught, the teachers must decide which words are of primary importance to understanding the content being taught. Simply using the words given at the beginning of a textbook chapter is not always the best way to choose words to study.

Backward planning comes into play when choosing the best words to focus on for strategy use. As a grade level subject area group, take a close look at the summative or final assessment. Decide which words students must have a deep understanding of in order to be the most successful on that final assessment. After that, Marzano (2012) suggests a good way to get started, by “organizing the basic terms into clusters provides teachers with a scaffold infrastructure that can be used in instruction” (p. 32). These clusters of words can be learned and studied together, giving students connections between the words themselves and the between the words and the concepts being studied. Some of the words will just need a quick definition given by the teacher and will not need full-on strategy use.

Allen (1999) offers another suggestion, saying that teachers can “determine which words were critical to understanding the text…then decide which words could be connected to students’ prior knowledge or learned through context and which would have to be bridged with direct instruction” (p. 7). Merging Marzano’s idea of clustering like words together and Allen’s suggestion of determining which words connect to students’ background knowledge and which need more support could be the best way to go about choosing.
Determining which words are crucial to the overall understanding of a topic is an important first step to actually teaching students those words. It can be an overwhelming task, but organizing words into clusters can be extremely helpful. Identifying the words that connect to students’ prior knowledge is also a way that teachers can organize the large amount of content-area vocabulary words into meaningful groups. Teachers should consider the goal of the unit and time constraints when choosing just how many words to include. There is no magic number, but if there are too many words to be learned and mastered, the task could become overwhelming for students and teachers.

In summary here are the steps for choosing words to use the strategy with:

1. Look carefully at the summative or final assessment
2. Determine which words will be necessary for success on the summative
3. Decide which words need deeper study using a strategy and which words just need short, explicit definitions given.
4. Plan for strategy instruction using the decided-upon words.

**Activating prior knowledge**

The second element, activating prior knowledge to make connections, can be accomplished in several ways. The first strategy in the map, which comes from Janet Allen, is a good way for students to become aware of their own knowledge of the words. It also gives teachers a quick glimpse of what words students are already familiar with and which words they will need more support learning.
Information about and practice with the words

Teaching the strategies to be used for real word understanding is not always a quick process. Elements three and four for vocabulary learning are accomplished through the gradual release method. The gradual release method has been proven to be highly effective for teaching students how to use a strategy. The chart below gives an overview of the gradual release lesson plan format:

Harvey and Goudvis have research-based steps for this gradual release method that have been specifically tailored for strategy instruction. When first teaching a strategy, this gradual release method will take a few days, not just in one class period. If students have already had experience using the strategy, the same method can be followed, but the time frame will most likely be shortened significantly shortened. The steps are listed below in detail:

1. An explicit instruction of the strategy, when and how it should be used, and teacher modeling of the strategy in action.
   a. Teacher explains the strategy.
   b. Teacher models how to effectively use the strategy.
   c. The teacher thinks aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
2. Guided practice
   a. Teacher purposefully guides a large group conversation that engages the students in a focused discussion that follows a line of thinking.
   b. Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience.
   c. Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, giving specific feedback and making sure students understand the task.

3. Collaborative practice
   a. Students share their thinking processes with each other during paired and small group work.
   b. Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.

4. Independent practice
   a. After working with the teacher and with other students, the students try practicing the strategy on their own.
   b. The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.

5. Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations
   a. Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
   b. Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines. (Fielding and Pearson, 1994; adapted by Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p.32-33)

This gradual release format from Harvey and Goudvis can be used for teaching any vocabulary learning strategy in this guide. Below you will find a general lesson plan.
format, based off of Harvey and Goudvis’ format, that can be used when planning for introducing or reviewing the strategies. Harvey and Goudvis give this advice for using the gradual release model:

We model for a few minutes, just long enough to get our point across, and then quickly engage kids in guided practice. Most of our instructional time is spent in guided practice because that is where we can best support kids as they move toward independence (2007, p. 33).

Depending on the level of familiarity of the strategy for the students, this format can be modified. Note that this format is not intended to be completed during one class period. Especially when introducing a strategy, this may take several days. As teachers become more familiar and comfortable with this format, detailed plans may not be necessary. It is a good idea to use the format until you are proficient with the flow of the lesson plan.

A final important note about teaching students the strategies. You should not teach a strategy and a new word at the same time. It’s important that during the modeling phase of the lesson, you are using words the students already know to model the strategy. Students should not be attempting to grasp the meaning of a new word and a new strategy at the same time. As you move through the gradual release plan, you can incorporate new words for the students to learn.
### Gradual Release General Lesson Plan Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words to be taught:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Explicit Instruction and modeling
- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
- Model the strategy.
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
  - What will you say?

#### Guided practice
- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  - What does this strategy help us do?
  - Why is it important?
- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
  - What will you say?
- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?

#### Collaborative practice
- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs-based, random, etc?)
  - How big are groups?
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can you be specific in your feedback?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent practice**
- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
- The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
  - How will you give feedback?
  - How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?

**Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations**
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  - Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  - What other relevant exposure can you give the students?

**Student Reflection**
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?

**Teacher Reflection**
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
When planning and teaching lessons for each strategy, consider both teacher and student actions. The table below may be helpful (Adapted from Fisher and Frey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What instructional stage are you at?</th>
<th>What is the teacher doing?</th>
<th>What are the students doing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Explicit instruction and modeling    | -Focusing on a single teaching point  
-Explicitly showing the students a learning behavior (strategy) through modeling  
-Refrain from answering unsolicited student questions-ask students to wait until a little later  
-Use only 10-15 minutes of instructional time | -Sitting close to the teacher  
-Watching and listening to what the teacher is doing and saying  
-Preparing to participate |
| Guided                               | -Providing opportunities for students to verbalize thoughts  
-Listening in to conversations to assess understanding  
-Inviting students to “give it a try”  
-Scaffolding release of responsibility  
-Differentiating through adapting content, process, or product | -Practicing modeled skill or behavior  
-Turning and talking  
-Making thinking visible through writing |
| Collaborative                        | -Creating opportunities for student collaboration  
-Organizing small groups  
-Facilitating or scaffolding small group work  
-Informally assessing student interactions and responses  
-Listening to students  
-Taking anecdotal notes | -Discussing ideas and concepts  
-Interacting with one another in meaningful ways  
-Practicing the skill/strategy  
-Making connections to their own lives  
-Explaining processes  
-Checking one another’s understanding |
| Independent                          | -Conferring with students | -Strategically and independently applying |
### Student Reflection

Giving students time and space to reflect on their vocabulary learning is a very important piece of the learning. Student reflection does not need to be a long process. Here are some quick ideas to help students reflect on what they have learned from using the vocabulary strategy:

- Quick writes
- 3-2-1 (Three things you learned, two interesting facts, one question you still have)
- Turn and talk
- “What stuck with you today?” on a sticky note
- Exit slip
- Ask the students to rate their understanding on a scale of 1-5. Have students explain their rating.

### Assessment

Formal assessment on the strategies themselves is not necessary. Students are learning to use these strategies to help them increase word knowledge, not to pass a test about how to use the strategy. However, teachers should be informally assessing how well students are able to use the strategy and differentiate or provide extra support if necessary. Informal assessment can be done in a few different ways. Teachers can:

| -Observing and taking anecdotal notes | -Assessing individual student responses | strategies and skills in authentic situations |
| -Taking responsibility for learning | -Reflecting and assessing personal progress |
- listen to conversations during group work
- ask probing questions to check for understanding
- monitor how students are using the structure of the strategy
- collect strategy sheets for review
- take notes or use a checklist for future reflection.

Differentiation and intervention

Most strategies presented in this guide can be easily differentiated for the needs of students. Students come to us with varying skill levels. Some students will easily catch on to the strategies and be able to use them without much difficulty or teacher support. Other students will need lots of support to successfully use the strategy. For each strategy, there will be ideas for differentiation included. These ideas are not exhaustive and you should use your professional judgement and knowledge when determining the best way to help your students be successful with the strategy.

There may be times when a student is really struggling with a strategy and needs further interventions. If a student continues to have difficulty with a strategy, it’s a good idea to start from the beginning with that student. Reviewing and possibly reteaching in a smaller setting can be very beneficial. Another effective intervention is to ask the student to “show me where you last understood”. This prompt is effective because it can help the teacher see just where the understanding broke down so they can decide how to structure their review or reteach. A third way to support a student is to move them into a group with a student or students who understand the strategy. Often times, peers can be better at
explaining the strategy to the student than the teacher. Monitor this intervention to be sure that the strategy is being explained accurately.

As with all things in the classroom, it’s important for the teacher to be attentive to student needs and take steps to support student learning however possible.
What specific strategies are being taught?

Each of the three grade levels there will be two new vocabulary learning strategies introduced. Each strategy is research-based and comes from experts in the fields of literacy and vocabulary learning. These strategies, when used correctly and with fidelity, will improve student understanding of important vocabulary words in any subject area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All grades</td>
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             | • Student-friendly vocabulary explanations with word study guides (Buehl, 2014) |
| Grade 7     | • Frayer Method (Graves, 2006 and Buehl, 2014)  
             | • Analysis Map (Allen, 1999) |
| Grade 8     | • Semantic mapping (Graves, 2006)  
             | • Context → Content → Experience (Allen, 1999) |
Strategies

Strategy for all grades: From the New to the Known

Why?
- Activate prior knowledge
- Student self-assessment on word knowledge
- Informal assessment for teachers on which words students already know
- Introduce new words for the unit
- Begin to familiarize students with spelling and pronunciation of the new words

How?
- Use at the very beginning of a new chapter or unit
- Give students a list of the new words for the chapter or unit
- Students choose where the words belong based on their own knowledge
- Students work with the teacher and with their peers to self-evaluate their knowledge of the new words

Don’t forget…
- Students need to place the words in the column that is right for them, not where they THINK the words should go (ie all in the far right column)
- Come back to this strategy at the end of a chapter or unit so students can reflect on their growth in word knowledge
### Dates:

**Unit:** Beginning of the year-Expectations and Classroom Norms

**Strategy name:** From the New to the Known

**Words to be taught:** kindness, responsibility, respect, mindset, open-mindedness

**Materials needed:** Copies for each student

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### Explicit Instruction and modeling

- **Name the strategy and explain its purpose.**
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    - The strategy is called “From the New to the Known”.
    - It helps us think about how much we already know about words.
    - The goal is, by the end of the unit, to have most or all of the words moved to the far right column.

- **Model the strategy.**
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    - Show the visual, explain the parts
    - Use the word “kindness” to model—where will it go in the chart?

- **Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.**
  - What will you say?
    - “This is the strategy we will use. I can see that there are a few different spaces I could put the word kindness. I have to think carefully about how well I already know this word before I put it somewhere. I think that I know several ways this word could be used, so I will put it in this column.”

---

### Guided practice

- **Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.**
  - Ask the students:
    - What does this strategy help us do?
    - Why is it important?

- **Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.**
  - Which word will you use?
    - Responsibility
  - What will you say?
    - “Now let’s look at the word responsibility. We’ve probably heard this word a lot, but do we know what it means enough to put it in the far right column?”
Write responsibility on your chart in the column that makes sense for YOU.”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    - Move around the room
    - Ask students why they placed the word in the column they chose
    - Have a few volunteers share their thinking

**Collaborative practice**

- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs based, random, etc?)
  - Table groups since this is an activating prior knowledge activity
  - How big are groups?
    - 3-4 students, depending on the table group
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    - A few students might need help reading the words
    - Try not to explain what the word means to the students. The activity is about what their knowledge is at this point. They will learn what the words mean.

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
    - Acknowledge their work, ask any clarifying questions
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
    - Re-read the column headings
    - Go through each word with the student, helping them to put the words in the right place for them
    - Explain that it’s okay if they don’t know a word
    - Ask questions to help clarify thinking.
  - How can you be specific in your feedback?
    - Address individual words the students have placed in different columns

**Independent practice**

- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
    - Respect, mindset, and open-mindedness

- The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
  - How will you give feedback?
Read each student’s form, written or verbal feedback
  o How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
  Discuss all words as a class or small group, paired discussions

**Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations**

- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  o Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
  - At the beginning of any new unit, they could quickly write this chart in their notebooks.
  - When reading, they can identify words as part of the different columns.

- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  o What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
  - Have a hard copy of the chart available, they can take to use in other classes.
  - When reading an article or passage, stop and use the strategy at different times throughout the year.
  - Use at the beginning of each new unit.

**Student Reflection**

Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  - Quick write: Students can go back to the words they don’t know as well and write one idea for how they can learn the word better!

**Teacher Reflection**

This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
### Strategy with “teacher talk”

Name: _____________________________________

**Directions:** Look at the word list for the new unit. Copy each word into a column that best matches your understanding of that word at this point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This word is totally new to me</th>
<th>I’ve heard or seen this word, but I’m not sure what it means</th>
<th>I know one definition or could use this word in a sentence</th>
<th>I know several ways this word could be used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. “This is the strategy we will use. I can see that there are a few different spaces I could put the word kindness. I have to think carefully about how well I already know this word before I put it somewhere. I think that I know several ways this word could be used, so I will put it in this column.”

2. “Now let’s look at the word responsibility. We’ve probably heard this word a lot, but do we know what it means enough to put it in the far right column? Write responsibility on your chart in the column that makes sense for YOU.”
Strategy with “student work” example

Name: ________________________________

Directions: Look at the word list for the new unit. Copy each word into a column that best matches your understanding of that word at this point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This word is totally new to me</th>
<th>I’ve heard or seen this word, but I’m not sure what it means</th>
<th>I know one definition or could use this word in a sentence</th>
<th>I know several ways this word could be used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness mindset</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>kindness</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade 6: Vocabulary Overview Guide

Why?
- To help students determine word meaning through context
- Provides strong guidance and scaffolding for learning the word meaning in context
- Gives students real exposure to the words in sentences and paragraphs

How?
- Give students examples of the words being used
- Allow students to determine their own clues and definitions for the words

Don’t forget…
- Before beginning instruction, have lots of examples of the “word in action” available for students
- Encourage students to find and share other examples of the word in action
Sample lesson for Grade 6 Humanities (Social Studies)
Vocabulary Overview Guide
Buehl 2014, p. 217-220, 259

Dates:
Unit:
Strategy name: Vocabulary Overview Guide
Words to be taught: Perspective, elder, artifact, oral history
Materials needed: Textbooks, strategy copies for each student, multiple sentences of
the “word in action” for each word

Explicit Instruction and modeling

- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    This strategy is called “Vocabulary overview guide”. It will help us
    understand some of the vocabulary in our new chapter

- Model the strategy.
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    - Display the strategy with words already written in
    - Have students open textbooks to the pages where the words are introduced to
      show the “word in action”
    - Display other sentences where the word is used

- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
  - What will you say?
    - “Let’s start by thinking about the word perspective. We see it in the textbook
      in the sentence ‘When people examine historical objects, they interpret them
      based on their perspective. People’s experiences affect how they think about
      the world, both past and present.’ Let’s look at another example of our word in
      action: ‘Recognizing how perspectives differ is an important part of
      understanding history.’ One final sentence to think about: ‘We have much
      to learn from people’s perspectives that are different from ours’. Looking at
      all these sentences, I can make a good guess about the word perspective. In the
      sentences I see the word ‘people’ and the word ‘differ or different’. This tells
      me that people have perspectives that are different and those perspectives can
      impact how they see the world or think about things. Let’s read the sentences
      again, thinking about how the word perspective is being used.”
    - Read sentences again as a class
    - “Now I can start to fill in my chart for the word perspective. The CLUE
      section is where I write a keyword or keywords that help me remember what
      the word perspective means. My clue words are people and different. For the
EXPLAIN section, that's where we write a definition, but it's in our own words. We aren't copying a definition from the book because those definitions are harder to remember. We will better remember the word meaning when we can put it in our own words. This part can be changed as we understand the word more and more throughout the unit. I'm going to write 'how people see or think about things differently'. The USE section is where we actually use the word in a meaningful sentence. It gives us an example to help us understand. To use it in a sentence, I will write, 'The historians had different perspectives on the lives of early Minnesotans'.

Guided practice

- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  - Ask the students:
    - What does this strategy help us do?
    - Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
    - Elder
  - What will you say?
    "We have three sentences that use the word elder. Let's read them together."
    Sentences:
    1. Many American Indian elders believe that Jeffers is a sacred place to which people have come for thousands of years.
    2. To elders, the symbols on the rocks speak not only of the past, but of the present and the future.
    3. Dakota elders tell us that their people have long considered shaking hands a gesture of friendship and trust.
    "What can we decide about the word elder from these sentences? Why? Let's complete our chart for this word. What can we write for our clue? What about our explanation? Now let's use it in a sentence."
    - Pause as needed to discuss and come to an agreement about each section.

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    - Encouraging more discussion.
    - Students must back up their statements—Ask “Why?” or “tell me more.”
**Collaborative practice**

- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs based, random, etc?)
    Choice partners (may adjust if students are struggling to stay on task with their partner)
    - How big are groups?
    2-3 per group
    - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    - Working on the word artifact with their partners, provide the sentences needed.
    - Assistance reading the sentences
    - Guidance as they complete the chart for that word
  - Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
    - What do you do and say when students understand?
      Encourage them to find other sentences with the word in action. Does this change their understanding of the word?
    - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
      Revisit the words perspective and elder and examples
      Re-read sentences
      Reteach the parts of the strategy (clue, explain, use)
      Provide additional sentences with the word in action.
    - How can you be specific in your feedback?
      Focus on one word at a time
      Point out exactly where you see they understand or don’t understand

**Independent practice**

- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
    Oral history
  - The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
    - How will you give feedback?
      Written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)
    - How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
      - During group work
      - Share out after most students have completed the independent work
Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss

### Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  - Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
  - Return to strategy throughout chapter—does their understanding of the words change over time as they are exposed to the word more and more?
  - As they gain mastery, students can choose which words will be used and find sentences independently

- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  - What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
  - Articles or current events that use the words
  - Where do you see the word in other classes? How does that impact your understanding?
  - Students can quickly draw a chart for other words in other classes

### Student Reflection
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  - Sticky note. Each student writes one thing that “Stuck with them” on the sticky note and put it on the board as they leave the room.

### Teacher Reflection
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
**Strategy with “teacher talk”**

Name: _____________________________________________

**Directions:** For the words given, complete the Vocabulary Overview Guide. Return to the guide often throughout the unit, as your understanding might change!

---

**Word:** Now I can start to fill in my chart for the word perspective.

**Clue:** The CLUE section is where I write a keyword or keywords that help me remember what the word perspective means. My clue words are people and different.

**Explain:** For the EXPLAIN section, that’s where we write a definition, but it’s in our own words. We aren’t copying a definition from the book because those definitions are harder to remember. We will better remember the word meaning when we can put it in our own words. This part can be changed as we understand the word more and more throughout the unit. I’m going to write ‘how people see or think about things differently’.

**Use:** The USE section is where we actually use the word in a meaningful sentence. It gives us an example to help us understand. To use it in a sentence, I will write, ‘The historians had different perspectives on the lives of early Minnesotans’.

---
Strategy with “student work” example

Name: ____________________________________________

Directions: For the words given, complete the Vocabulary Overview Guide. Return to the guide often throughout the unit, as your understanding might change!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word: perspective</th>
<th>Word: elder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clue: people, different</td>
<td>Clue: people, thousands of years, past, present, and future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain: how people see or think about things differently</td>
<td>Explain: elders have many ideas about things, especially about the history of the Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use: The historians had different perspectives on the lives of early Minnesotans</td>
<td>Use: Elder know a lot about Dakota culture and have many ideas about different parts of the culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade 6: Student-Friendly Vocabulary Explanations with Word Study Guides

Why?
- Students practice listening
- Exposure to the words
- Reading practice
- Visual learners have the opportunity to show their understanding through drawing

How?
- Teacher writes a student-friendly definition for the words to be studied
- Students create their own definition of the word
- Students complete the map with definition and example

Don’t forget…
- Remind students that drawing ability isn’t super important, but they should show effort with their drawing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy name:</td>
<td>Student-Friendly Vocabulary Explanations with Word Study Guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words to be taught:</td>
<td>number, compare, ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials needed:</td>
<td>student copies of Word study guide handouts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explicit Instruction and modeling**

- **Name the strategy and explain its purpose.**
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    
    This strategy is called “Student Friendly Vocabulary Definitions with Word Study Guides.” We use this strategy instead of just looking up words in the glossary or dictionary. This strategy helps us understand and remember the word meaning much better.

- **Model the strategy.**
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    
    Dictionary definition side-by-side with a written Student Friendly definition-use the word number.
    - Dictionary definition: a word or symbol, or a combination of words or symbols, used in counting or in noting a total.
    - SF definition: A symbol used in counting. We use numbers to show how many of something there is, how much money something costs, to show time, to count, to measure distance, etc.

- **Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.**
  - What will you say?
    
    “Read these two definitions. Which helps us understand what the word “number” means? I like the second definition better because it gives me lots of examples of what we use numbers for which helps me understand the word better.”
    
    Show students how to complete the Word Study Guide for the word numbers.
    “In this section we write the word number. Let’s look in the math book to find it in a sentence-who can find the word in a sentence? We write that sentence here. Next is our explanation, let’s use the Student Friendly definition from earlier. Great, who can give me an example of the word numbers used in another sentence? Now I’m going to write the numbers 0-9 in the Visual box to help me remember what the word means.”
**Guided practice**

- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  - Ask the students:
    - What does this strategy help us do?
    - Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
  - Compare
  - What will you say?
  - “The SF definition for the word compare is to closely look at two or more objects, ideas, people, numbers, etc. to find things that are the same between them and different between them.”
  - SHOW the definition to students on a handout or displayed somewhere.
  - “Now I would like you to help me complete the Word Study Guide for this word. We need to complete all the parts. What is our word? What is sentence from our book we could write down? We have the explanation. What about some examples? What picture could we draw?”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
  - Specific feedback when students give answers, ask them to explain their thinking or tell me more. Clarify purpose of boxes if there is confusion.

**Collaborative practice**

- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs-based, random, etc?) How big are groups?
  - Groups of 3-4. At least one student/group who is higher performing in math
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
  - Using the word ratio.
  - Students will be grouped with at least one student who does well in math to help them with the definition and the Word Study guide.
  - Student-friendly definition is already provided by the teacher.

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
Ask them to explain in their own words to cement the understanding
- What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
  - Revisit the examples
  - Ask where they last understood or what they are struggling with.
- How can you be specific in your feedback?
  - Point out exactly where you see they understand or don’t understand
  - Respond to different parts of the word study guide, ask questions

### Independent practice
- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
    - One more choice word from a list from the chapter (all with SF definitions already written by teacher)
    - Student chooses what word/words they need more work with (can use words found in ‘From the New to the Known’ strategy from the start of the chapter
  - The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
    - How will you give feedback?
      - Written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)
    - How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
      - During group work
      - Share out after most students have completed the independent work
      - Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss

### Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  - Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
    - Whenever they encounter an unknown word, they can ask the teacher for a SF definition and add it to their Word Study Guide.
  - Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
    - What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
      - Use the words in instruction and conversation
      - Have examples of the Word Study Guide format available.

### Student Reflection
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  - Choose one word from today
Rate your understanding of the new word on a scale of 1-5 (1 being I have no idea what's going on, 5 being I could teach this to someone else)
-One sentence of why you gave that rating.

**Teacher Reflection**
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
**Strategy with “teacher talk”**

Name: _____________________________________________

*Directions: For each word that has a Student Friendly definition (given by the teacher), complete a Word Study Guide. Come back to this study guide often!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Found in This Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our word today is ‘number’</td>
<td>What sentence can we use for the word ‘number’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write that sentence in this box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-friendly definition</td>
<td>Sentences that use that word</td>
<td>I’m going to draw a picture of the numbers zero-nine here. I’m going to make them look fun. That will help me remember information about the word ‘number.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our word today is ‘number’

What sentence can we use for the word ‘number’?

Write that sentence in this box

A symbol used in counting.
We use numbers to show how many of something there is,
how much money something costs, to show time, to count,
to measure distance, etc.

Who has another sentence that we can use in this section? The sentence needs to have the word ‘number’ in it.

I’m going to draw a picture of the numbers zero-nine here. I’m going to make them look fun. That will help me remember information about the word ‘number.’
**Strategy with “student work” example**

Name: _____________________________________________

*Directions: For each word that has a Student Friendly definition (given by the teacher), complete a Word Study Guide. Come back to this study guide often!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Found in This Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>Number skills are very important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A symbol used in counting. We use numbers to show how many of something there is, how much money something costs, to show time, to count, to measure distance, etc.** | **Adding positive numbers is just simple addition.**  
**Subtracting a negative number is the same as adding.** | ![Picture](image_url) |
**Grade 7: Frayer Method**

**Why?**
- Deepens students’ understanding of words they are already familiar with
- Encourages students to expand their thinking about a word

**How?**
- Teacher defines each section clearly before moving students through using the strategy
- Use many examples when teaching the strategy
- Allow any and all ideas as long as students can justify them
- Informally assess for understanding before students move on to using this strategy independently

**Don’t forget…**
- This strategy and versions of it are well known
- Can be challenging for students—provide lots of scaffolding, support, and guided practice
- Choose words carefully and make sure that you can come up with ideas for each box
Dates:  
Unit:  
Strategy name: Frayer Method  
Words to be taught: Map, invention, innovation, growth  
Materials needed: Textbooks, student copies of Frayer Method  

Explicit Instruction and modeling  
- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.  
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?  
    The Frayer Method helps us understand the words by challenging us to think of the words in different ways. We have to think about what the word is, what it means, and what it doesn't mean.  

- Model the strategy.  
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?  
    Show the Frayer Method graphic  
    Use images of the words being discussed if available  

- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.  
  - What will you say?  
    “We can see that the Frayer Method has a few different parts. The middle circle is where we write the word we are working with. Then we have the top two boxes, Essential Characteristics and Nonessential Characteristics. These boxes want us to think about what things are important to know to understand the word and what things aren't important to the word. The bottom two boxes are for Examples and Non-examples of the word. This is where we are going to write things that are examples of the word in action and things that are different or opposite of the word. Let's try it with a word we are really familiar with: Map. We write map in the middle. Then we need to think about some essential characteristics of the word map. Maps show us landforms, roads, bodies of water. They show distance and cardinal directions. Nonessential characteristics of maps are they not round like a globe, they might not show the big picture of the whole world like a globe. Some examples of maps are maps of states, countries, or continents. Road maps, topographical maps, those are examples too. Some non-examples are photographs of different places or a model of the moon.”
Guided practice

- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  Ask students:
  - What does this strategy help us do?
  - Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
  - Invention
  - What will you say?
  “Now let’s try it together for the word Invention. Write invention in the center circle. What are some essential characteristics of the word invention? What are non-essential characteristics? What are some examples? What are some non-examples? How do we know?”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    Ask clarifying questions
    Review any part of the strategy if needed

Collaborative practice

- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs based, random, etc?)
    Random-table groups
  - How big are groups?
    3-4 students per group
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    Using the word design
    Complete the Frayer method together through discussion
    Some groups may need group roles to stay focused

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
    Encourage them to add more to the different parts of the chart: “What else can you think of?”
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
“Which part is confusing?” Provide guidance or other resources (books, etc) if students get stuck.
Use a different, more well-known word.
   - How can you be specific in your feedback?
Point out exactly where you see they understand or don’t understand
Respond to different parts of the chart, ask questions

**Independent practice**
- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
    - Innovation
    - Growth
- The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
  - How will you give feedback?
    - Written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)
  - How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
    - During group work
    - Share out after most students have completed the independent work
    - Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss

**Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations**
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  - Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
    - Add to the chart as their understanding of the word increases during the unit
- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  - What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
    - Can use to review classroom expectations (use the words respect, fairness, etc)
    - During persuasive units in English. Controversial ideas could be put into the middle, students debate about elements and examples.

**Student Reflection**
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  - Three things you learned, two facts, one question you still have
Teacher Reflection
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Characteristics</th>
<th>Non-essential characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This box wants us to think about what things are important to know and understand what is important about the word is.</td>
<td>This box wants us to think about what things are important to know and understand what is important about the word isn’t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our word today is ‘map’. Write in this space.

Here we need to give examples of the word map. We might write some examples of the maps we have learned about in class. What are some you can think of?

Examples

This space is for what is basically the opposite of map, or ideas that aren’t similar to a map. What are some non-examples you can think of?

Non-examples
### Strategy with “student work” example

**Name:** ________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Characteristics</th>
<th>Non-essential characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landforms</td>
<td>Not round like a globe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>Might not show the whole picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodies of water</td>
<td>of an area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show distance, directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>map</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Pictures of your vacation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>Models of the planets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping malls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Non-examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade 7: Analysis Map

Why?
- Students expand word knowledge through comparing and contrasting
- Student created examples give opportunity to show understanding

How?
- Provide visual examples (videos and pictures)
- Students complete the definition of the word (can be explicitly given)
- Compare and contrast the words
- Students create examples

Don’t forget…
- High interest examples can help increase student engagement
- Choose words that can be compared and contrasted
Sample Lesson for Grade 7 Science
Analysis Map
Allen, 1999, p.49-50, 135

Dates:
Unit:
Strategy name: Analysis Map
Words to be taught: Cell organelle, nucleus, endoplasmic reticulum, golgi apparatus, vesicles
Materials needed: Copies for each student, textbooks, visuals, video about the cell organelles (to engage and enhance understanding)

Explicit Instruction and modeling
- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    - Analysis Map
    - Helps by giving us the definition along with comparing and contrasting with other words

- Model the strategy.
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    - Pictures and video of the organelles
    - Copies of the strategy

- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
  - What will you say?
    - “Today we are going to use the analysis map to help us understand the different cell organelles. This strategy is going to give us a definition of each word, have us make connections to the word by comparing and contrasting, and finally writing an example. We are going to start with the word cell organelle. Each cell is complex and has many different parts. These small parts of a cell are called organelles. Each organelle has specific jobs in the life of the cell. That will be my definition. Now I’m going to compare what a cell organelle is to other things I’m familiar with. I think a cell organelle is like a bigger organ in our bodies, like a heart or the lungs. Both the large organs and the small organelles are needed for life. To contrast, an organelle is not like the whole body. The whole body has many jobs where organelles just have one or two jobs. Finally, I need an example. An example of an organelle is the nucleus.”

Guided practice
- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
Ask the students:
- What does this strategy help us do?
- Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
    Nucleus
  - What will you say?
    “Now let’s work together on the word nucleus. The nucleus is an organelle that contains the DNA in a cell and directs all the activity in a cell. What could we compare that to? What could we contrast that to? What are some examples of what a nucleus might tell a cell to do?”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    Ask clarifying questions, ask for more information, review or redirect when answers are inaccurate.

Collaborative practice
- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs based, random, etc?)
    Needs-based. Like needs together
  - How big are groups?
    3-4 students per group
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    Words used: endoplasmic reticulum, golgi apparatus
    Support with the unknown words
    Review of what to put into compare and contrast
    Help with examples

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
    Ask students questions, challenge them to go deeper with their thinking, more examples, etc.
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
    Reference the examples, review the definitions
  - How can you be specific in your feedback?
Ask questions, address specific areas of the strategy one at a time

### Independent practice
- Students practice strategy on their own.
  - Which words will students be practicing independently?
    - vesicles

- The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
  - How will you give feedback?
    - Written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)
  - How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
    - During group work
    - Share out after most students have completed the independent work
    - Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss

### Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  - Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
    - Return to strategy to add examples or compare and contrast elements as we learn more in the unit

- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  - What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
    - Ask how they could use this strategy in other classes, incorporate into a variety of units, use during a non-fiction reading or video with other related words

### Student Reflection
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  - Quick write: Students can go back to the words they don’t know as well and write one idea for how they can learn the word better!

### Teacher Reflection
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.
- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
**Strategy with “teacher talk”**

Name: ____________________________

*Directions: For each word, fill in the definition first. Then complete the Compare and Contrast sections. Finally, write out some examples!*

**Word**

________ Write your word here. For us now it’s: cell organelle_____

**Definition**

Write our definition in this space. The definition is: Each cell is complex and has many different parts. These small parts of a cell are called organelles. Each organelle has specific jobs in the life of the cell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare to:</th>
<th>Contrast with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now we compare the word organelle to other things we are familiar with. Remember that when we compare, we are looking at similarities. I think a cell organelle is like a bigger organ in our bodies, like a heart or the lungs. Both the large organs and the small organelles are needed for life.</td>
<td>Here, we contrast the word cell organelle with things that are opposite from it. To contrast, an organelle is not like the whole body. The whole body has many jobs where organelles just have one or two jobs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples**

Finally, I need an example of what a cell organelle is. Examples help us get a picture in our head of what the word means, even if we haven’t worked with the word in a while. An example of a cell organelle is the nucleus, which we will learn more about in the days to come!
Strategy with “student work” example

Name: ____________________________________________

Directions: For each word, fill in the definition first. Then complete the Compare and Contrast sections. Finally, write out some examples!

Word
nucleus

Definition
The nucleus is an organelle that contains the DNA in a cell and directs all the activity in a cell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare to:</th>
<th>Contrast with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher or principal at a school</td>
<td>The students at a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The director of a movie</td>
<td>An office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A boss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The addition or subtraction symbols in a math problem, they tell you what to do with the numbers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples
The nucleus is the boss in the cell. It could tell the other parts of the cell to do their jobs and when to reproduce the cell.
Grade 8: Semantic Mapping

Why?

- Students can make connections between words and ideas
- Expand understanding of key words
- Show how different words can work together
- Student-directed thinking
- Can encourage meaningful discussion when students compare their maps with others

How?

- Students brainstorm what they know about a word or phrase
- Students group ideas together
- Each group gets a title based on what is included in that group

Don’t forget…

- No printable graphic organizer for this strategy, students create their own map
- Ask lots of questions to clarify and extend students’ thinking
Dates: 
Unit: 
Strategy name: Semantic Mapping
Words to be taught: Automation
Materials needed: Blank paper for students to create their map

Explicit Instruction and modeling

- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    Allows us to write everything we know about a word, but then take it further. Semantic mapping challenges us to categorize our knowledge about a word and furthers our understanding. We have to make connections between the things we know and understand about a word.

- Model the strategy.
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    Visuals of the steps of semantic mapping

- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
  - What will you say?
    “We are going to start with the word “technology”. This is a word we are all familiar with in this class. For step one, On my blank paper I’m going to write down everything I know about the word technology. The word technology goes into a circle in the middle and I connect my other ideas to the circle with a line.”
    - Will write: new, inventions, change, computers, makes things easier, electronics, medical, science, math, engineers, inventors, helpful, risky, etc.
    “Now I have all my words. For step 2, I’m going to flip my page over to make a new map where my ideas are more organized.”
    - Group like ideas together with a title for each group
    “Now my ideas are grouped together. I’m going to use my second map to write a sentence or two that explains what the word technology means to me. I can use some of the words from my semantic map in my explanation.”
    - Write: Technology is something that can help us. It doesn’t just mean computers or electronics. Technology is used in the medical field and in science to create new ways of doing things.”
**Guided practice**

- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  
  Ask the students:
  - What does this strategy help us do?
  - Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
    - Invention
  - What will you say?
    - “I used the word invention in my semantic map for the word technology. I’m going to dig deeper into that word with another semantic map. What can I include? Now how do I organize all these ideas into groups? What do I call each group? What can my explanation say?”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    - Students contribute to the semantic map, help organize into groups, name the groups
    - Ask clarifying questions
    - Redirect and explain if I’m given an inaccurate answer or response

**Collaborative practice**

- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs-based, random, etc?)
    - Random
  - How big are groups?
    - Partners
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    - Word: automatic
    - Provide the textbook definition, give examples

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
    - Ask students questions, challenge them to go deeper with their thinking, more examples, etc.
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
Reference the example, help with the definition, give suggestions for regrouping
  o How can you be specific in your feedback?
  Ask questions, address specific areas of the strategy one at a time

**Independent practice**
- Students practice strategy on their own.
  o Which words will students be practicing independently?
    Automation

- The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
  o How will you give feedback?
    Written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)
  o How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?
    - During group work
    - Share out after most students have completed the independent work
    - Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss

**Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations**
- Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations
  o Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?
    Add to the semantic map as needed
    Rework the explanation if needed

- Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.
  o What other relevant exposure can you give the students?
    Use the strategy as review for words or big ideas for the unit
    Display semantic maps for keywords in the unit, reference it regularly, encourage students to add to it throughout the unit, add to it myself throughout the unit.

**Student Reflection**
Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.
- How will your students reflect on their learning?
  Sticky note. Each student writes one thing that “Stuck with them” on the sticky note and put it on the board as they leave the room.
Teacher Reflection
This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.

- What went well?
- What would you change for next time?
- What resources would you need or not need next time?
- Any other thoughts or reflections?
“Teacher talk” reminders for semantic mapping

- Allow all ideas
- Students can organize and group however they choose
- Ask lots of questions, especially during the second step
- Don’t give a number limit on ideas
- Students may need pre-drawn maps to get them started during the first couple of times using the strategy. Looking at a blank page can stall some students’ thinking.

Strategy with “student work” example

Format of a semantic map

Step One:

- technology
  - electronics
  - new
  - helpful
  - medical
  - invention
  - science
  - engineers
  - makes things easier
  - computers
  - math
  - change

Makes things easier
Step 2:

Technology

Subjects that influence technology
- science
- math
- medical

Benefits of technology
- Makes things easier
- Change
- New
- Helpful

What does technology need?
- Computers
- Electronics
- Engineers
- Invention
Grade 8: Context → Content → Experience

Why?
- Words are shown in context
- Student experience and background informs their work
- Student engagement is increased when learning is directly tied to their lives

How?
- Students see the word in context
- Relate their experiences with the word to create a definition

Don’t forget…
- Each student will have different experiences with this strategy
- Ask questions to clarify thinking
Explicit Instruction and modeling

- Name the strategy and explain its purpose.
  - How will it help with vocabulary learning?
    - Strategy is called Context → Content → Experience.
    - It helps us make personal connections to the words and challenges us to look at words in several different ways.

- Model the strategy.
  - What visuals will be used to help the students?
    - Display copy of the strategy form

- Think aloud to show thinking and strategy use.
  - What will you say?
    - “The strategy we are learning today, called Context → Content → Experience, is going to help us make personal connections to the vocabulary words. Yes, even in math! We will be looking at the word in context, looking at how the word might be used in different ways, creating a definition, giving examples, and then thinking about our own experience with the word. We are going to start today with the word math to help us get comfortable with the format of the strategy. My sentence at the top will be: ‘I don’t want to go to math, when will I use what we’re learning in my life?’ This is something I know all of you have thought before! Anyway, our word is math. Then we write the definition, possibilities, and from context. The definition of math we will use today is the ‘study of numbers and their uses’. Some possibilities are calculus, algebra, or geometry. From context, it’s a class you have to go to. So, putting all those together, my common definition is going to be ‘a class where you study and use numbers’. Now I can write some examples of math. Math is used in lots of different careers, like engineering, architecture, etc. Math can help us find patterns and understand the world in new ways. Math is exciting! Finally, I can write my Personal Connection. For me, math has always been tough but I know that it’s really useful, so I have to try hard to understand.”
### Guided practice
- Teacher guides a large group conversation. Encourage all students to participate and share their thinking.
  - Ask the students:
    - What does this strategy help us do?
    - Why is it important?

- Teacher and students practice the strategy together in a shared vocabulary experience. Students do the strategy along with the teacher.
  - Which word will you use?
    - Equality
  - What will you say?
    - “Let’s think about the word equality not only for math but in other areas too. It helps us understand the word that much better. How can we complete all the parts of this strategy for the word equality?”

- Teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports their thinking, give specific feedback, and make sure students understand the task. Student voice is heard.
  - How are you, the teacher, supporting their attempts?
    - Asking questions, clarifying answers, giving feedback for responses, encouraging all students to participate

### Collaborative practice
- Students work together in pairs or small groups.
  - How are you grouping students? (needs-based, random, etc?)
    - Choice groups
  - How big are groups?
    - 2-3 students/group
  - What modifications or differentiation might students or groups need?
    - Word: Inequality

- Teacher moves from group to group assessing and responding to students’ needs.
  - What do you do and say when students understand?
    - Ask students questions, challenge them to go deeper with their thinking, more examples, etc.
  - What do you do and say when they don’t understand?
    - Reference the example, help with the definition, give suggestions for re-grouping
  - How can you be specific in your feedback?
Ask questions, address specific areas of the strategy one at a time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students practice strategy on their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Which words will students be practicing independently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inequalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How will you give feedback?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written (collect the sheets) and verbal (walking around and observing while students are working independently)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How will you encourage students to give feedback to one another?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share out after most students have completed the independent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade sheets with partners and have them discuss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application of the strategy in authentic reading situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students use the strategy in authentic reading situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where will students be encouraged to use this strategy moving forward?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add to the strategy when needed, rework connections or examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students use the strategy in a variety of different settings, contexts, and disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What other relevant exposure can you give the students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate into all classes, use with fiction and non-fiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage students to make connections with words in unlikely subjects, like Science.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan for students to look back on using the strategy to learn the vocabulary words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How will your students reflect on their learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick write: How did this strategy help your understanding of these words?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain your answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is your space to reflect on the lesson/lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What went well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What would you change for next time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What resources would you need or not need next time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Any other thoughts or reflections?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategy with “teacher talk”

Name: _________________________________________________

Context (how is the word used in a sentence?)
This section is where we put a sentence that uses the word in a meaningful way. Our sentence today is: I don’t want to go to math, when will I use what we’re learning in my life?
I know that we’ve all had this thought at one point or another!

Word
Our word today is math, so you can write it in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Possibilities</th>
<th>From Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The definition of math we will use today is the ‘study of numbers and their uses’. Write that into this box here.</td>
<td>Some possibilities are calculus, algebra, or geometry. There are many other types of math, but keep it simple for now.</td>
<td>From context, it’s a class you have to go to, usually even when you are in college and not a math major!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common definition
So, putting all three ideas above together, my common definition is going to be ‘a class where you study and use numbers’.

Example
Now I can write some examples of math. Math is used in lots of different careers, like engineering, architecture, etc.

Example
Math can help us find patterns and understand the world in new ways.

Example
Math is used when breaking codes or other exciting things!

Personal connection
Finally, I can write my Personal Connection. For me, math has always been tough but I know that it’s really useful, so I try hard to understand. It sometimes takes a lot of work and frustration, but I know it will be worth it.
## Strategy with “student work” example

### The equality “A is equal to B” is written as “A = B”

### Word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Possibilities</th>
<th>From Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When there is equality, both values on the left and the right side of the sign ‘=’ will be the same.</td>
<td>When finding equality, numbers might have to be moved around by subtraction, addition, multiplication, or division</td>
<td>Making both sides of an equation equal by doing different math functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Common definition

Equality occurs when both sides of an equation equal one another. Using different math functions can get both sides equal.

### Example

- \(5 + 10 = 10 + 5\)
- \(15/3 = 5\)
- \(4 \times 5 = 20\)

### Personal connection

You hear a lot about equality between different groups of people in the news. This type of equality is easier to achieve, I think.
**Roll-out Plan**

Now that you have all the background information, strategy knowledge, and lesson plan format understanding, let’s discuss two possible scenarios for actual roll-out of the strategies contained in this guide. It is up to teachers and administration to determine which plan is best for your building.

**Roll-out Plan 1: The Three-Year Plan**

This plan introduces the strategies over a three-year time span. This is a slower process, obviously, but it allows for time for reflection and improvement as the strategies are introduced over the three years. This plan phases in the common language, allows sixth grade teachers to become experts at their strategies first in the building. These teachers can then serve to help the seventh and eighth grade teachers with their instruction when the time comes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Sixth grade teachers are responsible for introducing the two vocabulary learning strategies for their grade level. Seventh and eighth grade teachers do not introduce or reteach vocabulary learning strategies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Sixth and seventh grade teachers are responsible for introducing the vocabulary strategies for each grade level. Seventh grade teachers can also include strategies learned in sixth grade in their instruction. Review and possible reteaching of sixth grade strategies may be needed. Eighth grade teachers do not introduced or reteach vocabulary learning strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>All three grade levels will introduce and teach their respective strategies. Seventh and eighth grade teachers can incorporate strategies from the lower grade levels into their teaching. Review and reteaching may be needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roll-out Plan 2: The All-at-Once Plan

This plan introduces the strategies in one year. Each grade level is responsible for introducing their strategies. With this plan, the whole building is using strategies, but students will not be familiar with all six strategies until they have completed grades 6-8 in the building. This plan creates a common language and vocabulary-learning goal for the whole building all at once. Everyone is learning and reflecting on the process together.
Additional considerations when teaching vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary effectively is more than using strategies to help students learn and understand word meanings. There are several other things teachers can do to reinforce and deepen word learning. When strategy instruction is combined with some (or all!) of the ideas below, teachers will find that students gain an even greater understanding of the words being taught.

**Exposure.** Exposing the students to the words being taught in a wide variety of contexts is one of the best and easiest ways to reinforce the word learning. Find the words being used in articles, videos, or other books. Point out the words when they come up in class and review what the words mean. Have students be on the look-out for the words and encourage them to bring the text to class when they find the word. Use the word as much as possible in verbal communications with both the whole class and individual students. The more exposure to the word, the better. Kelley, Lesaux, Keiffer, & Faller (2010) explain:

> Language is social, and so are kids. To promote deep understanding, teachers need to structure ways for students to hear more academic language used, hear words analyzed in a fun way, and practice using academic words. (p. 9)

Exposing students to books, magazines, articles, and videos that use the words in ways that are different from the textbook is important. “The aim of rich instruction was to have students engage in active thinking about meanings, about how they might use the words in different situations, and about the relationships among words” ((McKeown & Beck, 2004, p. 18). Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood (2005) elaborate, saying “teachers
supported vocabulary by providing students with opportunities to consider word meanings in different contexts” (p. 265). When students can interact with the words in diverse ways, their understanding is deepened.

**Word walls.** Creating a word wall in the classroom is an effective way to keep the words visible to students. A simple internet search will yield hundreds of ideas for setting up the word wall. Words can be added to the word wall throughout the year. Make the word wall interactive for students. Students and the teacher can also add examples of the word in action to the word wall if space allows. The words can be left up throughout the year or switched out for each unit.

**Personal dictionaries.** Encourage students to keep a personal dictionary or similar record of the words they have learned throughout the year. This can be kept in a section in a binder, folder, or notebook that students bring each day to class. After learning the words and using the strategies, students should add their word to their personal dictionary and use it as a reference. These personal dictionaries can be a very simple list or something more creative, like Janet Allen’s Word Jars (Allen, 1999, p. 146).

**Creating a word-rich environment.** Kame’euni and Baumann (2012), in their book *Vocabulary Instruction: Research to Practice*, offer several excellent ideas to creating a word-rich environment in the classroom. They suggest “a classroom full of materials...variety in levels of materials and topics is a must”(p. 195). Word games, crossword puzzles, word jumbles, riddles, drama, and art are just a few of the ideas they present. There are many online resources that can be used as well. Websites for word
practice, etc. are found in Section Eight. Teachers should aim to make their classrooms full of words. Presenting the vocabulary in fun and unique ways will keep students engaged in the word learning process.
Extra resources and online activities

There are hundreds of resources available to assist teachers with teaching vocabulary. In addition to the books listed in the bibliography, these are some other resources that can be useful both for teachers and students. Note: these resources were verified as current and active on July 2, 2015.

- **Vocabulary Games for the Classroom** by Lindsay Carleton and Robert J. Marzano
  - Engaging games that support vocabulary learning, for all grade levels.

- **NewsELA** ([www.newsla.com](http://www.newsla.com))
  - Current events articles for nearly every subject area. Articles can be leveled to meet the different reading needs of students.

- **Math Dictionary** ([http://amathsdictionaryforkids.com/dictionary.html](http://amathsdictionaryforkids.com/dictionary.html))
  - Kid-friendly definitions of many math terms.

  - Interactive word work, student friendly.

- **Wordsmith.org-A Word A Day** ([http://wordsmith.org/words/today.html](http://wordsmith.org/words/today.html))
  - In-depth look at a new word each day

  - Online word games, many options!

- **Free rice** ([www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com))
  - For each definition correct, they donate 10 grains of rice to people in need.
**Master Copies**

The handouts on the following pages are to be used with students during strategy instruction and use. Remember, it’s important to work through the entire gradual release model with the students. These pages are not intended to be simply copied and passed out. Students must have a complete understanding of how to use the strategy in order for it to be effective.

These graphic organizers are not of my own design, sources have been cited.
Master copy for From the New to the Known (Allen, 1999, p.129)

Name: _____________________________________

*Directions: Look at the word list for the new unit. Copy each word into a column that best matches your understanding of that word at this point.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This word is totally new to me</th>
<th>I’ve heard or seen this word, but I’m not sure what it means</th>
<th>I know one definition or could use this word in a sentence</th>
<th>I know several ways this word could be used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Name: _____________________________________________

Directions: For the words given, complete the Vocabulary Overview Guide. Return to the guide often throughout the unit, as your understanding might change!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word:</th>
<th>Word:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clue:</td>
<td>Clue:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain:</td>
<td>Explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use:</td>
<td>Use:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th>Word:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clue:</td>
<td>Clue:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain:</td>
<td>Explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use:</td>
<td>Use:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name: _____________________________________________

**Directions:** For each word that has a Student Friendly definition (given by the teacher), complete a Word Study Guide. Come back to this study guide often!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Found in This Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-friendly definition</td>
<td>Sentences that use that word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Found in This Sentence</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Master copy for Frayer Method (Buehl, 2014, p. 237)

Name: ________________________________________________

Essential Characteristics | Non-essential characteristics

Examples

Essential Characteristics | Non-essential characteristics

Examples

Non-examples

Non-examples
Master copy for Analysis Map (Allen, 1999, p.49-50, 135)

Name: ____________________________________________

Directions: For each word, fill in the definition first. Then complete the Compare and Contrast sections. Finally, write out some examples!

**Word**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare to:</th>
<th>Contrast with:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Format of a semantic map
Step One:

One thing I know

KEYWORD

One thing I know

Step 2:

One thing I know

Title

KEYWORD

One thing I know

Title

One thing I know
REFERENCES


