

# **EXPLICIT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION**

## **GOAL: ENGAGE STUDENTS IN DEEP, ROBUST VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION EVERY DAY.**

**Explicit Vocabulary Instruction** – Dedicating a portion of lesson time in **each content area** to: (1) word learning, (2) repeated exposure to new words in multiple oral and written contexts, and (3) providing students with strategies to make them independent vocabulary learners.

### **January's Dazzling Ideas**

**Dazzling Idea #1:** The connection between vocabulary and reading comprehension, as well as vocabulary and school performance in all content areas, is one of the most strongly established in educational research. Research indicates clearly that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with overall reading achievement (Davis, 1944, 1968; National Reading Panel, 2000).

**Dazzling Idea #2:** Researchers estimate that it could take as many as 17 exposures for a student to learn a new word. Repeated exposure could be in the same lesson or passage, but the exposures will be most effective if they appear over an extended period of time (Baumanm, Edwards, Boland, Font, Tereshinski, Olejnik, & Kame'enui, 2002 & 2003).

**In January, let's focus on implementing the first 2 of the 7 guiding principles of exemplary vocabulary instruction:**

1. **Vocabulary learning takes place when students are immersed in words.** In word-rich classrooms, teachers stop and discuss new words and provide for their students dictionaries, puzzles, word games, word calendars, and books on riddles and rhymes to support enthusiastic word learning.
2. **Vocabulary learning takes place when students are active in discovering ways in which words are related to experiences and to one another.** The construction **and discussion** of webs, maps, feature charts, and cluster/grouping strategies are very important in classrooms.

**Remember...**

- **Children need many, many exposures to words before those words become part of their "working vocabularies"!**
- **Vocabulary instruction doesn't just happen in language arts—it happens all day long in every content area!**

## Immersing Students in Words

Instead of:	Try this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on vocabulary instruction only in language arts class...</li> <li>• Never pausing to discuss words during a read-aloud...</li> <li>• Teaching only the words you find in your curricula...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly teach vocabulary using exemplary strategies in social studies, science, music, art, math, etc.</li> <li>• Stop and talk about words you encounter during read-alouds. Write the word, define it in student-friendly terms, and use it in a sentence.</li> <li>• Expose your students to a Word-of-the-Day format, such as the one in <a href="http://wordcentral.com">http://wordcentral.com</a>. Click on “Daily Buzzword” and have fun with the new word!</li> <li>• Have word games and puzzle books available in your classroom, or try the following online activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="http://www.funbrain.com/words.html">http://www.funbrain.com/words.html</a></li> <li>○ <a href="http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/word_games.html">http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/word_games.html</a></li> <li>○ <a href="http://pbskids.org/games/word.html">http://pbskids.org/games/word.html</a></li> <li>○ <a href="http://www.pitara.com/games/word_games.asp">http://www.pitara.com/games/word_games.asp</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Helping Students Relate to and Connect Words

Instead of:	Try this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the vocabulary instruction exactly as it is in your basal or other teacher’s manual...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students see connections between and among words by including one of the following graphic organizers (attached) or activities as you teach words to students. Don’t forget to <b>discuss</b> them! (Research shows that constructing graphic organizers without discussion is not effective.):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Semantic/Word Maps or Webs</li> <li>○ Semantic Feature Charts</li> <li>○ Word Clusters</li> <li>○ Story/Vocabulary Impressions</li> <li>○ Word Anchors</li> <li>○ Possible Sentences</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Graphic Organizers and Activities to Help Students See Connections Between and Among**  
**Words**

**Story/Vocabulary Impressions**

1. Develop a list of key ideas from a story that the students have not yet read. Write the words in a vertical list with arrows connecting the words. (The following list is an example from the first few pages of *Brave Irene*, Steig, 1986.)

↓ stitches

↓ duchess

↓ palace

↓ splendid

↓ muffler

↓ pasture

2. Have students read the list of words in order.
3. Have the students brainstorm possible relationships between the words ( i.e. “A duchess could live in a palace”; “The duchess could be wearing a muffler”, etc.).
4. Have the students write their own short stories using the words in the order that they are given.
5. Read to students the actual text from which the words are found. Have the students compare and contrast their own writing with the writing in the actual text. Explore the ways the words were used in both pieces of writing.

## Semantic Mapping/Webbing

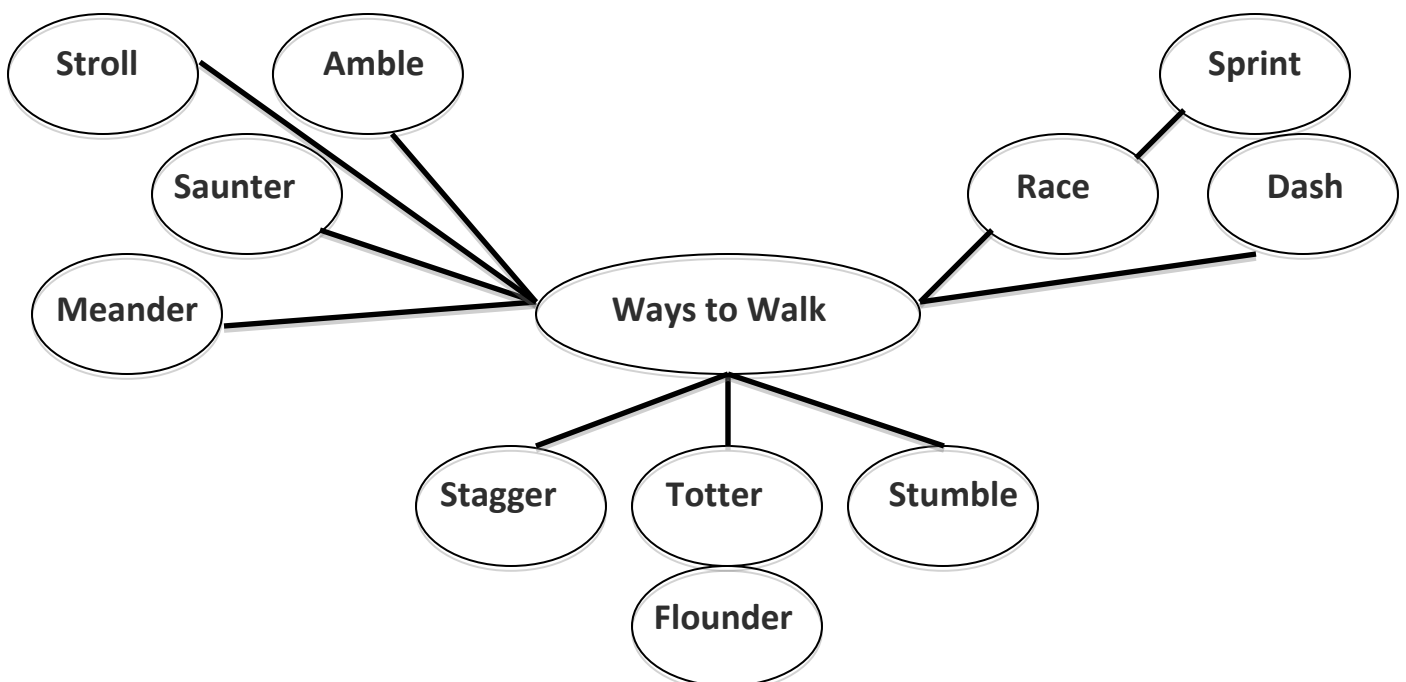
Word webs (also known as semantic mapping) illustrate how key words or concepts are related to one another through graphic representations. Creating word webs can be done as a whole-class, small-group, or individual activity. A word web is a graphic organizer created by students to help them learn vocabulary.

### How to Use Word Webs

1. Begin with a word. This strategy works well using words from expository texts.
2. Students free-associate other words, terms, or phrases they associate with the chosen word. The teacher writes these on the board in the order in which they are shared next to the targeted word. This is done until students run out of ideas.
3. Students categorize associations and label the categories. This can be done as a class, in small groups or pairs, or individually.
4. Students can present and explain their maps to others or to the class, with assistance from the teacher, if necessary.
5. When using this as a before reading activity, have students add to the categories after reading.
6. When students are familiar with the strategy, they can produce their own maps for words from independent reading.

From: <http://www.nea.org/tools/word-webs.html>

### Sample Semantic Web



## Semantic Feature Analysis

Very often you'll find yourself in a situation in which you need to sort out the similarities and differences among a group of events, people, objects or ideas. A technique that can help you do that is called Semantic Feature Analysis. Semantic Feature Analysis uses a grid to help you explore how a set of words or things are related to one another. By analyzing the grid you'll be able to see connections, make predictions, and master important concepts.

### Procedure

1. Identify the general topic to be analyzed. This works well in science, social studies, or content area nonfiction.
2. Make a list of vocabulary words related to the topic.
3. On the sample chart below, an overhead transparency, chalkboard, sheet of paper, or within a computer program, begin a sample chart. Put 5 to 10 of the words in your list across the top row of the chart.
4. List in the left column of the grid some features or characteristics that some of the words might have.
5. Look at the cells in the grid and ask yourself, does this element have this feature? If the answer is yes, put a "+" sign in the grid. If the answer is no, put a "-". If you don't know, leave it blank.
6. As you work your way through the grid, ideas will occur to you about additional characteristics or features to add. Keep adding them as long as they seem to add to your understanding of the topic.
7. When the grid is completed to your satisfaction, it's time to take a look at it and see what patterns emerge. Ask yourself...
  - a. Which columns are similar to each other? What features do the words in these columns have in common? Is there a name for the grouping of these elements? Could you make one up?
  - b. Which rows are similar to each other? What elements are tagged in the same way in those rows? What does this similarity tell you about these features?
  - c. Which cells are still blank? Where can you go to find the information you'll need to complete those cells?
8. When you've completed this first look at your grid, write up a summary of what you've learned. Your summary should answer the questions listed above.

### Semantic Feature Analysis Chart Sample

	Words			
Features	stroll	saunter	sprint	stagger
unhurried	+	+	--	?
speedy	--	--	+	--
unsteady	--	--	--	+
carefree	+	+	?	?



**Possible Sentences for \_\_\_\_\_**

(Name of Text or Topic)

**To the teacher:** List vocabulary words for a text or topic in the Word Box. Include both words that are known and unknown. Discuss the words briefly. Have students create sentences with the words, using 2 or 3 words in one sentence to display connections. Then, while reading the text, encourage students to discover how the author used the words. Have the student put a checkmark in front of the sentences in which the student feels s/he used the words correctly. Engage students in discussion, and have them revise sentences if necessary.

Word Box

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Leading a Teacher Discussion on Vocabulary Immersion and Word Connections:**

- 1. Ask teachers to “Whip Around the Table” and share the “Doing” movement strategy they tried from last month, briefing discussing successes and problems with the strategy. Make sure everyone shares.**
- 2. Make sure teachers each have a copy of the January “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction” handout (7 pages).**
- 3. Tell teachers we are leaving the “Student Engagement” discussion, but to continue using the engagement strategies they’ve found successful. Introduce the new topic: “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction”. Have a teacher orally read the “Goal”, the definition for “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction”. Then have someone read January’s “Dazzling Ideas”. Tell teachers that every month for the next 3-4 months, we’ll be discussing two of the seven guiding principles for exemplary, effective vocabulary instruction.**
- 4. Have teachers silently read the ideas in the “Immersing Students in Words” and the “Helping Students Relate to and Connect Words” tables. Remind teachers that you probably wouldn’t use these strategies every day, but that they could be used across the curriculum to support vocabulary development.**
- 5. After a minute or two, have teachers “Whip Around the Table” where they are sitting to briefly share thoughts, successes, or problems with any of these strategies. Quickly have each table brainstorm solutions to any of the problems.**
- 6. Have each teacher choose a strategy s/he is going to try for the next month. Have teachers “Whip Around the Table” again and share the “immersing” or “connections” strategy they will try.**