

# 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.

### **February's Dazzling Ideas**

**Dazzling Idea #1:** Students need to *personalize* word meanings—making the words their own—by accessing their prior knowledge about words, acting them out, or drawing their own pictures to illustrate meaning. (Eeds & Cockrum, 1985; Carr & Mazur-Stewart, 1988; Dufflemeyer, 1980).

**Dazzling Idea #2:** In effective, “word aware” classrooms, a definition of a vocabulary word is not enough. Students must use words in meaningful communication situations. They must talk about vocabulary words, write them in context, and see them in a wide variety of texts. (Duin & Graves, 1987; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

**In February, let's focus on implementing the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of the 7 guiding principles of exemplary vocabulary instruction:**

- 3. Vocabulary learning takes place when students personalize word learning.** Students need to use their own words to describe concepts. They need to act out words, “draw” definitions, and have first-hand experiences with words. While using a dictionary is an appropriate skill to teach, let's put the dictionary aside during our initial instruction of vocabulary words.
- 4. Vocabulary learning builds on multiple sources of information.** How many ways can a student experience a word? The sky's the limit!

**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!**

## Personalizing Word Learning

Instead of:	Try this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning vocabulary instruction by giving all of <i>your</i> information about a word...</li> <li>Having students write definitions of words using a dictionary during initial vocabulary instruction...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let the students access their own prior knowledge about words <i>first</i>. Ask: Where have you seen that word before? How was it used? Can you use that word in a meaningful sentence? What do you think it means? Can you show me what you think it means?</li> <li>Use a “fist-to-five” strategy: Say, “Show me ‘no fingers’ (fist) if you have no idea what that word means. Show me 5 fingers if you know it, can use it in a meaningful sentence, and can define it.” Then call on some of the students showing you 4-5 fingers. Clarify misconceptions and build on meaning with your own words. (Try the “Rate Your Words” attachment if you want a written version.)</li> <li>Share a definition of the word in your own language, and have students share a definition in <i>their</i> language—no parroting allowed!</li> <li>Let the students act out the meaning of words.</li> <li>Let the students sketch to show the meanings of words.</li> <li>To combine a lot of the above strategies, try a vocabulary journal (See attached for a modified Marzano journal page).</li> </ul>

## Word Exposure through Multiple Sources of Information

Instead of:	Try this:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching word meanings only through definitions or using only one text...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have students summarize (orally or in writing) a piece of text, directions, rules for a game, etc. for a partner, challenging them to use selected vocabulary in their summary.</li> <li>Challenge students to find/listen for their vocabulary words in other texts, on TV, on the radio, on digital materials, etc. Ask them to share where they found/heard the words.</li> <li>Try the “Key Word Notes” strategy (attached).</li> <li>Continue to use the January strategies for helping students make connections between and among words.</li> </ul>



Term

Understanding: 😊 😐 😞

**Describe:**

**Draw:**

Term

Understanding: 😊 😐 😞

**Describe:**

**Draw:**

## Key Word Notes for Writing Summaries

(Adapted from: *Thinking Strategies for Student Achievement* by Denise D. Nessel and Joyce M. Graham, p. 109)

1. Students work in pairs. Each student creates a “Key Word Note Form” (see sample below).
2. The text is divided into 4 parts by the teacher. Each student reads the first designated piece of text individually, silently.
3. Each person selects and writes in Box 1 three or four words from the text (or the teacher can write in 1 or 2 words and the student writes the rest) as memory aids, focusing on key text vocabulary.
4. Partners tell each other what words they selected and why, and then each person summarizes that particular part of the text.
5. Students repeat steps 2-4, completing all the text, using all the Key Word Note boxes.
6. With books closed, each student uses his/her Key Word Notes to write a summary of the entire text in Box 5.

### Key Word Notes

Box 1	Box 2
Box 3	Box 4
Box 5	

**Leading a Teacher Discussion on Personalizing Word Learning and Word Exposure through Multiple Sources:**

- 1. Ask teachers to “Whip Around the Table” and share the “Immersion in Words” or “Connecting Words” vocabulary strategy they tried from last month, briefly discussing successes and problems with the strategy. Make sure everyone shares.**
- 2. Make sure teachers each have a copy of the February “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction” handout (5 pages).**
- 3. Tell teachers we are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of examining 7 guiding principles of “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction”. Have a teacher orally read the “Goal”, the definition for “Explicit Vocabulary Instruction”. Then have someone read February’s “Dazzling Ideas”. Tell teachers that this month, we are discussing principles 3 and 4.**
- 4. Have teachers silently read the ideas in the “Personalizing Word Learning” and the “Word Exposure through Multiple Sources of Information” tables. Remind teachers that you may not 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 “Personalizing” or “Multiple Sources” strategy they will try. Teachers may also have another related strategy that they would like to try and share instead.**