

Figure RL 4.4

INTENSIFYING THE INSTRUCTION

Vocabulary-Learning Strategies

The vocabulary-learning strategy lessons are designed to help students understand what to do with potentially important unfamiliar words.

1. Select a text that contains vocabulary you know will challenge the participating students. This could be a text you are reading with the whole class. Each student should have access to a copy.
2. Read a portion of the text, demonstrating your thinking processes for dealing with vocabulary:
 - Is this a word I should try to understand or is it not important here?
 - Can I use my own logic to figure out what it means?
 - Do the surrounding sentences provide any clues to the meaning?
 - Do I recognize any of the word parts?
 - Does the author provide information anywhere else?
 - Is there someone I could ask?
 - Should I check the dictionary?

Be explicit about your processes. We want students to be consciously aware of what you are doing so that they will know how to bring these strategies into their own reading.

3. After demonstrating, ask students to read and discuss a passage of the text together, identifying unfamiliar words and discussing the best strategies for determining their meanings. Students can use highlighting tape or document words on sticky notes or note cards.
4. Continue instruction with students who do not demonstrate understanding of effective strategies for learning about new words.

INTENSIFYING THE INSTRUCTION

Vocabulary Studies

A new word is best learned as a concept, rather than through a process of isolated word study. The vocabulary-learning strategy lessons are designed as frameworks for students to study words in the wider context in which they appear.

To implement vocabulary studies, select words that are critical to understanding the key concepts in a text and use the graphic organizers featured in figures RL 4.6 to RL 4.10 to guide students to explore them from a variety of angles. Or students may select their own words for vocabulary study. The organizers are examples of materials you may use. Ideally, you will create your own to suit your particular needs.

As you develop your instruction and create your materials, take into consideration the following effective strategies for facilitating vocabulary learning (synthesized from research by Jitendra et al., 2004).

1. Ensure that students read often.
2. Provide instruction related to words students will need to deeply comprehend the material they are reading.
3. Focus not on a casually chosen set of words, but on a key word with multiple connections to other words.

For English Learners

Intervention research suggests that "English Learners will benefit most from rich, intensive vocabulary instruction that emphasizes 'student-friendly' definitions, that engages students in the meaningful use of word meanings in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and that provides regular review" (Gersten et al. 2007).