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## Introduction

The strategies presented in this workbook are valuable for all children from any background.

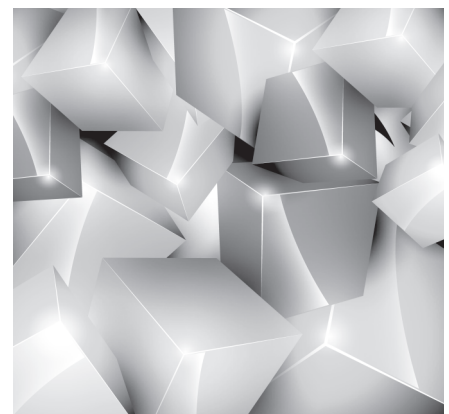
According to educational researchers, however, these strategies are especially critical for students from poverty.

### The research says ...

Cognitive performance in children raised in poverty diverges from non-poor children's performance as young as 2 years of age, continues at school entry, and impacts school performance through high school (Ryan, Fauth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006).

Poverty exacts greater costs on children during the preschool years than during later years of schooling (Evans, 2004).

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**PART I.**  
**Seven-Step Vocabulary-Development Plan for  
 Preschool, Primary, and Elementary Grades**

**Step One: Theme-related Read-aloud Book/Target Vocabulary**

- A. Select a theme
- B. Choose read-aloud books related to the theme
- C. Select target vocabulary from the book
- D. Teach target vocabulary from the book
- E. Read the book

- A. Select a theme that will extend over one or two weeks (themes may reflect core-knowledge guidelines)

Teaching through themes enables teachers to activate prior knowledge for several lessons, provides opportunities for multiple exposures to words, and allows students with limited experiences time to become familiar with new concepts.

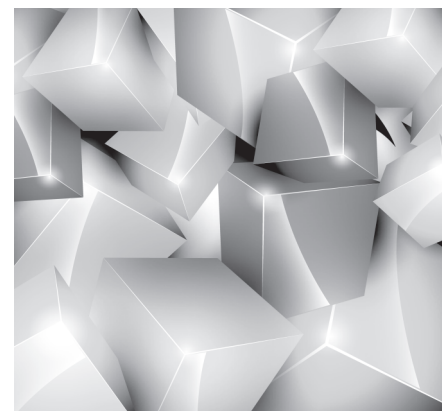
Sample themes include ...

Holidays	Transportation
Seasons	The Circus
Harvest	Kings and Queens
Weather	Fairy Tales
Animals	Community Helpers
Bears	Occupations
Horses	Sea Life
Butterflies	Dinosaurs
Frogs	Food
Insects	Dr. Seuss

Once the theme has been presented, each child feels a sense of familiarity with the topic and related read-aloud books, so vocabulary is acquired more easily and quickly. Themes also allow for room decors that can be displayed for a longer period of time.



Presenting vocabulary thematically helps children make associations between words and scaffolds students' learning (McGee & Richgels, 2003).

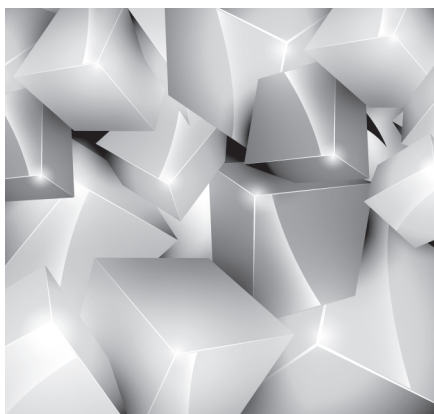


### The research says ...

Read-alouds that include explanations of targeted vocabulary can support word learning (Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002; Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004), as can dramatic play organized around a carefully chosen theme (Barone & Xu, 2008; Tabors, 2008).

### The research says ...

Simply reading a book and discussing it does not systematically improve vocabulary knowledge (Beck et. al, 2002).



## B. Choose read-aloud books related to the theme

Identify one theme-related trade book for each day of instruction. Include a variety of genres, being sure to include narrative and informational text for each thematic unit.

## C. Select target vocabulary from the book

Make a list of all words in the book that, unless discussed prior to reading the book aloud, could interfere with comprehension. Each of these words should be pre-taught.

From this list, select from three to six target words from each read-aloud book that will remain the focus of attention throughout the thematic period. These three to six words should be Tier Two words.

Following is a description Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three words:

- Tier One words (Beck et al., 2002) are those words whose meanings students are likely to know or learn easily. Examples of Tier One words are *run*, *happy*, and *smile*. Tier One words should not be chosen as target vocabulary for the theme.
- Tier Two is made up of words whose meanings students are less *likely to know* but that “appear frequently in a wide variety of texts” (Beck et al. 2002, p. 16). Sample Tier Two words from the story of Cinderella might include *midnight*, *uncomfortable*, and *charming*.
- Tier Three is composed of words that students can decode by using the context of texts to establish their meaning for immediate understanding. Tier Three words from the story of Cinderella might include *hearth*, *cinder*, and *coach*.

Although Tier One and Tier Three words will need to be discussed for immediate understanding, Beck et al. (2002) suggest that, for instructional purposes, teachers should concentrate on Tier Two words. These are words that can contribute most to students' language knowledge (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2003).

As much as possible, select positive words—as some children hear a greater than normal amount of negativity in their out-of-school environments (Hart & Risley, 1995). Also be sure to include adverbs among targeted vocabulary as often as possible, because children from some environments lack sufficient numbers of adverbs in their vocabulary.

#### D. Teach target vocabulary from the book

##### 1. Prior to reading the story ...

- a. Write out definitions of the target words. Using written definitions enhances the sameness of wording when defining the words.
- b. Collect pictures or other discussion props.

##### 2. BONUS

**Activity for teachers of older or more advanced students who can read but who would benefit from vocabulary-enhancing experiences.**

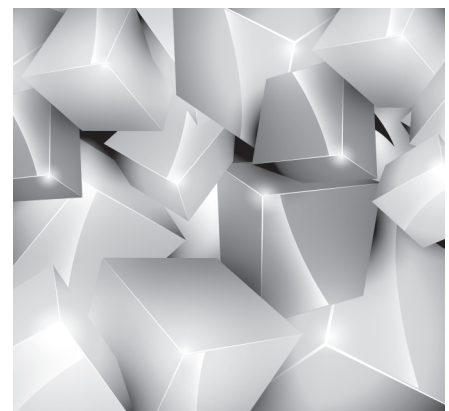
Students who haven't developed visual-perception skills often fail to see everything, including charts, graphs, and the text in a book or chapter. In fact, some researchers tell us that these students miss up to 50% of the material that is in their texts. New vocabulary words are often one portion of the material they miss or skip over. Such activities as the Knowledge Rating Scale (next page) can help students to focus on and learn key vocabulary words.

#### The research says ...

When teachers' explanations of new words [are] added to the reading of the story, the vocabulary learning is doubled (Elley, 1989, p. 184).

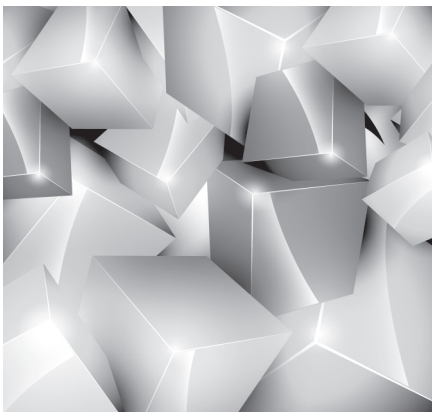
#### The research says ...

Target words should be discussed during prereading and follow-up talk (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).



### The research says ...

There's greater vocabulary development when there's less discussion during the reading of the text (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).



### Knowledge Rating Scale

Word	Know it well	Have seen or heard it	No clue
rhombus			
triangle			
pentagon			
quadrilateral			
trapezoid			
square			

### E. Read the book

Following the presentation of the target words, read the book, chapter, or unit straight through with little discussion.

### Step Two: Immediate Target-word Follow-up

Immediately following the reading of the book ...

- Discuss the target words again as they relate to the story.
- Ask questions that solicit the key vocabulary in response.

*Children will need to be prompted to use the target words in response to questions. Prompts might be, "I will ask a question, and you will answer with one of these words." Write out questions designed to solicit target vocabulary ahead of time, as this can prove to be challenging when not pre-developed. This activity not only reinforces the target vocabulary, it also encourages children to pronounce the word and to give the teacher the opportunity to hear if they pronounce the word incorrectly.*

- Relate the target words to the child’s life.

*This step is necessary in order to develop a sense of self-congruency with formal vocabulary for each child. Some children are not encouraged by people in their home environments to use formal register. Therefore, the child does not feel that formal language is congruent with his or her self-image.*

- Involve children in creative follow-up activities, such as role play.

*Simply telling the children to use the target words during free play or center time rarely suffices. Children need specific directions for how and when the words should be used.*

*Examples might include ...*

Pre-K to second grade:

*Role-play example: One child pretends to be the guest. The other children shake his hand and say, “I am so pleased to meet you.”*

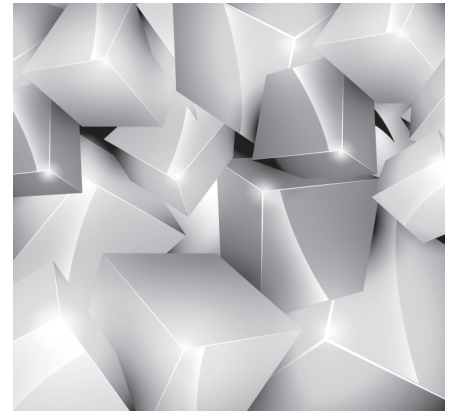
Third grade and up:

*Role-play example: Have students play the role by saying “This is she,” or by using a target word in a sentence, such as, “The most important thing that happened to me yesterday was \_\_\_\_\_.”*

### Step Three: Create Connections Through Interest Centers and Conversations

Engage in conversations with the children while they’re at lunch, in centers, or in discussion groups—or any other available time, using the target words.

- A. Post conversation starter cards containing the target words around the room as a reminder for all adults in the room to carry on conversations with the children and use the words during their conversations with the children. Keep in mind that carrying on conversations with the children is more important than most other tasks teachers are required to do.



#### The research says ...

While children should hear rich language, they must actively participate in conversations, both informal and structured, in order to increase vocabulary and language skills (Neuman, 2006).

Conversation starters that elicit use of a target word:

"Your painting is very creative."  
"Please tell me about what you are creating."

- B. Write the target words on note cards and tape the note cards to the door so that administrators, paraprofessionals, guests, et al., can use the target words when they visit the room.

**Today's Target Words:**

Creative  
Creating  
Charming  
Midnight

- C. Carry on conversations with children throughout the day using rich vocabulary, as illustrated below.

"This \_\_\_\_\_ looks mighty frightening. Do you feel frightened when you look at it?"

"It is pouring rain. We will get dripping wet if we go outside."

"That paper is ripped, and paint might drip onto the table."

"Your picture is exceptionally interesting."

- D. For some activities it is beneficial to give children the precise sentences containing the target word that you want them to use during telephone playtime, puppet time, flannel board story time, etc.

