

Vocabulary Research

Despite research showing its ineffectiveness, “many teachers still rely on word lists, having children look up definitions,” says Allen. However, this doesn’t work, because in order for the brain to store something new in permanent memory, it has to connect it to something else that is already known. (Allen, 1999)

Vocabulary knowledge is related to and affects comprehension. (Davis, 1968)

Word knowledge is not an all or nothing proposition. Words may be known at different levels. (Beck, 1988)

The levels of word knowledge (unknown, acquainted, and established) determine the instructional strategies to be used. (Beck, McCaslin and McKeown, 1980)

Students learn approximately 3,000 words per year. (Nagy, Anderson, and Herman, 1987)

Twenty-five to fifty percent of annual vocabulary growth can be attributed to incidental learning from context while reading. (Nagy, Anderson, and Herman, 1987)

There is much research that wide reading is the single most important factor in increased word knowledge. (Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Baumann & Kameenui, 1991)

Students with poor vocabularies, including diverse learners, need strong and systematic educational support to become successful independent word learners. (Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui, 1995)

Vocabulary acquisition is crucial to academic development. Not only do students need a rich body of word knowledge to succeed in basic skill areas, they also need a specialized vocabulary to learn content area material. (Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui, 1995)

By the second grade, students may know anywhere between 2,000 and 5,000 words (Graves, Juel, and Graves 1998)

To be effective, vocabulary instruction must provide adequate definitions and illustrations of how words are used in natural contexts. Integration, repetition, and meaningful use are three priorities in vocabulary instruction that increase reading comprehension. (Stahl 1986; Graves and Prenn 1986; Carr and Wixson, 1986)

While vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension (Baumann & Kame'enui, 1991; Stanovich, 1986), existing research does not support a specific vocabulary development method or program to address the discrepancies in word knowledge between students with poor and rich vocabularies. (Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998; National Research Council, 1998; Snow, 2002)

Differences in the amount of independent reading, lack of strategies to learn words from context, and diffuse word knowledge appear to be the most critical obstacles to vocabulary development for students with disabilities (Stahl & Shiel, 1999).