

Four-Ply Vocabulary Plan

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In this post I discuss a comprehensive plan for vocabulary growth. This multifaceted approach could be implemented in summer school and throughout the year. I provide useful links and an expanding slide to facilitate the professional planning process.

Michael Graves is a senior scientist who has conducted a thorough study of the research pertaining to vocabulary instruction. In doing so, he arrived at the hypothesis that a comprehensive vocabulary program needs to include four broad components (Graves, 2000, 2006). According to Graves, teachers can convey word knowledge and kindle interest through an integrated four-ply approach that includes both explicit and implicit methodology--a design that envelopes both intentional and incidental word learning. The four components are listed below and described more fully in *The Vocabulary Book* (Graves, 2006).

Provide rich and varied language experiences: Experience words and phrases through reading, listening, speaking, and writing across varied genres, including prose and poetry, narrative and informational texts. Read to and with students. Encourage students to read independently and in book clubs.

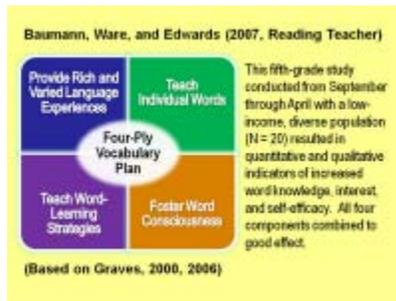
Teach individual words: Teach new words with explicit methods. Include a student-friendly definition, varied context, student-generated definitions, instructional-conversations with peers, interactive and responsive engagement, etc. etc. Use the method that best fits the word and the learner. This means we vary the method depending on the situation.

Teach word-learning strategies: Teach and model how to infer word meaning from context clues. Teach and model how to infer meaning from morpheme clues. Teach students how and when to use a dictionary and a thesaurus.

Foster word consciousness: Kindle interest in the power and usefulness of words and phrases. Play with words and learn to enjoy them.

Graves had only a hypothesis until his four components were systematically put into play in real time in a real classroom. Thus, Baumann, Ware, and Edwards (2007) worked with 20 fifth-graders for about 7 months, implementing this four-ply methodology and increasing the writing aspects of the study. This classroom included low-income students of diverse backgrounds. What were the results? The four-ply method resulted in vocabulary gains as measured with the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* and the *Expressive Vocabulary Test*. Furthermore, qualitative analysis revealed that the fifth graders grew in confidence and motivation. They were more apt to attack unknown words independently by addressing surrounding context clues and internal morpheme clues (prefix, base, suffix). Note, there was no control group, so findings are somewhat tenuous.

To learn how it was done, download Baumann et al. (2007) from *The Reading Teacher*. Read the article, perhaps dividing the faculty into four leadership teams, one for each component. If this plan is implemented with tenacity--not allowed to fall by the wayside--students are likely to make noticeable progress. If we persist and distribute the practice over time we should see gains, especially in receptive vocabulary. To facilitate the professional development process, I provide a summary slide.



See last page for slide details.

References:

Baumann, J.F., Ware, D., & Edwards, E.C. (2007). "Bumping into spicy, tasty words that catch your tongue:" A formative experiment on vocabulary instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(2), 108-122.

Graves, M. F. (2000). A vocabulary program to complement and bolster a middle-grade comprehension program. In B. Taylor, M. F. Graves, and P. van den Broek (Eds.), *Reading for meaning: Fostering comprehension in the middle grades* (pp. 116-135). New York: Teachers College Press.

Graves, M.F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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Baumann, Ware, and Edwards (2007, Reading Teacher)



This fifth-grade study conducted from September through April with a low-income, diverse population (N = 20) resulted in quantitative and qualitative indicators of increased word knowledge, interest, and self-efficacy. All four components combined to good effect.

(Based on Graves, 2000, 2006)