

The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Word of the Day

Teaching vocabulary in today's school setting tends to be quite different than the vocabulary drills we did as students. Vocabulary instruction should include more than just looking up words in the dictionary and using them in a written or oral sentence. As teachers today, we need to focus on teaching vocabulary through a variety of strategies that are both fun and stimulating for students. How do we choose the best words to teach to our kindergarteners? Using the tier three model developed by Isabel Beck is a helpful place to start:

Tier One: Basic words that rarely require instructional focus (*clock, baby, happy*).

Tier Two: Words that appear with high frequency, across a variety of domains, and are crucial when using mature, academic language (*frustrated, consequence, exhausted*).

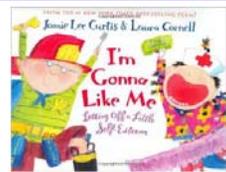
Tier Three: Low frequency words; often limited to specific fields of study (*habitat, properties, structure*).



Using this three tiered model can help guide teachers in selecting words that require direct instruction and are the words that are essential to expanding our students' vocabulary. Isabel Beck states, "Tier Two words are high-frequency words for mature language users - *coincidence, absurd, industrious* - and thus instruction in these words can add productively to an individual's language ability." When choosing words, we want to use words that the students will have the ability to use in their own language.

Vocabulary through reading!

We read the book, *I'm Gonna Like Me* by Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell. The book contains the word *unique* which became a focus word in our classroom. The word *unique* is considered a tier two vocabulary word. My students were fascinated by this word. We developed a student friendly definition; *special, one of a kind*. This word then became a focus vocabulary word in a reading lesson, writing lesson, and speaking and listening lesson, as well as a fun [snowflake art activity](#).



Standards

RL.K.4	RI.K.10	SL.K.3
RI.K.4	SL.K.1	SL.K.5
RL.K.10	SL.K.1a	W.K.2

Three Tiers: Three Lessons

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When thinking about Isabel Beck's three tier vocabulary model, I began to realize the number three can translate into three different activities/lessons for vocabulary. The three vocabulary lessons address some of the kindergarten literacy standards. Therefore, every vocabulary word we study as a class, can be used in reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

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Reading: To preplan, I select tier two words that I feel will help students expand their vocabulary. However, sometimes I allow the students to add their own tier two word from the text. This promotes students to become more aware of what words they know and what words they do not know (metacognition).

Writing: The vocabulary word we select from a text then becomes our "important word" that needs to be used in many different ways. In writing, the students write a **definition** for the vocabulary word. The students draw a picture to represent the vocabulary word. To expand the writing lessons, all of their vocabulary writing examples are saved and each student creates a **personal vocabulary book** to keep in his/her desk.

Speaking and Listening: What good are vocabulary words if you cannot use them in your oral language? As a class, we discuss with partners, in small groups, and as a whole group the words we are studying. The students say the word, define the word, and use the word in a sentence. Here is a **video** of four students discussing a vocabulary word they are studying in class.

Student Friendly Definitions

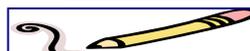
Dr. Louisa Moats states, "Not all children are fortunate enough to be born into homes where parents or caregivers provide rich language experiences. These disadvantaged children enter our kindergarten lacking oral language skills."

Parent involvement is imperative to building a child's vocabulary. When we are studying vocabulary in class, I purposefully choose a book that is part of a class set. The students take home the book, a blank piece of paper, and a **letter** with the assignment's directions. The students and their families are asked to develop a student friendly definition of one of the book's pre-selected vocabulary words. These definitions are then made into a class **book** that we read together. After reading the book a few times, the book is added to our **reading station**. The students practice reading the book for many different purposes; with pointers to promote one-to-one correspondence, to identify high frequency words, and to discuss the vocabulary words.



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The **Literacy Instruction Framework** Class for Kindergarten Teachers is being offered January 29-31. Email Robyn Markovic for more details.