

## Center for Urban Education Research Base

**Vocabulary development is central to comprehension and content learning and should include different strategies embedded in instruction in content and fiction.**

Core Element	Connections Structure	Basis in Research	Relevant Research
Vocabulary and vocabulary development strategies are integrated through reading and writing in the content areas.	Teacher emphasizes content vocabulary development. Illustrated “word walls” and glossaries. Students identify important words as they pre-read. Students write with “words of the week”	Vocabulary knowledge contributes to reading comprehension for readers and writers at all skill levels.	Stahl, 1986. Graves and Prenn, 1986. Carr and Wixson, 1986. Duin & Graves, 1987. Nagy, 1988.

The following statements are based on research completed in the 1980’s. It has already been well established what is needed for effective vocabulary learning. It is the application of that very definitive work that has not been accomplished, particularly in content area vocabulary development, which is a priority area of the Connections program.

To be effective, vocabulary instruction must provide both adequate definitions and illustrations of how words are used in natural sounding contexts. Based on surveys of available research (Stahl 1986; Graves and Prenn 1986; Carr and Wixson 1986) three priorities of vocabulary instruction that is effective in increasing reading comprehension can be identified: integration, repetition, and meaningful use. Intensive instruction is called for if one wants students to incorporate the instructed words onto their writing or speaking vocabularies (Duin and Graves, 1987).

Many texts read in school involve large numbers of technical terms and are not conceptually explicit. Definitions alone will not convey new concepts adequately. Intensive vocabulary development instruction is especially useful when new and difficult concepts are under study. And while all aspects of intensive instruction are important for such concepts, integration—that is, tying the new concept in with familiar concepts and experience and making the relationships among concepts clear—should be a major goal (p. 35).

Effective vocabulary instruction helps the learner to use the instructed words meaningfully. One motivation for this property is simply that students learn more when they are actively involved. Another is what is called “depth of processing.” Simply stated, the more deeply some information is processed, the more likely it

is to be remembered. In other words, vocabulary instruction that makes students think about the meaning of a word and demands that they do some meaningful processing of the word will be more effective than instruction that does not. There is a big difference between being able to say what a word means and being able to use it (p. 24).

W. E. Nagy, Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension, ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, National Council of Teachers of English, and International Reading Association, 1988.