VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION IN THE ELA COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

This tool was developed to assist practitioners in aligning their instruction of the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to the core areas of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) for K-5th grade students. The strategies presented in each area are a sampling of best practices known to be effective in targeting specific elements of reading. We encourage practitioners to utilize the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework to move students towards independent use of these strategies.

A Structure for Instruction that Works
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VOCABULARY

Knowledge of the meanings of words that are used both in oral (speaking and listening) and written language (reading) (NRP Report, 2000).

- Vocabulary knowledge relates strongly to reading comprehension and overall academic success (Baumann, Kame’enui, & Ash, 2003; Becker, 1977; Davis, 1942; Whipple, 1925).
- Vocabulary instruction should encompass direct teaching strategies as well as strategies for figuring out words independently (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).
- The language instruction that surrounds vocabulary instruction can help build student background knowledge and improve comprehension (Marzano, 2004).
- The relationship between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension is reciprocal, seeing new words activates knowledge of letters and their sounds (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Ehri, 2000).
- Teachers can realistically teach approximately 300 new vocabulary words per year (about 8 to 10 per week) (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001).

VOCABULARY IN THE ELA CCSS

Reading Standards-Literature K-5 (RL)
- **(RL 4) Craft & Structure**—Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Reading Standards-Informational Text K-5 (RI)
- **(RI 4) Craft & Structure**—Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Language Standards K-5 (L)
- **(L 4) Vocabulary Acquisition & Use**—Determine or clarify them meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
- **(L 5) Vocabulary Acquisition & Use**—Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- **(L 6) Vocabulary Acquisition & Use**—Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.
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## INFORMATIONAL TEXT
Craft & Structure (RI 4)

### Kindergartners
- **RI K.4**—With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

### Grade 1 Students
- **RI 1.4**—Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

### Grade 2 Students
- **RI 2.4**—Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 2 topic or subject area*.

### Grade 3 Students
- **RI 3.4**—Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 3 topic or subject area*.

### Grade 4 Students
- **RI 4.4**—Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 4 topic or subject area*.

### Grade 5 Students
- **RI 5.4**—Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 5 topic or subject area*. 
## Vocabulary Acquisition & Use (L 4-6)

### Kindergartners
- **L K.4a**—Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck).
- **L K.4b**—Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.
- **L K.5a**—Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- **L K.5b**—Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).
- **L K.5c**—Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note place at school that are colorful).
- **L K.5d**—Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., walk, march, strut, prance) by acting out the word meanings.
- **L K.6**—Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to text.

### Grade 1 Students
- **L 1.4a**—Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L 1.4b**—Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
- **L 1.4c**—Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflection forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).
- **L 1.5a**—Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- **L 1.5b**—Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
- **L 1.5c**—Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
- **L 1.5d**—Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic” by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.
- **L 1.6**—Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., because).
Alignment of ELA CCSS with 5 NRP Components of Reading - Vocabulary

Grade 2 Students
- **L 2.4a**—Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L 2.4b**—Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell).
- **L 2.4c**—Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional).
- **L 2.4d**—Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark).
- **L 2.4e**—Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases.
- **L 2.5a**—Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).
- **L 2.5b**—Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., toss, throw, hurl) and closely related adjectives (e.g., thin, slender, skinny, scrawny).
- **L 2.6**—Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., When other kids are happy that makes me happy).

Grade 3 Students
- **L 3.4a**—Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L 3.4b**—Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added to a known word (e.g., agreeable/disagreeable, comfortable/uncomfortable, care/careless, heat/preheat).
- **L 3.4c**—Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., company, companion).
- **L 3.4d**—Use glossaries or beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- **L 3.5a**—Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., take steps).
- **L 3.5b**—Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).
- **L 3.5c**—Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered).
- **L 3.6**—Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went looking for them).

Grade 4 Students
- **L 4.4a**—Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L 4.4b**—Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).
- **L 4.4c**—Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- **L 4.5a**—Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.
Alignment of ELA CCSS with 5 NRP Components of Reading - Vocabulary

- **L 4.5b**—Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
- **L 4.5c**—Demonstrate understanding of word by relating them to their opposites (antonyms) and to words with similar but not identical meanings (synonyms).
- **L 4.6**—Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal preservation).

**Grade 5 Students**

- **L 5.4a**—Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- **L 5.4b**—Use common grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis)
- **L 5.4c**—Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- **L 5.5a**—Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.
- **L 5.5b**—Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
- **L 5.5c**—Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homographs) to better understand each of the words.
- **L 5.6**—Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).
## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY

### Direct Teaching Strategies
- **Modeling**—Model examples and non-examples of new words by physically acting them out, showing physical items, or showing pictures. Also model a “think aloud” for how to monitor identification of known and unknown words.
  
  *Example:* Model what *sauntered* means by physically acting it out.

- **Synonyms**—Use known words to teach an unknown word. Ex: teach the word home to teach the new word *residence*.

- **Definitions**—Create a clear, understandable definition of the new word by adapting the dictionary definition. Make sure the definition doesn't contain other unknown words.

- **Semantic Maps**—Use visual representations of vocabulary (webs, chart, etc.) to help students learn new words by categorizing and labeling them.

- **Keywords**—Use mnemonics to teach unknown words. Includes a keyword and a visual depiction of the word.

- **Word Wall**—Create an alphabetized list of high-frequency words to display in the classroom. Keep in mind the following principles when using the Word Wall:
  1. Only include regular words with sounds that have been taught
  2. Only include exception words that have been taught
  3. Keep a ratio of 5 regular words for every 1 exception word
  4. Provide students with multiple opportunities to practice reading the words aloud.

### Indirect Teaching Strategies
- Engage in conversations with students using rich vocabulary
- Expose students repeatedly to read-alouds from a wide variety of texts
- Exposure students to a wide variety of texts during independent reading

### Independent Student Strategies
- **Context clues**—teach students to look at the text around the unknown word to determine the meaning of the word.
- **Morphemic use**—look at the units within the word (root, base, prefix, suffix) to determine the meaning of the word.
- **Dictionary use**—use a reference to determine the meaning of a word.
- **Personal dictionary**—have students create a personal dictionary where they monitor the use of words they’ve learned.