SESSION 3: DIRECT INSTRUCTION OF VOCABULARY

Introduction | Selecting Words | Graphic Organizers | Direct Instruction | Look Ahead

Introduction

Overview

In Session 2, you explored the critical concepts of levels of word knowledge in depth and were introduced to several kinds of instructional approaches to vocabulary. In this session, you will become familiar with specific direct approaches to teaching vocabulary, including using conceptually related words, graphic organizers, and meaningful word parts.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Discuss effective approaches to selecting central concepts and words for study.
- Evaluate in your online journal the effectiveness of a semantic Web interactive after assisting a student in creating his or her own semantic map.
- Evaluate additional approaches to helping students learn vocabulary, including definitional information and word part analysis, in your online journal.
- Synthesize your learning about direct instruction techniques by designing one lesson plan.

If you haven’t done so already, download and print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this course.
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Selecting Conceptually Related Words

In this section, you will learn one strategy for selecting and directly teaching vocabulary words, an approach in which words for study are organized around a central concept.

Five-Day Approach

Read "Developing Vocabulary in the Later Grades." This reading describes a five-day approach to the direct teaching of vocabulary. The authors begin with a description of the characteristics of frequent, rich, extended instruction in vocabulary and describe the five-day approach through a detailed example. As you read, consider how this approach might be applied in your classroom.

Focus of Instruction

In "Developing Vocabulary in the Later Grades," the authors discuss the importance of teaching conceptually related words and state the following:

"Building understanding of language comes through developing knowledge of both the similarities and the differences among words and the precise roles they can play. A focus here is on the exploration of complex dimensions of a word's meaning and the relationships that exist to other words along some of those dimensions—how the word may be related to others through some components but not others" (Beck et al., 85).

One challenge that teachers often face in using this approach is selecting the concepts and words on which to focus. Go to the discussion forum and discuss the following question:

How do you determine which central concepts and words to focus on in teaching different subjects?

Justify your statements by referring to the readings and examples from your professional practice.

As you complete the rest of the readings and assignments for this session, you should visit this discussion forum at least two or three times to continue the discussion. You may refer to the discussion rubric to review the expectations for participating in online discussions in this course.

It is important to reflect on your teaching style as well as the different learning styles of your students. The suggestion below might help you address the various instructional needs in your classroom.
Differentiated Instruction
In teaching struggling readers, it may be helpful to pose direct questions to students before they begin reading in order to make the connection that knowledge about words activated in a pre-reading activity can be used to help them with word meanings as they read. For example, after a K-W-L pre-reading activity, the teacher may ask the student what words or terms he or she would expect the author to use. This may assist the student in predicting and confirming the meanings of challenging words in the text.
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Direct Instruction Using Graphic Organizers

Direct instruction is important to help students learn new words. Teachers design this instruction based on their assessment of their students' word knowledge. In this section, you will continue to focus on the link between concepts and vocabulary by reading about and using graphic organizers.

Vocabulary Instruction in a Balanced Reading Program

Read "Vocabulary Instruction in a Balanced Reading Program" which details a number of techniques that have been shown to be effective in helping students learn vocabulary and related concepts. The authors highlight graphic organizers such as concept wheels, semantic word mapping, and semantic feature analysis. As you read, you may wish to write in the notes section of your online journal about the techniques and think about how they might be applied to your students.

Semantic Web Interactive Activity

Explore the Semantic Web A interactive, which has "herbivores" as its central concept. Create a map that contains the following: definition, examples, non-examples, and description. For instructions, read how to use the interactive.

Once you have spent some time exploring the interactive by yourself, use a similar interactive with a student. This version of the interactive allows you to fill in the central concept.

1. Select at least one student with whom to try the Semantic Web B interactive. For technical instructions, read how to use the interactive.
2. Use one of the central concepts provided in the interactive or choose a different central concept, using your knowledge of the student, grade level, and your professional expertise.
3. As you work with the student, encourage him or her to provide entries for each of the four categories.

Semantic Web Reflection

In your online journal, describe your experience using the interactive with a student. Use the following questions to guide your reflection:

Was this activity successful in helping the student develop in-depth
word knowledge? Why or why not? Be specific.

Would this activity work just as well using a pencil and paper approach instead of the technology? What, if anything, did the technology contribute?
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Additional Approaches to Direct Instruction

In this section, you will learn a number of techniques for directly teaching vocabulary to students.

Meaningful Word Parts

Read the excerpt "Understanding Word Parts," and then read "Teaching Elementary Students to Use Word-Part Clues." In these two readings, you will learn additional approaches to helping students acquire vocabulary, including using word pairs, definitional clues, and analysis of meaningful word parts, such as "uni-" and "-ly." While these techniques are only covered in brief, they are important to learn and will be used in your final project, so you may wish to take notes in the notes section of your online journal. As you read, consider and note how these approaches differ from the graphic organizers you previously read about in "Vocabulary Instruction in a Balanced Reading Program."

Meaningful Word Parts: "Cent"

View the "Prefixes and Word Parts" video that shows 5th graders engaged in a vocabulary lesson using words containing the word part "cent." As you watch, notice the words that are discussed and the techniques the teacher uses to explore the meaning of the word part.

In your online journal, reflect on the lesson you saw in the video. Use the following questions to guide you:

- Did this lesson foster in-depth word knowledge? Why or why not?
- What limitations of this approach, if any, became evident to you?
- What are the potential strengths of this approach?

One Lesson Plan Focusing on Direct Instruction of Vocabulary Assignment

In this assignment, you will design one of the two lesson plans that will form your final project. All of the lesson plans you create for the final project should focus on the grade level you have chosen. You may wish to review the assessment rubric for this assignment before you begin.

1. Choose two central concepts that you want your students to learn, and 6-8
challenging vocabulary words related to each concept (i.e., a total of 12-16 words). The concepts may come from a text your students have (or will) read, or from one of the content areas you teach.

2. Create one separate lesson plan, using a minimum of two different direct instructional techniques, to teach the concepts and vocabulary words you have chosen. For example, if you use a graphic organizer (e.g., word web, semantic map) in the first lesson plan, you will need to choose a different technique (e.g., analysis of word parts, five-day approach, providing definitional/contextual information) for the second lesson plan.

3. Use the lesson plan template [Word | RTF] to assist you in building your lesson plans.

4. Implement the lesson in your classroom (or the classroom you have secured access to for this course). After you try out the lesson, write a brief, one-page summary that describes your experience. Include reflections on how the "reality" of how the lesson differed from what you expected, suggest specific changes you would make to the plan based on your use of it, and extend what you have learned through your use of this plan to what you might want to alter or add to the plan you did not implement. You may wish to review the assessment rubric before you begin.

5. Submit your lesson plan and your written reflection to your facilitator in a word processing document by the end of this session.

Return to your online journal. Be sure that all of your responses are complete and free of grammatical and structural errors. Your facilitator will be assessing your journal reflections at the end of this session.

References


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Look Ahead

You have now completed the first two of the four lesson plans required for the final project. Your final project will be due at the end of Session 6. Now is a good time to start thinking about ideas you might want to consider for your next two lesson plans. If you have questions or would like some advice, this is a good time to ask your facilitator.

In Session 4, you will expand your consideration of vocabulary instruction to students with diverse learning needs. Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as you have already read, may need vocabulary instruction that differs from students whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are reflective of the "mainstream" culture of the school environment.

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