SESSION 5: EVALUATING VOCABULARY TEACHING: ENVIRONMENTS AND APPROACHES

Introduction

Overview
In Session 4, you considered the unique learning needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and learned some effective techniques for helping diverse students learn vocabulary. In this session, you will evaluate approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning.

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

- Synthesize your knowledge of effective vocabulary instruction by refining and discussing a rubric for evaluating classroom-based supports for vocabulary learning.
- Critically evaluate classroom vocabulary instruction using the rubric you have created.
- Analyze specific ways that your use of the rubric can inform your approach to teaching vocabulary.

If you haven't done so already, download and print the Assignment Checklist to keep track of your assignments for this course.
SESSION 5: EVALUATING VOCABULARY TEACHING: ENVIRONMENTS AND APPROACHES
Introduction | Developing a Rubric | Using Your Rubric | Look Ahead

Developing a Rubric

Classrooms that are "Alive with Vocabulary"
Read "Enriching the Verbal Environment" to learn about ways that teachers have enriched the verbal environment of their classrooms. Next, read "Guidelines for Evaluating Vocabulary Instruction." This brief reading describes a four-point evaluation plan for assessing the effectiveness of classroom-based vocabulary instruction. The authors include several examples of techniques that meet their evaluation criteria, some of which you will be familiar with from their previous readings in this course. These articles will assist you later in this session in creating a rubric for evaluating classroom vocabulary instruction. As you read, consider which "categories" of support might be most important to attend to in evaluating approaches to vocabulary instruction.

Rubrics to Evaluate Vocabulary Instruction Assignment
In this assignment, you will help create a rubric that can be used to evaluate the quality of vocabulary instruction in classrooms and commercially based vocabulary development programs. The primary purpose of this assignment is for you to become familiar with how a rubric can be used to evaluate complex concepts and classroom-based activities. While you are expected to try out the rubric in a classroom, the purpose of the observation is to become familiar with using the rubric, not to critically evaluate the given classroom. You may wish to review the assessment rubric for this assignment before you begin.

1. Print and study the "Rubric for Evaluating Classroom Supports for Vocabulary Development" and the four major criteria for evaluating classroom vocabulary instruction:
   - Assessment of students' word knowledge
   - Inclusion of words related to ongoing classroom curriculum and learning goals
   - Environmental supports for word learning
   - Use of a variety of specific instructional methods
2. Fill in the rubric for each of these four criteria and describe what evidence you would look for in a classroom or curriculum with "strong," "some," or "limited" evidence of each criterion. Examples for the first criterion are provided. Draw on your professional experience, course readings, and discussion and be sure to consult the notes you have made in your online journal.
3. Rubric creation is challenging work! It is often helpful to share thoughts and ideas with colleagues, as their input can help you shape and refine your ideas. Use the discussion forum to help you develop your rubric. Share your draft rubric in the discussion forum for this session as you work on editing and adding to the rubric for the above assignment that you will use throughout this session. Exchange information and feedback with other learners. Try to provide feedback to learners who have not received any feedback. You should go to the discussion forum at least two or three times to review the feedback that others have given you. Refer to the peer review guidelines to review some expectations for participating in online
discussions in this course.
SESSION 5: EVALUATING VOCABULARY TEACHING: ENVIRONMENTS AND APPROACHES

Introduction | Developing a Rubric | Using Your Rubric | Look Ahead

Using Your Rubric

By this point, you should have a carefully crafted rubric that articulates the essential elements of effective vocabulary instruction. In this section, you will take your rubric into a classroom and try it out.

Evaluating Classroom Environments Assignment

In this assignment, you will use the rubric you developed to assess aspects of the classroom environment relevant to vocabulary development. You may wish to review the assessment rubric for this assignment before you begin.

1. Arrange to observe a 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade classroom, preferably during a time when the teacher will be focusing on language arts and/or vocabulary.
2. Inform the teacher that you are taking a course on vocabulary development and will be pilot testing a tool for evaluating vocabulary instruction.
3. Observe the class for approximately 30 minutes.
4. Use your rubric as you observe the class, taking notes to support the ratings (limited, some, strong) you give on each criterion.
5. You may wish to talk to the teacher after your observation to clarify any questions or get more information about his or her vocabulary instruction.
6. Write about your classroom observation. Provide a brief description of the classroom and the students and then answer the following questions:
   - What rating did you give for each criterion of your rubric? Use your observation notes to support your ratings.
   - Taking all of the evidence together, how would you characterize the overall level of support for vocabulary learning you observed in this classroom?
7. Finally, provide a brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the rubric itself—what aspects of the classroom did it capture well? Were there aspects of the classroom that it did not capture?
8. Submit the rubric, a written summary of your classroom observation, and your brief analysis of the rubric to your facilitator in a word processing document by the end of this session.

This is a good time to return to the discussion forum and share the story of your classroom observation, remembering to protect the privacy of the teacher whose classroom you observed. Pay particular attention to the rubric itself and how you used it during the observation and in answering the journal questions.

Implementing What You Learned in Your Own Classroom

In your online journal, answer the following questions:

Now that you have created a rubric, are there other applications for rubrics that seem realistic for use in your classroom? If so, what are
Did the opportunity to observe and evaluate another teacher’s classroom vocabulary instruction cause you to reflect on your own teaching? If so, explain how.

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**


Look Ahead

In the final session of this course, you will bring together all of the strands of learning you have completed. You may wish to ask the facilitator any questions you have about the final project before you begin Session 6.