

# EARLY childhood

webinar series

## What Is the Important Vocabulary to Teach in Preschool?

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# Snapshot of Speaker

- Began professional life as a second grade teacher in 1968
- Involved in test and instructional material development since 1989
- Has been a speech pathologist, classroom teacher, school psychologist, graduate & undergraduate instructor
- Author of EVT-2, GRA<sup>+</sup>DE, G•MADE, RLI, & MLI
- Has a BS in speech pathology, MEd in elementary education, MA in educational psychology, and PhD in school psychology

# Overview

- Importance of vocabulary
- How vocabulary impacts literacy development
- Categories of important words
- 3-steps to verbal learning
- Suggested activities

# Vocabulary & Literacy

- Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children
  - Hart & Risley (1995)
  - 2 ½ year study of professional & welfare families
  - In one year a child with professional parents will hear 11 million words and a child in a welfare family will hear just 3 million words.
  - Longitudinal research demonstrated that early differences noted in children entering school remain static throughout their education

# The “Matthew” Effect

- The more words you know, the more you can read
- The more you read, the more words you will learn
- For children starting school with a limited vocabulary, “more” reading does not result in “more” vocabulary (Stanovich, 1986)

# Pre-alphabetic Stage

- 1<sup>st</sup> stage of reading & spelling development
  - Don't understand that letters represent sounds in words
  - Do know that print represents spoken messages
  - Can remember words by visual appearance
  - Don't know the alphabetic principle

# Early Alphabetic Stage

- Do know letters correspond to the sounds that make up spoken words (the alphabetic principle)
- Growing awareness of speech sounds and knowledge of letter forms
  - Attempt to “read” words by guessing from initial consonant & context
  - Spell by writing a few consonants & leaving out less distinct sounds
  - Beginning to demonstrate awareness of phonemes and the use of the alphabet to represent them

# Later Alphabetic Reading & Writing

- Gradual development of skill at sounding out words and spelling them phonetically
  - Ability to identify all speech sounds in a word and match to letters
  - Awareness of letter sequences & orthographic patterns



# Emergent Literacy Skills

- Rhyming, rhyming, rhyming
- Sound matching with initial consonants
- Auditory recognition of syllables
- Model correct syntactic patterns

# The Importance of Syntactic Awareness

- Dialogue
  - Nouns label
  - Verbs tell action
  - Adjectives & adverbs describe

# Important Word Categories

- Labeling: Nouns
  - Household objects & food items
  - Body parts
  - Common domesticated & wild animals
- Actions: Verbs
- Attributes: Adjectives & Adverbs
  - Basic numbers & colors
- Basic concepts & prepositions

- The 25 most frequent words make up about one-third of all print material.
- Top 25:
  - the of and a to
  - in is you that it
  - he was for on are
  - as with his they I
  - at be this have from

- Prepositions in the Top 25:

- the of and a to
- in is you that it
- he was for on are
- as with his they I
- at be this have from

# 3 Steps to Verbal Learning

- Verbal Learning: Gaining information from the spoken or written word

# 3-Steps to Verbal Learning

- Step One: Paying attention
- Step Two: Encoding
  - Putting new information into personally meaningful form
    - Not just “in your own words”
    - Actively processing information individually or with peers
- Step Three: Linking the new information to what you already know
  - To move from immediate memory into long-term memory

# Vocabulary Instruction Steps

- 1 Introduce new word.
- 2 Link: Integrates new information with prior knowledge.
- 3 Rehearse: Facilitates reexposure to words.
- 4 Practice: Provides opportunities for meaningful use.



# Vocabulary Development in Natural Contexts

- Matching perception - What is this?
- Analysis of perception - Show 4 pictures; Which one cries?
- Reordering Perception - Show 4 pictures; Tell me the name of the one that is not an animal.
- Reasoning about Perception - What made the milk fall off the table?

# Pivotal Early Childhood Themes: Provide Natural Context for Vocabulary Development

- Animals
- Weather
- Self-esteem
- Family
- Holidays
- World Cultures
- Community

# Basic Conceptual Words

- Form the functional vocabulary of early learning experiences
  - Following directions
  - Describing an object
  - Understanding spatial relationships
- 30% of the 220 high-frequency words
  - *Dolch Basic Sight Word List*

# Basic Conceptual Words

- Direction (up, down)
- Position (inside, outside)
- Size (large, big, little, small)
- Comparison (longer, shorter)
- Texture (smooth, rough)
- Quantity (many, few)
- Shapes (star, circle, triangle)

# Developing Conceptual Words

- Cut cardboard tubes into graduated lengths.
  - Longest, tallest, shortest, identical, nearest, etc.
- Use toys from fast-food restaurants for teaching position
  - Over, on, above, next, etc.
- Empty egg cartons & dry cereal pieces can illustrate quantity & numerical concepts.
  - More, less, some, none, few, many, same, etc.
  - One, two, three, etc.

# Labeling Activities for Young Children

- Outline the shape of simple objects
  - Child must match objects to shape (in one try) and name it
- Using grocery and discount store flyers, create separate posters
  - Things that go in the kitchen, the bath, the bedroom, the garage, etc
- Have child sort various buttons in an empty egg carton
  - Ask child why buttons are sorted the way they are

# Vocabulary-Building in Natural Contexts

- Read or tell stories
  - Ask questions
  - Ask for a different word
  - Ask student to retell story
  - Demonstrate how the context of the story can explain the meaning of an unknown word
- Tell jokes or tall tales.
  - Why is it funny? Unusual? Odd?
  - Retell changing a key word

# Reading Aloud

- Why:
  - Develops background knowledge
  - Builds vocabulary
  - Increases familiarity with language patterns
  - Develops familiarity with story structure
  - Develops print awareness
  - Models fluency, prosody, appropriate emotion
  - Helps to view reading as pleasurable



# References & Resources

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- Cultivating Readers: Making Reading Active and Fun!  
See [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org)

# References & Resources

- Fry, E. B., Kress, J. E., & Fountoukidis, D. L. (2006). *The reading teacher's book of lists* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall.
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# References & Resources

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# Questions?

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