Vocabulary Strand

What is Vocabulary?

Vocabulary encompasses the knowledge of word meanings in a language system, as well as the relationships among those words. It incorporates both the comprehension and use of words and requires the understanding of concrete and abstract meanings. Academic vocabulary, in particular, includes the abstract and multifaceted words and phrases most often used in school, civic, and professional settings and texts.

What is the role of Vocabulary in learning how to read?

Research shows that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of later reading success. It is critical to the development of both word identification and reading comprehension. Specifically, strong oral language vocabulary improves the student's ability to recognise words when reading and is necessary for students to understand and connect with the information that they read. Strong vocabulary knowledge also facilitates acquisition of the background information that is essential for comprehension. Given the importance of vocabulary in reading development, systematic instruction to enhance vocabulary knowledge is critical.

What is the approach to developing Vocabulary in Lexia® Core5® Reading?

Vocabulary instruction must go beyond word definitions in order to affect comprehension. The vocabulary strand in Lexia Core5 Reading is structured to teach word-learning strategies, to provide exposure to rich and varied vocabulary words, to promote deep knowledge of abstract academic vocabulary words, and to allow students to develop insights into word relationships. These goals are systematically integrated into increasingly more complex activities. Throughout the vocabulary strand, activities require students to think critically about words and the concepts they represent, while also applying strategies to build their vocabulary breadth and depth. These vocabulary tasks begin by developing oral vocabulary through the association of word meanings with pictures. As students begin to develop word identification skills, they continue to enhance their vocabulary knowledge through activities involving reading.

Early activities allow students to develop word-learning strategies as they deduce the meaning of unfamiliar, high-level words by analysing pictures for similarities and differences. Other early vocabulary activities are aimed at building categorisation skills as students must recognise relationships between words. As vocabulary activities progress, students are explicitly introduced to more abstract vocabulary concepts, such as multiple-meaning words, idioms, similes and metaphors, and academic vocabulary terms. Through these activities, students build both the knowledge and skills necessary for strong vocabulary development. For example, they acquire the strategies needed to use context clues to determine meaning. At the same time, students receive direct and deep instruction in complex and high-utility academic words, all in the context of multifaceted topics and texts. The most advanced vocabulary tasks continue to emphasise associations between words through a focus on analogies and shades of meaning. Students think about and recognise nuances in word meaning as they think critically about words and their relationships.

In addition to targeted vocabulary activities, students acquire vocabulary knowledge by repeated exposure to the rich language activities that exist in all strands of the Lexia Core5 Reading program. For example, early phonemic awareness and phonics activities require students to match pictures to words, building concrete vocabulary knowledge. Later activities, found throughout the Structural Analysis strand, provide students with the skills to analyse prefixes, roots, and suffixes for meaning and encourage the application of this knowledge to connected reading tasks. As such, while the vocabulary strand focuses explicitly on building deep and generalisable vocabulary knowledge and strategies, students are constantly building their vocabulary as they progress through all strands of the program.