**Vocabulary Strategy**

**Tier Two Vocabulary**

**Purpose**

* Increase students’ understanding of Tier Two Vocabulary in order for students to be successful readers and writers.

**Why is teaching Tier Two Vocabulary important?**

* Explicit instruction of Tier two words is crucial for students to engage fully with grade level text.
* Tier two words are the gateway for many of the complex texts students will be required to access proficiently and independently.
* Teaching Tier two words is one of the 6 shifts in the Common Core ELA State Standards.

**Directions**

* Use any of the vocabulary strategies that have been rolled out during the school year to increase students’ understanding of Tier Two vocabulary words.

**What are the different types of vocabulary?**

Tier Two Vocabulary

* Words of everyday speech
* Basic words which rarely require instruction in school
* Examples of Tier One words: baby, happy, clock

Tier Two Vocabulary

* Not specific to any one academic area
* Wide applicability to many types of reading
* Characteristic of mature language users
* Allows students to describe concepts in a detailed manner
* Mastery of tier two words is critical for reading comprehension
* Examples: determine, masterpiece, fortunate, industrious, measure, benevolent

Tier Three Words

* Domain specific
* Low-frequency
* Examples: isotope, peninsula, photosynthesis

**How should a teacher identify which Tier Two words to teach their students?**

To get an idea of the process of identifying Tier Two words, consider an example. Below is the opening paragraph of a retelling of an old tale (Kohnke, 2001, p. 12) about a donkey who is under a magical spell that forces him to do the chores for a group of lazy servants.

*Johnny Harrington was a kind master who treated his servants fairly. He was also a successful wool merchant, and his business required that he travel often. In his absence, his servants would ten to the fields and cattle and maintain the upkeep of his mansion. They performed their duties happily, for they felt fortunate to have such a benevolent and trusting master.*

The underlined words are those we identified as consistent with the notion of Tier Two words. That is, most of the words are likely to appear frequently in a wide variety of texts and in the written and oral language of mature language users. (Note: We chose this paragraph because there were so many candidate Tier Two words; however, most grade-level material would not have so many words in only one paragraph.)

One “test of whether a word meets the Tier Two criterion of being a useful addition to students’ repertoires is to think about whether the students already have ways to express the concepts represented by the words. Would students be able to explain these words using words that are already well known to them? If that is the case, it suggests that the new words offer students more precise or mature ways of referring to ideas they already know about.

One way to answer the question is to think about how a student might talk about the concepts represented by the Tier Two words. We think that students would be likely to offer the explanations shown in the accompanying list.

**Tier Two words Students’ likely expressions**

*Merchant* Salesperson

*Required* have to

*Tend* take care of

*Maintain* keep going

*Performed* did

*Fortunate* lucky

*Benevolent* kind

Adding the seven target words to students’ vocabulary repertoires would seem to be quite productive, because learning the words would allow students to describe with greater specificity people and situations with which they already have some familiarity. Note that these words are not simple synonyms of the familiar ones, however, instead representing more precise or more complex forms of the familiar words. *Maintain* means not only “keep going,” for example, but also “to continue something in its present condition or at its present level.” *Benevolent* has the dimension of tolerance as well as kindness.

**You Try It**

Below is another excerpt from the tale about the donkey under the magical spell described about (Kohnke, 2001, p. 12). You might find it useful to try your hand at identifying Tier Two words. You will get to see our choices below the excerpt, so that you can compare your selections with ours.

*The servants would never comment on this strange occurrence finding the kitchen clean even though none of them were seen doing the cleaning, each servant hoping to other had tended to the chores. Never would they mention the loud noises they’d hear emerging from the kitchen in the middle of the night. Nor would they admit to pulling the covers under their chins as they listened to the sound of haunting laughter that drifted down the halls to their bedrooms each night. In reality, they knew there was a more sinister reason behind their good fortune.*

Which words did you select? Trying to be all-inclusive, selecting any words that might fit Tier Two, we chose *comment, occurrence, tended, mention, emerging, admit, haunting, reality, sinister*, and *fortune*. We considered them Tier Two words as we viewed them as fairly “general but sophisticated words.” That is, they are not the most basic or common ways of expressing ideas, but they are familiar to mature language users as ordinary as opposed to specialized language. The concepts embodied in each word are ones that students already have some understanding of, as shown in the accompanying list.

**Tier Two words Students’ likely expressions**

*Comment* Something someone has to say

*Occurrence* something happening

*Tended* took care of

*Mention* tell

*Emerging* coming out

*Admit* to say you did something

Haunting scary

*Reality* being real

*Sinister* scary

*Fortune* luck

Now, the notion of tiers of words is not a precise one, and the lines between tiers are not clear-cut, so your selection may not match ours. Thinking in terms of tiers is just a starting point- a way of framing the task of choosing candidate words for instruction. Even within Tier Two, some words will be more easily familiar and some will be more useful than others.

**Some Criteria for Identifying Tier Two Words**

* *Importance* and *utility*: Words that are characteristic of mature language users and appear frequently across a variety of domains.
* *Instructional potential*: Words that can be worked with in a variety of ways so that students can build rich representations of them and of their connections to other words and concepts.
* *Conceptual understanding*: Words for which students understand the general concept but provide precision and specificity in describing the concept.

**How to get started with teaching Tier Two Words**

1. Select a text that your students will be reading. It can be a story, or an excerpt from a chapter book or novel, or a social studies textbook.
2. List all the words that are likely to be unfamiliar to students.
3. Analyze the word list:
   1. Which words can be categorized as Tier Two words?
   2. Which of the Tier Two words are most necessary for comprehension?
   3. Are there other words needed for comprehension? Which ones?
4. On the basis of your analysis, which words will you teach?
   1. Which will need only brief attention?
   2. Which will you give more elaborate attention to?

From <http://www.fcoe.net/ela/pdf/Vocabulary/beck8.pdf>

Tier 2 Word List

Accelerate

Achieve

Adjacent

Alternative

Analyze

Approach

Approximate

Arbitrary

Assert

Assess

Assign

Assume

Authorize

Automatic

Chapter

Compensate

Complex

Complicate

Comply

Component

Comprehend

Conceive

Concentrate

Concept

Conclude

Consequent

Consist

Constant

Construct

Consult

Context

Contrast

Contribute

Convert

Create

Criterion

Crucial

Data

Define

Definite

See STAR Toolkit <http://www.startoolkit.org/> for more information about Tier 2 words.

**Introducing New Vocabulary Teacher Resource**

Demonstrate

Denote

Derive

Design

Devise

Devote

Dimension

Distinct

Distort

Element

Emphasize

Empirical

Ensure

Entity

Environment

Equate

Equivalent

Establish

Evaluate

Evident

Expand

Expose

External

Feasible

Fluctuate

Focus

Formulate

Function

Generate

Guarantee

Hypothesis

Identify

Ignore

Illustrate

Impact

Implicit

Imply

Indicate

Individual

Inhibit

Initial

innovation

Intense

Interpret

Intuitive

Involve

Isolate

Magnetic

Magnitude

Major

Manipulate

Mathematics

Method

Minimum

Modify

Negative

Notion

Obtain

Obvious

Occur

Passive

Period

Perspective

Pertinent

Phase

Phenomena

Portion

Portion

Potential

Precede

Precise

Presume

Prime

Principle

Proceed

Publish

Pursue

Random

Range

React

Region

Require

Respective

Restrict

Reverse

Role

Section

Segment

Select

Sequence

Series

Shift

Signify

Similar

Simultaneous

Sophisticated

Species

Specify

Stable

Statistic

Status

Structure

Subsequent

Suffice

Sum

Summary

Technique

Technology

Tense

Theory

Trace

Tradition

Transmit

Ultimate

Undergo

Usage

Valid

Vary

Verbal

Verify

Vertical