EXPLAIN, ENGAGE, EXTEND, EXAMINE: FOUR E'S OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The Four Es (Explain, Engage, Extend, Examine) is a concrete approach to incorporating research-based practice into daily vocabulary instruction by focusing on the pivotal role of teacher and student talk in word learning. Specifically, teachers use language that is understandable to students, identify misunderstandings and correct them within a meaningful context, point out relationships among words, and reflect on evidence of student learning to determine next instructional steps. Students move vocabulary from the receptive to the expressive, add to and draw from the collective prior knowledge that develops through the sharing of information and experiences, and take risks with word learning. The article includes a summary of related research, two extended classroom examples, a discussion of how to select words for instruction, and approaches to assessing student word learning.

Although vocabulary instruction has received heightened attention in the last decade (Watts-Taffe, Fisher, & Blachowicz, 2018), classroom research points to great variability in the implementation of effective practices (Carlisle, Kelcey, & Berebitsky, 2013; Scott, Jamieson-Noel, & Asslein, 2003). In this article, we present an approach to teaching the meanings of new words that has been refined through our work with teachers over the last several years (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2008; Gwinn & Watts-Taffe, 2017). Strongly based on characteristics of effective instruction described in two landmark volumes *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary (2nd ed.)* by Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2013) and *Teaching Word Meanings* by Stahl and Nagy (2006), this approach supports teaching vocabulary with ease (or, more precisely, with *Es*).

The focus of this model is talk: teacher talk and student talk---the very thing that many teachers feel they do not have the time or the knack for when it comes to word learning. We have found that *The Four Es* provides teachers with a simple framework for enhancing the way they talk about words with their students, and improves their ability to discern student understanding through valuable formative assessment. We begin this article by discussing the research on effective approaches to teaching the meanings of individual words, including the pivotal role of talk. We then describe The Four Es approach using classroom examples. In the second portion of the article, we address the question of which words to teach using this approach and, finally, we discuss approaches to assessment.

What Works in Learning Word Meanings

In this article, we are concerned with in-depth word learning: the kind that lasts beyond an end-of-week multiple-choice or matching vocabulary test and allows students to quickly access a word's meaning, apply the correct meaning in a given context, and ultimately "own the word" (Stahl & Nagy, 2006). To know a word at this level is to have the receptive knowledge required for text comprehension, as well as expressive knowledge, which is required for using the word in one's own speaking and writing. Several robust studies (Mezynski, 1983; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1987; Wright & Cervetti, 2016) point to the following key components of in-depth word learning.

Definition and Context

When teaching a new word, it is important to provide multiple sources of information, specifically the definition *and* a meaningful context. For example, when students encounter the word *reservation* in their Social Studies textbook, their teacher can explain that a reservation is an area of land that belongs to Native Americans. She can also go to the Internet to locate a map of federal Indian reservations in the continental U.S. and go on to explain that these areas of land are carefully measured, protected by the government, and only for use by Native Americans. It is important to provide both definitional and contextual information because definitions alone do not provide enough information for in-depth, long-term word learning. In addition, contextual information is important to distinguishing one meaning from another for words like reservation, which has multiple meanings.

Active Student Engagement

When teaching a new word, encouraging students to do active cognitive work with the word such as discussing examples of the word or answering questions about the word enhances and solidifies learning. When teaching the meaning of *embarrassed,* for example, a teacher might provide a definition and some contextual information (e.g., "Some of you have been embarrassed when you've left your homework at home."), then ask students to think about a time when they were embarrassed. *Applause, Applause* and other games (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013) also encourage engagement. *Applause, Applause* asks students to indicate, with their level of applause, which words they would like used to describe them (e.g., *embarrassed, proud, loquacious, stellar*).

Relationships

Word learning is greatly supported when students are encouraged to examine the relationships that exist among words and concepts. In a primary grade classroom, students heard the word *humungous* in a read-aloud, and the teacher pointed out that humungous is related to the word *big,* but it refers to something that is "bigger than big." When she encouraged students to name other words that are related to humungous, the class brainstormed a list (e.g., *large, gigantic, enormous, huge*) that they then sorted in order of size.

Multiple Exposures

The process of word learning is incremental, meaning it takes practice to thoroughly learn and retain new word meanings. Therefore, it is important to revisit previously taught words over a period of several days and weeks, reinforcing and expanding contextual information with each exposure.

Finally, teaching individual words is most successful when other dimensions of vocabulary instruction are also in place. Specifically, a strong vocabulary program includes four parts: (1) teaching the meanings of individual words, (2) teaching word learning strategies (e.g., morphological analysis, contextual analysis), (3) immersing students in rich and varied language experiences, and (4) fostering word consciousness (interest in and metacognition about words) (Graves, 2016).

The Importance of High Quality Talk in Word Learning

One of the focal tenets of social constructivism is that learning occurs through social interactions that include scaffolding---the guidance provided by more competent peers and adults (Vygotsky, 1986). From a sociocultural perspective, classrooms that are rich with student talk allow for multiple ways of expressing understanding and a diverse array of connections to ideas. Duke and Carlisle (2011) noted that high quality classroom talk can positively impact student engagement and participation in learning, as well as students' abilities to explain ideas and share information. The importance of such interactions in word learning, specifically in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, has also been noted (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015; Manyak, 2012; Scott, Nagy, and Flinspach, 2008). However, in a recent study of discourse patterns related specifically to vocabulary support, Carlisle, Kelcey, and Berebitsky (2013) found that third-grade teachers engaged students in very few in-depth discussions of words across the literacy block, even in lessons focused specifically on vocabulary and comprehension. However, when they did engage in more extensive, in-depth support, students showed gains in reading comprehension across the school year.

Cultivating talk about words serves the word learning process by encouraging specific teacher and student behaviors. Teachers are encouraged to: (1*) use language that is understandable to students,* rather than the language of the dictionary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008); (2) *identify misunderstandings and correct them* within a context that is both meaningful and memorable (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2014); (3) *point out relationships* among words (Graves, 2009), and (4) *reflect on evidence of student learning* to determine next steps (Gwinn & Watts-Taffe, 2017). Students are encouraged to: *move vocabulary from the receptive to the expressive,* reflecting a relatively higher level of knowledge (McKeown, Deane, Scott, Krovetz, & Lawless, 2017, *add to and draw from the collective prior knowledge* that develops through the sharing of information and experiences (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2014), and *take risks with word learning* by experimenting with

usage and asking questions, which builds capacity for independent word learning (Scott, Skobel, & Wells, 2008).

The Four Es Strategy

A description of each aspect of the Four E's strategy follows, showing how the word *eager* could be taught using this strategy.

- *Explain.* Explain the meaning of the word using a student-friendly definition and information about contexts for the word that will be familiar to students. For example, *eager* means you can't wait to do something. I can tell when you all are eager for lunch, because you keep asking me, *"When will it be time for lunch? I'm SO hungry. I can't wait another minute for lunch!"*

- *Engage.* Actively engage students with cognitive processing of the new word's meaning; make connections to their prior knowledge. With regard to *eager,* ask the following questions: *"What are some things for which you are eager? What do you do when you are eager to do something?"*

- *Extend.* Extend connections with prior knowledge and semantic relationships; give students many practice opportunities through multiple exposures to the word, in a variety of settings, over time. A few days after your initial instruction, mention *"I've noticed that most of you eagerly waited for this day. Maybe it's because we're going to the Science Museum."*

- *Examine.* Examine student demonstrations of word learning to determine if the words taught have indeed been learned, the degree to which they have been learned, and which words require additional or corrective teaching. Student demonstrations of word knowledge include performance on formative vocabulary assessments (e.g., weekly tests) and use of new words in conversation (e.g., *"I am so eager for my birthday."*) It is through this examination of student work that instruction and assessment come together and provide direction for future instruction.

We now turn to two extended classroom examples of the Four E's strategy in action.

Teaching a Key Character Traits Word in Mr. Byrd's Third Grade Classroom

Character trait words are often taught in connection with narrative text reading. In this example, Mr. Byrd focuses on character traits as a unit of vocabulary study. At various points within the example, we provide bracketed notes to highlight some of Mr. Byrd's specific instructional moves and language choices that provide his students explicit information about the vocabulary word,

facilitate their cognitive engagement with the word, and allow him to expand and clarify their understandings.

MONDAY: EXPLAIN, ENGAGE, EXTEND

The following occurs on Monday, the first day of instruction for this word.

EXPLAIN

Mr. Byrd: This word is *persistent*. Say it with me: persistent. Persistent means to keep going, no matter what. Even when it is very hard to keep going, even when there are problems or challenges, to continue working toward your goal and doing what you want to do. Martin Luther King was persistent during the Civil Rights Movement. He continued to fight for equal treatment of African-Americans even when lots of people were against him, and he was put in jail, and his life was threatened. In our classroom, I notice that you all are persistent about going outside for recess. Even when it's raining, you ask if we can go out for recess. And when I say "No," what do all of you say?

Several students smile and a few raise their hands. Mr. Byrd nods toward a student who says, "We beg you to go out anyway."

Mr. Byrd (smiling): That's exactly right. You say, "Please Mr. Byrd. It's not raining that hard. We can still play." That's being persistent. Even though I've said we can't do it, you continue to work on trying to make it happen.

Kamila: You never say yes, though.

Mr. Byrd: That's a good point. Persistence doesn't always get you what you want. But the point is that you continue to try.

[Instructional Moves: Providing student-friendly definition, two examples (one featuring Martin Luther King and one featuring his students) and a clarification based on Kamila's comment. Language Choices: Persistent means. . .; I notice that you are all persistent about. . .; Persistence doesn't always. . .]

ENGAGE

Mr. Byrd*:* Can you think of another example of being persistent?

Jerry: My soccer coach tells me that I have to shake it off if the other team scores on me. I have to keep working hard and not give up.

Mr. Byrd*:* Are you the goalie?

Jerry: Yeah.

Mr. Byrd*:* So when someone gets a ball past you, you can't let that stop you from continuing to be the best goalie you can be. You can't just stop defending the goal because somebody scored. Is that what you mean?

Jerry: Yeah.

Mr. Byrd: Great example. Who has another example? Maybe a time when you've been persistent or someone you know has been persistent.

Annette*:* What about the Reds when they won that game over the weekend. It was at the end of the game and they were losing and then right at the end, they got two homeruns.

Mr. Byrd*:* That's another great example of persistence. The team was able to do that because they didn't give up. They were persistent in trying to win the game. I see a lot of you being persistent when you are working on something in class that's really hard, but you continue to work on it until you get it finished, even though you probably want to just stop. Raise your hand if this has ever happened to you. You've wanted to stop, but you've kept on going. . .you've been persistent?

Several hands are raised.

[Instructional Moves: Inviting students to make connections between their understanding of the word's meaning and their own experiences. Language Choices: Who has another example? Maybe a time when you've been persistent or someone you know has been persistent.]

EXTEND

Mr. Byrd: So you can find examples of being persistent in your own life. Tell you what. For the rest of the week, I want you to look for examples of being persistent, or persistence. It might be yourself, it might be your brother or your sister, or it might be on TV. Tomorrow, I'm going to ask for examples of persistence. That's your Word Detective work for this week. And to help you, let's think about other ideas that we think of when we think of being persistent. What ideas or words come to mind when you think of being persistent?

Julia: Keeping on going?

Mr. Byrd: Nods and records idea on chart paper. What else?

Samantha*:* To concentrate?

Mr. Byrd*:* Concentrate. Good one. (Records this word.) Other ideas?

Mark: Dedication. Like Martin Luther King was dedicated to what he was doing.

Mr. Byrd: Nods and records. Yes. These are all words that are related to the idea of being persistent. Now I'm going to put this chart right next to our Word Wall and we can add more ideas

later in the week. Now remember, throughout the week, I want you to be watching and listening for the word persistent. You may hear it or you may see it in action. When you do, add your name to our Word Sightings chart and we'll talk about what you've discovered on Friday.

[Instructional Moves: Encouraging extended connections with prior knowledge and expansion of semantic relationships aligned with personal experiences. Language Choices: For the rest of the week I want you to look for examples of being persistent…These are all words that are related to the idea of being persistent…I want you to be watching and listening for the word persistent. You may hear it or you may see it in action.]

TUESDAY – FRIDAY: EXTEND, ENGAGE, EXAMINE

Each morning, *Tuesday through Thursday*, Mr. Byrd follows up on this initial instruction by asking whether anyone has heard or seen the word persistent. Without asking for details, he reminds students to make note of their sightings on the white board, under Word Sightings: Persistent.

[Instructional Moves: Ensuring repeated practice and written displays related to the word.]

FRIDAY: EXAMINE

Students' initial conversations about the word on Monday provided Mr. Byrd with opportunities to examine understanding. On *Friday* morning, he pays particular attention to student understanding through dialogue based on what has been recorded on the Word Sightings board.

Mr. Byrd: How many students have sighted the word persistent this week?

Students: Eleven.

Mr. Byrd: We've had eleven sightings. Andre, tell us about your sighting. It says here: News.

Andre*:* I heard it on the news. Somebody said the government was persistent about something.

Mr. Byrd: OK, great. Maybe about some work being done in Congress, or by the President?

Andre: Uhm. I don't really remember.

Mr. Byrd: OK, but you know if was about government and it was on the news, and you heard our new word and you recognized it when you heard it.

Andre nods.

Mr. Byrd: Who else would like to share?

Sherry: I saw my dad trying to fix the computer. And it took a LONG time. And he was NOT happy.

Mr. Byrd: So, what made that a sighting of persistent? The fact that it took a long time or the fact that he was not happy.

Sherry: Both.

Mr. Byrd: Interesting. Well, the fact that it took a long time certainly says that he had to persist in order to get the job done. And the fact that he was not enjoying it meant that he had to be persistent in order to get it done, because he really would rather have stopped but he continued.

[Instructional Moves: Soliciting and examining student understandings, based on word sightings and corresponding dialogue, to determine next instructional steps which may include extending, clarifying, or correcting understandings. Language Moves: Andre, tell us about your sighting.; So, what made that a sighting of persistent.]

This example from Mr. Byrd's class highlights several characteristics of instruction that lead to deep vocabulary learning. As you read through the next example, consider the teacher's instructional moves, her language choices, and the ways in which student talk contribute to word learning.

Teaching a Key Concept Word in Mrs. Frasier's Fifth Grade Classroom

Students encounter new concepts and related academic terms across the content areas. In this example, Mrs., Frazier introduces the concept of *natural resources* within a science lesson, then returns to and expands the concept of *resources* in other content areas.

Wednesday: Explain, Engage, Extend

The following occurs on Wednesday, when the concept is first encountered in a passage found on the Encyclopedia Brittanica Kids website. Sharing iPads, students view the website in pairs.

Explain

Mrs. Frazier: Let's take a closer look at this paragraph. I'm going to reread the sentences related to the term *natural resources.* It says, "Ohio's greatest natural resource is its minerals, which provide fuel and raw materials for the state's manufacturing industries. . .. Another natural resource is Ohio's forest acreage, maintained by means of an extensive tree-planting program." Then later on down here it says, "Lake Erie fisheries also provide natural wealth." (Text from Encyclopedia Britannica Kids; http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/article-303390/Ohio). Based on what is written, what ideas do you have about the term *natural resources*? What do you think it means? And you may not know exactly what it means, but you may have some ideas about what you think it means.

Destiny: Well, they're talking about nature. The trees and the lake.

Sharon: Yeah. Natural means it's talking about nature.

Mrs. Frazier: Very good. Natural can refer to nature or the environment. It can also refer to something that already exists. Something that doesn't need to be created by humans.

ENGAGE

Mrs. Frazier: Now, we're going to think about why Ohio's natural resources are important. So, with your work partner, please reread each of the three paragraphs and after you read each one, talk to your partner quietly and make at least one note on your Think Sheet to answer the question: Why are the state's natural resources important? You will discuss ideas together, then write notes independently. You may choose to make the same note, or separate notes, and remember to use complete sentences. I'll be walking around, so raise your hand if you have a question as you go.

After partner work, Mrs. Frazier asks: So what did you learn as you reread each paragraph with a focus on why the state's natural resources are important? Which team would like to share something you learned from the first paragraph?

Joe: Eric and I wrote "Minerals are important to Ohio's industries."

Mrs. Frazier: OK, great. Did any other teams have this as well? (Several hands go up.)

So, let's take that one step further. Can any team share why industry is important in Ohio? Take a minute to talk to your partner.

Francine: Industry leads to manufacturing which leads to jobs and helps the economy.

Mrs. Frazier: Excellent thinking, Francine. Your statement really relates to the word *resources* in the phrase natural *resources.* Earlier, we talked about what the word natural meant and now we can see the power of *resources*. Resources are things that can be used to support various people and projects. They are vital for getting things done.

EXTEND

Mrs. Frazier: So you can see how the concept of natural resources is relevant to our understanding of our state's geography as well as its history---where people settled, the types of work they did, who they interacted with and why. Now, I have two things for two days. In the next two days, I want you to make a mental note of when you see or hear this term *natural resources* and also when you hear just the term *resources.* OK? So you're looking for the general term *resources* and the more specific term *natural resources.*

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY – EXTEND, ENGAGE, EXAMINE

During the last five minutes of the Science lesson on Thursday, Mrs. Frazier asks students to share their experiences with seeing or hearing the terms *natural resources* and *resources.* She repeats this on Friday, at the end of the school day, using the following routine.

Mrs. Frazier: Take out your sticky note pad and your markers. On one sticky note write natural resources in red. On another sticky note, write resources in green. Then put your name on both stickies. Now, if you've heard or seen one or both of these terms since yesterday, please get up and put your sticky note in the appropriate column on the white board. You'll place your sticky under Science, Social Studies, Literature, Writing, Math, or Out of School. (Students circulate to post their notes.) Now let's take a look at what we have. What do you notice? Where are our sticky notes?

Mia: Under Science and Social Studies, I see a lot of green---the natural resources stickies.

John: I also see some under Out of School.

Mrs. Frazier: John, I noticed that you put one in that column. Where did you see or hear the word outside of school?

John: It was in a news report on oil in Saudi Arabia.

Lydia*:* And I saw it in a magazine article about protecting the environment.

Maggie: I see some of the resources sticky notes---the red ones---under Writing and I think that's because we're getting ready to write our persuasive essays and you keep on telling us to use the resources we found when we researched our topics.

Mrs. Frazier: Yes, I used that word *resources* a lot didn't I? Raise your hand if you noticed my use of that word during our Writing time. (A few hands go up.) Whenever we write, we need to think about our purpose, our audience, and the resources we can draw upon. Sometimes we use facts from our research, sometimes we use ideas we get from studying how other people write, sometimes we use resources like spellcheck. These are all different kinds of resources that help us accomplish different kinds of things in our writing.

Over the next several weeks, we will return to these terms again and again. We'll see how natural resources relate to our world through Science, Geography, History, even Politics. We will also be mindful of how other kinds of resources help us accomplish things every day. Since these are two key terms and key ideas for us to know, I'm going to put them up here on our Word Wall. One week from today, we'll play this game again with the post it notes. Only next week, I want to see two notes from every single student. (Mrs. Frazier collects the stickie notes to serve as a record of which students posted them.)

The example from Mrs. Frazier's class includes the following instructional moves: close reading to generate an initial discussion about the term natural resources, encouraging connections to knowledge gained from the textbook through partner work, clarifying, comparing, and contrasting two related terms, discussing multiple content area contexts in which students may encounter the terms, repeated practice, and accountability for all students. Some of Mrs. Frazier's key language choices were: Based on what is written, what ideas do you have about the term natural resources?;

Your statement really relates to the word resources in the phrase natural resources.; In the next two days, I want you to make a mental note of when you see or hear this term. . .; Only next week, I want to see two notes from every single student. Like Mr. Byrd, Mrs. Frazier used talk that fostered students' talk, as students processed understandings of terms.

Selecting Words to Teach Using the Four Es

Since the Four Es approach is time-consuming, it is important to use it with words that warrant intensive instruction. Deciding which words to teach is often a challenge and two useful resources on this topic are *Words, Words Everywhere, but Which Ones do we Teach?* (Graves et al, 2013) and *Flood, Fast, Focus* (Blachowicz, Bauman, Manyak, & Graves, 2013). Based on Nagy & Hiebert's (2011) detailed theoretical analysis of word selection, we suggest considering difficulty and utility when selecting words to teach using The Four Es strategy.

Difficulty. The Four Es approach is appropriate for words that would be difficult for students to learn with less intensive instruction. Words with concrete referents (e.g., *gnarled*) tend to be easier to learn than words with abstract referents (e.g., *respect*), and words with abstract referents vary in difficulty as well (e.g., *grateful* versus *menacing*). But conceptual difficulty does not lie solely within the word; it is also related to student characteristics such as how much prior knowledge a student brings to a new word, connections students may be able to make between the new word and their own experiences, and student motivation for learning the new word.

Utility. It makes sense to use the Four Es strategy for words that are essential to the learning at hand (e.g, a particular literature study or a particular Social Studies unit). Many of these words also fuel understanding, thinking, and communication (through speaking and writing) in future units of study and across content areas. In the content areas (including English Language Arts), new words almost always align with concepts that are unknown to students and many of these will take weeks of study for full student understanding. If time is limited, it may be necessary to determine the most vital concepts to be dealt with and, importantly, the foundational concepts that are required for understanding later concepts. In addition to content-specific vocabulary, it is important to consider cross-content vocabulary---- terms that are used in multiple content areas, but whose meanings may vary (slightly or greatly) depending on the content area.

Examining Student Learning

Teachers commonly test vocabulary knowledge with matching or multiple choice tests, not unlike many high stakes vocabulary assessments that students take. We've found that teachers who regularly engage their students in conversation about words change their approach to assessment. First, they become more attentive to what their current data (e.g., performance on weekly vocabulary tests) reveal about their students' word knowledge. Second, they become interested in

new forms of assessment that capture gradations in growth, and that better inform their teaching. Overall, they look for student demonstrations of word learning in a greater number of forms and they keep records of these demonstrations. This aligns with the general body of research supporting the importance of formative assessment to inform instruction as well as the specific body of research supporting the value of multiple measures of word learning (Cervetti, Tilson, Castek, Bravo, & Trainin, 2012; Christ, Chiu, Currie, & Cipieleski, 2014; McKeown, Deane, Scott, Krovetz, & Lawless, 2017). In this section, we share approaches that have been useful in our work. For more ideas to support classroom practice, we recommend *Vocabulary Assessment to Support Instruction: Building Rich Word-Learning Experiences* (McKeown, Deane, Scott, Krovetz, & Lawless, 2017).

Maximizing Current Demonstrations of Word Learning

Multiple Choice and Matching Tests

End-of-week vocabulary tests often inform students' grades but are not used to guide future instruction. However, an analysis of student errors can highlight words that warrant additional instruction. For example, Chris (an author on this piece), has used these analyses to correct misunderstandings of easily confused terms such as *latitude* and *longitude.* In addition, he's added a "word consciousness" component to this otherwise traditional form of assessment with the following open-ended questions for students to answer in their own words: *What is your favorite word from our list? Use this word in a sentence. Why is it your favorite word?*

Using Words in a Sentence or Visual Display

Students are often asked to use new words in a sentence, and this activity has led to any number of sentences that fulfill the requirement without demonstrating understanding. In order to maximize this form of assessment, it is critical that students be required to create high quality sentences. These may be referred to as "Show Me" sentences or "No Doubt" sentences because they include enough contextual information to clearly show the reader, leaving no doubt in her/his mind, that the writer has a grasp of the word's meaning. Teaching students to write high quality sentences through examples and non-examples serves both assessment and instruction. Visual displays provide another way for students to demonstrate word knowledge and new technologies support a wide array of options. Students can find clip art and open source photos to show word meanings or they can use tools to create their own visuals (Tyson & Peery, 2017).

Word Sightings and Word Walls

In our earlier example of the Four Es in action, Mr. Byrd encouraged his students to look for examples of the word *persistent* and to add those to a Word Sightings chart (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2013). (See Figure 1 for a similar Word Sightings chart used in Chris's classroom.) Devoting classroom space to new words fuels the Four Es process because it stimulates conversation about new words over time. Word Walls can also serve this purpose when they are used purposefully and

interactively---not, as one teacher has said, as "wallpaper." Word walls may consist of index cards, large sticky notes, or chart paper with words listed, displayed over a period of weeks or months, with rotation in and out based on student learning. Photos of word walls can be sent home with electronic announcements to encourage practice outside school.

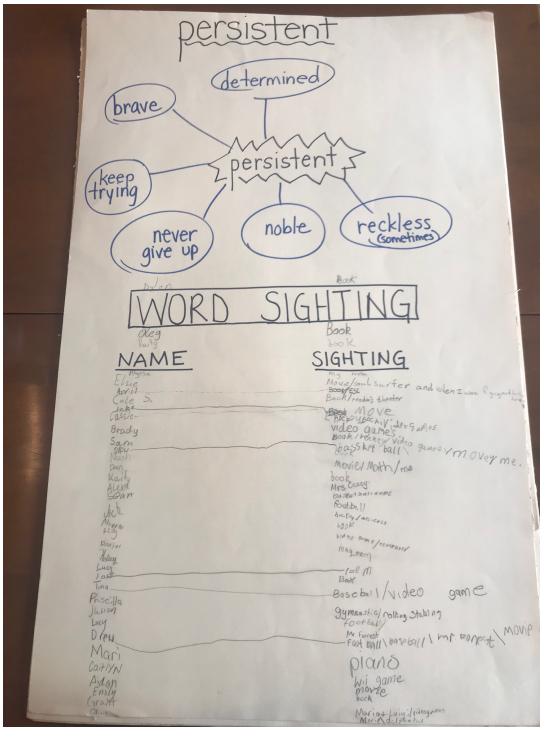
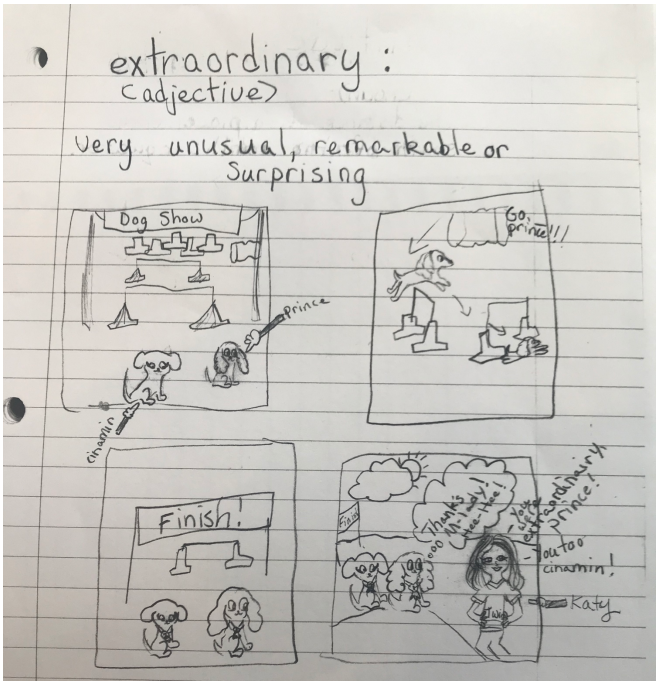


Figure 1. Word Sightings Chart for the Word Persistent

Using New Demonstrations of Word Learning

Vocabulary Notebooks, Word Journals, Word Files, and Word Rings

Students can use word journals to keep a record of new words and their meanings. In addition to words taught within pre-planned lessons, students should be encouraged to record words taught in unplanned lessons and words learned based on individual interest. The journal can be divided in a variety of ways so that students can easily revisit words related to particular concepts or words they have highlighted for possible use in their own writing. Scott, Skobel, and Wells (2008) suggest that students look for "gifts of words" in class read-alouds, novel studies, and independent reading. Collecting these words provides students with a "bank of powerful words" from which to choose when they engage in their own writing. See Figure 2 for examples of Word Journal entries.



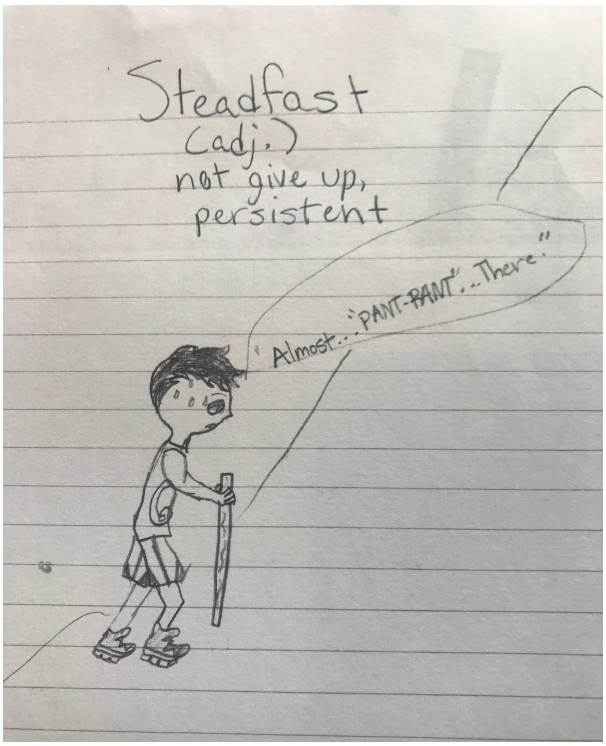


Figure 2. Word Journal Entries for the Words "Extraordinary" and "Steadfast"

Anecdotal Records

Since word learning is incremental, and occurs differently for different students, anecdotal records are a powerful way for teachers to monitor vocabulary growth. Blachowicz and Fisher (2014) suggest the following ways to keep anecdotal records:

- Keep a file card for each student and select 4-5 cards each day, to record observations about those students' vocabulary usage.
- Keep a notepad and pencil in each corner of the classroom. Use the closest pad to note important observations, collecting and compiling notes at the end of each day. Students can also use these pads to record vocabulary usage in small groups that may be working together on a novel study or disciplinary project.
- Keep a list of words that have been taught recently on your desk or on cards looped together on shower curtain rings. Check the list/ring as a reminder of words to review with students.

Assessments Tailored to Word Types

Instead of using the same type of assessment for all words taught, assessments can be tailored based on the types of words taught. For example, after a study of character trait words in Chris's classroom, he designed a Character Trait Assessment, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Directions:
1. I want you to write the definition of each character trait.
2. Then, pick a person you know who has that character trait.
3. Lastly, explain why you would give them the character trait.

Indecisive means _____

Person: _____

Explanation: _____

_____

Figure 3. Directions and One Item from Character Trait Assessment

Class Brainstorm: Ways to Own a Word

Explain the difference between knowing a word and owning it (e.g., "Owning a word means knowing what it means and using it correctly in speaking and writing."). Discuss the importance of repetition in being able to own a word and model some ways of showing word ownership (e.g.,

using a new word in a piece of writing or using a new word in a conversation with your science lab partner). As a class, brainstorm a list of possible ways to own a word---including discussion of existing classroom routines and assignments that might provide fertile ground, post the list, and encourage students to choose whichever way works best for them.

Closing Remarks

In their national study of high quality fourth grade teachers, Allington and Johnston (2002) stated "language itself (is) treated as a curriculum material." (p. 214). The Four Es approach is a way to provide rich, intensive instruction in the meanings of specific words, but it also speaks to language development in a broader sense. Teachers who use the Four Es report changes not only in the way they and their students engage with words, but in the ways teachers and students engage with each other. Talk about words transcends pre-planned times for vocabulary instruction, and classroom dynamics change. Teachers find ways to incorporate word learning into everything from lining up for lunch (e.g., "Raise your hand if you're feeling *lethargic*? Raise your hand if you're feeling *energetic*? Raise your hand if you're *neutral*? Let's have those who are lethargic line up first. Now let's have those who are neutral. Finally, energetic students may line up.") to Morning Message (e.g., "There's a mystery word in our Morning Message. It is another way of saying happy. Raise your hand if you see the word.") Similarly, students become more word conscious. After using the Four Es in the classroom, Chris reported, "*There isn't a day that goes by that students don't show me vocabulary we have discussed in their own books or use it in their writing or speaking."* Research clearly indicates the need for intensive instruction if the goal is for students to own words, as they do in Chris's classroom.

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