



# SWEL 5.1.11 Teacher Collaboration Project

## Vocabulary Module 1: *Selecting Vocabulary*

Presenter Name

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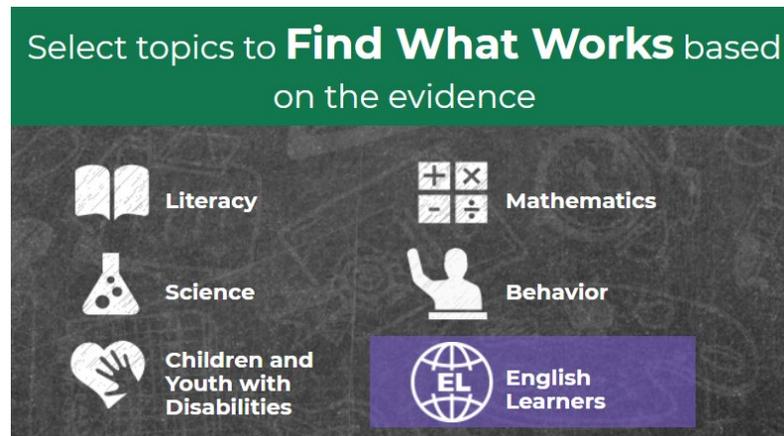
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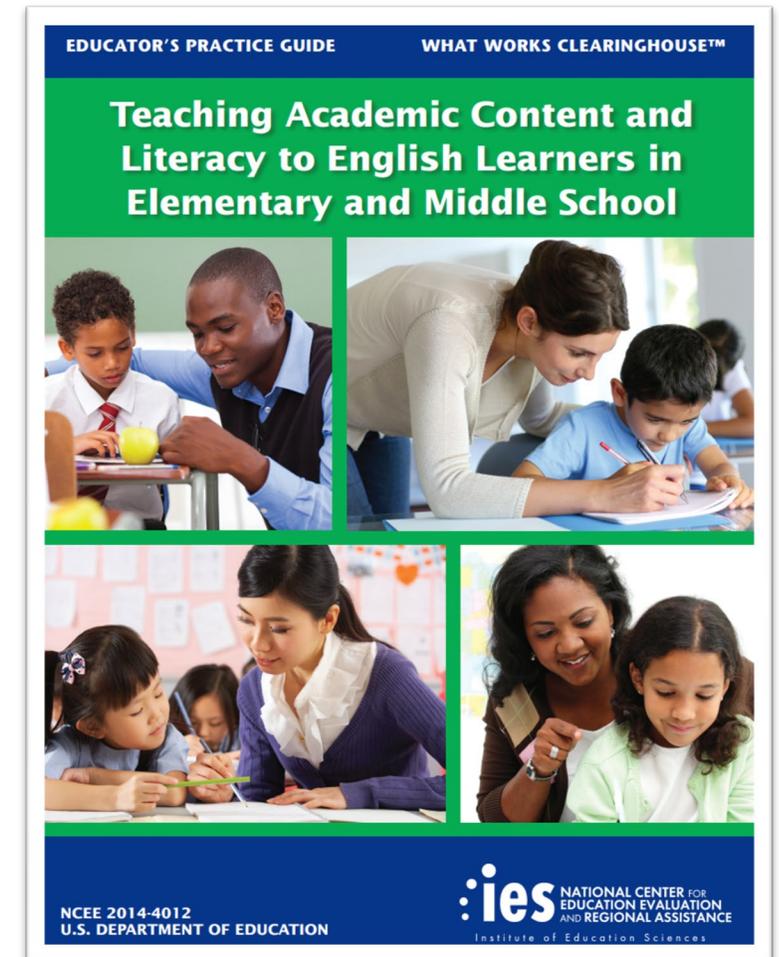
# The importance of vocabulary instruction for English Learner students

# Supporting English learner students' achievement

- The latest *What Works Clearinghouse* EL-focused practice guide endorses **academic vocabulary instruction** for cultivating ELs' **content knowledge** and **literacy skills**.



Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School*. IES Practice Guide. What Works Clearinghouse. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.



# Supporting English Learner Students' Achievement

- Together, the two recommendations supported by **strong evidence** emphasize **integrating a variety of academic vocabulary instructional activities into content area-teaching.**

**1** Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.



**2** Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching.



**3** Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills.



**4** Provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development.



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# Implementation Steps for Two Key Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1</b> <i>Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.</i>	<b>Recommendation 2</b> <i>Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching.</i>
Choose a brief, engaging piece of informational text that includes academic vocabulary as a platform for intensive academic vocabulary instruction.	Strategically use instructional tools—such as short videos, visuals, and graphic organizers—to anchor instruction and help students make sense of content.
Choose a small set of academic vocabulary for in-depth instruction.	Explicitly teach the content-specific academic vocabulary, as well as the general academic vocabulary that supports it, during content-area instruction.
Teach academic vocabulary in depth using multiple modalities (writing, speaking, listening).	Provide daily opportunities for students to talk about content in pairs or small groups.
Teach word-learning strategies to help students independently figure out the meaning of words.	Provide writing opportunities to extend student learning and understanding of the content material.

# How to Teach Academic Words Intensively and Effectively?

## Recommendation 1

*Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.*

Choose a brief, engaging piece of informational text that includes academic vocabulary as a platform for intensive academic vocabulary instruction.

Choose a small set of academic vocabulary for in-depth instruction.

Teach academic vocabulary in depth using multiple modalities (writing, speaking, listening).

Teach word-learning strategies to help students independently figure out the meaning of words.

You can watch a member of the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide panel describe Recommendation 1 [on YouTube](#). Find a clickable link on our Resources site!

Select text and target words

Provide in-depth, multimodal instruction

Teach word-learning strategies

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1. Select text and target words.



# Choosing an Appropriate Text

- For any given instructional unit, texts that are in line with (or come from) curricular materials should be chosen for both their **accessibility** and their **content-richness**

## Choose a text that

- Is **brief, interesting, and engaging** for the students
- Contains a **variety** of target academic words to focus on
- Connects to a given unit of study **and builds the students' knowledge** of a topic
- Provides sufficient **detail and examples** for students to be able to comprehend the passage
- Contains ideas that can be discussed from a **variety of perspectives**

# Sample Appropriate Text

When you walk into a zoo today, the exhibits look different than they used to look years ago. Before the 1960s, zoos had cages with tile walls and floors. Now, animals in zoos live in more natural environments. For example, instead of enormous gorillas pacing back and forth in cramped cement areas, they play on soft grass and nap in trees. Before, large birds lived in small cages. Now, zoos have large exhibits where birds can stretch their wings and soar from tree to tree. According to zoo design expert Jon C. Coe, these changes often have a positive impact on animals' health and happiness.

Still, creating better living spaces is just one step toward improving the lives of animals that live in zoos. Even in exhibits that look like their natural environments,

animals can become bored. According to Coe, boredom can have harmful effects.

“An exhibit may look great, but it isn't doing much for the animal unless it also involves a choice of things to do all day,” said Coe. Animals need to be challenged with activities such as looking for food and exploring their surroundings. In fact, some research has shown that giving zoo animals more options and activities promotes good health and lowers the incidence of violent behavior. Today, several zoos have created living environments for their animals that involve the kinds of pursuits that Coe described. For instance, the orangutans at the National Zoo in Washington, DC can travel across the zoo on overhead ropes to visit friends.

Source: 2014 What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide, pp. 16–17 (text excerpt associated with Recommendation 1, from the American Veterinary Medical Association website; see <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/021201k.aspx>).

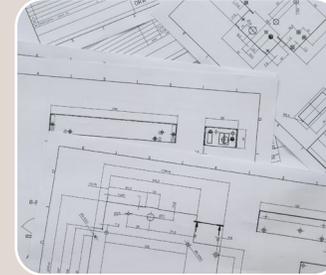
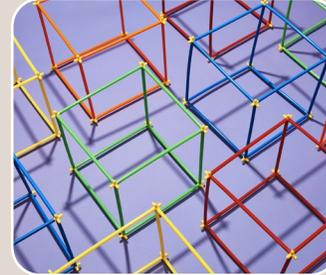
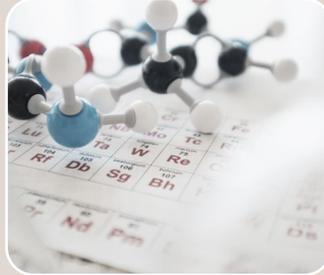
# Sample Appropriate Text

When you walk into a zoo today, the exhibits look different than they used to look years ago. Before the 1960s, zoos had cages with tile walls and floors. Now, animals in zoos live in more natural environments. For example, instead of enormous gorillas pacing back and forth in cramped cement areas, they play on soft grass and nap in trees. Before, large birds lived in small cages. Now, zoos have large exhibits where birds can stretch their wings and soar from tree to tree. According to zoo design expert Jon C. Coe, these changes often have a positive impact on animals' health and happiness. [...]

- Appropriate for upper-elementary students with moderate-to-strong level of English language proficiency and a range of reading abilities
- Comprehensible *and engaging*
- Timely topic with many words and ideas that can be depicted visually and can ground discussion
- Text offers two categories of academic vocabulary: *content-specific* (e.g., natural, health) and *domain-general* (e.g., expert, area)

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# Choosing a Small Set of Vocabulary to Teach



...are central to understanding the text.

...are frequently used in the text.

...might appear in other content areas.

...have multiple meanings.

...have affixes.

...have cross-language potential.

# Criterion #1: Centrality to Text

Words central to understanding the text.

Curriculum publishers often **bold** words that are central to understanding a text.

Some words that are important to understanding a text may not be bolded—but they may be good choices for target instructional words as well.

When you walk into a **zoo** today, the **exhibits** look different than they used to look years ago. Before the 1960s, zoos had **cages** with tile walls and floors. Now, animals in zoos live in more **natural environments**. For example, instead of enormous gorillas pacing back and forth in cramped cement areas, they play on soft grass and nap in trees. Before, large birds lived in small cages. Now, zoos have large exhibits where birds can stretch their wings and **soar** from tree to tree. According to zoo design **expert** Jon C. Coe, these changes often have a positive **impact** on animals' health and happiness.

Source: 2014 What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide, pp. 16–17 (Recommendation 1 and associated text excerpt).

# Criterion #2: Frequency in Text

Words frequently used in the text.

Academic words that appear often are important to target (even if their meaning seems clear).

Multiple encounters with a word help students commit it to memory.

When you walk into a zoo today, the exhibits look different than they used to look years ago. **Before** the 1960s, zoos had cages with tile walls and floors. **Now**, animals in zoos live in more natural environments. For example, instead of enormous gorillas pacing back and forth in cramped cement areas, they play on soft grass and nap in trees. **Before**, large birds lived in small cages. **Now**, zoos have large exhibits where birds can stretch their wings and soar from tree to tree. According to zoo design expert Jon C. Coe, these changes often have a positive impact on animals' health and happiness.

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# Criterion #3: Use in Other Content Areas

Words that might appear in other content areas.

Some academic words are 'domain-general' and may be used across content areas.

Understanding these words helps students in your content area and when reading texts in other areas.

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# Criterion #4: Multiple Meanings

Words with multiple meanings.

Many words have related but distinct meanings and usages across content areas (e.g., “volume” in English language arts vs. in science and math)

Teaching multiple meanings explicitly helps students understand how words function in different contexts.

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# Criterion #5: Presence of Affixes

## Words with affixes (prefixes/suffixes)

Words altered by adding prefixes and/or suffixes help us attend to how word parts change a **root word**.

Affixes can change a root word's **meaning** (e.g., *like* → *dislike*) or its **grammatical form** (e.g., *cage* → *cages*) or **function** (e.g., *nature* → *natural*).

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# Criterion #6: Cross-Language Potential

Words with cross-language potential (cognates).

Many words have **cognate** relationships across languages (i.e., they share an origin and retain a similar meaning and sound).

Choosing cognates can **increase students' confidence** (but they tend to be easiest to find in Romance languages like Spanish and Portuguese).

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## *Pause and Try It! Select 6 Target Words:*

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# *Reflect on Your Selections: Which Criteria Are Met?*

**Which of your selections...**

...are central to understanding the text?

...are frequently used in the text?

...might appear in other content areas?

...have multiple meanings?

...have affixes?

...have cross-language potential?

Compare your selections to the example selections and justifications in the 2014 WWC Practice Guide (p. 17, Exhibit 1.3).



# Key takeaways

# 1. Selecting Vocabulary: *Key Takeaways*

- ✓ Research indicates that six key word characteristics should be considered when selecting target words:
  - ✓ Centrality to understanding a text
  - ✓ Frequency of use in a text
  - ✓ Likelihood of appearing in other content areas
  - ✓ Having multiple meanings
  - ✓ Containing affixes
  - ✓ Having cross-language potential
- ✓ Intentionally selecting texts and target words can help ensure that ELs are well supported and engaged in their content-area lessons.
- ✓ Reflecting on how target vocabulary relates to what students already know can generate interest in continuing to master new words *that will help them succeed.*

# For more information



Check out the key resource this presentation draws on:

- [2014 What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide](#)



Parts 2 (on direct instruction) and 3 (on word-learning strategies) can be accessed [HERE](#).



REL Southwest has compiled a rich repository of materials and guides you can draw from in your collaboration teams. Visit, browse, and download at [THIS.WEBSITE](#).

# Word Parts and Cognates

