

## VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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## AGENDA

- Overview of Intervention
- Sample of Classroom Intervention
- Sample of Home Literacy Intervention
- Findings

## LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING FOR ELLS

- Language and literacy learning are thoroughly connected and enhancing language development is key to ensure ELLs' success as readers and writers.
- The research on ELLs points out that teachers need to focus on developing oral language by providing rich and engaging language environments while at the same time focusing on building literacy skills.

## VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

- Vocabulary development has been identified as an important and challenging area of language and literacy development for ELL students (August & Shanahan, 2006).
- ELLs' level of vocabulary knowledge has been shown to be an important predictor of reading ability (fluency), comprehension, and achievement on reading assessments (Hickman et. al, 2004).

## VOCABULARY CHALLENGE

- Students reading in their first language have already learned on the order of 5000-7000 words before they begin formal reading instruction in schools (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001).
- ELLs must not only close this word knowledge gap but try to keep pace with native speakers. ELLs with a strong education background acquire words at a faster pace.
- ELLs need to develop a vocabulary that includes high-frequency words along with special academic content words (Perogoy & Boyle, 2008)

## READ-ALOUDS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS

- Can have positive effects on vocabulary learning and reading comprehension; books are "where the words are" (Stahl & Stahl, 2004);
- Has the potential "introduce children to the joy of reading; build background knowledge; build vocabulary; and familiarize children with text structures, concepts about print, and the distinctive character of written language" (Graves, 2009);
- Is "the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985 as cited in Graves, 2009).

### KINDERGARTEN LANGUAGE STUDY INTERVENTION

- Longitudinal Study
- Goal: design, develop, implement an intervention program to improve vocabulary skills of Spanish-English bilingual kindergarten students and assess the impact of the intervention on language and early literacy skills, from kindergarten through second grade

### KLS INTERVENTION DESIGN

- Intervention included parallel school and family literacy components
- School component focused on pre-, during, and post- read-aloud activities to foster oral language and vocabulary growth
- Family literacy component focused on read-alouds with authentic language and literacy activities that are culturally appropriate and relevant

### CLASSROOM COMPONENT

- 16 week intervention, four monthly units
- Each unit thematically organized around three books, for teaching a total of 18 key words and 24 basic words
- Each unit is introduced with a training session
- Each week consists of 20 minute read-aloud lessons
- Total number of words: 72 key, 96 basic

### READ-ALOUDS (GRAVES, 2009)

- Pre-Reading
  - Activating background knowledge
  - Pre-teaching vocabulary
- During Reading
  - Questioning for understanding
  - Reinforcement of vocabulary
  - Retelling
- Post-Reading
  - Reinforcement of meaning
  - Activities and games

### DAY 1

- Activate Background knowledge
  - "Have you ever played make believe?"
- Basic Vocabulary
  - Forest, tree, vine, flower
  - "This is a forest. A forest is a large area of land where trees grow close together. I am going to say forest and then I want you to repeat it with me, forest — forest — forest."

### DAY 2

- Teach key vocabulary
  - Wild, tame, terrible
- Interactive Reading
  - On page 28, stop and say "See, they are acting really wild. They are jumping and screaming, hanging on the tree branches, and stomping together"
  - On page 37, stop and ask, "Why do you think he went home?"

### DAY 3

- Day 3 includes more key vocabulary and another interactive reading of the story
- Key Vocabulary
  - Private, stare, frightened
- Interactive Reading
  - After pages 1-6, "Who can tell me what just happened?"
  - After pages 29-32, "How did the Wild Things feel about Max leaving?"

### DAY 4

- Discussion of the book
  - Students share with a partner what they liked and/or disliked about the text
  - Vocabulary review
- After page 5, "Max's mother thinks he is wild. Now I want you to make a face like a wild animal. Grr."
- After page 17-18, "Can you pretend to show me your terrible claws?"

### REVIEW

- Final week of each unit was a review week of all books
- Vocabulary Bingo with Key words
- Pat, Clap, Basic word game



### FAMILY LITERACY COMPONENT

- Parallel to the classroom, session took place once a month at the school site
- The family literacy component focused on increasing language interactions through read-aloud's with authentic language and literacy activities that are culturally appropriate and relevant
- Specific attention to
  - Reading in the home
  - Vocabulary learning
  - Home language use
- Parents can be taught to be more effective in supporting children's language and literacy development in the home, and they can do this in their home language.

### PARENT INTERVENTION

- Six sessions
  - Unit 1: Introduction
  - Unit 2: Vocabulary
  - Unit 3: Comprehension and extended discourse
  - Unit 4: Sounds, words, and book concepts
  - Unit 5: Narrative retelling
  - Review
- Across Workshops
  - Discussion of questions such as:
    - "How did you like the books?"; "Which was your favorite?"...
    - What word did you and your child learn?
    - What do you hope to learn in this session?
  - Emphasized important points:
    - Reading is the basis for all learning
    - Reading together in Spanish can help your child learn English
    - Specific strategies on how to read with your child
      - Preview the cover
      - Talk about illustrations
  - Small Group Work

### UNIT 3: COMPREHENSION AND EXTENDED DISCOURSE

- Importance of learning to read in kindergarten
- Promoting comprehension by providing opportunities for children to talk about pictures
- Spanish at home and English at school
  - Books in intervention provided in Spanish for home; as well as additional books
- Beyond books
  - Activities include singing songs, playing together, talking about the words they encounter

### FINDINGS

- Improvements in depth and breadth of vocabulary skills for intervention students supports the importance of explicitly teaching vocabulary
- High levels of engagement from the families who participated in the intervention program and increased reading at home demonstrate families are eager to support their children

### IMPLICATIONS

- Findings from the study show the potential for combining efforts in schools and at home to improve the language and early literacy skills of ELL children
- Culturally and linguistically diverse families are eager to support their children and this might be a potential pathway for strengthening their role as children's first teachers

### CONCLUSIONS: EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS FOR ELLS

- Have a curriculum that helps second language learners actively participate
- Have a routine and consistent organizational structure
- Are language-rich with teachers who use supportive methods of communication
- Include discussions that build upon English speakers knowledge at the same time helping second language learners understand
- Establish partnerships with families

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THANK YOU!