A STUDY GUIDE FOR

# LEARNING WORDS

INSIDE & OUT

**Vocabulary Instruction That Boosts Achievement in All Subject Areas**

## NANCY FREY & DOUGLAS FISHER

Foreword by
DONNA OGLE

# A Study Guide for
# *Learning Words Inside and Out*
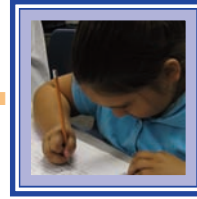
This study guide is intended to support your understanding of the concepts presented in *Learning Words Inside and Out, Grades 1–6: Vocabulary InstructionThat Boosts Achievement in All Subject Areas*, by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher.

You can use this study guide as you finish each chapter or after you complete the whole book. Prompts and questions are intended to promote personal reflection but could also be used to foster small-group discussions between colleagues.

# Why Teaching Subject Area Words Can Make or Break Achievement

1.  Frey and Fisher talk about the unmet vocabulary needs of elementary students. Discuss several of the reasons for these unmet needs within the context of your own school.

2.  Consider your own experiences with learning new words. How do you typically learn them? What are the implications for your classroom instruction?

3.  Discuss the role word knowledge plays in writing.

4.  Word knowledge is often described on a continuum of shallow to deep. Discuss the degrees of understanding that researchers like Dale, O'Rourke, and Bamman (1971) have described.

5.  Discuss the differences between general, specialized, and technical words. Is it important to teach words from each of these categories? Why?

6.  Frey and Fisher have developed an academic vocabulary model that consists of five big ideas. Following is a rubric that educators can use to evaluate how they are integrating these big ideas across the school day as part of a schoolwide initiative. Using the rubric, how might you describe the vocabulary efforts at your school?

The attached rubric can be used in a number of ways. One of the most common ways to use this is as a needs assessment. As the facilitator, you might copy the rubric and ask each teacher to complete it anonymously. By compiling the scores, you will easily identify areas of need and can thus target professional development, coaching, demonstration lessons, and feedback accordingly. For example, if teacher modeling is reportedly occurring less frequently than is necessary for student learning, you might use the corresponding PowerPoint presentation with teachers, show videos of teachers modeling, and demonstrate modeling for your colleagues.

You can also use each component of the rubric to gauge success. For example, if you targeted teacher modeling, you might periodically ask teachers to complete that section of the rubric after reading the chapter in *Learning Words Inside and Ou*t, observing videos of other teachers, participating in demonstration lessons, and receiving peer coaching. If the professional development plan is working, the average self-assessment score should be increasing. As it does, you can recognize —effort and celebrate success.

## ■ Fostering a Schoolwide Vocabulary Initiative

| How do students acquire and extend their academic vocabulary across the school day? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **_Intentional Instruction:_ Words are identified by subject and/or grade level.** | Words are identified using a framework for selection. Word lists include general, specialized, and technical vocabulary and are shared across grade levels. | All grade levels select a range of general, specialized, and technical vocabulary by subject, but these are only shared within the grade level. | Some words have been selected by grade level and subject, although these are driven by textbook lists (primarily technical vocabulary). | Individual teachers are applying a framework for selecting vocabulary, although these are not being shared outside of the grade level. | Individual teachers have identified words using the text-book (technical vocabulary), and these are not known to others in the grade level and school. |
| **_Transparent Instruction:_ Teacher modeling and think alouds** | All teachers have received professional development in modeling and use it daily in their instruction. They share their practices with one another. | Some grade levels have received professional development in modeling and are using it daily. | All teachers have received professional development, but it is not yet being regularly implemented. | Individual teachers are sharing their modeling practices with one another through peer visits. | There are individual experts using teacher modeling, but there is no opportunity to share practices with others. |
| **_Useable Instruction:_ Peer talk and small group collaboration** | Oral language practices are schoolwide and all teachers integrate peer talk and/or small group collaboration daily. | Some grade levels use oral language daily and are emerging as skilled practitioners. | Some grade levels are planning ways to integrate peer talk and small group collaboration into daily practice. | There are individual teachers who use peer talk and small group collaboration but there has not been an opportunity to work with others. | Instruction is dominated by whole group lectures followed by silent, independent work. |
| **_Personalize Instruction:_ Independent and individual learning** | Students school-wide consolidate their under-standing through activities that promote spiral review and metacognition. | Grade levels are collaborating to build professional knowledge with colleagues. | Some grade levels have developed a plan for how students increase vocabulary metacognition and spiral review. | Individual teachers are becoming skilled at personalizing instruction, although there is no mechanism for sharing practice. | Independent work emphasizes isolated skills and memorization. |
| **_Prioritizing Vocabulary:_ Words of the Week and Wide Reading** | The school has implemented the plan and teachers receive regular professional development to refine practice. | The school has created a plan for schoolwide vocabulary and wide reading (SSR and independent reading) | The school has created a plan for either schoolwide vocabulary OR wide reading. | The school is studying school-wide vocabulary and wide reading for future planning. | There is no plan, and no current initiative to examine these schoolwide practices. |

# Make It Intentional

## A Framework for Daily Word Learning

1. Explain what *intentional vocabulary instruction* means. Why do the authors suggest that teachers should teach more than just words found in the classroom textbook?

2. Discuss the decision-making model that Frey and Fisher have developed for vocabulary selection. How might this model help you select words to teach in your own classroom?

3. How might a primary-grade teacher use the Dolch sight word list for vocabulary instruction? How could an intermediate-grade teacher use Coxhead's Academic Word List for similar purposes? How might Ogden's Basic English Word List help teachers of English learners?

4. In what ways would students benefit from learning about Latin and Greek root words, suffixes, and prefixes?

5. Discuss how subject area teachers might select technical vocabulary words to teach.

6. As mentioned in this chapter, teacher modeling can be an effective means by which to teach vocabulary alongside content instruction. How might you incorporate modeling, vocabulary instruction, and content teaching simultaneously in your classroom?

7. Why is collaboration between students important for academic vocabulary acquisition?

8. Frey and Fisher describe how teachers might use journal writing in mathematics to promote independent use of vocabulary words. What types of activities might you try in your content area? How might journal writing assignments advance vocabulary and concept understanding in other content areas?

# Make It Transparent

## Showing Students Your Thinking About Words

1.  Why might a teacher explain his thinking when reading a piece of text? How could you use this strategy?

2.  What does it mean to model context clues? Discuss the four categories for natural contexts that Beck, McKeown, and McCaslin (1983) developed.

3.  What are the five ways in which context clues are provided by authors?

4.  Frey and Fisher suggest that teachers devote time to modeling morphology and word parts. What prefixes, suffixes, root words, cognates, and word families might you teach in your content area?

5.  How could a teacher model the use of resources when deciphering word meaning?

# Make It Useable

## Harnessing the Power of Peer Conversations

1. Discuss the research that supports the use of oral language to foster vocabulary development.

2. Explain the characteristics of effective peer learning. Develop a plan for incorporating these characteristics into a collaborative activity for your content area.

3. Consider the authors' three tips for successful peer interactions, and complete the following chart.

| Applying the Tips for Successful Peer Interactions | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Tip* | *What Does It Mean?* | *How Does It Apply to My Classroom?* |
| Tip 1: Provide students with a purpose statement. | | |
| Tip 2: Remember that variety is the spice of life. | | |
| Tip 3: Integrate vocabulary activities into the content flow. | | |

4. Describe the use of partner and group discussions to help students clarify vocabulary understanding. What collaborative oral activities might you incorporate into your curriculum?

5. The use of student think-alouds and reciprocal teaching provides opportunities for students to talk about reading while clarifying vocabulary. Compare and contrast how these two strategies support vocabulary development.

6. Choose two or three graphic organizer structures from those described by Frey and Fisher. Describe how each might be suited to a certain topic in your content area.

7. Consider the following approaches for vocabulary development. Complete the chart.

| Applying Various Approaches for Vocabulary Development | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Strategy* | *What Is It?* | *How Could I Use It?* |
| Semantic feature analysis | | |
| Concept circles | | |
| Shades of meaning | | |

8. How might you use written approaches to building academic vocabulary in your classroom? Discuss two or three possible strategies for doing this.

# Make It Personal

## Consolidating Students' Word Learning Through Individual Activities

1. Discuss the three characteristics of effective learners that Murdoch and Wilson (2006) have identified.

2. Nagy (1988) described three conditions needed for students to learn vocabulary: integration, repetition, and meaningful use. Explain what these three conditions mean in terms of word learning.

3. Review the various suggestions offered by the authors for consolidating individual learning through logs. Describe each strategy briefly, considering how each might apply to your grade level.

4. Complete the following chart for strategies that incorporate word manipulation to consolidate individual learning.

| Applying Word-Manipulation Strategies | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategy for Manipulating Words** | **What Is It?** | **How Could I Use It?** |
| Word sorts | | |
| Word cards | | |
| Mnemonics | | |

5.  Generative sentences and writing frames can help students consolidate learning through composing. Explain how you might incorporate these two strategies into a subject that you teach.

6.  Why do the authors recommend that assessment of academic vocabulary acquisition be carried out across teacher modeling, peer interaction, and individual learning?

# Make It a Priority

## Creating a Schoolwide Focus on Learning Words

1.  Explain how words of the week may be incorporated as a part of a schoolwide vocabulary effort. Is this a strategy that might work at your school?

2.  Consider the discussion of word walls. How might you use a word wall in your classroom?

3.  What is wide reading and how can it affect vocabulary development?

4.  What role does student interest in a topic play in incidental vocabulary learning?

5.  Discuss the components of an effective sustained silent reading (SSR) program as identified by Janice Pilgreen (2000). How might SSR be successfully implemented at your school or in your classroom? If there already is an effective SSR program, reflect on what makes it successful.

6.  How might you incorporate independent reading into each content area of instruction? What types of reading materials would you suggest for students?

# Make It Your Own

## How to Keep Learning About Academic Vocabulary

1. Summarize the five lessons Frey and Fisher learned. In what ways do these reflect your experiences?

2. Which types of resources for the classroom might you acquire to support your own professional learning about academic vocabulary instruction? What materials might you acquire to support student learning?