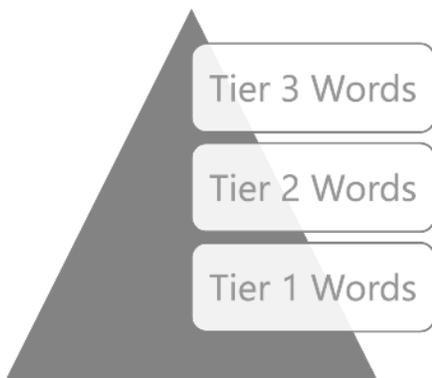


Resource Guide: Vocabulary Instruction with Complex Texts

The purpose of this Resource Guide is to outline the importance of vocabulary instruction to rigorous and equitable ELA lessons. This guide describes the types of vocabulary words found in complex texts as well as the instructional habits a teacher should have in mind regarding vocabulary when planning the lesson using that complex text.

Types of Vocabulary Words

The standards define vocabulary in three tiers. While the term tier may connote a hierarchy, a ranking of words from least to most important, the reality is that all three tiers of words are vital to comprehension and vocabulary development.



Tier 3 Words: Domain-specific words that are found specifically in a field of study. Because of this, these words are often explicitly defined by the author, scaffolded, or in a glossary.

Tier 2 Words: Academic vocabulary that is more likely to appear in text than speech. These should be the focus of ELA instruction because they are generalizable among many texts and topics.

Tier 1 Words: Important words that are usually part of everyday speech, but not typically the focus of ELA instruction.

Best Practices for Instruction aligned to Vocabulary and Complex Texts

- Vocabulary instruction should be in service of supporting students to understand the meaning of the complex text used in the lesson. This work should not hinder students doing the thinking of the lesson and may differ depending on the text, words within the text, and readers in the class.
- When determining which words to focus on in a rigorous and equitable ELA lesson, read through the text and determine:
 - Which words are necessary to understand the meaning of the text?
 - Which of those words are explicitly defined by the author, scaffolded, or in a glossary within the text (Tier 3 Words)?
 - Which words are words that students may see throughout many texts within your current unit of study (Tier 2 Words)?
 - Which words may be a challenge for English Language Learners, but not as challenging for the native English speakers in your class (Tier 1 Words)?
- Organize your lesson so that the focus of ELA instruction is around those Tier 2 words. Ensure that any word explicitly defined in the text is taught using close reading with an emphasis on context clues to help determine meaning.

“Research suggest that is students are going to grasp and retain words and comprehend text, they need incremental, repeated exposure in a variety of contexts to the words they are trying to learn.”

-Common Core Standards, Appendix A, http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf