Effective Communicator
VOCABULARY



Supporting Students to Communicate Effectively with Vocabulary Development

The *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Reading and Writing's* Companion Glossary and Support defines vocabulary as knowledge of the individual word meanings in a text and the concepts that those words convey; words known or used by a person or group, representing concepts or ideas and meanings mutually understood; also, all the words of a language. Through explicit instruction and academic and social discussions, students of all ages develop extensive vocabularies, enabling them to comprehend complex texts and engage in purposeful writing and conversation. The KAS calls for text- and evidence-based writing wherein students are expected to choose words and phrases appropriate to purpose and audience in order to achieve their intended effects.

Connection to Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

"Explicitly teaching students academic vocabulary, sophisticated sentence structures, alongside comprehension strategies enables the expression of ideas with high-quality writing to convey their intended meaning" (Kim, 2026). Isabel Beck and her colleagues recommend setting a goal of teaching 400 words per year, or approximately 2 words per day, through explicit, systematic instruction. This should be accomplished in all courses, including core and elective. They go on to describe the types of words ideal for instruction as sophisticated, abstract, central to the meaning of text, and relevant across contexts (Beck et al., 2013). Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Guide: Providing Interventions for Grades 4-9 states that while "giving students information about a word is important to initiate word learning, students will need to work with the words and their meanings to remember [and use] them" (Vaughn et al., 2022). A highly effective vocabulary routine includes all aspects of literacy-reading, writing, speaking and listening (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Connection to High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs)

Specifically, teaching academic vocabulary, or the language of school and study required for success in academic work, is incorporated in HQIRs across content areas. Moreover, many HQIRs use evidence-based vocabulary routines, including Anita Archer's, highly effective vocabulary routine linked above. It is imperative, though, to ensure that this sophisticated vocabulary is not just taught and learned in the context of reading. Students should also use it to express ideas in Writing to Learn, Writing to Demonstrate Learning and Writing for Publication tasks in all disciplines.

Considerations

HQIRs may refer to vocabulary as academic, domain-specific or the like. While the *KAS for Reading and Writing's* Companion Glossary and Support defines each explicitly, instruction should not be distracted by these terms. Instead, the focus should be on increasing students' word knowledge and use in receptive and expressive experiences across content areas.

*References