WORD CONSCIOUSNESS
SAMPLE LESSON
Prepared Participation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Based on Feldman, K., & Kinsella, K. (2005). *Narrowing the language gap: The case for explicit vocabulary instruction.* New York: Scholastic.

INTRODUCTION

The Prepared Participation activity, as described by Feldman and Kinsella (2005), gives students the opportunity to use vocabulary words during a classroom discussion, as opposed to reading the words and hearing them used by the teacher. This practice works especially well with both English language learners and students with impoverished vocabularies.

The following lesson is based on a practice suggested by Feldman and Kinsella in *Narrowing the Language Gap: The Case for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction.* It can be used with novel reading (as seen in the example below), chapter reading, or even short passages. Before planning this type of lesson, identify the topic of discussion as well as any academic words in the reading that are related to the topic.

Remember the previous discussion of how to choose words to teach. Preview the text and choose words that:

- Students must know in order to understand what they read.
- Students are likely to use and encounter frequently.

For example, in the novel *Holes*, by Louis Sachar, one important topic is the issue of bullying. In Chapter 30 of *Holes*, a few "big-idea words" related to bullying are *uneasy, astonished*, and the phrase *feeble attempt.* These words are used as examples in the following sample lesson.

OBJECTIVE

The student will use new vocabulary words in small-group and whole-class discussions.

MATERIALS

- Textbook or novel.
- Overhead projector, chart paper, or chalkboard.

DAILY REVIEW

Teacher:
Yesterday we completed Part 1 of *Holes*. Can anyone tell me…? Who remembers…?

Quickly review from a chart or board:

- List of character names.
- Setting locations.
- Major plot events.

STATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Teacher:
Today we are going to have a class discussion about bullying. I am going to give you an opportunity to use some of our vocabulary words. First, we will prepare for our discussion, and then we will all participate in the discussion. Using new words in a discussion is an opportunity to practice and learn the new words. Also, the more you actually use a word the more it becomes your own.

MODEL AND TEACH

Grouping: Whole class and partners

1. List several words from the story or passage to be read. Tell the students that the words are in the passage. The following sample words are from *Holes* by Louis Sachar.

   Topic:
   Bullying: Teasing or picking on someone who does not deserve it.

   Related words:

   - *Uneasy*: Feeling uncomfortable.
   - *Feeble attempt*: A failed or weak try.
   - *Astonished*: Surprised.

2. Ask students to make (with partners) a list of examples of bullying they have seen or heard.

3. After students write several examples, ask individual students to read and share items from their lists. Write several examples on the board or overhead.

HELPFUL HABIT | Asking students to read exactly what they wrote will encourage them to be specific in their writing and will discourage students who like to share lengthy stories with the class but refuse to write anything down.

4. Give a few sentence starters and show students how to use their background knowledge about bullying to complete a sentence that includes one of their vocabulary words. For example:

   - "One example of bullying I have seen at our school is..."
   - "I was astonished when I saw..."

5. Model the activity by thinking aloud.

Teacher:
We just wrote down several examples of bullying. One example that sticks out to me is the eighth-grader who was teasing the sixth-grader at the bus stop every day. So, if I wanted to complete the first sentence starter, I might write: "One example of bullying I have seen at our school is teasing at the bus stop."

Record on the board or overhead.

Or I could write: "I was astonished when I saw the large eighth-grade boy picking on a much smaller sixth-grade boy at the bus stop right next to the school!"

Record on board or overhead.

Raise your hand if you can tell me what *astonished* means? That's right. *Astonished* means surprised. So, I was surprised to see such a big kid picking on a smaller kid at the bus stop that was so near to school.

6. Give a few more sentence starters and allow students a few minutes to work with their partners to complete more sentence starters. For example:

   - "Once I made a feeble attempt to stop a bully by ..."
   - "Bullying makes me uneasy because ..."

7. Circulate around the room and check for understanding. Check that students' sentences are complete, make sense, and that vocabulary words are used appropriately. Ask several volunteers to share one of their sentences and write a few examples on the board or overhead.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners

1. Explain that in few minutes you are going to have a class discussion about bullying and that you want each student to be armed with several sentences about their own experience in order to contribute to the discussion. Ask students to expand their current list by writing additional sentences about bullying using sentence starters, vocabulary words, and their own experience as a guide. Circulate around the room and be available to guide as needed.
2. Have students rehearse their sentences with their partners.
3. Lead a structured discussion of the topic. Now that students have practiced reading their sentences, it is time to participate.
4. One at a time, allow students to read one of their rehearsed sentences to the class.
5. Have students elaborate on their sentences and comment on other students' sentences as appropriate.

GENERALIZATION

Teacher:
How could you use this activity in your other classes?

Student:
We could use it to practice our new vocabulary words.

Teacher:
That's right. Remember, the more you use a word, the more it becomes your own. When I was in college, I used to write my new vocabulary words on an index card and keep the stack of cards in my backpack. I would try to use each of the words during normal conversation at least once each day.

Student:
So we could do that, too. We could even keep track of how many times we use the word each day.

Student:
Yeah, we could keep score.

Teacher:
Or we could keep a chart in the classroom of some important words we need to learn. When any of you use one of the words either in another class or talking to your friends or family, we will keep track on the chart.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

During the class discussion, listen and check for the following:

- Are students using topic and related words correctly?
- Are students responding appropriately to each other's ideas during discussion?

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

The Word Wizard activity (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2001, 2002) involves giving students points or rewards for noticing or using their vocabulary words after initial instruction. This can be accomplished by adding tally marks next to students' names on a Word Wizard chart. Using Word Wizard in your classroom may help you incorporate frequent review and encourage word awareness in your students. This is important because students are not likely to learn and use new words without thinking about and practicing the words after initial vocabulary instruction (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Keep a list of vocabulary words posted on a word wall or chart. These may be words students used in the Prepared Participation activity. Add a tally next to a word each time a student uses the word correctly in class or each time a student notices or uses the word outside of class and can give the context in which the word was used.

Reward the class with the highest tally marks at the end of each week or each month.