Finding the Right Words: Exemplary Educators Essence of Vocabulary Instruction

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FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS: EXEMPLARY EDUCATORS ESSENCE OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

by

Mackenzie W. Sheahan

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
Western Michigan University
December 2019

Doctoral Committee:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of my doctoral degree, as well as this dissertation, would not have been possible without the support and encouragement received from family, friends, colleagues, and professors. There are no proper words to convey my deep gratitude for my husband, Mitchell Sheahan. He has inspired and encouraged me to trust God, pursue my passions, and take risks. Thank you to our children, Kaley and Aiden, who have lived this journey alongside us, and just like Mitch, have sacrificed so much to help me finish well.

I must thank the most important professor in my life, my mother, Dr. Elizabeth Whitten. She has provided me with numerous opportunities for teaching and research, while offering invaluable guidance as I pursued knowledge of teaching, learning, and leadership. Without her guidance, this dissertation would not have been possible. Words can not express how grateful I am to my father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandmother, and siblings for their unfailing emotional support. To my friends and colleagues, words of encouragement, writing breaks, dinners, texts, prayers, and editing advice supported me through this process, thank you.

My sincere thanks must go to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Luchara Wallace, and my committee members, Dr. Shalia Rao and Dr. Jennifer Sell, for lending me their expertise, encouragement, hard questions, and timely support as I worked to produce a quality study.

Of course, a special thanks must go to my participants, without their willingness to share their experiences this study would not have been possible.

Mackenzie W. Sheahan
FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS: EXEMPLARY EDUCATORS ESSENCE OF VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

Mackenzie W. Sheahan, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 2019

This study was warranted in order to deeply understand the exemplary teacher and the complexity of beliefs, challenges, and overall essence of vocabulary instruction in early elementary. By using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis the study illuminates how exemplary second-grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. Specifically, the study allows insight into the perceptions and daily actions that meet the needs of all students, with and without disabilities, through vocabulary instruction.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Words are tools used to access background knowledge, express ideas to communicate effectively, and learn new concepts (Graves, Schneider, & Ringstaff, 2017). Vocabulary, also known as word knowledge, has been referenced as the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together (Rupley, Logan & Nichols, 1998). An individual's access to a robust vocabulary makes comprehension of both reading and language accessible (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; Graves et al., 2017; Moats, 2009). Research stresses the correlation of word knowledge with reading comprehension (Beck et al., 1982; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Graves et al., 2017; Massachusetts Reading Association, 2011; Moats, 2009; Ricketts, Nation, & Bishop, 2007; Sedita, 2005; Sénéchal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2006; Thorndike, 1917). A student who does not adequately grow vocabulary knowledge and word identification skills will have minimal growth in reading comprehension, which affects long term academic success and may ensure failure within the student’s academic career (Biemillar, 2005; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000). For these reasons, vocabulary instruction is significant as it relates to both receptive language and expressive language (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Nagy, 2005). Receptive and expressive language development encompasses reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking. With strong vocabulary instruction, a student’s overall reading achievement is affected positively along with long term school success (Archer & Hughes, 2014; Biemillar, 2005).
Statement of Research Problem

Research concludes that teachers must be equipped to intervene in the early grades so vocabulary gaps can not only be prevented, but remediated (Hart & Risley, 1995). Students with limited vocabulary skills will lack the foundation to independently learn an adequate amount of vocabulary to keep up with peers (Massachusetts Reading Association, 2011). When not intensely intervened in early grades, the gap between strong readers and struggling readers grows each year (Stanovich, 1986). In order to remediate, or close the vocabulary gap, students must be given ample opportunity to use new words and receive instruction in word meanings (Archer & Hughes, 2014; Hart & Risley, 1995). Explicit vocabulary instruction within a protected core (Tier I) reading block and additional (Tier II and/or Tier III) intervention session(s) are critical for students whose language skills are weak (Moats, 2009). In order to narrow the gap between strong readers and struggling readers, a teacher must be knowledgeable in vocabulary acquisition, instruction, and remediation (Hart & Risley, 1995; Moats, 2009).

For teachers to incorporate effective vocabulary instruction and remediation into daily instruction, they must receive guidance on evidence-based vocabulary practices and applicable implementation examples. Vocabulary instructional guides have been mass produced and can be found with a quick search using Google. However, applicable implementation examples of daily vocabulary instructional routines and evidence-based practices within a lower elementary classroom are not as easily found. Hearing the lived experiences of exemplary early elementary teachers who are currently implementing vocabulary instruction to a classroom full of students who have a wide range of ability levels is a great starting place to understand the essence of the daily vocabulary instruction that is possible.
Describing qualities of effective and exemplary teaching has been a long-standing area of research (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Chin, 2007; Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005; Hill, Schilling, & Ball, 2004; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986). It was identified through Kagan (1992) that a teacher’s beliefs guide his or her interactions and interpretations of the world, thereby becoming evident in the teacher’s daily instructional decisions. If a teacher does not believe or is unaware that vocabulary instruction is essential to reading success or unsure of how to implement vocabulary instruction into the daily routine, the teacher’s instructional decisions will reflect that.

**Purpose of Study**

A study is warranted in order to deeply understand the exemplary teacher and the complexity of beliefs, challenges, and overall essence of vocabulary instruction in early elementary. The study will gain insight to the perceptions and daily actions that meet the needs of students of all ability levels through vocabulary instruction. The purpose of this phenomenological study will illuminate how exemplary second grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. Through this study, the researcher will gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the second grade teachers making meaning of their world through vocabulary instruction. Secondly, the researcher will make sense of the teachers’ perceived meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This in-depth exploration of the teachers’ lived experiences will add a new voice to the current body of research.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this phenomenological study will illuminate how exemplary second grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. The
researcher will gain insight into the perceptions and daily actions that meet the needs of all students, with and without disabilities, through vocabulary instruction. The following are broad research questions that will be addressed and, due to the flexible nature of qualitative work, other subtopic research questions will emerge during the study:

1. How do exemplary teachers view daily vocabulary instruction for students of all abilities?
2. How do exemplary teachers assess each student’s breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition?
3. How do exemplary teachers instruct and make sense of students who are experiencing deficits in their vocabulary?

**Deficiency Statement**

It has been suggested that teachers need knowledge of language development in content areas and training in vocabulary instruction techniques (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Seidenberg, 2018; Sweeny & Mason, 2011). Research on vocabulary instruction framework and conceptual understanding is numerous. However, there is a limited amount of studies on the actual daily practices of highly-effective elementary educators regarding their perceptions, daily instruction, and knowledge basis of daily vocabulary instruction (Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010).

This study will explore and describe the lived experiences and perspectives of second grade elementary school teachers to draw out rich, thick descriptions of how these participants understand and support students using vocabulary instruction and remediation. Looking deeply at exemplary teachers' perceptions of their own preparedness and knowledge of reading instruction,
specifically vocabulary instruction, will paint a picture of successful vocabulary instruction in early elementary (Kane et al., 2010; Moats, 2009).

**Significance of This Study**

The proposed research study will inform general and special educators, administrative leaders, and educational researchers with an understanding of exemplary teachers’ perceptions and practices of vocabulary instruction. The study may contribute to informing best practices to improve reading and vocabulary instruction in the early elementary classroom. It is necessary to explore teachers’ knowledge and preparedness to teach reading and the instructional resources they perceive as beneficial and necessary to vocabulary instruction.

Current literature is replete with research about the importance of vocabulary instruction effective vocabulary interventions, how the interventions can be implemented, and the effect of these interventions. However, research specifically giving a voice to exemplary teachers in regards to their own understanding of and practices within vocabulary instruction, is limited.

**Definition of Terms**

**Active Engagement.** *Active engagement* will refer to how instruction is defined with response opportunities to ensure all students are taking part in the learning process and begin to own the words and understand word meanings in multiple contexts. To ensure all students are actively engaged the educator may use choral responses, partner responses, written responses, and/or individual responses.

**Assessment of Student Growth.** *Assessment of student growth* refers to the two primary approaches to assessing student growth, formative and summative. This study will focus on a summative measure of overall student growth using the Acadience Reading assessments. The
Acadience Summative Assessment of Student Growth is a classroom report that uses the Acadience Pathways of Progress to determine the percentage of students within each classroom who made average or above average progress at the end of a school year (Good, Powell-Smith, Kaminski, Stollar, & Wallin, 2018).

**Background information.** Background knowledge will refer to a student’s experience and knowledge of their world and the concept presented. A basic level of knowledge about a topic will enable the student to make sense of word combinations and choose among multiple possible word meanings (Hirsch, 2003).

**Context.** Context in this study refers to the material a reader is using and specifically the style of writing found in books. Vocabulary acquisition involves understanding the context of two different types of writing styles appearing in books: (a) naturally occurring text and (b) instructional text (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013).

**Context Strategies to Determine Word Meaning.** Context strategies to determine word meanings will refer to how readers can explicitly be taught in a number of ways to locate other words and phrases in a passage that give clues about what an unknown word means.

**Comprehension.** Comprehension will refer to a students’ understanding of a text or word. Comprehension is the essence of reading as it shows the student understands and can interact with a word or text (Learner & Johns, 2015).

**Differentiated Instruction.** Differentiated instruction refers to instruction provided by a teacher that is designed strategically and based on individual student needs (Whitten, Esteves, & Woodrow, 2019).
**Exemplary Teacher.** An *exemplary teacher* is defined through many aspects of a teacher’s profession. Researchers have wrestled to define, pinpoint, and assess exemplary teaching practices. A wide range of terms have been used interchangeably with exemplary including teaching excellence, effective teaching, high quality and best practices (Ableser, 2010). This study will use these terms interchangeably, always centering on teaching for all to learn as a central theme of exemplary practice (Ableser, 2010). Specifically, this study defines an exemplary teacher by the following criteria: During the last two years a second-grade teacher has 1) been referred to as a literacy leader by his or her current building, 2) has been evaluated as “Proficient” or “Distinguished” on the local teacher evaluation rubric, 3) implemented Tier I reading instruction within an established school-wide academic Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for the last two years, and 4) his or her class average on the Acadience Summative Growth Report shows “Average Classroom Reading Growth” or “Above Average Classroom Reading Growth” for at least the past two years (Good et al., 2018).

**Explicit Vocabulary Instruction.** *Explicit vocabulary instruction* will refer to the teaching of specific words and their meanings that students will encounter in texts (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003; Sedita, 2005). Explicit instruction refers to a highly structured instructional model that emphasizes fast-paced modeling, continuous modeling, guided practice, and independent application (Whitten et al., 2019). This instruction must provide clear explanations and examples of the meanings of these words in various contexts, and provide students with opportunities to discuss, analyze, and use the words (Armbruster et al., 2003; Kelley, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Faller, 2010).
**Expressive Vocabulary.** Expressive vocabulary or expressive language refers to producing language through speech or writing (Jalongo & Sobolak, 2011). This type of vocabulary knowledge includes accessing semantic knowledge in addition to phonological representations.

**Formative Assessment.** Formative assessment will refer to a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners (CCSSO FAST SCASS, 2017).

**Indirect Vocabulary Instruction.** Indirect vocabulary instruction will refer to student’s acquisition of vocabulary through indirect exposure to words at home and at school (Sedita, 2005). This will include listening and talking through different activities such as listening to books read aloud or reading widely on his or her own (Stahl, Richer, & Vandervier, 1991; Texas Reading Initiative, 2002).

**Intervention.** Intervention, also referred to as remediation, will be defined as a strategy or supplemental activity used to reteach or intervene on a specific skill, concept, or set of skills that a student is struggling with or has been identified as an area of deficit. If receiving an intervention, a student should remain in the general education setting during core instruction and receive intervention support outside of the core instruction time in order to not reduce the student’s rate of learning (Skinner, Pappas, & Davis, 2005).

**Instructional Text.** Instructional text refers to writing that is meant to allow a reader to extract the meaning of a word (Beck et al., 2013).
**Modeling.** Modeling will be referred to as an instructional strategy where the teacher or another student demonstrates a new concept or skill and students learn by observing and imitating.

**Morpheme.** Morphemes refer to word parts such as “ed,” “un,” “ing.” One or more morphemes can be found in a word.

**Morphemic Analysis.** Morphemic analysis will refer to any activity in which the student must determine or infer the meanings of words by examining their meaningful parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.)

**Morphology.** Morphology refers to the study of word forms.

**Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).** A district’s MTSS infrastructure should include the following six essential elements: 1) a comprehensive balanced assessment system, 2) collaborative work that builds capacity and infrastructure, 3) use of data-driven dialogue as an approach to problem solving, 4) a continuum of available, effective interventions, 5) a process to document implementation fidelity, and 6) on-going program evaluation. The fourth essential element will be the focus of this study. MTSS is a comprehensive infrastructure that seeks to meet the needs of all students at varying levels of intensity and encompasses the academic, social-emotional-behavioral demands of learning, and students’ mental health. MTSS should emphasize a system of support, rather than just singular tiers of interventions.

**Natural Text.** Natural Text or naturally occurring text will refer to writing that has not been written to inform the reader of the word meaning but instead to tell a story. This type of writing makes it difficult for the reader to use the context of the story to derive a single word’s meaning (Beck et al., 2013).
**Pathways of Progress.** Pathways of Progress is an Acadience Reading measure that provides an evaluation of a student’s reading growth over time, compared to other students with the same level of initial reading skills (Good et al., 2018).

**Professional Development.** Professional development refers in this study to training designed to support and improve teacher effectiveness toward student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

**Purposeful Planning and Instruction.** Purposeful planning and instruction will refer to the structure, system, methods, techniques, strategies, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction to assist student learning. This direct teaching or planned experiences should provide effective and productive learning by adapting to the learning styles and needs of each learner, engaging them in the learning process, helping them become independent, and ultimately facilitating growth in knowledge and/or understanding (Woolfolk, 2010).

**Receptive Vocabulary.** *Receptive vocabulary* refers to the words a person can understand and respond to when they are presented in text or we listen to others speak, even if the person cannot produce those words (Burger & Chong, 2011; NICHD, 2000).

**Semantic Mapping.** *Semantic mapping* is a method of vocabulary instruction that allows students to make connections between new vocabulary words and words that are already known by organizing words into families or clusters (Heimlich & Pittleman, 1986; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Reyes & Bos, 1998; Scanlon, Duran, Reyes, & Gallego, 1992; Schifini, 1994).

**Technology Integration.** *Technology integration* will be referred to as the act of an educator integrating technology into a curriculum and/or lesson if it is recognized to be valuable for enhancing and extending the student’s learning experience with vocabulary learning.
**Tier I Instruction.** *Tier I Instruction*, also known as *core instruction*, is critical to the success of all students (O’Connor, 2016). Tier I instruction will be defined as a daily block of time in the general education classroom in which all students receive instruction using a district approved curriculum (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999; Wright, 2007). For routines, expectations, and materials to be considered part of tier I instruction they should be used consistently in daily instruction. High quality and consistent tier I instruction is a foundational piece of MTSS.

**Tier II Instruction.** *Tier II Instruction*, also known as What I Need Time (WIN), is a 20-30 minute block of time that occurs 3 or more days per week. During this time students that have been identified through universal screening and/or other entrance criteria and assessments receive evidence-based interventions consisting of programs and/or strategies designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support core instruction (Whitten et al., 2019).

**Tier III Instruction.** *Tier III Instruction* provides a specific intervention time to students who have been identified with specific deficit areas and who have not fully responded to Tier II efforts (Whitten et al., 2019). This intervention takes place a minimum of 30 minutes per day, five days per week individually or in small groups, in addition to Tier I and Tier II instruction (Whitten et al., 2019). During this time the identified students receive evidence-based interventions that consist of programs and/or strategies designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier I and Tier II (Whitten et al., 2019).

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all individuals (CAST, 2012). UDL principles create options for how instruction is presented, how students express their ideas,
and how teachers can engage students in their learning (CAST, 2012). UDL is based on three main principles: representation, action and expression, and engagement.

**Vocabulary.** *Vocabulary* refers to all the words in a person’s language repertoire.

**Vocabulary Exposure and Application Throughout Subject Areas.** *Vocabulary exposure and application throughout subject areas* will refer to an educator’s decision and practice to intentionally place students in an environment that will cause them to experience both direct and indirect vocabulary teaching in multiple subject areas.

**Whole-Group Instruction.** *Whole-group instruction* refers to the method of grouping students for the delivery of information. Whole-group instruction can ensure that all students receive the same information when an educator is modeling what students will do independently, introducing new material, explaining assignments, and/or conducting closure activities (Whitten et al., 2019).

**Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I includes the introduction of the study as well as the research purposes, significance, and questions. Chapter II provides pertinent literature review covering vocabulary acquisition and instruction informed by the significant studies in the field on vocabulary instruction. Chapter III focuses on the methodology used to carry out the investigation to reach the desired results and answers to the research questions. This section will consist of a discussion of the rationale for methodology, followed by an explanation of the study population and sampling procedures. This section will also include an explanation of the data collection procedure, how data will be analyzed, and details throughout that validate the methodology for this study. The results of the investigation are reported in Chapter IV.
Chapter V offers a discussion of the findings, draws conclusions related to the questions investigated, provides implications for practice, and presents limitations and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature contains key components of research which relate to the underlying structures of this study. Literature covering vocabulary learning and acquisition covers a broad range of topics. Through the literature review, themes were extracted in order to understand the phenomena being investigated (Borg, Gall, & Borg, 1996; Randolph, 2009).

**Vocabulary**

**Importance of Adequate Vocabulary Skills**

A rich vocabulary enhances and supports multiple aspects of an individual’s life (Beck, et al., 2013; Becker, 1977). The areas that an adequate vocabulary supports and enhances are found within language acquisition and proficiency, comprehension, and overall reading ability (Cooper, Roth, Speece, & Schatschneider, 2002; Olofsson & Niedersoe, 1999; Richards, 2002; Scarborough, 1990; Wright & Cervetti, 2017). According to Richards (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency, providing a learning foundation to speak, listen, read, and write (Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013). As a component of language proficiency and acquisition, an individual’s vocabulary provides grammatical knowledge of grammar and phonological awareness (Muter, Hulme, & Snowling, 2004). As vocabulary has been shown to affect many areas of language and reading development researchers have claimed that a young child’s vocabulary can be regarded as a predictor of overall language development and overall level of intelligence (Muter et al., 2004; Richards, 2002; Sternberg, 1997).
Impact of an Adequate Vocabulary

Impact on Reading Comprehension

Throughout the history of educational research, evidence has demonstrated a strong correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension (Beck et al., 1982; Ricketts et al., 2007; Sedita, 2005; Sénéchal et al., 2006; Thorndike, 1917). Vocabulary and comprehension skills are both imperative to a student’s reading achievement, yet one relies heavily on the other. Bromley (2002) emphasized vocabulary as a precursor to comprehension but also an outcome. Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas, (2006) echoed similar conclusions and pointed to the increase in comprehension skills when a student has a rich vocabulary. Stahl and Fairbanks’ (1986) meta-analysis of the relation of vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension showed that vocabulary instruction had a significant effect on student comprehension (mean effect size of .97). Wright and Cervetti, (2018) built upon theories of vocabulary and comprehension correlations by conducting a systematic literature review and qualitative synthesis to identify vocabulary interventions that do and do not improve passage-level text comprehension. The study was inconclusive as they found there was no empirical evidence that instruction in one or two strategies for solving word meanings will impact generalized comprehension (Wright & Cervetti, 2018). They were able to conclude instruction that focused on active processing was found to be more impactful than a definition or dictionary method for supporting comprehension of text containing the target words (Wright & Cervetti, 2018). These findings support Mexynski’s (1983) findings, where three variables were identified the key components for vocabulary instruction to transfer to comprehension: “(a) amount of practice given to the words,
(b) breadth of training in the use of the words, and (c) the degree to which active processing is encouraged” (p. 273).

**Impact on Academic Success**

While many researchers have examined the correlation between vocabulary and comprehension, other researchers have described how a larger vocabulary contributes to other areas of school success (Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1997; Becker, 1977; Lubliner & Smetana, 2005). Simply stated, Lubliner and Smetana (2005) concluded that students do better in school when they have a larger vocabulary and because of this reading comes much easier. This is a stark contrast to peers who may have delayed vocabulary (i.e., delays in the amount of word use and word meaning) at the end of second grade. The peers who show a delay in vocabulary have incredible difficulty closing the gap and typically remain behind throughout the duration of their schooling (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Catts, Adlof, & Weismer, 2006; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Stanovich, 1986).

**Profound Differences in Vocabulary Skills**

Profound differences in students vocabulary skills are apparent upon entrance to kindergarten. Research cites many correlations associated with a student whose vocabulary is limited at the beginning of kindergarten, a leading cause being those considered economically disadvantaged (Duncan, Brooks-Gun, & Kelbanov, 1994; Hart & Risley, 1995; McLloyd, 1998). The University of Kansas researchers, Hart and Risley (1995), published a study of 42 families with a child seven months old, this sample including 6 families on welfare, 13 of low socioeconomic statuses, 10 families of middle socioeconomic status, and 13 high-income families. Observations were conducted monthly in each family home from the time the child was
seven months until three years old. Results of the study showed 86% to 96% of the words used by each child at three years of age were directly derived from their parents’ vocabularies (Hart & Risley, 1995). On average, the children from families on welfare only heard about 616 words per hour versus those children from professional families who heard on average 2,153 words per hour (Hart & Risley, 1995). This led to one finding that the children from a higher financial home had far more language exposure than the children from the low socio-economic home (Hart & Risley, 1995). This resulted in a 30 million word gap that developed by age three for children in low socioeconomic families.

Hart and Risley (2003) and other researchers looked further into these findings over the next decade. Following up with 29 of the 42 families when the students entered third grade, the researchers found that measures of the child at age three predicted the language skill at ages nine and ten (Hart & Risley, 2003). This study also led researchers to report after entering kindergarten, strong daily vocabulary will need to be implemented or the vocabulary gap will continue to widen for this particular population of learners. If there is a lack of daily vocabulary instruction, the result will be first grade high-performing students knowing approximately twice as many words as low-performing students (Hart & Risley, 2003). This gap, now referred to as the Matthew Effect (Hart & Risley, 2003; Stanovich, 1986), continues to grow, resulting by 12th grade, high-performing students knowing about four times as many words as low performing students (Hart & Risley, 1995, 2003). After early elementary the achievement gap becomes a language gap between socioeconomic groups (Hirsh, 2002).
Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary growth has been named a neglected component of reading instruction by numerous researchers (Baumann & Kame‘enui, 2004; Feldman & Kinsella, 2005; National Reading Pannel, 2000). Vocabulary is often incorporated into comprehensive reading programs in elementary classrooms over the years. No one widely accepted model for vocabulary instruction currently exists.

Current Practices in Vocabulary Instruction

Although studies have found the impact of vocabulary instruction to be a necessity of early classroom instruction there is little focus on how much and the types of instruction taking place in the classroom (Christian, Morrison, Frazier, & Massetti, 2000; Nelson, Dole, Hosp, & Hosp, 2015). Numerous studies have found results mirroring Durkin (1979), who found that upper elementary teachers spent less than 3% of their classroom instructional time on vocabulary or word meanings. Sadow (1989) looked at seven reading teachers and reported a range of zero to 13 minutes of vocabulary or word meaning instruction was spent per day. Scott and Nagy (1997) found similar results, 6% of instructional time in an upper elementary classroom was spent on vocabulary instruction. This was broken down even further to find that only 1.4% of that instruction was actually in content area vocabulary instruction (Scott & Nagy, 1997). Cunningham et al. (2009) found in a study of 121 first grade teachers in 37 urban school districts that teachers self-reported spending on average two minutes per day engaged in vocabulary instruction. These results are similar to those found by Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, and Deffes (2003), where Kindergarten teachers were observed spending one quarter of time allotted for language arts instruction on oral language development, which included discussing words and
word meaning. Other studies have echoed these results and conclude that there is little explicit instructional time devoted to vocabulary instruction in the later elementary setting (Biemiller, 2004; Durto & Morgan, 2003; Moats, 2009). Chien et al. (2010) found preschool children typically spend less than eight minutes of their preschool learning time completing storybook reading activities which is the only time teachers focus on vocabulary. Wanzek (2014) was the only study reviewed that looked at the early elementary setting, specifically in second grade classrooms. On average, 8% of the core reading instruction was spent on direct vocabulary instruction (Wanzek, 2014). Nelson et al. (2015) conducted a study of vocabulary teaching of K-3 teachers in low-income schools with results indicating that less than 5% of the teachers language arts time (7.55 minutes) was spent on vocabulary instruction (Nelson et al., 2015). Although the research and recommendations for the use of vocabulary instruction for both strong readers and weak readers is known, it has been found that it was not being carried out consistently in classrooms (Nelson et al., 2015; Wanzek, 2014). In fact, studies have shown that approaches to vocabulary instruction are not only limited, but are also dangerously (Sparks, 2013).

**Research to Practice Gap**

There is a significant disconnect between what we know about the science of reading and educational practice (Seidenberg, 2017). Researchers Moody et al. (2018) designed a study to cross-reference Wright and Cervetti’s (2016) review of empirical vocabulary research to practitioners practices in order to uncover theories behind vocabulary instruction. Findings demonstrated most instructional recommendations targeted receptive vocabulary and were guided by social constructivism, sociocultural, and schema theories. The study also uncovered
the link between theory and teacher’s practice may not be transparent to teachers and explicitly stating the theoretical underpinnings of instructional recommendations is essential for teachers to put this type of instruction into practice (Beck et al., 1987; Moody et al., 2018). Without explicit discussions and teaching of vocabulary instruction, theory and science practices can become problematic and theories misunderstood (Moody et al., 2018). One reason for these misunderstandings or lack of knowledge may be due to practitioner-oriented articles that focus on describing the vocabulary strategy and tips for implementation but provide no background of the research or foundation of the strategy (Moody et al., 2018).

Vocabulary instruction can be particularly challenging for classroom teachers as they need to have a deep understanding of language and literacy development, the nature of words and their meanings, instructional approaches, and how to select meaningful words (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). These are all critical factors in the quality of their literacy instruction. There is a common theme that emerges after reviewing literature documented on vocabulary instruction over the last 50 years. Given the amount of time spent on vocabulary instruction in the classroom, it is likely insufficient for students who have a vocabulary deficit or are simply further behind than their average peer (Nelson et al., 2013).

**Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction**

The importance of vocabulary as related to success in reading is well documented, but there continues to be little research that conclusively identifies the best methods or combinations of methods of vocabulary instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000; National Reading Technical Assistance Center, 2010). Vocabulary instruction should be comprised of both explicit and implicit instructional strategies while using active instruction (NCTAC, 2010).
Vocabulary instruction must therefore also include indirect instruction methods, such as exposing students to lots of new words and connecting it to reading (Hirsch, 2003). Teachers should note that vocabulary experts agree that when reading a child should know 90 to 95 percent of the words in order to comprehend a text and use indirect vocabulary strategies to obtain new words, although this fact is often misused (Hirsch, 2003; Nagy & Scott, 2000).

Vocabulary research recommends when using direct instructional techniques to improve student’s word learning and reading comprehension the following should be provided: (a) the definition and contextual information of the word meaning, (b) connections to known concepts, (c) the opportunity to compare and contrast new words with known words, (d) multiple exposures and opportunities to practice new words, and (e) instructional activities to use and identify the meanings of new words (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Baker, et al, 1998; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Stahl & Fairbanks, 2006). Nelson et al. (2016) identified the areas that encompass these direct instructional elements are (a) explicit teaching the meanings of unknown words, (b) explicitly teaching strategies for how to figure out the meanings of words, and (c) developing student’s word consciousness.

**Teaching of Word Meanings**

The teaching of word meanings should be multifaceted instruction and include explanations of word meanings and multiple opportunities to encounter and use the words across contexts (NICHD, 2000; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Wright & Cervetti, 2016). Direct, explicit vocabulary instruction has been documented by numerous researchers as having a positive impact on long-term reading comprehension and immediate word learning (Baker, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 1995; Beck, et al., 2002; Biemiller, 2000, 2004; Hirsch, 2003; Marzano, 2004;
Wanzek, 2014). As previously stated, there is no one best method to choosing words that should be taught. There are a number of recommendations on how to choose and teach words such as words based on a tiered approach (Beck et al., 2002), root words (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001), or word families sometimes referred to as vocabulary mega clusters (Hiebert, 2011). Once the words have been chosen by the instructor, he or she should plan out the method of instruction using those words (Stahl, 1999).

**Teaching Word Solving Strategies**

There are a vast number of words a student must learn. Because of this, there is a need for teachers to utilize vocabulary interventions that move beyond direct, explicit teaching of word meanings to supporting students in learning strategies for deriving word meanings (Baumann et al, 2002; Graves, 2006; Wright & Cervetti, 2016). When explicit instruction is provided to students on word-solving strategies, they improve at applying these strategies (Baumann, Edwards, Boland, Olejnik, & Kame’enui, 2003; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012).

**Word Consciousness**

Word consciousness can be considered a student’s awareness and/or interest in words and their meanings (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004; Nelson et al., 2013; Scott & Nagy, 2004; ). As students are explicitly taught to play with words through active learning they will develop word consciousness (Nelson et al., 2013)

It is estimated that students can be taught explicitly some 400 words per year in school, and then indirectly learn 1,600, gaining a total of around 2,000 words a year (Beck et al., 2002). By the end of high school, college-ready students will need to acquire about 80,000 words (Hirsh, 2003). Biemiller (2001) concluded that 80% or more of the root words learned by sixth
grade are a result of an adult giving a direct explanation for the unknown word. However, a teacher cannot teach students all of the words they need to learn during core reading instruction. Those students who have been identified as having a language or vocabulary gap need to be supported using the supplemental intervention process (Luftus et al., 2010; Tuckwiller, Pullen & Coyne, 2010; Wanzek, 2014).

**Access to Exemplary Teachers’ Practices**

Bembry et al. (1998) reported enormous differences (e.g., 35+ percentile ranks) in reading achievement for children who spent three years with more effective teachers (upper 40% in achievement gains) compared to children who spent three years with less effective teachers (bottom 40%). Sanders (1998) reported similar differences in patterns of achievement among children whose teachers varied in their instructional effectiveness. In another study of exemplary first grade teachers (Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, & Pressley, 1999), there were large effects for exemplary teachers on the achievement of the lowest achieving children. Students will benefit from exemplary educators. Because of this, we must develop all teachers into exemplary educators.

In order to develop these exemplary educators, we must allow them time and support to develop their skill set. An important component of this development is bringing the current exemplary educators’ practices to the surface. Collins, Block, Oakar, and Hurt (2002) drew attention to the growth in educators owning professional knowledge and practices when exposed to expert educators in action within their field. Sanden (2012) wrote of a similar experience as she looked at highly effective teachers and reading instruction within the teachers’ classrooms. Sanden (2012) gave clear narratives of the highly effective teachers reading instruction, which
were used to highlight effective and practical options for others to embed in their own practice.

Educators must be exposed to their colleagues who are considered exemplary in the area of vocabulary instruction.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This study will utilize a qualitative research design in order to make meaning of the lived experiences of second grade teachers and their vocabulary instruction. It is essential that this study be positioned within the framework of qualitative research in order to interpret the essence of these lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The methodology section of this study will consist of a discussion of the rationale for the methodology, followed by an explanation of the study population, and sampling procedures. This section will also include an explanation of the data collection procedure, how data will be analyzed, and details throughout that validate the methodology for this study.

Qualitative Research Description and Rationale

The position from which the researcher will conduct this qualitative study will foster particular methods of asking questions and interpreting the lived experiences of exemplary teachers in the area of second grade vocabulary instruction (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Positioning this study as qualitative will support the method of gaining exploratory, in-depth information about the complexities of personal experiences (Giorgi, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Moustakas, 1994). By collecting descriptions, interpretations, and everyday life experiences of the participants, the researcher will be able to increase the understanding of the lived experiences of the participants being studied (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It should be noted that this study is focused on understanding lived experiences, not predicking or controlling a process. It is for this reason a quantitative research stance would not suit this study.
The researcher will act as the primary instrument of investigation by conducting research in naturalistic settings with an evolving and emergent design. This methodology will then help discover beliefs and practices of second grade teachers’ vocabulary instruction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Phenomenological Methodology and Rationale**

Phenomenology is a complex and comprehensive philosophy that thematizes consciousness and its functions (Giorgi, 2017). The phenomenological philosophy underpinning this study draws from the work of Heidegger's (1988) interpretive approaches to exploring the human experience. Phenomenology, as a method, focuses on the understanding of a concept, phenomenon, or the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals about the phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This type of research begins with acknowledging that there is a need to understand a lived experience from the point of view of the experiencer in order to be able to discover the meaning of it (Englander, 2012; Giorgi, 2017). Furthermore, Giorgi (2017) claims that philosophically the key to deep descriptions of the experiences described in a phenomenological study should be by a researcher who has lived the experience. This allows the researcher to reflect on dimensions of the lived experience that may otherwise be missed by another researcher (Giorgi, 2017). This approach looks to discover the meaning of a phenomenon in every step of the study.

As a phenomenological researcher, epistemological and ontological assumptions should inform the selection of a particular methodology. The specific type of phenomenological study that the researcher will conduct will be guided by the work of Smith’s (1996) interpretative
phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is rooted in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Figure 1) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; van Manen, 1990).

Figure 1. The Three Influences of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is supported by Heidegger’s philosophical stance and takes on characteristics through its double hermeneutic process and interpretative processes (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The double hermeneutic process used in IPA highlights the awareness of individuals’ lived experiences, empathic hermeneutics, supported with deep understanding of the essence of the phenomenon, while asking critical questions and questioning hermeneutics (Pringle et al., 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The double hermeneutic emphasis allows the researcher to view how participants construct meaning from their social and personal worlds (Denzin, 1995; Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA also uses the theoretical tenet of idiography, which is concerned with uncovering the particularity of a specific phenomenon. This will cause the researcher to write
IPA uses an in-depth qualitative analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008) through the use of in-depth interviews, transcription analysis, observations, and document analysis, using an idiographic mode of inquiry (Smith et al., 1995; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The researcher collects information from knowledgeable participants who are asked to describe the phenomenon, followed by analyzing the themes and interpreting the data. A phenomenological approach such as this is warranted to better understand the complexity of knowledge, input, and instructional implementation in classrooms of highly effective elementary educators who teach vocabulary instruction in all content areas.

**Positionality Statement**

Smith and Osborn (2007) emphasized that IPA is a dynamic process with an active responsibility for the researcher. This process requires the researcher to become intimately acquainted with the participants’ worlds and to take an insider’s perspective of them. This study will explore the lived experiences of elementary classroom teachers, and the researcher identifies herself as having been an elementary classroom teacher. The researcher views her role in connection to the participants objectively, yet she has lived experience of being a classroom teacher. The researcher will use reflexivity and transparency as she demonstrates her respect for each teacher’s classroom authority and expertise. By honoring all teachers through this process and making use of the expertise they hold, the researcher will be able to develop a clearer understanding of vocabulary instruction in early elementary classrooms.
Methods of Planning for Data Collection and Data Analysis

In order for phenomenological research to achieve rigorous quality, it is important that the research process be articulated in such a manner that data collection and analysis are both viewed as a single, unified process with the same underlying theory of science (Englander, 2012). Phenomenologists utilize many methods for data collection including: observation, in-depth interviewing, and written accounts of participants (Hesse, 2011).

Sampling Strategy

IPA research often focuses on a limited number of targeted participants that the researcher believes have in-depth knowledge of the issue being researched (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Specifically, IPA uses purposive sampling capitalizing on the distinct feature of producing very detailed interpretative accounts (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling, in other words, it is not random (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lavrakas, 2008). This type of sampling allows the researcher to select a group with specific characteristics who will best inform the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). More specifically, expert sampling, a type of purposive sampling, will target in-service second grade teachers who were designated as “exemplary” through a multi-phase, purposeful selection process.

Site & Access

The participants will be selected from elementary schools in a medium size suburban K-12 district (6,000-10,000 students) in the midwest. The districts fitting this criteria will receive a packet addressed to the Superintendent introducing the study and requesting permission to conduct this research. The packet will include: (a) A letter to the Superintendent with
information about the study (Appendix A), (b) an optional Letter of Cooperation to be acknowledged by the Superintendent and/or School Board, (c) an example email addressed to Principals requesting nominations (Appendix B), (d) a Participant Letter outlining the study for nominated teachers (Appendix C), and (e) a Letter of Consent to be signed by the participants (Appendix D).

**Participant Selection Process**

The selection process will be completed in stages. In the first stage, the researcher will contact a district superintendent for permission to conduct the study. Once permission is granted the second stage will begin. The researcher will contact principals from eight elementary schools through email (Appendix B), informing them of the study and asking if they would nominate a second-grade teacher to participate in the study based on four criteria. During the last two years the teacher has 1) taught second-grade, 2) been referred to as a literacy leader in his or her current building, 2) has been evaluated as “Proficient” or “Distinguished” on the local teacher evaluation rubric, 3) has implemented core (Tier I) reading instruction within an established school-wide academic Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), and 4) his or her class average on the Acadience Summative Growth Report shows “Average Classroom Reading Growth” or “Above Average Classroom Reading Growth” (Good et al., 2018). During stage three the researcher will contact the participants that have been recommended by the principals based on the nomination criteria. The researcher will send a letter to each nominee requesting participation (Appendix C) in the study. If the nominated teacher agrees to meet, the researcher will schedule a meeting to review the Consent Document (Appendix D) and answer questions.
No interview questions will be asked at the initial meeting, and the researcher will eliminate any persons who did not meet the designated criteria.

**Data Collection Planning: Instrumentation**

Working from a perspective aligned with phenomenology, the main goal is to produce rich descriptions and make meaning of the participants’ experiences. This type of research refrains from producing hard and fast generalizations that apply to all in-service teachers. Data will be collected through multiple semi-structured interviews, field observations, and participant mapping. Multiple data sources and data collection methods will triangulate and confirm emerging findings by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The study’s main form of data collection will take place through a series of three to five semi-structured interviews with each participant using an interview protocol (Appendix E). This type of data collection has been a chosen method of IPA because of the engaging dialogue and flexibility to probe interesting or important areas as they arise (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The participants interviewed will be seen as the experts in the subject areas discussed and may introduce the researcher to new areas related to this research. This is due to the semi-structured approach allowing flexibility to probe in new related areas. Through purposeful conversations the researcher will gather a majority of the data for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research questions and interview questions guide the process of revealing the participants’ lived experiences and their knowledge and practices around vocabulary instruction. Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggest structuring interviews around three linked questions—main questions, probes, and follow-up questions—to evoke the in-depth and detailed responses required in a qualitative
study. Open-ended questions, followed up with probes such as “tell me more” and “please explain,” will be used to explore and build upon teachers’ responses. A limited number of questions will be prepared in advance, along with plans to ask follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

**Field Observations**

Field observations will be completed 2-3 times per participant during the study. Observations will be based on the research questions presented in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a non-participant, the researcher will not engage with the participants during the observation, and instead take field notes from a distance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An observation protocol has been developed as a method for consistent note taking in the field (Appendix F).

**Mapping**

Participants will be asked to map out different aspects of how they would support and remediate learning for a student struggling with vocabulary acquisition. Michel (2010) suggested that the construction of maps can be seen as powerful indicators of a participants’ reality. Mapping will be used as a method of documenting the lived experiences of the participants and connect to the participant’s interview process in order to make sure the interpretations are those of the participant (den Besten, 2010; Michel, 2010; Powell, 2010).

**Data Collection Planning: Institutional Review Board**

Prior to beginning data collection, the researcher will obtain approval for this study from Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This will ensure the ethical treatment of participants.
Informed Consent

An Informed Consent Document (Appendix D) will be created to be signed by all participants. The Consent Document will include: the overview of the study, uses of the data, methods to be employed, benefits, disclosures, and conditions. The end of the document will contain a statement about the confidentiality of the data collected and the procedures for maintaining the data, the participants rights, the researcher’s contact information, and a place for the participant and witness to sign. No contact will be made with the participants until the IRB has reviewed and approved the research protocol.

Confidentiality of the Participants

By providing pseudonyms for all participants as well as the schools and district, participants can be assured anonymity. In qualitative research, participants can almost never be assured anonymity, which means that even the researcher can’t identify a particular participant. However, as researchers, we can assure participants that their names will not be divulged.

Methods of Data Collection

Collecting Data

Semi-Structured Interviews

The study’s main form of data collection will take place through a series of three to five semi-structured interviews with each participant. The interview protocol has been developed (Appendix E) as well as the first set of interview questions. The researcher will use a set of developed questions with each scheduled interview. By using a semi-structured interview
approach, the questions will guide the interview process through the funneling technique (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This process will allow for the interviewer to begin with broad general questions to establish rapport followed by the interviewee slowly providing thoughtful and intentional information that is narrow and specific to the content addressed. The interview process will allow the researcher to engage with participants and modify initial questions in light of how the participant responds (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This technique lends itself to ensuring the direction of the interview is not producing data that is biased in the researcher’s direction (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Prior to each interview, participants will be asked once again to review and acknowledge the signed Consent Form. They will also be asked for permission to record the interview. If the participant agrees, the conversation will be recorded and transcribed after the interview. Interviews will be conducted in each teacher’s classroom in a one-on-one setting after school, lasting 30 to 90 minutes. The participant’s classroom was chosen as the interview location because it is important to find a location and environment that is both safe and comfortable for the participant.

**Field Observations**

Field observations will be based on the research questions presented in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observations will be completed two to three times per participant during the study. Each observation will be scheduled in the participant teacher’s classroom during core reading instruction. As a non-participant in the observations, the researcher will not engage with the participants during the observation, and instead take field notes from a distance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using the observation protocol (Appendix F), the researcher will take
observation notes while in the field. This observational data will allow the essence of the research problem to be discovered at a greater depth than just the participant’s insights alone (Patton, 2002).

**Mapping**

Participants will be asked to map out different aspects of how they would support and remediate learning for a student struggling with vocabulary acquisition. Mapping will be used as a method of documenting the lived experiences of the participants (Michel, 2010; Powell, 2010; van Besten, 2010). For the researcher to not solely rely on their own interpretation they will take time during the interview to have the participant to explain his or her map (Hoerschelmann & Schaefer, 2005; Young & Barrett, 2001). The post-drawing interview is a way to generate the participant’s explanation of his or her map, and to confirm the researcher’s initial interpretation of the visual material (Kuhn, 2003).

**Trustworthiness in Collecting Data**

Qualitative researchers, unlike quantitative researchers, do not have highly prescribed ways of ensuring validity and reliability. There are accepted strategies, however, that qualitative researchers employ to address trustworthiness. This study has four strategies to build trustworthiness throughout the study.

**Reflexivity**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have identified the researcher as the main instrument in the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) echoed this fact and discussed the advantages of the researcher being the instrument of qualitative research. Interpretative phenomenological analysis relies heavily on interpretation, and therefore, does not require the researcher to completely
bracket his or herself out of the research (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Throughout this study, the researcher will keep a reflexive journal recording any details of the nature and origins of any emergent interpretations. The journal allows the researcher to immediately capture initial thoughts and feelings following interviews.

**Audit Trail**

An audit trail will be used to strengthen confirmability throughout the study (Martins, 2015). This document will allow the researcher to reflect, retrace, and track final findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This will include the step by step procedures, data collection, thoughts, and how decisions were made throughout the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Member Checking**

Participants will engage in member checking to review their transcripts. This will increase the trustworthiness and validity of the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants will have the opportunity through this iterative process to remark on the content accuracy and meaning of the interviews (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Triangulation**

Data will be triangulated through the use of multiple semi-structured interviews, field observations, and mapping strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation by using multiple data sources and multiple data collection methods will confirm findings and validate the accuracy of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
**Storing Data**

Interview audio files will be destroyed after the three year period. Participants will be informed of this as indicated within a statement on the consent form. The statement will include the assurance that the audio recordings will be in a password secure location with access to only the researcher. Following the interview, the researcher will type interview transcripts based upon a recording of the interview. The interviewer will then send the interviewee a copy of the transcripts asking the interviewee if they would like to change or add anything. After transcripts of the recorded interviews are typed, the recordings will be deleted from the recording device. The transcripts will be downloaded onto a zip drive. The zip drive will be stored in a locked file cabinet. The data will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

**Type of Data Analysis and Analysis Steps**

Smith and Osborn (2008) outline four key stages of inductive analysis (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcript Analysis &amp; Initial Themes</td>
<td>Connecting the Themes</td>
<td>Analysis of Other Cases</td>
<td>Writing Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis results in a double hermeneutic approach allowing the researcher to make sense of the participant’s thinking about and reflecting on his or her experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The four phases of this approach will begin with particular examples and slowly work up to general categorization and claims, following an idiographic approach (Smith et al., 1995).
**Phase 1: Transcript Analysis & Initial Themes**

The first phase of the inductive analysis will begin with an analysis of each participant’s transcripts. The researcher will begin by reading the interview transcript several times, making notes and annotating significant or interesting points in the left margin. The researcher may find it useful to listen to the audio recordings and review notes in the reflective journal while completing this step of the process to catch any subtle nuances that may have been lost in the transcription of the interviews. Repeating this step two to four times will allow the researcher to become more familiar with the interview and build potential for new insights to develop (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). After listening, reading, and recording initial interpretations, the researcher will move on to more focused noting by returning to the beginning of the transcript and using the right margin to develop more concise themes of the participant’s thoughts. Reading the transcripts line by line, the researcher will analyze the notes and participant’s words in order to create themes.

**Phase 2: Connecting Themes**

The second phase will take place in three steps: building an initial list of themes, clustering of the themes, and creating a table of the themes. When building the initial list of themes, the researcher will use the transcript notes to list the themes initially found on a piece of paper and look for connections in order to cluster the themes together (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The clustering of these themes will allow superordinate themes to be extracted on to a different piece of paper. On-going checking of the transcript will affirm the researcher’s interpretation. Participants’ exact verbatim will be used to support each one of these superordinate themes. The superordinate themes will be analyzed and prioritized based on three conditions: (a) the number of times appeared, (b) the richness of the descriptions, and (c) the connections to the other
themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). These superordinate themes will be displayed in a table listing the theme, transcript location(s), and the key words used (Appendix E) (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Lastly, the superordinate themes will be confirmed by the researcher reading back through each transcript because of the iterative process of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

**Phase 3: Analysis of Other Cases**

After the first two phases of the inductive analysis are complete the researcher will practice reflexivity by documenting all thoughts and reactions in a reflexive journal. The researcher will then be able to analyze each participants’ transcript having bracketed all thoughts and feelings from a separate transcript. After all transcripts have been coded and analyzed the researcher will analyze the convergences and divergences among the participants table of themes.

**Phase 4: Writing Up**

The inductive data analysis evolves into a reporting process. The researcher will first construct a final table of subordinate themes using all of the data collected. The final themes will be translated into narrative accounts using rich, thick detail that explain and illustrate the themes found. Verbatim extracts will be used in the narrative to support each of the themes.

**Trustworthiness in Data Analysis**

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend qualitative researchers engage in at least two validation strategies in order to gain trustworthiness in a study. A validation strategy that will be employed by the researcher in this study is triangulation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is through the use of multiple data methods of collection (semi-structured interviews, mapping, and observations) triangulation will be established as a strategy of validation (Creswell & Poth,
Another strategy that will be used throughout the study will be the researcher reflexivity. The researcher will be pushed to be as transparent as possible using illustrations of prior experiences, making note of influences, and/or personal expectations throughout the data analysis.

Another strategy that will be used to display trustworthiness of the study will be the continuous member checking. Participants will be sent electronic files containing a copy of his or her transcripts, a list of emergent themes, and quotations that support the themes. The researcher will ask the participants to review the documents and respond with any questions, comments, or specific concerns. If the participants provide feedback the researcher will clarify meaning in the particular areas of concern. The researcher will use the revisions to draft narratives that are a better representation of the participant’s voice.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Delimitations

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand the lived experiences of second grade teachers within the context of vocabulary instruction. Smith, Larkin, and Flowers (2009) recommend using a purposive homogeneous sample for IPA studies. The participants were delimited to second-grade teachers, who were currently teaching, and identified as exemplary second-grade teachers. The researcher selected participants who were able to provide the most meaningful lived experiences.

Limitations

With the researcher’s attention restricted to the participants ability to make meaning of his or her own thoughts and behaviors around vocabulary instruction, the researcher will not analyze
the impacts that participant’s current vocabulary instruction is having on the student’s learning in other content areas. This analysis could be beneficial to the educational community and the literature surrounding vocabulary instruction, although it was not the focus of this study.

**Summary**

The study will employ data collection methods and gather detailed data about the participants’ lived experiences. Rigorous methods for data analysis for interpretive descriptive phenomenological analysis will be used. Throughout the research process strategies consistent with Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) standards for qualitative research validity will be utilized. Detailed interview, observation, and mapping data and the analysis of the data will be presented in chapter four. The findings and supporting evidence will attempt to answer the research questions presented at the beginning of this study.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In Chapter I, it was stated the main purpose of the study is to illuminate how exemplary second grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. The literature review in Chapter II revealed the complexity of vocabulary acquisition, instruction, the research to practice gap, and lack of early elementary research on classroom vocabulary instruction. Using Husserl’s (1970) descriptive phenomenology, the exploration of each participant’s individual lived experience led to an examination of essential themes related to vocabulary instruction. In order to gain this understanding, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to answer the following broad research questions:

1. How do exemplary teachers view daily vocabulary instruction for students of all abilities?
2. How do exemplary teachers assess each student’s breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition?
3. How do exemplary teachers instruct and make sense of students who are experiencing deficits in vocabulary?

These three questions, as well as an extensive literature review, have helped shape the interview protocol used with participants. The interview questions and protocol were continually referenced as part of the iterative, analytic process. Prior to writing this section, the researcher followed the data collection and analysis phases presented in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents the
data collected during the study and details how participants expressed their experiences. This chapter also provides a thorough analysis of the data collection results, coding methods, and development of themes and superordinate themes through a narrative account.

**Data Collection**

Data collection began once the study proposal had been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The first step in the process included recruitment of each participant, immediately followed by individual participant meetings. During these initial meetings, the purpose of the study was explained and participants were asked to read, discuss, and sign the Western Michigan University IRB approved consent form (see Appendix E). Data collection commenced after the researcher found a total of three participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study.

**Descriptive Information**

Based on the initial criteria, elementary principals gave a total of nine recommendations for participants in the study. Seven invitations were sent by the researcher to teachers nominated by building principals after reviewing initial criteria. Four participants agreed to participate and completed the Consent Document (Appendix D). One participant was unavailable to participate in all the interviews and observations. The demographic information of all three participants who completed all interviews, observations, and mapping is listed in Appendix L.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in the study, they will be referred to as females and pseudonyms will be used. Regarding the years teaching in elementary education: Participant 1, Kate, stated she had six years of experience; Participant 2, Amy, stated she had 14 years of experience; and Participant 3, Deb, stated that she had 32 years of
experience. A brief narrative of each participant’s academic characteristics and background is presented below.

**Participant 1: Kate**

Kate began her teaching career in kindergarten and has spent the last five years in second grade. Kate started her experience in the school district where she is currently teaching second grade. As she reflected on her experiences in her first interview with the researcher, she stated, “I just have loved teaching...every part. I was really lucky getting in this building as well. I was right out of college.” Kate voiced in her interviews that she has been determined to learn as much as she can about teaching. She is currently finishing her masters in reading at a local university. During her six years in district, she has participated on her building leadership team, the district’s technology team, and has been chosen for special implementation teams. Kate presents annually at local and state conferences and works on her own teaching blog at night.

**Participant 2: Amy**

Amy received a masters in elementary reading and math from a local university. She began her teaching career in her current district and loves being part of her district. At the beginning of her career, she taught one year in third grade and has spent the remaining 13 years in second grade. She is a leader in a number of ways throughout her district, including on her second grade team and building leadership team. During Amy’s first interview, she spoke of the yearly opportunities she has as a team leader to train new teachers and team members in second grade curriculum.
Participant 3: Deb

Deb has taught for a total of 32 years. During the beginning of her career, she taught in lower elementary out of state before moving to her current district. Throughout her entire career she has taught in lower elementary with the last twenty-two years in second-grade. Halfway through her career, she received her masters degree in elementary education. Deb explained, “I have been a mentor teacher for quite a number of pre-interns and interns, from two different universities… Throughout the years, I’ve served on the reading and writing curriculum teams, helped to select new basal programs, created lesson plan exemplars, and curriculum binders for my grade level.” Deb has a variety of experiences and finds immense value in learning new skills through attending professional development seminars, reading professional articles, blogs, and books about best practice.

Interviews

The researcher made it a priority to develop a personal connection with each participant during the initial meeting that was held prior to the first interview. During the initial meeting participants were made aware of the varying levels of time commitment, noting that their contribution would not exceed five hours. Each participant participated in three interviews with the researcher. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and given to participants to complete a member check. The data was stored on a password-protected computer and in password-protected files on the hard drive. Interview transcriptions were completed. They were compared two times to the original audio files for accuracy by the researcher and another individual with expertise in the area of teaching and instruction. The edited transcripts were sent to each participant for review. The participants were asked to provide any areas that would need
to be discussed or revised via email. No changes, clarifications, or additions were requested by participants.

**Observations**

Each participant was observed three times during the study. The observations took place during a thirty to forty-five minute block of instruction. Data recorded during each observation was focused on the research questions presented in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Journaling and Bracketing**

A reflexive journal was used by the researcher throughout this study, as recommended by Smith et al. (2009), to record thoughts, decisions, ideas, experiences and research notes related to the phenomenon of exemplary teachers’ vocabulary instruction. The reflexive journal was used in the development of the study and a new section in the journal was started once the researcher received committee and IRB approval. From May, 2018 through July, 2019 entries were made by the researcher. This research journal documented the researcher’s journey throughout the study.

**Field Notes**

Wolcott (1994) and others encouraged researchers to write reflective notes, insights, and observations throughout the research process (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). As recommended by Wolcott, the researcher found it beneficial to keep field notes about emotions, expressions, and analytic memos as the data was collected. These insights were recorded in case they would be beneficial to the interpretation during the analysis and writing.
Data Analysis


Phase 1: Transcript Analysis and Initial Themes

During the first phase of the inductive analysis, the researcher analyzed each participant’s transcripts and observational data. After listening to the recording of the interview several times, the researcher began the analysis. Each transcript was read three times. The researcher made notes and annotated significant or interesting points in the left margin (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). After the researcher recorded initial interpretations, the researcher moved on to more focused noting, returning to the beginning of the transcript and using the right margin to develop more concise themes of the participant’s thoughts (Figure 2).

To ensure the reliability of the initial analysis and emerging themes, an expert from the field also completed the analysis to confirm the emerging themes extracted. This process was also repeated with participant observations as the researcher read the observations (descriptive notes), and the initial reactions or interpretations of those observations (reflective notes) three times. The researcher made additional notes as interesting points emerged in the right hand margin of the observations.
Phase 2: Connecting Themes

The second phase took place in three steps: (a) an initial list of themes was built, (b) the themes were clustered, and (c) a table of the clustered themes created. Table 2 shows the initial themes built for the first participant, Kate. All participants can be found in Appendix M.

The researcher used the transcript and observational notes to list the themes initially found and looked for connections in order to cluster the themes together (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Table 3 shows the clustering of themes for Participant 1, Kate. All participants results can be found in Appendix N. The clustering of these themes allowed superordinate themes to be extracted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Initial List of Themes by Interview for Participant 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1: Kate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interview 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated Vocabulary Exposure</td>
<td>Vocabulary Throughout Subject Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonyms and Antonyms</td>
<td>Visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary in Content Areas</td>
<td>High-Level Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional Activities</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real World Vocabulary</td>
<td>Student Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Nonfiction</td>
<td>Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples &amp; Activities</td>
<td>Real World Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics Connection</td>
<td>Context Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to Writing</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Activities</td>
<td>Time Constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>Whole Brain Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Cards</td>
<td>Essential Standards (CCSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Grouping</td>
<td>Focus on Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferencing</td>
<td>Finding Word Meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Vocabulary Instruction</td>
<td>Vocabulary Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Vocabulary Instruction</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Comprehension Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Motivation</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Choice</td>
<td>Nonfiction Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Technology Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Integration</td>
<td>Indirect Vocabulary Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Student Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>I Do, We Do, You Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Do, We Do, You Do</td>
<td>Teachable Moments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3  
**Phase 2: Initial List of Themes Clustered for Participant 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1: Kate</th>
<th>Vocabulary Exposure and Application Throughout Subject Areas</th>
<th>Vocabulary Concepts &amp; Word Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Indirect Vocabulary Instruction</th>
<th>Purposeful Planning and Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Real-World Examples and Application</td>
<td>1. Repeated Vocabulary Exposure and Application</td>
<td>1. Teachable Moments</td>
<td>1. Explicit Vocabulary Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Word and Language Use</td>
<td>5. High-Level Vocabulary</td>
<td>5. Purposeful Grouping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Activating Background Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Vocabulary Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Making Words</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Technology Integration</td>
<td></td>
<td>8. UDL</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Conferencing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. Movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12. Activating Background Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. Whole Brain Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14. Essential Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15. Student Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher used on-going checking of the transcript each time a new superordinate theme was extracted to affirm the interpretation. Participants’ exact verbatim was used to support each one of these superordinate themes (Appendix O). The superordinate themes were analyzed and prioritized based on three conditions: (a) the number of times appeared, (b) the richness of the descriptions, and (c) the connections to the other themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the last part of the third step of the second phase, the superordinate themes were confirmed by the researcher and another expert from the field by re-reading each transcript and extracting supporting evidence from the participant to pair with the superordinate theme. This was part of the iterative process of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008).
Phase 3: Analysis of Other Cases

During Phase 3, the researcher practiced reflexivity by documenting all thoughts and reactions in the reflexive journal. The researcher then approached each participant’s transcript analysis having bracketed all thoughts and feelings from the other transcripts and observations. The researcher analyzed the convergences and divergences among the participants table of themes. From the analysis of the cases in this study, four main superordinate themes were articulated. Table 4 shows a description for each of the main superordinate themes based on the participants. Each of the participants in the study was represented for each superordinate theme.

Table 4
Superordinate Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposeful Planning &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary Concepts</th>
<th>Word Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary Exposure &amp; Application Throughout Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Purposeful planning and instruction will refer to the structure, system, methods, techniques, strategies, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction to assist in effective and productive learning by adapting to the learning styles and needs of each learner, engaging them in the learning process, helping them become independent, and supporting them in reaching the objective(s) of the lesson.</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Vocabulary concepts will refer to elements of language that must be explicitly taught and practiced for students to build a strong base of word knowledge.</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Word learning strategies will refer to the strategies that are connected to vocabulary concepts and support students’ development of word knowledge and the transfer to utilize the strategy in any context independently.</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Vocabulary exposure and application throughout subject areas will refer to a teacher’s decision and practice to intentionally place students in an environment that will cause them to experience both direct and indirect vocabulary teaching in multiple subject areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase 4: Writing Up

The inductive data analysis used to construct the final superordinate and subordinate themes (Table 5) evolves into a reporting process.
In Chapter V, the final themes were translated into narrative accounts using thick, rich detail that explains and illustrates the themes found. Verbatim extracts will be used in the narrative to support each of the superordinate and subordinate themes in relation to the three research questions. From the initial coding and analysis, the iterative process allowed the researcher to revise, condense, alter, move and combine codes into broader themes. Eventually, all themes were merged into the final superordinate and subordinate themes that are discussed in Chapter V. The narrative details the iterative process, as recommended by Smith et al. (2009), in Chapter V demonstrates the researcher making sense of each participant’s attempt to make sense of their own experiences with vocabulary instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposeful Planning &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary Concepts</th>
<th>Word Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary Exposure &amp; Application Throughout Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Formative Assessment</td>
<td>5. Idioms &amp; Figurative Speech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Developing Word Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Indirect Vocabulary Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5**

*Superordinate & Subordinate Themes*
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Smith et al. (2009) define guidelines for conducting IPA research by analyzing and creating levels of coding that lead to the discovery of emergent superordinate and subordinate themes. Chapter IV presented the initial themes and findings of this study which have been further refined in Chapter V. The superordinate themes have been identified within individual transcripts as well as linked across participants. The four final superordinate themes presented include: (a) purposeful planning and instruction, (b) explicit teaching of vocabulary concepts, (c) word learning strategies, and (d) vocabulary exposure and application through subject areas. Smith et al. (2009) recommend presenting results without referencing relevant literature as done in Chapter IV. In addition, Smith et al. (2009) also recommend the discussion section includes a comparison between the findings of the study and the available literature. Therefore, Chapter V will present and relate findings to the literature as appropriate. Chapter V responds to each of the research questions by presenting the data in relation to the identified superordinate and subordinate themes.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do exemplary teachers view daily vocabulary instruction for students of all abilities?

Exemplary teachers view daily vocabulary instruction as an essential part of multiple subject areas for all students in second grade. Each exemplary teacher spoke of and was
observed instructing vocabulary lessons that adapted to the learning styles and needs of each student. All four superordinate and a number of subordinate themes were extracted from the data to develop the exemplary teachers’ perspectives around daily vocabulary instruction for students of all abilities (Table 6).

Table 6
Superordinate & Subordinate Themes Found to Illuminate Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposeful Planning &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary Concepts</th>
<th>Word Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary Exposure &amp; Application Throughout Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Subordinate Themes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Idioms &amp; Figurative Speech</td>
<td>4. Metacognitive Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Superordinate Theme 1: Purposeful Planning and Instruction**

The exemplary teachers used purposeful planning and instruction to engage students in the learning process, help develop independence, and support mastery of vocabulary concepts and word learning strategies. A belief expressed by the exemplary teachers was vocabulary instruction was beneficial for all students “whether they were high or low” and that a mixed ability classroom could participate “together” through “differentiated instruction”. Participant narratives and observation data showed each exemplary teacher was found to have consistent and specific structures, systems, instructional routines, methods, techniques, strategies, procedures, and processes for planning and instruction that assisted student learning of vocabulary. All of the participants related to how planning should adapt to the learning styles and needs of each student to be engaged in the learning process, become independent, and reach the objective of the lesson.
or master the skill. Vaughn (2012) affirmed the participant’s beliefs in planning and instruction as she stated:

It’s important for content-area teachers to integrate literacy practices into their instructional routines. Getting the kind of momentum and success we need with this age group can only occur when it is done throughout the day. So expanding the number of vocabulary words that students have from 8,000 to 12,000 can’t occur by one teacher teaching two or three words per week (para. 1).

The following subordinate themes were found within the superordinate theme of purposeful planning and instruction. The subordinate themes are supported by the data extracted from the exemplary teachers’ interviews, observations, and mapping: (a) Universal Design for Learning (UDL), (b) Response to Intervention (RTI), (c) Developing Word Consciousness, and (d) Indirect Vocabulary Instruction.

**Subordinate Theme: Universal Design for Learning (UDL).** An exemplary educator understands the diversity in his or her classroom when considering each student's background, maturity, needs, interests, abilities, knowledge, and learning style. This knowledge of diversity has an impact on the purposeful planning and instruction (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2006). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles assisted the exemplary teachers in creating options for how instruction was presented, how students expressed ideas, and how the teachers engaged students in learning (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). UDL is a framework based on three main principles: (a) representation, (b) action and expression, and (c) engagement (Meyer et al., 2014).

**Multiple Means of Representation.** The UDL principle of Multiple Means of Representation encourages teachers to offer information they present to students in more than
one format. All three exemplary educators spoke of and were observed using multiple ways of
representing information, one being visual diagrams and charts to represent the content being
 taught. Kate stated, “Another one of the main things I do now is just scaffolding words with
different resources, photos, and visuals”. The principle of Multiple Means of Representation
also provides teachers with the opportunity to support students when activating background
knowledge. All three exemplary educators spoke of this practice, Amy stated, “Monday when
we introduced the vocab words...during whole group instruction...[we activate and] build
background knowledge to help them [get ready to] understand what those words mean.”
Deb spoke of how she strategically plans her instruction with this principle in mind:

During instruction, I want to plan on the kids sharing their prior knowledge about
something so I really have to pick and choose what I plan for instruction. And sometimes
that's what takes so long for my prep is to think about what have we done recently and
what would be best for this. I want to make sure it gets their enthusiasm going and
reveals their knowledge.

Each of the exemplary teachers expressed a belief that students differ in the ways they perceive
and comprehend information presented, which causes them to purposefully plan vocabulary
instruction (CAST, 2017; Meyer et al., 2014).

**Multiple Means of Action & Expression.** The UDL principle of Multiple Means of
Action & Expression provide students more than one way to interact with the content and
materials to show what they have learned (CAST, 2017; Meyer et al., 2014). Through interview
and observation data, the researcher identified ways each exemplary teacher would give students
choice. Kate stated one reason she feels choice must be planned into vocabulary instruction,
“[Students] have to have a choice, if they don’t have a choice they are disengaged”. The choices exemplary teachers gave students included methods of how students could respond to learning, how the teacher scaffolded instruction, and how goal setting opportunities were offered for the whole class and individual students (CAST, 2017; Meyer et al., 2014). Amy utilizes her weekly vocabulary test as a goal setting opportunity for individual students and the class as a whole:

We record their progress on our wall...but we use the two graphs to look at comprehension and vocabulary. For the most part, I like comparing like comprehension and vocab. They actually seem to consistently do better on vocab... So then they graph as a whole class and then they all have individual student data binders. So after they get done with their test, they write down their scores when they're finished and then they grab [their individual binders]. So they keep track of all of their, their tests and so they can kind of see where they are strong and where they have some weaknesses compared to how they did last week. We also set goals each quarter. So, you know and they know what they want to work on in reading. Sometimes it might be that they want to improve their vocab scores...then they're keeping track of it so they're aware of how they're doing. 

Through the principle of Multiple Means of Action and Expression, the exemplary teachers put strategies in place to access a student’s experience and knowledge of his or her world and vocabulary word or concept presented.

**Multiple Means of Engagement.** The UDL principle of Multiple Means of Engagement encourages teachers to look for multiple ways to motivate and engage students. Kate stated, “I create an environment where it’s engaging and it hits them where they’re at...It should be different [for each student] because we are trying to get them engaged where they are.” The
exemplary teachers spoke of students who like working alone and other students who thrive working with peers. Each teacher provided multiple options for engagement within lessons observed and also spoke of this practice taking place throughout the day. The exemplary teachers have found that there is power in peer partners, as Deb stated, “I see that sometimes the lower ones are pulled up by a peer better than they would be if they were sitting there with me in a remedial type situation. We know there's a lot of research that proves that.”

In a later interview Deb added:

> If I notice that a student needs more support I will try to make sure they are with a partner that is able to support them...But it is through these easy procedures that I think they need to, to have the chance to be the leader or contribute. They need to be exposed and see their peers do it so they can. [This is why] I try to involve them and partner things.

These practices were tied to the belief that there is not one means of engagement that will work for all students in all situations (CAST, 2017; Meyer et al., 2014). Throughout all exemplary teachers’ interviews, observations, and mapping, focus on a personal connection was emphasized as teachers spoke of fostering collaboration and community, which is a checkpoint within the Multiple Means of Engagement principle.

**Principles in Action.** The exemplary teachers’ transcripts and observations were analyzed for evidence of each teacher utilizing the different guidelines and checkpoints associated with each principle. Table 7 lays out UDL principles with the guidelines and checkpoints developed by Meyer et al. (2014). If multiple pieces of evidence were found for the guidelines and checkpoints, it is indicated under the participant’s name with a checkmark.
## Table 7

### Participant Use of Universal Design for Learning Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UDL Principle</th>
<th>Guidelines &amp; Checkpoints</th>
<th>Participant Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception</strong></td>
<td>Offer ways of customizing the display of information (1.1) Offer alternatives for auditory information (1.2) Offer alternatives for visual information (1.3)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language &amp; Symbols</strong></td>
<td>Clarify vocabulary and symbols (2.1) Clarify syntax and structure (2.2) Support decoding of text and symbols (2.3) Promote understanding across languages (2.4) Illustrate through multiple media (2.5)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Activate or supply background knowledge (3.1) Highlight patterns, features, big ideas, &amp; relationships (3.2) Guide information processing and visualization (3.3) Maximize transfer and generalization (3.4)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Action</strong></td>
<td>Vary the methods for response and navigation (4.1) Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies (4.2)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression &amp; Communication</strong></td>
<td>Use multiple media for communication (5.1) Use multiple tools for construction and composition (5.2) Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance (5.3)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Functions</strong></td>
<td>Guide appropriate goal-setting (6.1) Support planning and strategy development (6.2) Facilitate managing information and resources (6.3) Enhance capacity for monitoring progress (6.4)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruiting Interest</strong></td>
<td>Optimize individual choice and autonomy (7.1) Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity (7.2) Minimize threats and distractions (7.3)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustaining Effort &amp; Persistence</strong></td>
<td>Heighten salience of goals and objectives (8.1) Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge (8.2) Foster collaboration and community (8.3) Increase mastery-oriented feedback (8.4)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Regulation</strong></td>
<td>Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation (9.1) Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies (9.2) Develop self-assessment and reflection (9.3)</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although none of the participants used specific UDL language (Multiple Means of Engagement, Expression, and Representation), all evidence through practices and statements collected and analyzed by the researcher and field expert strongly suggest that all of the UDL principles saturated each classroom. It is evident that exemplary teachers create options within vocabulary instruction for how content is presented, how students express ideas, and how students are engaged in vocabulary learning (CAST, 2012; 2017; Meyer et al., 2014).

Subordinate Theme: Response to Intervention. Each exemplary teacher’s school had implemented and sustained Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). One system within each of the school’s MTSS structures is the Response to Intervention (RTI) tiered system in reading. Each reading intervention system is made up of three tiers (Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III). Tier I Instruction, also known as core instruction, was recognized by the exemplary teachers as critical to the success of all students (O’Connor, 2016). Tier I instruction in each of the participant’s schools is a protected block of time in the classroom in which all students receive daily instruction using a district approved reading curriculum (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999; Wright, 2007). During Tier I instruction, the exemplary teachers teach multiple aspects of reading including vocabulary. The vocabulary lessons taught during the Tier I instructional time were taught through the use of a district-approved reading program basal in conjunction with the teacher’s choice of delivery and some activities. Along with explicitly teaching the vocabulary lesson from the reading program, Deb stated, “I teach vocabulary throughout the day, every day. It is important in every subject!” Kate, who also teaches the explicit lesson from the basal, echoed Deb’s statement, “…just making sure that [vocabulary is] more of a priority with everything. With absolutely every subject and is not just [kept to] vocabulary time.”
All three exemplary teachers were intentional in the planning of the specific activities during the Tier I instructional time. Deb shared her thoughts on what she shares with new teachers as they begin using the curriculum:

You can't walk in and pick up the teacher guide and teach, you know, day one, day two, day three, there's too much and you'd have to choose and you'd have to let some go. But you have to know your class so that you know what to let go and what they need.

When asked, Deb expanded on what other colleagues over the years have done for vocabulary instruction:

The basal it's so broad that I think everyone [other teachers] might or could do it differently. It could just be that a teacher will just introduce it and have the students read the words on the page and then give them an assignment. I mean it could just be paper, pencil and really basic and you'd still be checking it off your list. So I think it depends on what the teacher feels like they need or want to invest in it to make it happen. But I see my kids score better [in general] if I do more with it. I think vocabulary instruction is essential for lower elementary because it builds throughout their educational career. If we only do the minimum down here, I mean maybe we should be able to toss out something else instead of choosing not to do as much vocabulary.

With powerful, systematic Tier I instruction students are set up for success. Students with and without disabilities who are experiencing deficits in vocabulary are further supported in Tier II and Tier III in addition to Tier I. Tier II and Tier III instruction will be addressed within the study’s third research question.
**Subordinate Theme: Developing Word Consciousness.** The exemplary educators demonstrated development of word consciousness through their intentional planning and by using wordplay activities to motivate and engage students in learning new words. Word consciousness is a students interest in and awareness of words (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). Exemplary teachers were found to intentionally plan multiple exposures to specific words to develop this word consciousness. Deb utilized instructional routines, like her morning helper (Figure 3), within the day to provide multiple exposures to specific words that she has planned:

At the beginning of the year [and throughout the year] we begin the day with a calendar person. They learn to choose [multiple] weather words [to put on the calendar]. We talked at the beginning of the year that you need one [word] for how it looks and one [word] for how it feels. Sometimes they would pick cold and chilly. [Then we have to discuss as a class], that those really mean the same thing... So I teach a lot just through this [over and over during the year].

*Figure 3. Example of Multiple Exposures to Words*
Deb also incorporates a daily riddle into her morning instructional routine:

I also have [the morning helpers] in the morning end our routine by telling us two riddles. We start at the beginning of the year with really simple riddles, but they [the students] don't get them. I mean, they first think the meanings are literal. By the end of the year we've learned about synonyms, idioms, antonyms and they start to think differently about how to answer a riddle so they make a lot more sense.

The practice of incorporating word plays (e.g., palindromes, puns, jokes, and riddles) into instructional routines can also build a student's word consciousness (Stahl, 1999). The exemplary teachers demonstrated that planning and instruction in the development of word consciousness encouraged students to actively construct links between new information and previously known information about a word (Hirsch, 2003; Stahl, 2004). Another way exemplary teachers develop word consciousness in students is by modeling their own love of words. Kate described how she incorporates word consciousness into her daily practice:

So they're hearing all these different words constantly and I always make a big deal about words like, “oh my goodness, that's such a good word! What does that mean though?” We talk about what it means quickly... it's just the exposure and then expecting them to find or use that word...I model and bringing this type of talking up a lot during class.

All three exemplary teachers were observed praising students for word choices made during instruction, which is another practice that builds students’ word consciousness (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998; Texas Reading Initiative, 2000).
Subordinate Theme: Indirect Vocabulary Instruction. Each exemplary teacher planned activities and practices that supported indirect vocabulary instruction. Indirect vocabulary instruction is teaching, activities, or environments where explicit instruction is not utilized and the student's acquisition of vocabulary is through indirect exposure to words (Sedita, 2005). Kate’s classroom practice mirrored those referenced by Stahl et al. (1991) as she spoke of multiple opportunities each day where students participate in listening and talking during different activities like listening to books read aloud and/or reading widely on their own:

I am trying to expose them to as many new words as possible...on the iPads and Chromebooks, they go to Epic and can listen to an audiobook, which is great for vocabulary, hearing all those new words. It just motivates them so much!

Kate continued as she explained why she is passionate about thinking through indirect vocabulary instruction and why only thinking about the eight to ten words from the reading vocabulary list is not enough for students:

It’s just that, it is not real, it is not like real world vocabulary. It is not [always] like something that we would use...it is just very consolidated and isolated from everything else that is going on other than that one story… I try to find and create activities that had more vocabulary words to incorporate into their writing.

Amy spoke about her indirect vocabulary instruction in addition to explicitly taught vocabulary lessons:

While we're reading the story on Tuesdays as a class, we stop and look at the highlighted words and we talk about it, on Wednesdays, there's not a ton of direct instruction. It's
more partner reading and partner comprehension... then whatever comes up while they're reading, we use the words that they don't understand.

Deb uses various activities and her classroom library to indirectly expose students to words:

We make a lot of class books at the beginning of the year. That way everybody is featured in the book because everybody has a page. Then a lot of them still choose [the books] for free read and read their old stuff. I hear them say things like, “I only wrote one sentence then, haha.” It's fun for them to compare what they're writing used to be like...I found that it helped a number of kids with vocabulary when they really dug into writing.

The exemplary teachers identified how important both explicit vocabulary instruction and additional indirect vocabulary exposure was for each student, no matter the ability level.

**Superordinate Theme 2: Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary Concepts**

Explicit vocabulary instruction is the teaching of specific words students encounter in texts. The teacher must provide clear explanations and examples of the meanings of these words in various contexts, and provide students with opportunities to discuss, analyze, and use the words (Sedita, 2005). The intentional teaching of these vocabulary concepts will create patterns in which students gain practice and create a solid foundation of word knowledge that will have long-term sustainability in their lives.

Amy illustrated how students are expected at a young age to use context clues to discover word meaning. This example illustrates why explicit instruction is needed for particular skills that are foundational elements for future learning and reading success:

I think it's really important for kids to learn how to use context to be able to determine the meaning of a word in context. And if we don't start it early, then they're never going to
Kate echoed Amy’s thoughts when she stated:

You have to...spend time talking about it. So then they have the skills to figure out what the words mean instead of just like, here's the word, here's what it means. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that because we need to do that sometimes, but there needs to be more [explicit] teaching of the strategies to find the words for themselves too...we're not really teaching them how to figure out [vocabulary concepts], we're just feeding it to them. So if they're just being fed the word, they're not going to have the skills they need.

All participants voiced a strong belief in utilizing explicit instruction as an essential practice when planning and executing vocabulary instruction. During all three of Deb’s observations, she demonstrated elements that constructed an explicit instructional routine. The following were her observed elements: (a) strategically chose examples and non-examples, (b) anticipated common misconceptions by discussion, (c) repeated essential content a number of times in multiple ways, (d) modeled and scaffolded instructional steps, (e) applied the concept/skill using an “I do, we do, you do” teaching method, and (f) had students complete independent tasks successfully.

Through the analysis of participant interviews five vocabulary concepts were illuminated as those taught by exemplary teachers (Table 8).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Concept</th>
<th>Participant Thoughts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Families</td>
<td>“They really do begin to use them... they begin to group the words into groups and categories.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Explicitly introducing this just kind of helps them begin to group the words into groups and categories.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affixes</td>
<td>“I also do explicit teaching of base words, suffixes, prefixes, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, irregular verbs, and word sorts.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“They begin to learn the meaning of words, and then if they don't know what it means but there are other words that are synonyms or may have the same prefix that we have learned, it is something that they will apply.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“They can learn that and then begin to understand the concept of how we can change words into past tense or present tense.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Even if a student is at a lower level or has been identified on some type of screening to struggle in this area they're still able to apply prefixes and suffixes and yes I think it helps them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonyms &amp; Antonyms</td>
<td>“With the vocab words ...they will do synonyms and antonyms with their team.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“So even when I'm just talking, I'll say something in five different ways, just so they hear a bunch of synonyms for the same thing.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We seem to do better when we're using like antonyms or synonyms, so then they can kind of relate it to something. That is more successful than just like matching...or filling in the blank in a sentence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They begin to learn the meaning of words, and then if they don't know what it means but there are other words that are synonyms or may have the same prefix that we have learned, it is something that they will apply.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Meaning Words</td>
<td>“A few other things that we do that contribute to vocabulary learning are read alouds every day, including books chosen specifically for enhancing certain skills, such as rhyming, multiple meaning words, using quotation marks, prepositions, adjectives, identifying character traits, etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Now when we are doing something like multiple meaning words. I give a half sheet and ask them to think with their family and all of the activity choices are interactive. Like, tell your mom and dad about multiple meaning words, or watch for these words at home, or think of five more together and be ready to share.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idioms &amp; Figurative Speech</td>
<td>“So then during planning, I saw homophones coming up again related to this week’s story. So there's still the vocabulary to introduce, but when I look at them, um, I always think about what can I tell the kids already know and how much do I have to teach these new words? I am going to have to make sure they understand certain things.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We echo read and it helps with phrasing. I also have [student helpers] in the morning routine by telling us two riddles. We start the beginning of the year with really simple riddles but they don't get them. I mean, they first think the meanings are literal. By the end of the year we've learned about some synonyms, idioms, antonyms and they start to think differently about how to answer a riddle and so they make a lot more sense.”</td>
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All exemplary teachers agreed with Castles, Rastle, and Nation (2018) regarding teaching reading:

Reading involves more than alphabetic skills. To become confident, successful readers, children need to learn to recognize words and compute their meanings rapidly without having to engage in translation back to sounds. Therefore, it is important to understand how children progress to this more advanced form of word recognition and how teaching practice can support this (p.6).

Exemplary teachers agreed that concepts are foundational skills that need to be explicitly taught in order for students to continue to be successful in building their knowledge of words.

**Superordinate Theme 3: Word Learning Strategies**

Word learning strategies will refer to the way students are supported by helping them develop strategies for learning words that can be applied in any context. Each participant spoke and was observed using multiple word learning strategies, depicted in Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Learning Strategy</th>
<th>Participant 1: Kate</th>
<th>Participant 2: Amy</th>
<th>Participant 3: Deb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morphemic Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Mapping &amp; Classifying Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Strategies to Determine Word Meaning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Strategies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The word learning strategies observed and spoken of during participant interviews are described below, with examples and research around the aspects of using these strategies to teach words and language usage.
**Subordinate Theme: Morphemic Analysis**

In two of the three exemplary teachers’ classrooms, the researcher found the practice of morphemic analysis. Morphemic analysis, a common word learning strategy, is a strategy in which the meanings of words can be determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, base words, roots, etc.) (Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui, & Tarver, 2004; Moats, 2000; Stahl & Shiel, 1992). Deb spoke of the common misconceptions she has watched students experience if morphemic analysis is not continually used and explicitly taught within a classroom:

If you say, look back in the story and find a word that is a base word plus an ending or whatever the skill is, then they might take a word like pretty and think, “oh it has the -y added” [so prett must be the base and -y the added part]. But that's not the same as lucky would [change the meaning to] be full of luck. So sometimes we have to model it and explicitly teach it so that they understand.

Amy was found using morphemic analysis in all three observation sessions. She would work with small groups of students to analyze words that were found in the context of the reading, “I love when we have our class conversations on the carpet, we talk about the word, we try to bring in examples, use them as questions so that we make it relatable.” Morphemic analysis ultimately helps to equip students to read and understand text by focusing on two key reading skills: quickly and accurately decoding words, and acquiring vocabulary (University of Texas, 2011).
Subordinate Theme: Semantic Mapping & Classification

Semantic mapping is a strategy the exemplary teachers used to allow students to make connections between new vocabulary words and words they knew by organizing words into families or clusters (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007; Heimlich & Pittleman, 1986; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Reyes & Bos, 1998; Scanlon et al.,1992; Schifini, 1994). Deb was the only participant to talk about and be observed using the word learning strategy of semantic mapping and classification of words. Deb models and completes semantic mapping as a group regularly, but her students also are equipped to complete this strategy independently or with a partner. During an observation, pairs of students chose a set of homophones to complete a semantic map with and then completed a page for a class book together (Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Example of Semantic Mapping Conclusion Activity](image)

Semantic mapping was connected to the practice of students learning to classify words by parts of speech, meaning, pronunciation, endings, roots, and emotion (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007; Heimlich & Pittleman, 1986; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Reyes & Bos,
1998; Scanlon et al., 1992; Schifini, 1994). Deb spoke of the activities that she uses to expose students to semantic mapping:

A few of the [activities and] strategies that I use [when classifying words] are KWL, riddles to introduce/review vocabulary words, helping students to make connections between vocabulary words, word associations, like, ‘Which vocabulary word goes with float by and slowly? - drift’.

Semantic mapping addresses Common Core State Standards related to knowledge of language and vocabulary acquisition and use. Most importantly, Deb has found that this type of word learning strategy helps students recall the meaning of words as they read text. This word learning strategy can help exemplary teachers differentiate instruction, offer choice, and focus on the use of multiple representations, which aligns with UDL principles.

**Subordinate Theme: Context Strategies to Determine Word Meaning**

There are a number of strategies students can explicitly be taught to infer, predict, and locate other words and phrases in a passage to discover the meaning of an unknown word. Deb spoke of using her daily read alouds to practice using context strategies to determine word meanings. She will pick a book with a specific skill or concept they are learning and then use it for demonstration after explicit instruction. Amy referred to the lessons she teaches using the student’s anthology, “Right now it's just me saying, ‘Oh yeah, let's stop at that word and go back.’ ‘Do you know what this means... Do you understand what that word really means?’” Instead of [just saying], ‘what's the word?’” In a later conversation Amy expanded on why context strategies should be taught to early elementary students:
I think it's really important for kids to learn how to use context to be able to determine the meaning of a word in context. If we don't start it early, then they're never going to get it. It's really important to teach those skills and they have to be explicit. I mean, this is how we do it, because sometimes it's hard to figure out what that word means based on, you know, the rest of the sentence or the rest of the passage.

If students are not explicitly taught how to use the word learning strategies they may never realize how to use them effectively. Amy spoke of a group of high-achieving second grade students she worked with during WIN time:

They were to read the vocab words in context of a sentence and then make a guess or a prediction of what they thought the word meant. I realized that this group was just, they were so off...I thought that when they read the definition, they would be able to talk about what the author meant by [the word] in the sentence and really get an understanding of what that word meant. But they really struggled with trying to come up with it just from reading that word in context. I think if there wasn't a conversation with me, and if I hadn’t been going through it and saying, “okay well you know you said you thought that word meant this... but would that make sense in that sentence?” [They wouldn’t have figured it out.] They were completely clueless when it came to making that prediction just by using the sentence and context clues. So I don't know if that's just something that as a system we are lacking? What it does tell me, specifically, is that we need to work on [explicitly teaching] context clues.

As Amy continued to reflect on this experience she questioned whether those students who were farther behind their peers in the high WIN group were able to use context clues. This thought
process was hinting at what McKeown (1985) found, as it was found that struggling readers are significantly less efficient at deriving words from context. Although, students are able to learn words from context if they are taught procedures to use when they encounter new words (Elshout-Mohr & van Daalen-Kapteijns, 1987; Werner & Kaplan, 1952).

**Superordinate Theme 4: Vocabulary Exposure and Application Across Content Areas**

The exemplary teachers expressed the belief that vocabulary exposure and application should happen throughout subject areas. The exemplary teachers intentionally placed students in environments that allowed them to experience both direct and indirect vocabulary instruction in multiple subject areas. Two subordinate themes were extracted from the exemplary teachers’ data: (a) technology integration and (b) cross-curricular connections. These subordinate themes focused on vocabulary exposure and application.

**Subordinate Theme: Technology Integration**

All exemplary teachers found it helpful to draw upon technology resources to support students when differentiating for content, process, and product. The integration of technology into a curriculum and/or lesson can assist in the enhancement and extension of our students’ learning of vocabulary (Clark, 2013). Deb spoke of the desire to use more one-to-one technology resources to support students in vocabulary acquisition, but was quick to say she was cautious with the amount of time students are in front of a screen, “I don’t want them to just get put on a computer, but using it [more] may allow me to get back into doing some more small group things. That's my hope.” Deb also expressed her need for more professional development in the use of one-to-one devices since they were just rolled out to her grade level. Both Amy and Kate were part of the technology pilot throughout the district and spoke of feeling extremely
comfortable using one-to-one technology to support students with vocabulary acquisition and practice. All three exemplary teachers spoke of using multiple technology resources in a whole group setting. By having access to technology supports the teachers were able to expose and instruct students across content areas by tying in resources from math and science. Amy spoke of using additional technology resources to give students exposure to vocabulary and other content areas, “For example, Spelling City, all of our vocab lists are preloaded in there. Or they could use something like Lexia... We also use BrainPOP, United Streaming, um, or just additional texts so they can kind of make a connection.” The use of technology to support instruction of the whole group highlights the use of UDL principles throughout content areas.

**Subordinate Theme: Cross-Curricular Connections**

The exemplary teachers all spoke of cross-curricular connections which told of their practices and desires to organize and design instructional connections between concepts and vocabulary being taught in reading, writing, science, math, and social studies. All three exemplary teachers continuously spoke of how they ask students to write, in order to demonstrate, support, and deepen their knowledge and understanding of themselves, their relationships, and their worlds (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007; Shanahan, 2009). It was through the act of writing and reading that the exemplary teachers connected the subject areas of math, science, and social studies. The exemplary teachers spoke of how they observe second graders beginning to understand that writing can carry meaning and words convey thoughts, ideas and feelings. The goal for the students is to become independent in the writing process (generating ideas, drafting, revising and editing), and apply the process in their daily writing. By making connections to the concepts and vocabulary learned
in other subject areas students are able to transfer and apply these skills in their writing. Kate spoke of her vocabulary instruction during math:

The word symmetry… I just make sure they see it and then we talk about it. I like to do whole brain teaching around it where we're moving and doing some kind of motion to help them remember. They remember it so much better that way. Then once they see it, they're moving, all of that's happening, they can remember it a lot better.

All three exemplary teachers spoke of connecting vocabulary instruction to science. Amy spoke of the current unit they were teaching, “We also do use a lot of vocabulary in our science curriculum. Like right now we're doing magnets. So we really talk about [the vocabulary] and use questions like, what does repelling mean? Or, what does attract mean?” Deb mentioned, “Before we start a social studies or science unit we need to talk about the vocabulary.”

The exemplary teachers spoke of and demonstrated various options for how instruction is presented, how students express their ideas, how teachers can engage students in their learning, and how instruction can be customized and adjusted to meet individual student needs. Because of purposeful planning for vocabulary instruction across subject areas, the exemplary teachers believed they were able to better meet the needs of their students.

**RQ 2: How do exemplary teachers assess each student’s breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition?**

The exemplary teachers’ perspectives of how to assess each student’s vocabulary acquisition was found in interview and observational data documented in one superordinate theme (Table 10). Research question two had the intention of extracting the exemplary teachers’ voices on the breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition through assessment. Breadth was a
targeted component to discover how the teachers viewed the assessment of how many words a student knew, otherwise known as the volume of words (Stahl, 2018). Depth was targeted to find out how teachers viewed the assessment of how well the student knew the words, and gauge accessibility of multiple aspects of a word for a student, otherwise known as the dimension (Stahl, 2018). The exemplary teachers’ thoughts and observation data were illuminated within the superordinate theme to increase the validity of the overall voice concerning assessment.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate &amp; Subordinate Themes Which Illuminate Research Question 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Planning &amp; Instruction</td>
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</tbody>
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Subordinate Themes:
1. Response to Intervention (RTI)
2. Formative Assessment

Superordinate Theme 1: Purposeful Planning & Instruction

The superordinate theme of purposeful planning and instruction was tied to research question two because of the nature of how vocabulary is developed through direct and indirect vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary is extremely difficult to assess as an independent factor (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Stahl, 2018). Nagy and Townsend (2012) described the codependency of vocabulary, comprehension, and knowledge acquisition, and spoke of how it is not desirable to separate the assessment of academic vocabulary from the instructional unit in which it was taught. It was for this reason that assessment was found as an integral component within the exemplary teachers’ planning and instruction. The following subordinate themes found within the superordinate theme of purposeful planning and instruction are supported by the
Subordinate Theme: Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI systems utilize universal screening tools, informal assessments, and teacher observation to identify students who are at risk of failure. The screening tools and assessments should be intended to identify students who are in need of vocabulary remediation and support. All three exemplary teachers spoke of the current screening tools and assessments available to them. The available options are not intended to show if a student has a deficit in vocabulary but could be used as an indicator to take a deeper look at vocabulary acquisition skills. Amy spoke of this issue in her second interview as she stated:

"Coming up with how to identify those students with vocabulary deficits, it's probably the most difficult because there's not really, you don't have like a screener for that. We don't really have a way to identify them besides just interacting with them in class and having conversations or class discussions. You know what, that's not really an easy one to identify."

Kate stated, “We don't have one [an assessment or screener] that tells us about vocabulary problems. I am sure there may be one out there already, or part of one. I just don't know how accessible they are to teachers, you know, or how friendly.” Although it is possible for the exemplary teachers to use the tools and assessments available to flag students who may need support, they were not able to identify the next tool or process to dig deeper into vocabulary as a specific need. All three exemplary teachers spoke of the lack of assessment tools that would identify vocabulary as a deficit.
In addition to screening tools, RTI uses progress monitoring for students who are receiving Tier II and Tier III intervention supports. Monitoring a student’s progress ensures that the student is receiving support effective for targeting the area of need. All three exemplary teachers spoke of not being able to monitor progress in vocabulary with the exception of the weekly vocabulary test from the reading series. Each teacher administers and utilizes the vocabulary test differently. For example, Amy allows students to use resources as they would do in an everyday situation, “I allow them to go back in the story even and use their book. Because for vocab, it's just, you know, how they're able to use those words on their own.” Both Deb and Kate do not allow students to use their book but rather ask the students to do the best they can with what they remember. With only the weekly test to use as a progress monitoring tool the teachers are unsure of how to ensure interventions and instruction are benefiting students’ vocabulary skills.

Through the RTI system, exemplary teachers are able to discuss students’ needs and get the general reading support that may be necessary to support students. Due to the exemplary teachers’ lack of universal screener and progress monitoring tools within the RTI system specific to vocabulary, they have leaned on using formative assessment to identify and monitor the progress of students with suspected vocabulary deficits.

**Subordinate Theme: Formative Assessment.** Formative assessment was identified as a practice used in a majority of the observations of the exemplary teachers. Although none of the exemplary teachers called the observed practice “formative assessment” each teacher was observed practicing a process used to elicit evidence of student learning in order to improve student understanding of the content or strategy taught and supported students to become more
self-directed learners (CCSSO FAST SCASS, 2017). Found in multiple forms of informal evaluation, the exemplary teachers were quick to identify students who needed support. Deb spoke of listening in on students’ partner conversations in order to adjust instruction to support her students, “if they just have a really general understanding and they can't connect, then I know maybe that little group has to have more instruction or support.” Formative assessment that was found in the exemplary teachers’ practices provided them with information required to balance their instruction in order to address the needs of individual students. Deb articulated this when she stated, “I sometimes recognize if what they share doesn’t connect if they don't share much or if what they write is not that much I sometimes suspect there may be a vocabulary issue. …... they have [to have] more instruction or support.”

When observing, the researcher found formative assessment also allowed the exemplary teachers unscheduled teaching opportunities. They took brief interruptions during independent work time to address particular teaching points or concepts with students that they knew needed more support. An example of this brief interruption occurred after a lesson on homophones. One of the exemplary teachers determined a student could continue to benefit from a modelled experience while others were ready to move on to partner work. The exemplary teacher quickly pulled the student aside to model another example of a different homophone then asked the students questions in order to help generate ideas for the assignments and activities the class was about to do. The student left the quick interruption to rejoin the partnership with ideas to successfully contribute to the task. Formative assessment is an important piece of effective differentiation and support. It allows teachers to plan, group, teach, remediate, and understand what students are learning. Formative assessment helped each exemplary teacher realize
students’ strengths and needs. The process of formative assessment helps support the Response to Intervention structure, which is a part of each school’s Multi-Tiered System of Support that reaches across subject areas for all students.

**Other Assessments Used to Identify Students.** In addition to universal screening tools, formative assessment and teacher observation, the exemplary teachers spoke of other assessments that may contribute to the picture of a student’s vocabulary skills. Amy shared thoughts on how she identifies students who may have vocabulary deficits:

I would say for identifying students that have a vocabulary deficit, um, look, probably the first indicators would be from DIBELS. So looking at their errors to see if they are inserting words? Or, more than likely, they would be saying the wrong word and not knowing that it doesn't make any sense in that sentence. So if they're just continuing with that, like a lot of times second graders do it might be an indicator. We sometimes see them just kind of gloss over that word or make up something that starts with the word part. Not even paying attention to it. So if they don't know what the meaning of it is, then the sentence doesn't have any meaning. Also with their comprehension, we do a retell. So if they don't have a strong retell, more than likely they weren't able to determine the meaning of the passage. So that might mean there are some vocabulary issues.

Amy then went on to speak of the basal assessment that is used throughout the district in second grade:

We also do those weekly assessments so that, I mean, if we are not catching it with DIBELS, this might be another way to see a red flag. If they're consistently having trouble with those weekly assessments on what the vocab words are. Also, some of the
writing assignments and/or assessments can kind of be a good indicator whether or not they have, um, issues with the vocabulary words, especially when we get into like informational writing, that kind of thing.

Kate spoke of her frustrations with the weekly vocabulary tests as she stated, “How can we make it better as a grade level without just focusing on this test? It just seems like there'd be a lot better ways to design an assessment where you're assessing vocabulary rather than just specific words every week.”

Although all of the exemplary teachers spoke of weekly assessments used for vocabulary within the reading series, only one spoke of the assessments being impactful for instruction.

**RQ 3: How do exemplary teachers instruct and make sense of students who are experiencing deficits in vocabulary?**

The exemplary teachers’ perspectives of how to instruct and make sense of students who were experiencing deficits in vocabulary were found in interview and observational data documented in four superordinate themes (Table 11).

Table 11

**Superordinate & Subordinate Themes Which Illuminate Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposeful Planning &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Explicit Teaching of Vocabulary Concepts</th>
<th>Word Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary Exposure &amp; Application Throughout Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Subordinate Themes:**  
1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)  
2. Response to Intervention (RTI)  
3. Differentiation  
4. Purposeful Grouping | **Subordinate Themes:**  
1. Word Families  
2. Affixes  
3. Synonyms & Antonyms  
4. Multiple Meaning Words  
5. Idioms & Figurative Speech | **Subordinate Themes:**  
1. Morphemic Analysis  
2. Semantic Mapping & Classifying Words  
3. Context Strategies to Determine Word Meaning  
4. Metacognitive Strategies | **Subordinate Themes:**  
1. Technology Integration  
2. Cross Curricular Connections |
Superordinate Theme 1: Purposeful Planning & Instruction

Purposeful planning and instruction must be utilized as a powerful tool to improve student outcomes for those experiencing deficits in their vocabulary. All of the exemplary teachers took time to provide support for vocabulary learning both in planned lessons and in incidental encounters with unfamiliar words throughout the day. Both of these practices are important elements of rich, thick vocabulary instruction (Graves, 2006; Stahl, 2005). Participant narratives and observation data showed that each exemplary teacher found having consistent and specific structures, systems, instructional routines, methods, techniques, strategies, procedures, and processes for planning and instruction assisted student learning of vocabulary. The following subordinate themes were found within the superordinate theme of purposeful planning and instruction, and are supported by the data extracted from the exemplary teachers’ interviews, observations, and mapping: (a) Universal Design for Learning (UDL), (b) Response to Intervention (RTI), (c) Differentiation, and (d) Purposeful Grouping.

Subordinate Theme: Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Although none of the participants used specific UDL language (Multiple Means of Engagement, Expression, and Representation), the practices and statements collected and analyzed by the researcher and field expert strongly suggested that all of the principles saturated each classroom. These exemplary teachers create options within vocabulary instruction on how instruction is presented, how students express their ideas, and how they engage the students in vocabulary learning (CAST, 2012). As stated in the findings around research question one, each of the exemplary teachers expressed a belief that students differ in the ways they perceive and comprehend presented information, how the student expresses information learned, and how each student is engaged
(CAST, 2017). Planning multiple ways to ensure information is accessible to all students will allow easier access and comprehension of content for all students, including those with various disabilities (CAST, 2017). Kate spoke of her experiences of giving a choice to students who showed deficits in vocabulary, “[After the] mini-lesson about it, let’s practice it, and then break up to give them a choice. That is another thing. They have to have a choice, if they don’t have a choice they are disengaged.”

The exemplary teachers’ practices are supported by research around effective teaching strategies in vocabulary instruction and UDL principles (Moats, 2018; Stahl, 2018). They all provided coherent, systematic instruction for learners who are struggling to achieve grade level, as well as those who are exceeding proficiency (CAST, 2017; Moats, 2018; Stahl, 2018). All of the participants related how this planning should adapt to the learning styles and needs of each learner, engage him or her in the learning process, help him or her become independent, and support him or her in reaching the objective of the lesson or master the skill.

**Subordinate Theme: Response to Intervention.** As previously stated, each exemplary teacher’s school had implemented and sustained a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Within each school’s system of support, an RTI reading system was found, and each system was made up of three tiers (Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III). Students who have shown or are suspected of having deficits in vocabulary are specifically supported in Tier I, II, and potentially Tier III.

Tier II instruction, also known in each of the participant’s schools as What I Need Time (WIN), is a 20-30 minute block of time occurring three or more days per week. During this time students have been purposefully grouped based on skills identified by a universal screening and other entrance criteria from assessments. During WIN time, students receive evidence-based
interventions consisting of programs and/or strategies designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support core instruction (Whitten et al., 2019). Tier III instruction provides a specific intervention time to students who have been identified with specific deficit areas and who have not fully responded to Tier II efforts (Whitten et al., 2019). In each of the participant’s schools, Tier III intervention takes place a minimum of 30 minutes per day, five days per week, individually or in small groups, in addition to Tier I and Tier II instruction (Whitten et al., 2019). During this time the identified students receive evidence-based interventions that consist of programs and strategies designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier I and Tier II (Whitten et al., 2019).

As previously addressed, all three exemplary teachers believe they must support all learners in Tier I, core instruction, as well as take responsibility for Tier II intervention support. With this in mind, the exemplary teachers articulated the need to continually find ways to support students of all ability levels. In particular, those with deficits in vocabulary through intervention in Tier II and Tier III must be supported. The exemplary teachers recognize supports in the classroom are powerful and necessary to support students who may struggle just as Deb stated:

I sometimes recognize [students who are struggling] if what they share doesn’t connect, if they don't share much, or if what they write is not that much, I sometimes suspect there maybe a vocabulary issue. I also listen to their conversations, if they just have a really general understanding and they can't connect, then I know maybe that little group has to have more instruction or support.
All the exemplary teachers recognized that the core instruction provided through the curriculum was not enough for students who have a deficit in vocabulary or seem to be behind their peers. Participants utilized the other subordinate themes of differentiation, purposeful grouping, and formative assessment to drive their purposeful planning and instruction within Tier I and Tier II.

**Subordinate Theme: Differentiation.** Differentiation was found to be a subordinate theme that was influenced by RTI implementation at each school, as it was found throughout the interviews and observations of each participant. These exemplary teachers believe differentiation to match the definition given by Whitten et al. (2019), instruction provided by a teacher that is designed strategically and based on individual student needs. Highlighting all three participants’ beliefs on differentiation, Amy’s thoughts summarized the difficulties spoken of when using the basal and other materials without differentiation:

> Sometimes it's hard... because again, it doesn't fit everybody, you know, it helps ten kids really well and then it's really challenging [for two] and I need to really support those couple students. I just try to differentiate that more and that's my whole approach. Everything is differentiated. I am going to make an environment where it’s engaging and it hits them where they’re at because I have students that are at a ninth-grade level and at a kindergarten level. So it doesn’t make sense to me to teach them all the same thing from vocabulary or reading in general...It should be differentiated and get them engaged where they are.

Another technique that all exemplary educators utilized was that of multiple response techniques to engage learners in instruction. The researcher identified the different types of response techniques within the interviews and observations as being: (a) choral responses, (b) partner
responses, (c) written responses, (d) and/or individual responses. By differentiating instruction and the response methods used, Deb spoke of how the exemplary educators found that differentiation gave “students [who were struggling] an opportunity to get ready and have something to contribute.” The exemplary teachers used differentiation to ensure all students were taking part in the learning process. The exemplary teachers differentiated and personalized instruction so students began to own the words and understand word meanings in multiple contexts.

**Subordinate Theme: Purposeful Grouping.** Brulles & Brown (2018) describe how classrooms with a range of student abilities should utilize flexible and purposeful grouping in order to meet the diverse needs of the students in the room. Each exemplary teacher demonstrated and spoke of utilizing tiered systems of support to organize instruction at Tier I and Tier II through groups and partner activities. Groupings were not just based on skill level but were created in various ways for different purposes to meet the needs of all students. Deb spoke to the reasoning behind her use of partner activities, “We have a lot of whole group, also small group, and turn and talk. I think it's better if they can interact in some way, like doing the partner activity.” Amy shared her view of using purposeful groups when she is planning remediation and intervention,

As far as like remediation, you could go two ways, For small group instruction, a lot of times, um, we have the opportunity to front-load the story by going over the vocab words. Maybe pre-read it before we do it in class, or at least look at those vocabulary words before we go over them in class. We also have these great vocab readers that go along with our weekly stories. These have all the vocab words in them, using them, using them
in context, and then they also have helped build reading skills. So both of those things would build their background knowledge. With whole group instruction, we have some time to do a little partner stuff like think, pair, share. For example, you know, turning and talking with your partner about what this word means or using in a sentence or one asking the other ‘Where have you heard that before?’ ‘What does it make you think of?’ More time for whole group instruction or discussion would be great.

Kate shared one of her peer pairing strategies that was used two of the three observations,

We also do something I like to call this a pilot-copilot situation, whether with someone that changes all the time or maybe somebody that they can work well with. The pilot will read the page and then the copilot will read the page after....[Then I would] pull that group of kids and prep them for the high vocabulary words first before we do that. So they get to hear it not only with me, then they get to hear it with the pilots and then they read the page.

By grouping students in various ways for different purposes, the exemplary teachers are able to meet the needs of all students when planning vocabulary instruction and remediation.

**Superordinate Theme 2: Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary Concepts**

The exemplary teachers spoke of and were observed teaching vocabulary concepts in a highly responsive, explicit, and systematic way in order to reach students who were struggling with vocabulary concepts (CEEDAR, 2017). Without explicit instruction, students would not only struggle with comprehension, but they may practice misconceptions or lack the depth of knowledge needed to apply the word in other contexts. Deb spoke to the hesitancy she has noticed in her colleagues when planning instruction for students with deficits in vocabulary:
The [students who are struggling] begin to learn the meaning of words and then if they don't know what it means, but there are other words that are synonyms or may have the same prefix that we have learned [that] it is something that they will apply...Even if a student is at a lower level or has been identified on some type of screening to struggle in this area, they're still able to apply prefixes and suffixes and yes I think it helps them.

It is common for teachers to assume students already have a grasp on the parts that make up words, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes (Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui, & Tarver, 2004). This assumption is typically wrong for students who have deficits in vocabulary and specific disabilities. As students get older, the more complex content and vocabulary may frustrate or overwhelm struggling readers (Stahl & Shiel, 1992). Therefore, it is important to teach students how to break complex words into smaller parts (Carnine et al., 2004; CEEDAR, 2017; Stahl & Shiel, 1992). Students who have deficits in vocabulary or have a disability do not typically use learning strategies or apply concepts like their peers, instead, they must be explicitly taught to use the concepts and strategies (CEEDAR, 2017). It is through the high-leverage practice of explicit instruction that the exemplary teachers found it necessary to explicitly teach and reteach specific vocabulary concepts through Tier I and Tier II instruction.

**Superordinate Theme 3: Word Learning Strategies**

Words are linked in a student’s memory to other concepts, words, or experiences, based on their relationships to each other (Rumelheart, 1980; Anderson, 1980). A student’s ability to learn and retain a new word’s meaning is related to the student’s ability to utilize a strategy to associate the new word with his or her prior knowledge. The exemplary teachers spoke of the
importance of explicitly teaching the word learning strategies to all students, but in particular those with deficits in vocabulary and those with disabilities.

**Subordinate Theme: Metacognitive Strategies.** Metacognitive strategies, a subordinate theme found among all three exemplary teachers, has been found to be a high-leverage practice with all student populations (CEEDAR, 2017). Metacognitive strategies used with other word learning strategies assist in the transfer of word knowledge from one context to another (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Deb spoke of using metacognitive strategies within the activation of students’ background knowledge:

Sometimes, I have students write in their journal before we start. They are able to write about what they know about the topic or word, why do they know this, and why do they think it is important. This helps me know what they already know and lets me know the students who may not feel confident. It gives those students an opportunity to get ready and have something to contribute. We do this through a lot of brainstorming and sharing of what they [think] or what their partner [thinks].

Metacognitive strategies and instruction recorded during the exemplary teachers’ observations were integrated into lessons through modeling and explicit instruction. Kate would ask her students to stop and write on their white boards what they thought the word meant. She would then ask them to think about why they thought the word meant what they had written as they began a discussion about the word. In Amy’s classroom, students learned to monitor their performance both individually and collectively in relation to explicit vocabulary goals and make necessary adjustments to improve learning. She then would meet with them individually to discuss their thoughts on the progress they had made, as well as set a new goal.
All three exemplary teachers spoke of and were observed using this high-leverage practice with all student populations (CEEDAR, 2017). The exemplary teachers believed that the use of metacognitive strategies supported memory, increased students’ attention, and helped with the self-regulation of learning (CEEDAR, 2017).

**Superordinate Theme 4: Vocabulary Exposure & Application Across Content Areas**

With all students and, in particular, those experiencing deficits in vocabulary, exemplary educators intentionally create environments where they will experience both direct and indirect vocabulary teaching across multiple subject areas. The exemplary teachers saw the need to explicitly connect vocabulary across subject areas for those students who were experiencing deficits in vocabulary and those with disabilities (Farstrup & Samuels, 2008; O’Conner, 2007). Each subject area has specific vocabulary that needs to be explicitly taught to students who are experiencing deficits in vocabulary. Kate explained:

> [Vocabulary instruction needs] to be more cross-curricular, as far as math vocabulary, actually seeing more of the words...I do more vocabulary with math...on [a universal screener] they were asked a question with the word symmetrical and I realized that they knew what [the concept was] but they’ve never seen the word...This is why I really make sure we would focus on vocabulary, like with a math lesson, before introducing it. Even thinking about how we engage the students, pulling out important vocabulary… having cards where you are displaying them visually.

With all of the options for how instruction is presented, how students express their ideas, and how teachers can engage students in their learning, instruction across subject areas can be customized and adjusted to meet individual student needs. With these tools, the exemplary
teachers voiced that they can better meet the needs of their students and, ultimately, better prepare them for real life.

**Limitations**

Limitations of IPA, as an approach, were considered by the researcher and discussed in Chapter III, the methodology chapter. The following is an extension of that discussion in order to outline the two limitations which appear pertinent to this study. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to understand the lived experiences of second grade teachers within the context of daily vocabulary instruction. The purpose and methodology of the study caused it to be delimited to a small number of participants who were identified as exemplary second grade teachers. The small number of participants is specifically related to the qualitative method of IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). IPA, the sample, is purposively selected to be as homogenous as possible. Given the small sample size, the findings of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample. Nevertheless, the study will support the reader in judging the applicability of the findings presented and the possible implications for his or her own practice.

The second limitation was anticipated at the beginning of the study. The process of IPA was time consuming and labor intensive as the researcher gathered data to be triangulated. This is considered a limitation of IPA (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Janesick, 2011; Miles et al., 2014). Because of the intense look at the individual participants, the researcher’s attention was restricted to the participants making meaning of their own thoughts and behaviors around vocabulary instruction. Therefore, the researcher was not able to analyze the possible impact of the exemplary teachers’ vocabulary instruction on the students’ learning in content areas. This
analysis could be beneficial to the educational community and the literature surrounding vocabulary instruction, although it was not the focus of this study.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study have possible implications for professionals who work in elementary educational settings. The IPA study illuminates the exemplary teachers’ experience of the phenomena but does not attempt to explain it (Smith et al, 2009). If the reader chooses, the voices of the exemplary teachers can be useful in informing practice and professional development in educational settings.

**Implication 1: Purposeful Planning & Instruction Across Content Areas**

Each exemplary teacher spoke of and demonstrated consistent and specific structures, systems, instructional routines, methods, techniques, strategies, procedures, and processes for planning and instruction that assisted student learning of vocabulary. Through the process of purposeful vocabulary planning the exemplary teachers were able to adapt instruction to the learning styles and needs of each student. The exemplary teachers believed students to be more engaged in the learning process, becoming independent, and reaching the objectives set before them when purposeful planning and instruction was used (principles of UDL, differentiation, tiers of instruction, purposeful grouping, formative assessment, etc.). The exemplary teachers planning and instruction indicated that they viewed the instruction of vocabulary on a continuum that had both explicit vocabulary instruction and indirect vocabulary instruction as key components to be planned and not a dichotomy (Hunt and Belgar, 2005; Lee and Tan, 2012; Nation 2001; Schmitt 2008).
It is imperative that, like the exemplary teachers, other teachers are equipped with the tools and knowledge to plan purposeful vocabulary instruction across content areas. Administrators should be reminded not to accept the claim from teachers that they are able to invent instruction if they are reluctant to review the research and evidence-based practices (Moats, 2017). Voiced by the exemplary teachers, it is necessary for teachers to continually collaborate and learn about what great instruction looks like. Intuition and experience of teachers should be valued, but they should only be considered when a teacher has been equipped with a foundation in evidence-based practices, high-leverage practices, and knowledge of vocabulary instruction (CEEDAR, 2017; Moats, 2017). Like the exemplary teachers, all early elementary teachers should consider how they may purposefully plan vocabulary instruction across content areas by examining the subordinate themes illuminated in this study: UDL, tiers of instruction (RTI), differentiation, purposeful grouping, word consciousness, indirect vocabulary instruction, and formative assessment.

Implication 2: Explicit Instruction of Vocabulary Concepts and Word Learning Strategies

Students with and without disabilities can fail to make sufficient progress in the general education setting if their teachers lack a deep and comprehensive understanding of vocabulary (CEEDAR, 2017). All vocabulary concepts and word learning strategies illuminated by the exemplary teachers in this study are essential for all students but in particular for those who are experiencing deficits in vocabulary or have a disability. Moats (2018) warned administrators and teachers of the potential danger when teachers lack knowledge in strategic word learning strategies, “All sorts of unproductive activities fill the void when language structure is not taught
in an organized, explicit, and systematic manner” (p. 20). It is important for administrators to support the professional development of teachers in the area of vocabulary instruction. By developing teachers’ knowledge base we are able to build a foundational understanding of how students learn to read and acquire word meanings. Teachers are then able to plan purposeful and meaningful instruction of vocabulary concepts and word learning strategies in which students gain practice and create habits that will have long-term sustainability in their lives. For these reasons, it is important for other teachers to emulate the exemplary teachers in this study by using high-leverage practices when teaching vocabulary concepts and word learning strategies.

**Future Research**

This study aimed to enhance the understanding of exemplary teachers’ perspectives and beliefs in vocabulary acquisition, instruction, and remediation. Research has highlighted how important and influential it can be to conduct in-depth research with exemplary classroom teachers (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Chin, 2007; Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005; Hill, Schilling, & Ball, 2004; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986), but is limited in the area of teachers’ views and practices in early elementary vocabulary instruction. Future research in this area appears important to aid in the understanding and strengthening of early vocabulary instruction.

**Vocabulary Concepts and Word Learning Strategy Research**

The exemplary teachers varied in their understanding of how students progress to more advanced word recognition. Kate, the participant with six years of experience, questioned the practices from the basal that guided the instruction through specific grammatical and explicit vocabulary concepts, and verbalized a need for more indirect vocabulary exposure. Amy, the participant with 14 years of experience, wondered how she could find more current research or
evidence-based practices for teaching vocabulary concepts to her second graders. Deb, the veteran teacher with 32 years of experience, did not question the basal but did address how a young teacher could be overwhelmed with the concepts and content if not supported by a grade-level team or mentor. Both Amy and Deb articulated how there is a lack of support and resources for teachers, specifically those new to the profession, when it comes to the concepts of vocabulary, and the importance for teachers to understand. Without the explicit teaching of these vocabulary concepts at a young age, students will lack the reading foundation necessary to make them successful as they encounter challenging texts in middle school and high school. Therefore, future research is needed to support teachers of all levels of experience in the area of word learning strategies and vocabulary concept instruction. With more research in this area, teachers will have the resources needed to include word learning strategies and vocabulary concept instruction in their daily instruction.

**Context Clue Research**

All exemplary teachers continuously spoke of context clues as a word learning strategy. Despite its prominence, not one of the exemplary teachers was able to describe a specific model or methodology for how she would teach a procedure for deriving words from context. While research findings show that some definition and context approaches are effective (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986), Graves (2006) pointed out that these approaches do not necessarily engage students in active analysis of word meanings and uses. A common mistake teachers make is relying solely on context clues to provide word meaning to students (Kuhn & Stahl, 1998; Moats, 2007). Heavy reliance on context clues is simply not adequate vocabulary instruction and a lack of a particular method is not uncommon (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Kuhn &
Stahl (1998) spoke of the general problems in the use of research to guide educational practice when teaching context clues. Findings from the review of research presented recommendations for teaching procedures for learning word meanings in context, but there are very few studies actually examining the effects of instruction (Kuhn & Stahl, 1998). This type of instruction is incredibly hard to measure because we do not yet have evidence-based and research-validated practices (Kuhn & Stahl, 1998; Stahl, 2018). Therefore, studies in the area of teaching procedures or methods and the evidence of the effectiveness at early elementary in learning word meanings within context would benefit teachers and add to the research in this area.

**Assessment of Vocabulary Breadth and Depth Research**

The exemplary teachers were found to view and take ownership over each student’s daily vocabulary instruction, no matter the ability level of the student. Two of the participants spoke of the Multi-Tiered System of Support outside of the classroom through the RTI reading structure that was put in place within the school. The outside help was always in addition to the core instruction and extra support given by the classroom teacher. In order for teachers to instruct all students, they must have multiple sources of information to develop a deep understanding of each student’s strengths and needs in vocabulary (Ceedar, 2017; Nagy and Townsend, 2012). Exemplary teachers have voiced the need for multiple sources that specifically look at a student’s vocabulary skills. These assessments or methods of data collection need to be identified, researched, and brought to teachers. With further research and development of these tools teachers will need to partake in ongoing professional development on how to utilize, analyze, and make instructional adjustments to improve student outcomes (CEEDAR, 2017; Nagy and Townsend, 2012).
Summary

Through an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of exemplary second grade teachers, this study has illuminated the multiple and complex ways exemplary teachers perceive vocabulary acquisition, instruction, and remediation. The findings of this study offer three unique insights into exemplary teachers’ experiences in vocabulary instruction.

First, the study examined how exemplary teachers perceive daily vocabulary instruction for students of all abilities. The practices and perceptions of the exemplary teachers were supported by research that highlighted the use of high-leverage and evidence-based instructional practices. Through the process of purposeful vocabulary planning, the exemplary teachers were able to adapt instruction to the learning styles and needs of all students, including those experiencing deficits in vocabulary and those with disabilities.

The purposeful planning and instruction tied into the second unique finding within the perspectives and practices of exemplary teachers. The exemplary teachers utilized word learning strategies to teach specific vocabulary concepts. It was through the explicit teaching of these strategies and concepts that students were equipped with a foundational knowledge of words and skills to figure out the meaning of new words they encountered in texts.

The third unique finding was illuminated as the exemplary teachers voiced their concerns around the lack of formal assessments available to identify students who were experiencing deficits in vocabulary. Without a formal assessment, the exemplary teachers utilized formative assessments and tiers of instruction to identify and remediate reading skills that were related to vocabulary learning.
This study, which used IPA to incorporate exemplary teacher voices into the analysis of vocabulary instruction, suggests studies that do not include the daily teacher perspective would lack a critical element of understanding into the complexities of vocabulary instruction and long-term student success in reading. Additional research will continue to benefit and support the implementation of high-leverage practices, assessments to analyze vocabulary skills, and strategies specific to vocabulary instruction and remediation, ultimately benefiting students who begin school with a deficit in vocabulary. This study has illuminated the complexity of teachers’ perspectives on meeting student needs within vocabulary instruction and the importance of supporting teachers learning about vocabulary acquisition. Teachers’ knowledge and skills in understanding how students learn and grow in vocabulary acquisition and the transfer to reading is essential for the success of all students.


doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.1994.tb00752.x


McKeown, M. (1985). The acquisition of word meaning from context by children of high and
low ability. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, 482–496.


doi:10.3390/educsci8040180


Appendix A
Letter to District Superintendent

Dear [Superintendent's Name],

My name is Mackenzie W. Sheahan and I am a doctoral candidate in the Special Education and Literacy Studies Department at Western Michigan University. As part of my doctoral program I am completing a qualitative research study on exemplary teachers vocabulary instruction in second-grade classrooms. The purpose of this phenomenological study will illuminate how exemplary second-grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. Specifically, gaining insight into the perceptions and daily actions that meet the needs of all students through vocabulary instruction.

I am specifically looking for a district that has a multi-tiered system of support that has been in place for at least three years. Knowing that you have had MTSS in place for three or more years assures me that your teachers have experience working with all students in the general education classroom. Your district would be an ideal environment to find exemplary second-grade teachers to participate in the study. If you are interested in your district participating in this study I would like to ask your Elementary Principals to nominate exemplary second-grade teachers based on a set of criteria. Using the following criteria Elementary Principals will be asked to nominate second-grade teachers as participants:

1. The teacher has been referred to as a literacy leader in the building, by his or her current building.
2. Using the 5D Teacher Evaluation Rubric, the teacher has been evaluated as “Exemplary” for three consecutive years.
3. The teacher has implemented Tier I and II reading instruction within an established MTSS framework for the last three years.
4. The last three years of the teachers class average in DIBELS Composite Scores show at least 1 year of growth, based on the District’s second grade cut scores.

Once Principals submit nominations I will then meet with the nominated teachers to explain all aspects of the study before asking them to agree to participate. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. Second-grade teachers that agree to participate in this study will understand that their identities will be kept strictly confidential. His or her name, the name of the school, and the name of your district will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudonym.

Attached you will find a copy of a letter Requesting Participation from your Elementary Principals. Please feel free to send it to those who will participate in the nomination of exemplary second-grade teachers. If it is more convenient I am able to send the letters to the Principals or meet face-to-face to explain the process. If you are interested in learning more about participating in the study please contact me by email mackenzie.w.myers@wmich.edu or phone at (269)225-7831.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mackenzie W. Sheahan
Appendix B

Recruitment Email for Teachers

Dear [Principal's Name],

My name is Mackenzie W. Sheahan and I am a doctoral candidate in the Special Education and Literacy Studies Department at Western Michigan University. As part of my doctoral program I am completing a qualitative research study on exemplary teachers vocabulary instruction in second-grade classrooms. The purpose of this phenomenological study will illuminate how exemplary second-grade teachers make meaning of their own daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. Specifically, gaining insight into the perceptions and daily actions that meet the needs of all students through vocabulary instruction.

I was specifically looking for a district that has a multi-tiered system of support that has been in place for at least three years. Knowing that you have had MTSS in place for three or more years assures me that your teachers have experience working with all students in the general education classroom. Superintendent, [Insert Superintendent’s Name], has agreed to allow me to contact you in order to find exemplary second-grade teachers to participate in the study.

Using the following criteria could you please nominate a second-grade teacher as a potential teacher to be contacted for participation in the study:
1. The teacher has been referred to as a literacy leader in the building, by his or her current building.
2. Using the 5D Teacher Evaluation Rubric, the teacher has been evaluated as “Exemplary” for three consecutive years.
3. The teacher has implemented Tier I and II reading instruction within an established MTSS framework for the last three years.
4. The last three years of the teachers class average in DIBELS Composite Scores show at least 1 year of growth, based on the District’s second grade cut scores.

Once you submit your nomination via email I will then meet with the nominated teacher to explain all aspects of the study before asking them to agree to participate. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. Second-grade teachers that agree to participate in this study will understand that their identities will be kept strictly confidential. His or her name, the name of the school, and the name of your district will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudonym.

Attached you will find a copy of a letter Requesting Participation from the teacher that you nominate. Please email the name of the teacher that fits the criteria listed above to mackenzie.w.myers@wmich.edu. If you are interested in learning more about participating in the study or have questions please contact me by email mackenzie.w.myers@wmich.edu or phone at (269)225-7831.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Mackenzie W. Sheahan
Appendix C

Letter Requesting Participation

Dear [Teacher’s Name],

My name is Mackenzie Sheahan and I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am writing to ask you to be part of a qualitative research study on exemplary teachers vocabulary instruction in second-grade classrooms. You have been recommended as a participant in this study by your Principal based on a set of criteria. This study is part of the requirements in my pursuit of a doctoral degree in Special Education and Administration. I hope you will consider participating in this study.

If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in three different parts of the study.

1. The first part of your participation will allow the researcher to observe 2-3, 30-minute instructional blocks in your classroom. The researcher will not participate or interact with you or your students during these observations.

2. The second part of participation in this study will take place in 3-5 interviews that will last approximately 45-60 minutes each. These interviews will take place face-to-face at a time most convenient for you.

3. The last part of the study you will be asked to participate in will be at the beginning of the study. You will be asked to map out your professional development experiences with vocabulary. These three parts are will make up the total amount of 1 ½ to 5 hours over the course of a six month period.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or for withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and school will not appear in the study. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudonym.

Please contact me to set up a time to discuss more details of your participation by replying by email to mackenzie.w.myers@wmich.edu or by phone at (269) 225-7831.

Sincerely,

Mackenzie W. Sheahan
Appendix D

Human Subjects Internal Review Board Approval

Date: December 18, 2018

To: Luchara Wallace, Principal Investigator
   Mackenzie Sheahan, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-12-25

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Finding the Right Words: Exemplary Educators Essence of Vocabulary Instruction” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., you must request a post-approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: December 17, 2019
Principal Investigator: Dr. Luchara Wallace  
Student Investigator: Mackenzie W. Sheahan  
Title of Study: Finding the Right Words: Exemplary Educators Essence of Vocabulary Instruction  

You have been invited to participate in a research study titled "Finding the Right Words: Exemplary Educators Essence of Vocabulary Instruction". This study will serve as Mackenzie W. Sheahan’s dissertation for the requirements of the doctoral degree in Special Education and Administration. This consent form will explain the purpose of the research study and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research study. Please read this consent form carefully, completely, and ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
Through this study, we are looking to deeply understand your experiences with vocabulary instruction as an exemplary second-grade teacher. We will do this by looking at your beliefs, challenges, and overall perceptions of vocabulary instruction in your classroom. The purpose of this study will be to highlight how you, an exemplary second-grade teacher, make meaning of your daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction.

Who can participate in this study?
Individuals who can participate in the study are current second-grade teachers who have been nominated by their building principal based on the following set of four criteria:
1. The teacher has been referred to as a literacy leader in the building, by his or her current building.  
2. Using the 5D Teacher Evaluation Rubric, the teacher has been evaluated as “Exemplary” for three consecutive years.  
3. The teacher has implemented Tier I and II reading instruction within an established MTSS framework for the last three years.  
4. The last three years of the teachers class average in DIBELS Composite Scores show at least 1 year of growth, based on the District’s second-grade cut scores.

Where will this study take place?
All parts of the study will take place within your school district. All sessions and observations will be scheduled at your elementary building at your convenience.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The specific time commitment for this study is made up of three different parts (explained below) totaling between 1½ to 5 hours over the course of a six month period.
What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in three different parts of the study. The first part of your participation will allow the researcher to observe 2-3, 30-minute instructional blocks in your classroom. The researcher will not participate or interact with you or your students during these observations. The second part of participation in this study will take place in 3-5 interviews that will last approximately 45-60 minutes each. These interviews will take place face-to-face at a time most convenient for you. The last part of the study you will be asked to participate in will be at the beginning of the study. You will be asked to map out your professional development experiences with vocabulary. These three parts are will make up the total amount of 1½ to 5 hours over the course of a six-month period. If you do not feel comfortable or do not want to continue participation in the study, you can stop at any time.

What information is being measured during the study?
Your participation in this study will provide the data being measured through classroom observation, interviews, and mapping of professional development history. This information/data will never include your name or your identity. Your data will be used with other second-grade teachers’ experiences to identify themes and draw conclusions.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no identified risks for participating in this study. Pseudonyms will be provided for all participants as well as the schools and district because of this you can be assured of anonymity. All interviews will be audio recorded but once the transcription of the audio is complete the recordings will be destroyed. You will always have the right to access the transcripts from your interview. After the researcher is done analyzing the data, you will receive a list of emergent themes and quotations that support the themes. You will always have the right to review the documents and respond with any questions, comments, or specific concerns. All recordings and sensitive material will be locked in a secure location with limited access to individuals other than the Primary Investigator. Data will be stored in electronic files organized by data type on a secure server that is accessible by a password. If you do not feel comfortable or do not want to continue participation in the study, you can stop at any time.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
The potential benefit from this research will be the results of this study may serve to further the understanding of exemplary second-grade teachers in the studied district and provide a clear indication of the vocabulary practices and classroom instruction. There are no other direct benefits for participating in this study.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There will be no financial cost for participating in this study.
Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The Principal Investigator, Dr. Luchara Wallace, and the Student Investigator, Mackenzie W. Sheahan, will be the two persons who have access to the information in this study. The audio record will be saved in a locked file, then destroyed after it has been transcribed.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you may contact the Primary Investigator, Dr. Luchara Wallace at 269-387-5941 or Luchara.Wallace@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature Date
Appendix E

Sample Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study:</th>
<th>Finding the Right Words: Exemplary Educators Essence of Vocabulary Instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Interview:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Interview:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
<td>Mackenzie W. Sheahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee:</td>
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</table>

Before we begin the interview, I wanted to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study to deeply understand your experiences with vocabulary instruction as an exemplary second-grade teacher. As one of a group of researchers, I am interviewing you, and others, to better understand and make sense of how you, an exemplary second-grade teacher, make meaning of your daily experiences in relation to vocabulary instruction. Please remember you can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation.

[Review all aspects of the consent form]

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview today in order for the transcription to be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview. You completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. [Begin recording interview]

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your question.

1. Please begin by telling me about yourself, educational background, and your work as professional within the field of education?
2. How do you think vocabulary fits into the context of your classroom?
   
   a. **Prompt:** What are some of the strategies you have used within vocabulary instruction that have been successful?
      
      i. **Prompt:** Could you share some specific examples of that strategy?
   
   b. **Prompt:** What might be some strategies you have tried but may not have been as successful?
      
      i. **Prompt:** What are some of the reasons you might think that strategy did not work well?

3. What other experiences or insight could you share with me that might shed more light on this topic?
   
   a. **Prompt:** Is there anything else I should have asked to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this topic

*Thank you for participating in this interview. If necessary, may I contact you for a follow up interview or to clarify some of your responses?*
## Appendix F

Sample Observation Protocol

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<th>Observational Protocol</th>
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<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
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Map of Location
## Appendix G

### Phase 1: Transcript Analysis & Initial Themes Template

<table>
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<th>Transcript Analysis &amp; Initial Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant:</td>
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<td>Location of Interview:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Interview:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points of Significance/Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript</td>
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<td>Emerging Themes</td>
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Appendix H

Phase 2: Connecting the Themes Template

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<th>Connecting Themes</th>
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<td>Participant:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Interview:</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial List of Themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent themes based on the sequence in which they came up in the transcript.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Clustering of Themes</th>
<th>Transcript Evidence</th>
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Appendix I

Phase 3: Analysis of All Cases Template

<table>
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<th>Table of Themes from Participant 1</th>
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<td>Themes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table of Themes from Participant 2</th>
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<td>Themes</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table of Themes from Participant 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<th>Table of Themes from Participant 4</th>
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<td>Themes</td>
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Appendix J

Phase 4: Writing Up Template

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<th>Master Table of Themes for Group</th>
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<td>Themes</td>
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<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
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## Appendix K

### Phase 4: Writing Up Narratives Template

#### Master Table of Theme Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Draft Narrative</th>
<th>Exact Verbatim Used as Support</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Theme]</td>
<td>Draft Narrative:</td>
<td>Exact Verbatim Used as Support:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Theme]</td>
<td>Draft Narrative:</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Theme]</td>
<td>Draft Narrative:</td>
<td>Exact Verbatim Used as Support:</td>
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Appendix L

Participant Demographics

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Years of Experience in Early Elementary Education</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Acadience Classroom Reading Progress Percentile</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Above Average Classroom Reading Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Amy</td>
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<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Average Classroom Reading Progress</td>
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<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Deb</td>
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<td>M.A.</td>
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Appendix M

Phase 2: Initial List of Themes by Participant and Interview

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<th>Participant 3: Deb</th>
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129
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<tr>
<th>Purposeful Grouping</th>
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<th>Application</th>
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Appendix N

Phase 2: List of Themes Clustered by Participant

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<tr>
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<th>Participant 2: Amy</th>
<th>Participant 3: Deb</th>
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<td>1. Purposeful Planning and Instruction</td>
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Appendix N 
Phase 2: List of Themes Clustered by Participant 
Participant 1: Kate participant 2: Amy participant 3: Deb
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<tr>
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<th>i. Self-Evaluation</th>
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### Appendix O

**Phase 2: Superordinate Themes and Supporting Evidence**

#### Participant 1: Kate

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<tr>
<th>Themes Clustered</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Exposure and Application</strong></td>
<td>‘I try to bring it [vocabulary instruction] into everything’</td>
<td>‘[Vocabulary instruction needs] to be more cross-curricular as far as math vocabulary, actually seeing more of the words.’</td>
<td>‘I will also support them with small group and individual vocabulary practice. So I have this like phonics thing that I like to do with these same kids. It's using their phonics skills by moving tiles around and like, um, make different words. Then we talk about what each word means and then we put them into sentences and then we'll write them out. I think that's the biggest way, just because a lot of times I have a group that really, I mean basic words, they don't know what they mean. So that'</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Throughout Subject Areas</strong></td>
<td>‘We need to do more vocabulary with math...on NWEA they were asked a question with the word symmetrical and I realized that they knew what it was but they’ve never seen the word’</td>
<td>‘Really make sure we would focus on vocabulary more so like with a math lesson before introducing it. Even like with how we engage the students, pulling out important vocabulary… having cards where you are displaying them visually.’</td>
<td>’ I talk about that all the time, [we will say] let's inference particularly what does this mean when we're reading, and they can do those skills when they're reading, but then the test doesn't really test what they actually do in real life’.</td>
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<td>– Real-World Examples and Application</td>
<td>‘[I] incorporate the vocabulary words into their writing’</td>
<td>‘just making sure that it's more of a priority with everything. With absolutely every subject is not just like vocabulary time.’</td>
<td>’What do you think this big word means in this passage? That's the skill they're actually going to need to know how to do no matter what they're doing, you know, in their career.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Nonfiction Text</td>
<td>‘try to like give them as many inquiry-based problems or things to think about as possible even with writing’</td>
<td>’I do lots of nonfiction writing.’</td>
<td>’I will also support them with small group and individual vocabulary practice. So I have this like phonics thing that I like to do with these same kids. It's using their phonics skills by moving tiles around and like, um, make different words. Then we talk about what each word means and then we put them into sentences and then we'll write them out. I think that's the biggest way, just because a lot of times I have a group that really, I mean basic words, they don't know what they mean. So that’</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Time Constraints</td>
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<td>‘“I incorporate vocabulary the most is with writing. Then hopefully when we get everything else it transfers over.’</td>
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<td><strong>Vocabulary Concepts &amp; Word Learning Strategies</strong></td>
<td>‘I try to think of five synonyms for one word.’</td>
<td>‘It’d be nice to have more time to incorporate cross-curricular science into language arts.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Repeated Vocabulary Exposure and Application</td>
<td>‘We act out each word on the fly, it's just like nice and quick, and they then have an image of that and there's a definition. ’</td>
<td>‘What do you think this big word means in this passage? That's the skill they're actually going to need to know how to do no matter what they're doing, you know, in their career.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Strategies to Determine Word Meaning</td>
<td>‘one day they'll do like synonyms with their team and like antonyms with their teams.’</td>
<td>’I will also support them with small group and individual vocabulary practice. So I have this like phonics thing that I like to do with these same kids. It's using their phonics skills by moving tiles around and like, um, make different words. Then we talk about what each word means and then we put them into sentences and then we'll write them out. I think that's the biggest way, just because a lot of times I have a group that really, I mean basic words, they don't know what they mean. So that’</td>
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<td>– Making words, like with the tiles</td>
<td>‘We do making words, like with the tiles’</td>
<td>’I will also support them with small group and individual vocabulary practice. So I have this like phonics thing that I like to do with these same kids. It's using their phonics skills by moving tiles around and like, um, make different words. Then we talk about what each word means and then we put them into sentences and then we'll write them out. I think that's the biggest way, just because a lot of times I have a group that really, I mean basic words, they don't know what they mean. So that’</td>
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<td>Indirect Vocabulary Instruction</td>
<td>‘I am trying to expose them to as many new words as possible.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comprehension Connection</td>
<td>‘I would really help, not only with their phonics but it also helps with their vocabulary.’</td>
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<td>• Phonics Connection</td>
<td>‘Another one of the main things I do now is just scaffolding words with different resources, photos, and visuals.’</td>
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<td>• Word and Language Use</td>
<td>‘we don't have one [an assessment or screener] that tells us about vocabulary problems. I am sure there may be one out there already, or part of one. I just don't know how accessible they are to teachers, you know, or how friendly.’</td>
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<td>• Activating Background Knowledge</td>
<td>‘You have to make sure to look at the text features like the headings and spend time talking about it. So then they have the skills to figure out what the words mean instead of just like, here's the word, here's what it means. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that because they do need that sometimes, but there needs to be more teaching them the strategies to find the words for themselves too.’</td>
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<td>• Making Words</td>
<td>‘Teaching the strategies would be my ideal, which I do, but again, we only have so much time. I think the testing puts a lot of limits on what we can do because parents are like looking at these test scores.’</td>
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<td>• Technology Integration</td>
<td>‘look in the glossary, write them all down. Which isn't always the best way to learn new vocabulary either.’</td>
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<td>• Teachable Moments</td>
<td>‘we're not really teaching them how to figure that out in elementary we're just feeding it to them. So if they're just being fed the word, they're not going to have the skills they need.’</td>
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<td>• Student Book Choice</td>
<td>‘So even when I'm just talking, I'll say something in five different ways, just so they hear a bunch of synonyms for the same thing.’</td>
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<td>• Writing Activities</td>
<td>‘I also use the quick word books, any new words that they find or get excited about it, they always are like taught to write them in there so they have them. And then I like to go back when I'm working with them during writing and revisit their words like, oh, remember this was a really big cool word. They will ask, “Like what did this mean? Or what does this mean? Or how can we use this better in a sentence?”’</td>
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<td>• Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>‘Anytime I give any type of advice [to parents] or have a conversation it is about the student’s awareness of words [if I am noticing an issue with vocabulary].’</td>
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<td>• High-Level Vocabulary</td>
<td>‘Needs to be a lot of conversation. Having that conversation and having them listen to high level vocabulary is everything. Not only with books but just hearing explanations from people other than me.’</td>
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<td>• Technology Integration</td>
<td>‘having guest readers.’</td>
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<td>‘by reading them, they get to watch each other and they have to edit a bunch together with all different kinds of people. So they're hearing all these different words constantly and always making a big deal about words like, ‘oh my goodness, that's such a good word! What does that mean?’’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Anytime I give any type of advice [to parents] or have a conversation it is about the student’s awareness of words [if I am noticing an issue with vocabulary].’</td>
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mean though? We talk about what it means quickly... it's just like the exposure and then expecting them to find or use that word.'

'teaching them to just use all the resources possible to create something new. So that, that's, I think how I incorporate vocabulary the most is with writing. Then hopefully when we get everything else it transfers over.'

'kind of come and it's very natural and like they apply to them and what they're interested in…'

'We use our weekly vocabulary tests, so if a student's struggling with vocabulary on the test, we talk about it and how they can learn those words and use them. I would tell parents to just bring the weekly vocabulary into their home, they should try to incorporate them. So really the only reason I address it now is that it is kind of, it's connected to a curricular or even like a report card. So if they are not doing well I need to address it but I've never like conferences specifically been like vocabulary is really an issue.'

'I would begin when they are even younger. I mean starting with like kindergarten, seeing the words, using the proper words. Like when people call adjectives, salsa words.'

'I would just make sure that everything is consistent from lower to upper.'

'It's just, it's 10 words that I think that everyone focuses on because they're going to get, they know they need to the grades in for it and instead of focusing on, okay, like vocabulary as a whole. How can we make it better as a grade level without just focusing on this test? And it just seems like there'd be a lot better ways to design an assessment where you're assessing vocabulary rather than just specific words every week.'

'A lot of our kids have parents that don't really talk to them or use high-level vocabulary. And so how can they figure it out? How can they figure it out for themselves as they continue to grow the great thoughts?'

'The basal makes sure you don't miss anything. Right? It tells us you need to do adjectives...or the other common core things you have to do in second grade. So it keeps you on track with the skills that they need.'

'but for a lot of the,m it's not the right level for

For a struggling student that is with struggling with vocabulary, I would pair them with a strong student'.

'I like to call this a pilot-copilot situation, whether with someone that changes all the time or maybe somebody that they can work well with. The pilot will read the page and then the copilot will read the page after…[Then I would] pull that group of kids and prep them for the high vocabulary words first before we do that. So they get to hear it not only with me, then they get to hear it with the pilots and then they read the page.'

'Another one of the main things I do now is just scaffolding words with different resources, photos, and visuals'.

'But hearing the other students share theirs and um, be able to talk about different things is great for the students who are struggling.'

'Oh, what does that mean? I've never heard that word." I model and bringing this type of talking up a lot during class. As far as like direct instruction, like every single day, my top support would be our phonics routines and the phonics routines help a lot.'
‘just trying to like differentiate that more and that's my whole approach... everything is differentiated and everything's in groups and everything is real life’

them. It's either too easy or too hard for a student but they have the little vocabulary books that go along with it with the vocab words for that.’

‘a lot of times I let the students pick them. Um, or inspire them as far as like the writing goes and then sharing them out.’

‘When I'm modeling, I try to speak with the vocabulary in mind. So even when I'm just talking, I'll say something in five different ways, just so they hear a bunch of synonyms for the same thing.’

‘Here is a mini-lesson about it. Let’s practice it and then break up to give them a choice. That is another thing. They have to have a choice, if they don’t have a choice they are disengaged.’

‘I need to display the words that I am talking about’

‘Using pictures of the words’

‘I am going to make that an environment where it’s engaging and it hits them where they’re at because I have students that are at a ninth-grade level and at a kindergarten level. So it doesn’t make sense to me to teach them all the same thing from vocabulary or reading in general...It should be differentiated and get them engaged where they are.’

‘We act out each word on the fly, it's just like nice and quick, and they then have an image of that and there's a definition. Then one day they'll do like synonyms with their team and like antonyms with their teams.’

which we put the vocabulary words up. I like it just because they're visible.

‘having cards where you are displaying them visually.’

‘but for a lot of the, m it's not the right level for them. It's either too easy or too hard for a student but they have the little vocabulary books that go along with it with the vocab words for that.’

‘So like the word symmetry or like whatever the word is, just making sure they see it and then we talk about it. I like to do like whole brain teaching around it where we're like moving and doing some kind of motion to help them remember because they remember it so much better that way. Then once they like see it, they're moving, all of that's happening, they can remember it a lot better.’

‘Another one of the main things I do now is just scaffolding words with different resources, photos, and visuals’.

‘I have a bunch of pictures on our slide show with the word and pictures so that we talk about what it means. It is here again that I will group the struggling student with other students. Together they talk about synonyms and the, you know, the higher kids are the ones throwing them out there and the sentences, but they’re hearing them and then those that are struggling eventually they're starting to use them on their own.’

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<tr>
<th>Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</th>
<th>Choice</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘We act out each word on the fly, it's just like nice and quick, and they then have an image of that and there's a definition. Then one day they'll do like synonyms with their team and like antonyms with their teams.’</td>
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<td><strong>Purposeful Planning and Instruction</strong></td>
<td>'I try to teach it, you know, like explicitly, at least one day a week. So it is just part of the routine.'</td>
<td>'A [daily] 30 to 45-minute chunk would be a good amount of time for them to do something hands-on or for them to kind of apply the vocabulary lesson. Right now, a lot of times we just have to move on and it just gets integrated into what we're doing.'</td>
<td>'I would say like for identifying students that have a vocabulary deficit, um, look, probably the first indicators would be from DIBELS. So looking at their errors to see if they are they inserting words? Or more than likely they would be saying the wrong word and not knowing that it doesn't make any sense in that sentence. So if they're just continuing with that like a lot of times second graders do it might be an indicator. We sometimes see them just kind of gloss over that word or makeup something that starts with the word part. Not even paying attention to it. So if they don't know what the meaning of it is, then the sentence doesn't have any meaning. Also with their comprehension, we do a retell. So if they don't have a strong retell, more than likely they weren't able to determine kind of the meaning of the passage. So that might mean there are some vocabulary issues'.</td>
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<td>'we usually do vocabulary to start our story to kind of give them some background knowledge. Then it kind of incorporated throughout the rest of the week. We also use our vocabulary readers for small group instruction for like our struggling readers. Then we always do other vocabulary practice. Especially on Thursdays to prepare them because we take a vocabulary test on Fridays.'</td>
<td>'Right now it's just me saying, &quot;Oh yeah, let's stop at that word and go back.&quot; &quot;Do you know what this word means... Do you understand what that word really means?&quot; Instead of actually being, um, &quot;what's the word?&quot; We are not really focused on vocabulary not like we are doing it for a purpose. It would be great to say, okay, we're actually going to really focus on this vocabulary part of the story or, you know, tie it into social studies, tie it into science, which we don't normally get a chance to do. What would be nice to be able to plan to plan it and be, you know, prepared for it and not just like, oh, if it comes up we will do it. But instead have a time set aside for it.'</td>
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<td>'I really focus on vocabulary with our high second-grade readers in my novel study groups during WIN time because there's so many words. A lot of times the content of the books might be, you know, a little above their heads if they're high readers...Yeah, the vocabulary for those, for the novel studies, has been a huge component.'</td>
<td>'Well what we kind of do now, with the constraints we have right now is we pretty much follow along with our basal. Whatever is mapped out for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. We follow that as much as we can.'</td>
<td>'We also do those weekly Journeys assessments so that, I mean, if we are not catching it with DIBELS, this might be another way to see a red flag. If they're consistently having trouble with those weekly assessments on what the vocab words are. Also, some of the writing assignments and/or assessments can kind of be a good indicator whether or not they have, um, issues with the vocabulary words, especially when we get into like informational writing, that kind of thing.'</td>
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<td>'We also do a lot of vocabulary in our science curriculum. Like right now we're doing magnets. So we really talk about questions like, what repelling mean? Or, what does attract mean? '</td>
<td>'On Mondays, a huge chunk was already spent on vocabulary...Then Mondays and Thursdays are where I spend the majority of my vocabulary time for reading. Right now I spend probably about 15-20 minutes on vocab, on Mondays, and probably about 10-15 minutes on Thursdays. Any other time it's just kind of 'embedded'.</td>
<td>'as far as like remediation, you could go two ways. For small group instruction, a lot of times, um, we have the opportunity to front-load the story by going over the vocab words. Maybe preread it before we do it in class, or at least look at those vocabulary words before we go over them in class. We also have these great vocab readers that go along with our weekly stories. These have all the vocab words in them, using them, using them in context, and then they also have helped build reading skills. So both of those things would build their background knowledge. Also in small group instruction, we have time to get into some additional resources like technology resources. For example, Spelling City. All of</td>
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<td>'I really like using reading in context. So like using the vocabulary readers so they can see the word being put into use. But I love when we have our class conversations on the carpet, we talk about the word, we try to bring in examples, use them as questions so that we make it relatable. Like, &quot;when's a time that you felt nervous?&quot; And so then they're using that word, they're thinking about it. They're making you know, text-to-self connections. Um, that, that seems to be the most helpful.'</td>
<td>'So I feel like it's really important to teach those skills and they have to be explicit. I mean, this is how we do it, because you kind of, sometimes it's hard to figure out what that word means based on, you know, the rest of the sentence or based on the rest of the passage.'</td>
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<td>'Their assignment was to read the vocab words in context of a sentence and then make a guess or a prediction of what they thought the word meant. I realized that this group was just, they were so off...I'</td>
<td>'I choose it [vocabulary instruction and activities] based</td>
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thought that when they read the definition, they would be able to talk about like what the author meant by it in the sentence and really get an understanding of what that word meant. But they really struggled with trying to come up with it. Just from reading that word in context. I think if there wasn't a conversation with me, and if I hadn't been going through it and saying, “okay well you know you said you thought that word meant this... Would that make sense in that sentence?” They were completely clueless when it came to making that prediction just by using the sentence and context clues. So I don't know if that's just something that as a system we are lacking? What it does tell me specifically is that we need to work on using context clues.'

- **Vocabulary Concepts & Word Learning Strategies**
  - Technology Integration
  - Activate Background Knowledge
  - Word Meaning Strategies
  - Context Clues
  - Text-To-Self Connection
  - Phonics Connection
  - Comprehension Connection

'we usually do vocabulary to start our story to kind of give them some background knowledge. Then it kind of incorporated throughout the rest of the week. We also use our vocabulary readers for our small group instruction for like our struggling readers.’

'The words in there they're not quite used to or they haven't seen before. So we really take the time to get out the dictionary and look the word up. We ask, “What does that word actually mean?” Then we have a lot of conversation, they take notes too, so they're actually writing it down so they're kind of using it too.’

'I really like using reading in context. So like using the vocabulary readers so they can see the word being put into use...They're making you know, text-to-self connections. Um, that, that seems to be the most helpful.’

'When they are taking the vocabulary test I allow them to go back in the story even and use their book. Because for vocab, it's just what, you know, how they're able to use those words on their own.’

'We seem to do better when we're using like antonyms or synonyms, so then they can kind of relate it to something. That is more successful than just like matching, you know, matching the definition of the word or filling in the blank in a sentence.’

'Right now it's just me saying, “Oh yeah, let's stop at that word and go back.” “Do you know what this means... Do you understand what that word really means?” Instead of actually being, um, “what's the word?” We are not really focused on vocabulary not like we are doing it for a purpose.’

'I think it's really important for kids to learn how to use context to be able to determine the meaning of a word in a context. And if we don't start it early, then they're never going to get it. So I feel like it's really important to teach those skills and they have to be explicit. I mean, this is how we do it, because you kind of, sometimes it's hard to figure out what that word means based on, you know, the rest of the sentence or based on the rest of the passage.’

our vocab lists are preloaded in there. Or they could use something like Lexia. With whole group instruction, we have some time to do a little partner stuff like think, pair, share. For example, you know, turning and talking with your partner about what this word means or using in a sentence or one asking the other “where have you heard that before?” “What does it make you think of?” More time for whole group instruction or discussion would be great. We always have that discussion asking where is the time to introduce vocab words for the student that's having vocab issues. They are going to need more of that and not just on Monday when we introduced the, um, the vocab words. They need additional resources that they could use during whole group instruction to kind of build that background knowledge and help them understand what those words mean. We also use BrainPOP, United Streaming, um, or just additional texts so they can kind of make a connection.’
### Indirect Vocabulary Instruction

- **Informational Writing**
- **Vocabulary Exposure throughout Subject Areas**
- **RTI**
- **Teacher Observation**

| 'Vocabulary in science comes out as we are using it.' | 'We record their progress on our wall...but we use the two graphs to look at comprehension and vocabulary. For the most part, I like comparing like comprehension and vocab. They actually seem to consistently do better on vocab... So then they graph as a whole class and then they all have individual student data binders. So after they get done with their test, they write down their scores when they're finished and then they graph those. So they keep track of all of their, their tests and so they can kind of see where they are strong and where they have some weaknesses compared to how they did last week. We also set goals each quarter. So, you know and they know what they want to work on in reading. Sometimes it might be that they want to improve their vocab scores or maybe they want to work on phonics. But then they're keeping track of it too. So they're aware of how they're doing.' |
| 'Right now it's just me saying, “Oh yeah, let's stop at that word and go back.” “Do you know what this means... Do you understand what that word really means?” Instead of actually being, um, ”what's the word?” We are not really focused on vocabulary not like we are doing it for a purpose. It would be great to say, okay, we're actually going to really focus on this vocabulary part of the story or, you know, tie it into social studies, tie it into science, which we don't normally get a chance to do. What would be nice to be able to plan to plan it and be, you know, prepared for it and not just like, oh, if it comes up we will do it. But instead have a time set aside for it.' |
| 'While we're reading the story on Tuesdays as a class, we stop and look at the highlighted words and we talk about it, on Wednesdays, there's not a ton of direct instruction. It's more partner reading and partner comprehesion. So there's not a ton of vocabulary focus.' |
| 'Sometimes for like my WIN time, I just wing it, whatever's in that novel study and then whatever comes up where they're reading and then use the words that they don't understand. So it's just like, “oh yeah, we need that.”' |

### Need for Research, Best Practices, Materials Regarding Vocabulary Instruction

- **Time Constraints**
- **Essential Standards**
- **Assessment**

| 'One of our second-grade team goals is to come up with common vocabulary for math, we use Engage New York. But to come up with that vocabulary, and even common vocabulary for the new science curriculum, that's definitely going to be on like our to-do list for probably summer curriculum work because there's a lot of new vocabulary and we'll have to definitely work on that.' |
| 'They were completely clueless when it came to making that prediction just by using the sentence and context clues. So I don't know if that's just something that as a system we are lacking? What it does tell me specifically is that we need to work on using context clues.' |
| 'Now I even wonder how that correlates to some of our other students that are lower and what else might be happening out there. Especially those students that are reading below grade level, they're just trying to interpret the sentence. They're just trying to decode. They come to a word they don't know. I mean, our DIBELS retell are' |
| 'So I mean, compared to what would be ideal, it's probably about half to like a quarter of what we're actually doing.' |
| 'Sometimes looking at my small groups for our WIN time, it's really apparent, like in those are my highest readers in second grade. And when they come to a word and they have to make a prediction of what the word means and then actually go through the dictionary and find it, they have no clue what the word might mean. It's scary because, you know, those are my strong readers and they have a really hard time using those contexts clues. Um, so I feel like those skills are really important in lower elementary learning how to use those clue or make inferences.' |
| 'No, I am probably not [doing what I know I should do for vocabulary instruction].' |

### Assessment

- **Observation**

| 'But they have a certain focus being able to read the words, you know, we're still learning to read. And then once they've kind of mastered that, then the huge focus is comprehension.' |
| 'Coming up with how to identify those students with vocabulary deficits, it's probably the most difficult because there's not really, you don't have like a screener for that. We don't really have a way to identify them besides just interacting with them in class and having conversations or class discussions. You know what, that's not really an easy one to identify.' |
| 'I don't really think that I have [spoken with parents about vocabulary problems] besides just like at every report card time. I mean, parents, they become aware of whether or not the kids struggle in vocab because it's one of our standards on our report card, but it's usually not something that I would like, you know, talk about. Like if a child is struggling with reading, we send home like fluency folders or that kind of thing but in regard to vocab, it's never been a targeted area.' |
always so low. It's just, I think a lot of times in second grade they are just, you know, learning how to read, especially the set of our kids that are just coming in from other districts. They struggle just decoding and then when it's like, okay, now tell me what we just read. What can we expect them to tell us when they just literally worked so hard to read the words.'

And retell, especially when we're doing DIBELS. So that's what we tend to focus on because that's where we are tested.'

'That's where our assessments are and that's where we show student growth. Now, last year we started for second grade making our own common growth assessments or student growth assessments. And so we did take one of our units and reading and make a pre and post test for phonics and vocabulary. So we are using vocabulary to show student growth. We have changed it a little bit this year, but that's just for the student growth component of like our, our evaluation. That's not necessarily like how students are actually showing growth. Like when we go to our data meetings and we're looking at, you know, where they're at and where they need to be. But the main focus is always on accuracy and comprehension.'

'Another thing is not even knowing all like what are the best practices for vocabulary? There's not like, I mean I'm sure that's why you're doing this is because there's not a ton of research on it. When I see trainings come up through our local ISD there's not a ton of PD on vocabulary. I mean it's hard to, to find stuff out there about what is good? Like what can I do, I mean there's tons of stuff for classroom management and tons of stuff for reading comprehension and all of this stuff. But really there's not a ton on vocabulary.'

'Like I was saying, you know, earlier, when we assess vocabulary in second grade throughout the district, it's, I mean it's, it's in our basal. It's one of our main, you know, skills that we decided it was one of our essential standards as a grade level, um, as far as assessing. But as far as teaching it, there's not really a huge emphasis on it.'

'Like I said before, I'll go to like Teachers Pay Teachers or Pinterest and really, there's not a ton on there either. It's like, it's just like cuter worksheets. Yeah, I mean, you know, they just made them cuter and this may make the kids a little more engaged I guess. But it is just something they cut and paste or something like that where they can be a little more hands on. But really it's pretty much a glorified worksheet and it doesn't help you know how to instruct it necessarily.'
Participant 3: Deb

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<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Purposeful Planning and Instruction</td>
<td>I teach vocabulary throughout the day, every day. It is important in every subject!</td>
<td>An hour or so [of vocabulary instruction] at the beginning of the week and then a little bit less at the end... at the end they practice with it. Then at the beginning, I've got to do the introduction...</td>
<td>I am watching to see how much they are able to talk about themselves, what they share, if they go deep or are able to explain what they are like. If I notice that a student needs more support I will try to make sure they are with a partner that is able to support them.</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Before we start a social studies or science unit we need to talk about the vocabulary.</td>
<td>During instruction, I want to plan on the kids sharing their prior knowledge about something so I really have to pick and choose what I plan for instruction. And sometimes that's what takes so long for my prep is to think about what have we done recently and what would be best for this. I want to make sure it gets their enthusiasm going and reveals their knowledge.</td>
<td>Thinking specifically about a student who may have vocabulary issues I want them to know I understand them. I would make sure to have a morning conversation. A lot of times I make sure their morning work is set up so they can talk to someone. So I would make sure that person is seated by someone else who can support them.</td>
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<td>Exposure and Application</td>
<td>Throughout Subject Areas I sometimes recognize it if what they share doesn't connect or if they don't share much or if what they write is not much I sometimes suspect there might be a vocabulary issue. I also listen to their conversations, if they just have a really general understanding and they can't connect, then I know there are a lot of constraints for this[to happen].</td>
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<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>Write is not that much I sometimes suspect there might be a vocabulary issue.</td>
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<td>UDL</td>
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<td>Formative Assessment</td>
<td>students connecting the elements of a topic. It is nice that it helps them write about a topic without a guiding structure.</td>
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<td>Student Motivation</td>
<td>maybe a vocabulary issue.</td>
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<td>Time Constraints</td>
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<td>Personal Connection</td>
<td>It helps as a differentiation peace because students are able to expand and put more context around their learning. While some of them are still on the basic elements of a topic. It is nice that it helps them write a lot more than if we just asked them to write or talk about a topic without a guiding structure.</td>
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<td>Reading Everyday</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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It's good for all the kids whether they're high or low because it is something that we can use together and then differentiate from. I have been able to relate books to the articles or now Scholastic makes a link so you can watch a little video or complete a game to go with the articles.

You've got to have the classroom structure in place so that you don't waste time with getting groups going or gathering materials. So at the beginning of the year, you've really got to set the standards and make sure materials are where kids know they can find them and, and then give the directions in a way that they're used to so they can get after it.

We're not taking as much time as we would like to in vocabulary instruction, but we know that there are other things that need that time. Yeah, the biggest constraint is time.

I've been teaching a long time, so I've got them organized that way, which makes it easier for me. But I feel like sometimes we don't have time to share with each other.

The basal...it's so broad that I think everyone [other teachers] might or could do it differently. It could just be that a teacher will just introduce it and have the students read the words on the page and then give them an assignment. I mean it could just be paper, pencil and really basic and you'd still be checking it off your list. So I think it depends on what the teacher feels like they need or want to invest in it to make it happen. But I see my kids score better [in general] if I do more with it. I think vocabulary instruction is essential for lower elementary because it builds throughout their educational career. If we only do the minimum down here, I mean maybe we should be able to toss out something else instead of choosing not to do as much vocabulary.

The words I started with for yesterday's lesson was in a prior spelling list that needed to be reviewed before moving on.

So then during planning, I saw homophones
coming up again related to this week’s story. So there’s still the vocabulary to introduce, but when I look at them, um, I always think about what can I tell the kids already know and how much do I have to teach these new words? I am going to have to make sure they understand certain things.

Then the words on this week's list are all base word plus an ending, which we've had in the past. The words are longer than last time. So we'll do things with syllables and this type of planning is what I kind of change with each story.

You can't walk in and like pick up the teacher guide and teach, you know, day one, day two, day three, there's too much and you'd have to choose and you'd have to let some go. But you have to know your class so that you know what to let go and what they need. I think about how tough it would be to be hired for as a new teacher.

We need more time to collaborate I think. Some people might listen to you talk about something you are passionate in and be like, oh brother or that's too much work or you know, I don't have time or whatever. But, then if we leave them on that and don’t have time to collaborate, what happens? They probably pick it up and either they check off the box or maybe not even do it and then the kids lose out. So maybe collaboration would be beneficial because you could share that passion, there's a lot of room to grow.

So math, science, and social studies have no guides necessarily for vocabulary. So I look at the assessments mostly for math. The teacher guide does give a lot of, you know, in this module, there is topic A, topic B, topic C, and then it separates it out. So we really need to use math language to be consistent. Like how many more, how many fewer, how many like that. Or how and when we use the word algorithm and when will we introduce these bigger words Then I hear from
other conversations that follow them so it helps third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade if we use the right language. Then for science and social studies, I again look at the assessment a lot of times. This is so I make sure and teach and say force, repel and attract for magnets.

When I look at, you know, what we did with the vocabulary yesterday, it's like I could have given them an assignment, but it was so much better to hear the conversations.

I always want to plan on reading a story or show a video clip or a BrainPOP.

I don’t want them to just get put on a computer but using it may allow me to get back into doing some more small group things. That's my hope.

| Vocabulary Activities                           | Sometimes we will need to do activities to make the word something they understand and can put in context before doing the new module or lesson. Accessing student knowledge regarding the theme, subject, or characters of a reading selection, science/social studies topic, or math concept, Journal writing, including KW(L), Riddles to introduce/review vocabulary words, Teacher modeling, using vocabulary in context, rephrasing and/or defining words for students when necessary, Helping students to make connections between vocabulary words, vocabulary to personal knowledge/ experiences, and related to the content of the story/lesson. EETCHY pre-writing lessons (vocabulary expansion tool). “Playing” with words, brainstorming, creating anchor charts together, writing class books (every student contributes a page), Word Associations (Which vocabulary word goes with float by and slowly? - drift), Partner work, Turn and Talk/Shoulder partners, 5 Ws and an H, Scoots/Roam the Room activities, Identifying Author’s Purpose, using evidence from text. | We really need more hands-on activities and experiences with words. I am noticing that kids are too busy when we talk in class about what they are doing after school. They don’t have time to practice spelling words, I used to give homework lots of homework. Now when we are doing something like multiple meaning words, I give a half sheet and ask them to think with their family and all of the activity choices are interactive. Like, tell your mom and dad about multiple meaning words, or watch for these words at home, or think of five more together and be ready to share. | I try to incorporate movement, I mean through the year, but more at the beginning of the year.

We make a lot of class books at the beginning of the year. That way everybody is featured in the book because everybody has a page. Then the lot of them still choose that for free read to read their old stuff. I hear them say things like, “I only wrote one sentence then haha”. It's fun for them to compare what they're writing used to be like. |
Exploring genre, identifying text features for non-fiction.

A few other things that we do that contribute to vocabulary learning are read alouds every day, including books chosen specifically for enhancing a certain skills, such as rhyming, multiple meaning words, using quotation marks, prepositions, adjectives, identifying character traits, etc.

Assigning a paper pencil worksheet or activity without prior vocabulary introduction. This doesn’t work because it is assuming that the students already know and understand how to use the vocabulary words in a sentence. I feel like the sentences are short and basic, you know, but if you’ve done this other instruction and then you say you use them in a sentence, they go much deeper and it means something to them.

Sometimes, I have students write in their journal before we start. They are able to write about what they know about the topic or word and why do they know this, and why do they think it’s important. This helps me know what they already know and lets me know the students who may not feel confident.

It gives those students an opportunity to get ready to have something to contribute. We do this through a lot of brainstorming and sharing of what they did or partner share.

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Vocabulary Concepts & Word Learning Strategies

- Student Motivation
- Comprehension Connection
- Metacognition
- Phonics Connection

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I know as a beginning teacher I didn't really see the need for that much phonics practice, but it is really valuable [its connection to vocabulary].

So then during planning, I saw homophones coming up again related to this week's story. So there's still the vocabulary to introduce, but when I look at them, um, I always think about what can I tell the kids already know and how much do I have to teach these new words? I am going to have to make sure they understand certain things.

It'd be nice if kids could be involved in picking the words that they want to learn and, and I, can you give me an example of that. If a kid had an interest, like I have a lot of boys, especially this year, they're so into animals. I wound up buying a lot more of the Who Would Win? books because they love those. So if they, if they wanted to choose words to learn or explore from that topic or text in a literature circle, I don't even know where they would fit anymore. And I loved that.

You know, brothers and sisters and pets and things that are familiar and easy to talk about. I look at easy skills like opposites and movement in the room. So I will tell them things like, everybody stand over here if you know this and things like that. And I have them do an introduction kind of thing, it's sort of a framed introduction. So they would say like, this is my friend, so and so, and one way we're alike is, and then the other person has to talk.
them and correct themselves. They'll say ‘unperfect’ instead of ‘imperfect’, like when you were here observing before, so introducing this just kind of helps them begin to group the words into groups and categories. They begin to learn the meanings of words and then if they don't know what it means but there are other words that are synonyms or may have the same prefix that we have learned it is something that they will apply. They can learn that and then begin to understand the concept of how we can change words into a past tense or present tense.

Even if a student is at a lower level or has been identified on some type of screening to struggle in this area they're still able to apply prefixes and suffixes or yes and I think it helps them.

**Instructional Routines**

- **Setting Up for Success**
  - It gives those students an opportunity to get ready and have something to contribute. We do this through a lot of brainstorming and sharing of what they did or partner share.

- **Procedures**
  - At the beginning of the year we begin the day with a calendar person. They learn to choose weather words and we talked at the beginning of the year of, you know, you need one for how it looks in one for how it feels. Sometimes they would pick cold and chilly. It's like, mm. So those are, you know, those really mean the same thing. So I teach a lot just through this.

  - We echo read and it helps with phrasing. I also have two friends in the morning end our routine by telling us two riddles. We start the beginning of the year with really simple riddles but they don't get them. I mean they first think their meanings are literal. By the end of the year we've learned how about some synonyms, idioms, antonyms and they start to think differently about how to answer a riddle and so they make a lot more sense.

- **Student-led**
  - You've got to have the classroom structure in place so that you don't waste time with getting groups going or gathering materials. So at the beginning of the year, you've really got to set the standards and make sure materials are where kids know they can find them and, and then give the directions in a way that they're used to so they can get after it.

  - I have also found that along with checking in with them I need to make sure that I support them procedurally... I mean, take something like the pledge...students learn that there is a procedure for this in our room. They may even be shy about standing up front, but when we have a procedure like that they get used to seeing everyone do it and then they have no problem standing there. I help, you know, for somebody who may need help to take charge. I say, okay, everybody time for the pledge, push in your chair, and stand up. Then I teach the helper they have to say ready. So they all start at the same time. But it is through these easy procedures that I think they need to, to have chances to be the leader or contribute. They need to be exposed and see their peers do it so they can. I try to involve them and partner things.
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<td>connect or if they don't share much or if what they write is not that much I sometimes suspect there may be a vocabulary issue. I also listen to their conversations, if they just have a really general understanding and they can't connect, then I know maybe that little group has to have more instruction or support. Being able to use a multiple meaning word and how it might be used one way on one student's paper and their partner does the other way. If they learn about the words first then they can do things like make sure they are using it the way the story uses it. Then you can tell if they're understanding that.</td>
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<td>like yesterday doing the partner activity. I see that that sometimes the lower ones are pulled up by a peer better than they would be if they were sitting there with me in a remedial type situation. We know there's a lot of research that proves that.</td>
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<td>I also do explicit teaching of base words, suffixes, prefixes, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, irregular verbs, and word sorts. Some may say that younger students may not understand these but they really do begin to use them and correct themselves. They'll say ‘unperfect’ instead of ‘imperfect’. Explicitly introducing this just kind of helps them begin to group the words into groups and categories. They begin to learn the meanings of words and then if they don't know what it means but there are other words that are synonyms or may have the same prefix that we have learned it is something that they will apply. They can learn that and then begin to understand the concept of how we can change words into a past tense or present tense.</td>
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<td>We're not taking as much time as we would like to in vocabulary instruction, but we know that there are other things that need that time. Yeah, the biggest constraint is time. The words I started with for yesterday's lesson was in a prior spelling list that needed to be reviewed before moving on. But you have to know your class so that you know what to let go and what they need.</td>
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<td>If you say, you know, look back in the story and find a word that is a base word plus an ending or whatever the skill is, then they might take a word talk about themselves, what they share, if they go deep or are able to explain what they are like. If I notice that a student needs more support I will try to make sure they are with a partner that is able to support them. But it is through these easy procedures that I think they need to, to have chances to be the leader or contribute. They need to be exposed and see their peers do it so they can. I try to involve them and partner things. We have a lot of whole group, but also small group, and turn and talk. Thinking specifically about a student who may have vocabulary issues I want them to know I understand them. I would make sure to have a morning conversation. A lot of times I make sure their morning work is set up so they can talk to someone. So I would make sure that person is seated by someone else who can support them.</td>
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like pretty and think, oh it has the y added. But that's not the same as lucky would be full of luck. So. So sometimes we have to model it and explicitly teach it so that they understand it.

**Indirect Vocabulary Instruction**

- Home-to-School Connection
- Vocabulary Everyday
- RTI

Captions, labels, diagrams, graphs, subheadings, titles, all of that is addressed through our basal only a few times during the year. I have found if you address these concepts throughout the year you see a huge difference in the way a student in second grade reads a story at the beginning of the year compared to later.

It's good for all the kids whether they're high or low because it is something that we can use together and then differentiate from. I have been able to relate books to the articles or now Scholastic makes a link so you can watch a little video or complete a game to go with the articles.

We have a huge classroom library that are organized by topic, but then also by the language arts skills. Along with those books we have phone books, rhyming books, multiple meaning word activities, and class books.

I appreciate that the kids that get extra support and help by being pulled out for reading and math intervention, but it's a half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon and it changes every year. So we'd have to kind of revamp our order of things every year.

I found that it helped a number of kids with vocabulary when they really dug into writing.

When we are reading stories we use quite a lot of nonfiction. Our school PTO pays for Scholastic News and Weekly Reader, which a lot is a lot more nonfiction than we used to. So we can use these to introduce a lot of vocabulary through that. That all supports the students. The nonfiction in the basal and the Weekly Reader go well with our social studies and Science.

Some families are too stressed and I think, but the kids need to talk to their families.

I am noticing that kids are so busy when we talk in class about what they are doing after school. They don’t have time to practice spelling words, I used to give homework lots of homework. Now when we are doing something like multiple meaning words. I give a half sheet and ask them to think with their family and all of the activity choices are interactive. Like, tell your mom and dad about multiple meaning words, or watch for these words at home, or think of five more together and be ready to share.

We always start with a lot of welcoming activities and get to know you.

But it is through these easy procedures that I think they need to, to have chances to be the leader or contribute. They need to be exposed and see their peers do it so they can. I try to involve them and partner things.

We can look at a lot of things like synonyms so students don't just keep saying good and bad, you know. We start out the year journaling, um, especially at the beginning, we always brainstorm first. So then there’d be those word choices on the board. We also use a quick word dictionary that they learn to record words in that they want to use or learn. When they want to add a word they first think about how it sounds at the beginning and then find that page and look for it first. And if they don't find it, it's fine. But then they come to me and I help. I make everybody, especially the beginning of the year, read their journal entry to me and then sometimes they encourage more or tell me about those specific things. But if they have a need, a quick word, they cut the line and let come right to the front because then I can just write it and then they're supposed to use it. The words they are trying to use gives me a good indicator too. They know how it starts and there's a lot of telling things is how they use that dictionary or if they don't want to use it at all.

We send home a parent packet… which tells the importance of reading every day. I mean that's a big part of what would help with vocabulary.
I think that the vocabulary gap is a big deal. Those conversations in the car may not be happening because we're on technology or we're not, you know, they have their headphones on because mom's on the phone.

Sometimes we will need to do activities to make the word something they understand and can put in context before doing the new module or lesson. Sometimes, I have students write in their journal before we start. They are able to write about what they know about the topic or word and why do they know this, and why do they think it is important. This helps me know what they already know and lets me know the students who may not feel confident. It gives those students an opportunity to get ready and have something to contribute. We do this through a lot of brainstorming and sharing of what they did or partner share. It also lets kids who may not feel confident have something to contribute. So we do a lot of brainstorming and sharing of what they know or do this through some partner share.

Assigning a paper pencil worksheet or activity without prior vocabulary introduction. This doesn’t work because it is assuming that the students already know and understand how to use the vocabulary words in a sentence. I feel like the sentences are short and basic, you know, but if you've done this other instruction and then you say you use them in a sentence, they go much deeper and it means something to them.

During instruction, I want to plan on the kids sharing their prior knowledge about something so I really have to pick and choose what I plan for instruction. And sometimes that's what takes so long for my prep is to think about what have we done recently and what would be best for this. I want to make sure it gets their enthusiasm going and reveals their knowledge.

But you have to know your class so that you know what to let go and what they need.

We start out the year journaling, um, especially at the beginning, we always brainstorm first. So then there'd be those word choices on the board.

I try to just really have them pull in, um, their life or their experiences or their feelings.

Activate Background Knowledge

- Brainstorming
- Setting Up for Success
- Formative Assessment
- Personal Connection
- Personalized Learning
- Metacognition