Wondrous Words:
Explicit Vocabulary Instruction for Kindergarten English Language Learners

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by

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The Thesis of Amy Lucile Hammon is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011
Dedication

To Paul, thank you for everything. I love you.

To Mom and Megan, thanks for always being there.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Wondrous Words:
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by

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Susan Scharton, Chair

An expansive vocabulary is a key component in reading comprehension. Because vocabulary is so important, students need instruction in the meaning of new words. Wondrous Words is a curriculum designed to improve vocabulary instruction with kindergarten English language learners. Through this curriculum, students receive explicit instruction on vocabulary words used during a teacher read aloud. After learning about the word and hearing the read aloud, the class completes a specific vocabulary activity, requiring students to either act out the word meaning, fill in a vocabulary journal, or select an image that matches the new vocabulary word. Wondrous Words was created to improve retention of vocabulary
learning, foster depth of word understanding, and increase word consciousness. Based on observations and student work, some students developed expert-level definitions and remembered words over time. The depth of understanding of the word and how well it was remembered varied depending on the vocabulary word being learned. Almost half of the students showed an increased consciousness of words, displaying examples of word consciousness by asking about new words, making connections between words, and using previously learned vocabulary words. Wondrous Words demonstrates that young children can develop a consciousness of words and can ask for clarification about unknown vocabulary, given they are provided with explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities to interact with the word.
Chapter I: Introduction

I am currently a teacher in San Marcos, where I have been teaching for the past three years. My school serves a population of mostly English language learners (ELLs). In my particular classroom, 86% of the students were ELLs. This past year was my first year teaching kindergarten, while I had previously taught fourth and fifth grades. Having taught the upper elementary grades gave me a different perspective when I came to kindergarten.

ELL students have substantial deficits in language arts relative to native English speakers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). One particular language arts skill in which this shortfall is evident is vocabulary (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). A student’s vocabulary describes word understanding within several different contexts: oral and written; receptive and productive (Graves, 2006). Two key aspects of vocabulary are the number of words known by the student and the depth of knowledge about each word. Word knowledge ranges from no knowledge to a deep understanding of word meaning and use under multiple contexts. Therefore, improving vocabulary requires both learning new words and deepening word understanding.

As an upper elementary grade teacher, I saw how important vocabulary understanding was for reading comprehension. I noticed the difficulty my students had with vocabulary in the stories we read and this deficit was magnified in my ELL students. The students could comprehend the
concepts in the book but the vocabulary was challenging for them to understand. They could not and would not use a dictionary to find out the word meaning. My students could sound out the words but did not know what the words meant. I had many novels that I was excited to share with my students, but the vocabulary in them was often a barrier to comprehension. My students could not participate in a discussion of the literature because they were missing critical pieces of information. I tried to scaffold the vocabulary instruction by giving my students the background and details necessary to understand the new words, but I could not find a method that consistently worked. My ELLs had a vocabulary deficit that made it hard for them to participate in my highest-level reading group. They had many of the same reading skills as my non-ELLS, but word meaning was one of the main things holding them back.

I began to see lack of vocabulary as a barrier to my students’ reading comprehension. Knowing how important vocabulary was, I was curious to see how it was taught in kindergarten. My first resource for kindergarten vocabulary instruction was the Houghton Mifflin teaching guide (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003). In the upper elementary grades, each weekly story in Houghton Mifflin had eight to ten vocabulary words suggested for teaching, along with a few simple activities to go with the words. I was disappointed to see that there was little in place to help my kindergarten students learn vocabulary. For example, the kindergarten teacher’s guide only highlighted very simple
words, and these lessons were as infrequent as every other week. Unlike the upper elementary grades, there was no suggested word list. Instead, there was a brief discussion about mentioning words that related to the unit theme. For instance, one of the units in the teacher guide was on colors. In this unit, the only suggested vocabulary words were the colors words. Another unit suggested focusing instruction on words pertaining to size, such as big and small. There was very little written on how to teach these words and few of the vocabulary words were from the unit books.

I also found that none of the teachers at my grade level were talking about vocabulary instruction in kindergarten. At our grade level meetings, relevant discussions centered on phonics and decoding skills. Phonics refers to the correspondence between letters (or groups of letters) and sounds, and decoding involves sounding out written words without necessarily identifying their meaning. Our grade level team was lucky enough to receive money to buy curriculum resources twice during the school year; however, both times, the team invested in more phonics materials. We bought phonics books for the students to use and instruction guides for the teachers. When kindergarten teachers in our district discussed reading, they typically referred to the ability to decode words. While decoding skills are critical for reading success, they often overshadow other important elements in reading, such as understanding vocabulary or reading comprehension. The emphasis on decoding in kindergarten is reflected in our district report cards. On the report
cards, there were 12 categories that evaluated students’ phonemic awareness (understanding the sounds in spoken words) and phonics skills, while only six categories rated students’ comprehension abilities. The imbalance between phonemic awareness and vocabulary can also be seen in the California state standards. In kindergarten, there are seven phonemic awareness standards but only two standards for vocabulary development (California Department of Education, 2009).

My review of the current state of kindergarten vocabulary instruction suggests the need for an improved curriculum. I want to address the vocabulary gap starting in kindergarten and improve vocabulary instruction through the development of a new and flexible curriculum focused on active and explicit vocabulary instruction. My curriculum was designed around the specific vocabulary needs of ELLs, looking at what current research says was the best approach to vocabulary instruction.
Chapter II: Assessment of Need

Based on my experience with upper elementary students with vocabulary deficits and the lack of explicit vocabulary instruction in kindergarten, I began a thorough study of vocabulary instruction and its importance in language arts instruction. My first area of focus was the achievement gap between native English speakers and English language learners (ELLs) in language arts. Vocabulary knowledge is one piece in a language arts block and is important for successful reading comprehension (Biemiller, 2003). Because a growing number of schools are now serving a population of ELLs, the reading success of such students is an important issue for schools to examine.

Achievement gap of English language learners

Compared to their native English speaking counterparts, ELLs consistently perform worse on language arts assessments (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007).

Each student enters school with a different set of knowledge and abilities. However, as a group, native English speakers enter kindergarten with an average vocabulary of 2,000 to 8,000 words (California Department of Education, 1999), while the English vocabulary of ELL students is significantly smaller, though the exact number of words ELLs know when they enter school is difficult for researchers to agree upon. If teachers do not address this difference in vocabulary through effective instruction, ELL students remain at
a disadvantage compared to their non-ELL counterparts. August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) noted the discrepancy in English vocabulary between ELLs and non-ELLs. They found that not only do ELLs have less vocabulary (breadth of knowledge); they also have less information about the meaning of vocabulary word (depth of knowledge). They cite the need for more research into improved vocabulary instruction of ELLs.

The difference in vocabulary between English language learners and native English speakers can help explain the achievement gap seen in reading comprehension test scores of English language learners. There are difficulties inherent in drawing conclusions from this type of data because the methods for identifying and testing ELLs pose several problems. Abedi (2003) listed several shortcomings of using state testing and AYP to measure the growth of ELLs. For example, as ELL students progress through school, they can be reclassified as an English speaker, complicating tracking of this population’s progress. He also cited the inconsistency of ELL labels across states, making it challenging to monitor the progress of ELLs on nationalized tests. The difficulty of tracking student populations complicates the interpretation of standardized testing scores. However, despite the complexities of interpreting the results, standardized testing data sheds light on the ELL achievement gap.

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2007) showing reading performance for fourth and eighth grade students indicates that only
7% of fourth-grade ELLs tested at proficient or above, compared with 34% of non-ELLs. Even taking the problems with testing into account, this data paints a troubling picture. The California Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report, which summarizes the growth of students on state-wide standardized tests, also shows this difference in proficiency on standardized tests. In 2010, 36.1% of ELLs scored at or above proficient on the general ELA tests, compared to a California state-wide proficiency level of 53.9% (California Department of Education, 2010). ELLs had the second lowest out of eleven subgroups, only performing better than the Students with Disabilities subgroup.

**Need at the local level**

The needs of English language learners are especially relevant to schools and classrooms serving a high percentage of such students. Given that 81% of the students attending my particular school are classified as English language learners (School Accountability Report Card, 2010), and 19 out of the 22 students (86%) in my kindergarten class were learning English (School Accountability Report Card, 2010), the needs of this population are important to my colleagues and me. The make-up of our school population makes it especially important for the teachers to provide students with sufficient English vocabulary instruction. As a teacher, I want to give my students the language tools they will need to succeed and make themselves heard at school.
**Need at the state and national level**

Across the state and nation, a number of schools are now serving a growing population of English language learners, making the reading success of ELLs an important issue for schools to examine. Approximately 25% of California kindergarten through twelfth grade students are ELLs (California Department of Education, 2009). At the national level, between the 1997-98 and 2007-08 school years, the percentage of ELLs in K-12 schools has grown 53.25% (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In contrast, the percent of all students enrolled in schools during that same time period has grown 8.45% (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In terms of national student population, the 1995-1996 school year had 3.2 million ELLs enrolled in public education in kindergarten through twelfth grade, and by the 2005-2006 school year, the number of ELLs increased to five million (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2009). As the ELL population continues to grow, an increasing number of schools must consider instruction focused on this group. In order for schools to serve this population with effective language arts instruction, it is necessary to address reading comprehension, specifically vocabulary instruction.
Chapter III: Review of relevant research

In order to develop a vocabulary curriculum designed to meet the current needs of English language learners (ELLs), I examined research to learn what constituted effective vocabulary instruction to learn the best methods for teaching vocabulary, I looked at larger constructs that affect multiple areas of education as well as specific research into vocabulary acquisition. Examining the research enabled me to better critique and design vocabulary curriculum.

Constructs in Vocabulary instruction

Effective vocabulary instruction takes advantage of best teaching practices and educational theory. Two important concepts to include when discussing vocabulary instruction are depth of understanding and active learning. Depth of understanding refers to covering a subject in great detail, giving students enough time to understand multiple aspects of the subject. Depth of understanding is important in vocabulary instruction because students need in-depth knowledge of word meanings. An active learning environment is one where students play a role in their learning, with the teachers and students work together to make meaning during a lesson. Active learning environments help students learn vocabulary because they are engaged in activities and have more of a say in their own learning.

Depth of understanding.

When students develop deep levels of knowledge about a word, they demonstrate depth of understanding. Students can display different levels of
knowledge, from the novice level to that of an expert. A vocabulary expert differs from a novice in several key ways: 1) experts can identify patterns better than novices, 2) experts have deep breadth of knowledge versus the more shallow knowledge of a novice, 3) experts’ knowledge is flexible and changes depending on the situation, and 4) experts are able to fluently retrieve their knowledge with minimal effort (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). When teaching vocabulary, the goal should be for students to have an expert level definition of words, rather than that of a novice. Students should have a solid meaning of a word, being able to apply it to and understand it in a variety of contexts. Traditional vocabulary instruction requires students to memorize definitions from the dictionary. Students can recite these definitions but have no true understanding of what the word means. They cannot use the word themselves or understand the nuances of what the word means. This emphasis solely on memorization does not lead to an expert-level understanding of the word.

Students should have a deep understanding of word meaning. When teaching for depth, teachers give students more opportunities to discuss and interact with words. When comparing two different methods of teaching vocabulary, the program that allowed for more time to discuss words led to deeper understanding of the word meanings (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). Students with vocabulary depth are not limited by using the word in only one specific situation.
Depth of understanding in vocabulary is especially important for English language learners (ELLs). August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) reviewed multiple studies examining the ways English language learners learn vocabulary. They found that ELLs not only know fewer words than their English-only peers, but the understanding of the words they do know is more superficial than their native English speaking peers. The study authors made recommendations for vocabulary instruction, including using the students’ first language, determining students’ knowledge of simple words, reviewing previously taught words, and reinforcing the word learning. English language learners knew fewer multiple meanings for a word and used fewer words to describe a vocabulary term. In another study of monolingual Dutch and bilingual Turkish children, researchers asked students to give all the meanings that they could think of for a given vocabulary word in Dutch (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993). The study found that the Turkish students had fewer meanings and examples for words. For the word nose, the Turkish students thought of fewer examples of what uses a nose has. Because the Turkish students only heard Dutch words at school, they had less exposure to hearing vocabulary words in multiple contexts, leading to a less in-depth knowledge of the words (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993). Students learning a second language need effective vocabulary instruction in school to help make up this difference in vocabulary skills.
An important concept to remember when discussing vocabulary is that using a word is not the same as fully understanding a word. To help students make connections between words and understand all the uses of a word, teachers need to instruct students in the deep meaning of words by providing students with multiple examples of the word. For the word giraffe, the different examples should emphasize the giraffe’s long neck, its spots, and its natural habitat. All of these attributes contribute to what we think of as giraffe. When people reference a giraffe, students with deep understanding would have a complete picture in their mind, displaying their expert knowledge by using the word in multiple contexts (tall, spots, from Africa) and successfully categorizing words (animal, mammal,). Giving students sufficient time and resources to develop depth of understanding is important for teachers to consider and is an important aspect of effective vocabulary instruction.

**Active learning.**

A definition of active learning challenges the notion that students are blank slates, ready to absorb everything the teacher says. Instead, proponents of active learning theorize that students play a role in understanding and making meaning while they learn. Active learning relates to Piaget’s constructivist theory of learning in which, students use their previous experiences to help them make sense of new learning (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Vygotsky theorized that social interactions were key to learning, supporting the ideas that learners were not islands unto themselves (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Through social interactions, students
learned from others, likewise building upon their previous knowledge.

Collaboration and social learning are an important part of an active learning environment (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

In a classroom that embodies active learning, the teacher does not spend the bulk of the class period lecturing. Instead, students are involved in their own learning. In active learning, teachers stop presenting knowledge for the students to absorb. Instead, the teacher’s role changes to that of a facilitator, helping students make their own meaning (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). The teacher is not seen as the only one with valuable input into the lesson; with active learning, students use their own and each others’ insights in learning. Research in active learning often center on college classrooms, since these often feature the traditional lecturer model of instruction. Results from research in active learning has caused professors to question this traditional model (Shang, Shi, & Chen, 2001), yet active learning is also a beneficial feature of elementary school classrooms, too. By using techniques that focus on elements of active learning, teachers can support young students as they ask and answer questions and try to make meaning from the world around them (Falk, 2009).

There are many hallmarks of an active learning environment. Active learning theorizes that students need to engage in activities in order to learn: reading, writing, talking, listening and reflecting about the learning (Meyers & Jones, 1993). When students are involved in the learning, they are paying
more attention to the material that is being presented. In active learning, problem solving should mirror real life situations and new information is presented in context (Shang, Shi, & Chen, 2001). Connections are made between what is being learned in the classroom and how it is used in the real world. When designing vocabulary activities, these principals of active learning should be taken into consideration. To actively involve students in the vocabulary learning, students should be reading the word, writing about the vocabulary, talking about the vocabulary word with peers, and collaboratively working together to make meaning.

Both active learning and depth of knowledge are important features in education and improve instruction in varying educational contexts. Research has also been done on specific practices and theories in effective vocabulary instruction.

**Role of vocabulary in reading comprehension**

Reading comprehension is making meaning by interacting with a text (Snow, 2002). It describes the understanding that students take away from a piece of text they have read. Comprehension of grade-level reading materials requires more than just decoding skills – it also requires sufficient vocabulary understanding to understand what is read. Multiple researchers have studied the important role that vocabulary plays in reading comprehension (Becker, 1977, Biemiller, 2003, and Lervag & Aukrust, 2010).
Becker (1977) noted the role vocabulary plays in school achievement among disadvantaged students of low socioeconomic status. He found that these students were exposed to texts with limited vocabulary in the lower elementary grades. Once students were in fourth grade, the vocabulary became more difficult. Up until fourth grade, these students were making progress, but this progress stopped when they were expected to read and understand more difficult vocabulary. The disadvantaged students’ drop-off in reading success was not found with other students, leading Becker to theorize that the drop-off was related to insufficient vocabulary. He made the call for improved vocabulary instruction.

Biemiller (2003) examined the role vocabulary played in the reading comprehension of second language learners. He reviewed vocabulary research as well as his own that examined current knowledge about vocabulary research. His study showed that by third grade, students could decode (read and pronounce but not necessarily understand) “more words than they could understand” (p. 324). The paper also noted that vocabulary differences began in early elementary school. At the end of second grade there can be a large discrepancy between students; some students know more than 4,000 more words than their peers. Because of this discrepancy, Biemiller called for schools to spend more time on explicitly instructing students in vocabulary development.
Lervag and Aukrust (2010) looked at second-grade students in Norway who were native and non-native Norwegian speakers. Norwegian has more consistent phonics rules than English, enabling the researchers to control for decoding, providing students with reading passages composed entirely of phonetically decodable words. They found that as decoding skills develop, vocabulary becomes the most important factor in comprehension. Because students could sound out all of the words in a reading passage, phonics skills were less important in determining reading comprehension. Instead, vocabulary played a large role in students’ reading comprehension. Those students with higher vocabulary were more likely to have higher reading comprehension. If students did not know the meaning of multiple the words in the text, their reading comprehension suffered. Because of the role vocabulary plays in reading comprehension, the researchers suggested that students learning a second language would benefit from vocabulary instruction starting at a young age.

The previous studies showed a relationship between limited vocabulary and weak reading comprehension. Other research has shown that vocabulary instruction can improve reading comprehension. For example, Carlo et al. (2004) found that intensive vocabulary lessons improved the reading comprehension of fifth-grade ELL and non-ELL students. These lessons were conducted for 30 to 45 minutes a day, four days a week. Throughout the week, students learned ten to 12 new vocabulary words. After 15 weeks of
these vocabulary lessons, both ELLs and native English speakers showed an increase in both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

The research has shown the important role of vocabulary instruction plays in an effective language arts education for all students, especially for those learning English. In order to understand what they read, students need a sufficiently large vocabulary. Research shows that without this vocabulary knowledge, students display poorer reading comprehension.

**Effective Vocabulary Instruction**

There are many different key elements that need to be considered in designing and implementing effective vocabulary curriculum. The first element I examined in effective vocabulary instruction is word selection. If there are thousands of words in the English language—how does a teacher decide which words to teach? Once the words have been chosen, students are given more information about the word. I examined research that discusses how to create an effective definition for students. Research has also been done on how to introduce the vocabulary word: presenting the word in multiple contexts provides students with more information about its meaning. Another aspect of vocabulary research examined in the research is how often words should be reviewed and in what contexts. Lastly, vocabulary instruction should foster the development of word consciousness, increasing students’ consciousness of words and word meanings.
In order to provide students with the instruction needed to improve their vocabularies, effective examples of vocabulary instruction needs to be examined. One important factor in vocabulary instruction is deciding upon which words to focus instruction. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) identify three types of word students come across while reading: Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three. Tier One words are simple words with a basic meaning, such as purple or table. Tier Two words are words that are more complex and used in a variety of situations. Examples [of Tier Two words] include coincidence, absurd, industrious, and fortunate. Because of the large role they play in a language user’s repertoire, rich knowledge of words in the second tier can have a powerful impact of verbal functioning. Thus, instruction directed toward Tier Two words, can be most productive. (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, p. 8)

Tier Three words are words that are used infrequently or in a specific field, such as genome or kayak. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) make the case for focusing instruction on Tier Two words, saying these will be the most beneficial for the students to learn, because students will keep coming across them in academic settings.

Vocabulary instruction should also focus on words that are necessary to comprehend the current reading assignment (Nagy, 1989). To understand a story about a grumpy goose, one needs to know the meaning of the word grumpy. When selecting which vocabulary words to teach, an instructor needs to think about how the word is used in context and if learning more information about the word will help the students’ comprehension with the
book. Tier Two words and words that are necessary for comprehension of the
text should be the focus of vocabulary instruction.

In order to learn the words that have been selected for instruction,
Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) recommend multiple techniques to
promote learning. One of the key recommendations is using child-friendly
definitions. Rather than using dictionary definitions that can be confusing and
hard for young children to access, words should be described plainly and in
terms with which students are familiar. All too often, the definition provided by
the dictionary is confusing, not leading to true understanding. The definition
for words should be something that students can work with and comprehend.
For the word game, the first definition provided by the dictionary is “an
amusement or pastime.” (dictionary.com, 2011), which requires the reader to
know the meaning of the word amusement. A student-friendly definition, on
the other hand, is “something that is fun to play.” The second definition is easier
for a student to understand. The teacher should think about what words and
concepts students are familiar with and include those in the definition. A
comprehensible definition is an important step in effective vocabulary
instruction (Graves, 2006).

Another way teachers can promote learning new vocabulary is by
providing multiple examples that use the word. The words should not just be
used in the way they are first shown in a story. Instead, the teacher should give
a variety of examples, showing the different ways a word can be used (Beck,
Hearing multiple sentences that use the vocabulary word in different ways, provides students with valuable examples of word usage. By providing multiple contexts for the word, teachers increase the depth of word understanding. In the case of the word game, the teacher should provide different examples of games, such as Candyland, Go Fish, soccer, and Jeopardy. These examples show students that the word game can apply to many different activities.

Explicit vocabulary instruction is critical in expanding students’ vocabularies. This type of instruction is especially true for traditionally low achieving students (including students of low socioeconomic status and English learners). Children have a difficult time learning words from context (McKeown, 1985). This approach is based on inferring the meaning of a novel word based on its use in the text context. While learning from context does provide some information about the meaning of the vocabulary word, it is not as effective as explicit vocabulary instruction. When students are provided with explicit vocabulary instruction, they show an improvement in learning more words, increasing the size of their vocabulary (Marulis & Neuman, 2010). An effective vocabulary program will provide students with clear definitions of words and specific vocabulary activities designed to improve both depth and breadth of vocabulary. Direct vocabulary instruction is especially beneficial for English language learners; making it clear to the ELLs what specific words they should be learning (Goldenberg, 2008).
Phillips, Foote, and Harper (2008) examine current vocabulary instruction in kindergarten through twelfth grade and find it lacking in effectiveness. Based on what is missing in current vocabulary instruction, they recommend five strategies for improving instruction: 1) select words based on students’ current lexicons; 2) increase the use of graphic organizers; 3) ask students to make, then discuss, predictions about word meanings; 4) require students to compare synonyms and antonyms; and 5) have students classify words. All of these strategies require students to take a more active role in vocabulary activities in the classroom. By giving students opportunities to be active learners, they have more of a stake in learning and using vocabulary words and their achievement is positively affected as well (Meyers & Jones, 1993).

One of the goals of vocabulary instruction is for students to learn the words so they can use and apply them in the future. When students come across a previously taught vocabulary word, they should have more information about that word than when encountering a completely new word. Reviewing the words over time and allowing students to play a more active role in learning can improve memory and retention (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002), increasing the likelihood that students can apply the vocabulary learning in the future. Practice also improves memory, enabling learners to better recall information from their long-term memory. (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). By giving students opportunities to practice recalling
vocabulary words, a teacher increases the likelihood of retention. Teaching vocabulary should not be isolated to a small block of time once a week. Instead, vocabulary lessons should be frequent, helping students review and recall previously learned words. Students should hear the word multiple times throughout the week and have a variety of ways to interact with the word.

Because kindergarten students have different learning needs than other grade levels, studies targeting young children were also examined. Hart and Risley (1975) examined how young children learned language in the preschool setting and found much of the learning occurred during one-on-one conversations between student and teacher, based on various cues and prompts from both the teacher and student. The researchers concluded that incidental learning was effective in increasing students’ language arts skills and that incidental learning was how language was learned in preschool. Other studies have looked specifically at how young bilingual students learn language. Tabors and Snow (2001) looked at bilingual preschool students in three different age groups: zero to three, three to five, and five to eight. The researchers found that bilingual students in English-only environments were not learning language at the desired rate. The English vocabulary these students did learn was through social interactions, not through exposure to texts. Another study compared bilingual, low-income pre-kindergarten students in the United States with Spanish-speaking students in Puerto Rico, measuring their pre-literacy and language skills (Paez, Tabors, & Lopez, 2007). Students in
the bilingual program did not make any significant oral language gains in English after a year of pre-kindergarten. These students also did not demonstrate any gains in their Spanish vocabulary. Based on these results, the researchers state that preschool teachers need to work on developing students' oral language skills in preschool.

Given the breadth and depth of vocabulary words students need to learn, explicit instruction from teachers does not meet all the vocabulary needs of a student. Instead, students can be taught to recognize unknown words and seek out the meaning of these words (Scott & Nagy, 2004). Word consciousness is defined as increased thinking about words. Students display word consciousness when they ask questions about new words and show an interest in learning new vocabulary. As students develop more word consciousness, they begin to play a more active role in their own vocabulary learning. Students also benefit from increased consciousness of vocabulary learning. Word consciousness is especially important when instructing less advantaged students, because it helps these at-risk students grow a rich vocabulary (Graves, 2006).

Multiple techniques can be used to help develop word consciousness in students. Graves and Watts-Taffe (2008) list six ways educators can promote word consciousness in the classroom:

(1) create a word-rich classroom, (2) recognize and promote adept diction, (3) promote word play, (4) foster word
consciousness through writing, (5) involve students in original investigations, (6) teach students about words. (p. 186).

These different methods give students opportunities to learn about words and become more aware of the words they hear daily, leading to an increase in word consciousness. These increased levels can lead to greater vocabulary learning. In a study looking at the most effective methods of vocabulary instruction for kindergarten students, researchers found that the students were displaying more examples of word consciousness after receiving direct vocabulary instruction (Zipoli, Coyne, & McCoach, 2011). Word consciousness was an unintended effect of the instruction, yet researchers in the project noted that after receiving vocabulary instruction, students asked more questions about unknown words.

When teaching and assessing students on vocabulary, teachers need to be aware of how well students know a word. Knowing a vocabulary word is more than a simple yes or no proposition. There are different levels of knowing a vocabulary word, from having no recognition of a word to deep knowledge of a word’s meaning. Beck, McKeown, and Omanson (1987) created a description of the different stages of vocabulary knowledge: 1) no knowledge of the word; 2) some sense of the word; 3) knowledge of the word in a limited context; 4) general knowledge of the word; and 5) deep understanding of the word in multiple contexts. When talking about knowing a vocabulary word, it is important to clarify what knowing a word entails. Students with deeper levels
of word understanding can make more connections between words and use the words in more contexts (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993).

Teaching vocabulary to ELLs is important because they come to school with less breadth and depth of vocabulary in English than their English-only peers (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993). There are some specific strategies that are especially effective in helping ELLs with their vocabulary acquisition. One way to help ELLs learn new vocabulary is to review and reinforce the learning by discussing the words over multiple days and referencing back to previously learned words (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). When teachers spend time in class discussing new words from a text and following up the reading with an activity that reinforces the learning, ELLs’ vocabulary improves.

Multiple years of rich vocabulary instruction also helps ELLs learn more vocabulary. When students have access year after year to effective vocabulary instructions, they show greater improvement than those students with just one year of strong vocabulary teaching (McLaughlin et al., 2000). Strong, explicit vocabulary instruction should begin before kindergarten and continue through school in order to best help ELLs learn new words.

While vocabulary instruction should be occurring every year in school, the pace at which students are taught new words needs to be carefully managed. Students need to learn enough words to help them successfully grow their vocabulary but not so many words that the process overwhelms them. Gersten and Baker (2000) discussed, with a guided, multivocal work
group of teaching professionals, effective teaching practices for ELLs. Through analyzing these discussions of best practices, they found teaching vocabulary was a key element in teaching English. By only teaching seven words at once over a long period of time, students had the opportunity develop deeper word meanings for these new words. Slowing the pace of vocabulary instruction improved the students’ vocabulary acquisition.

Vocabulary research is an extensive subject with findings on almost all aspects of teaching vocabulary. To be an effective vocabulary instructor, decisions need to be made about word choice, definitions, discussions and activities. Teachers of ELLs need to be especially purposeful about teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction also benefits from general good teaching practices, such as teaching for deep understanding and creating an active learning environment. When examining current vocabulary curriculum, it is important to keep what constitutes effective vocabulary instruction in mind. Effective curriculum should promote depth of understanding in an active learning environment. Vocabulary words should be carefully selected, students should be taught high-utility words and words that are essential for comprehension of a story. The definition of the word should be presented in student-friendly terms and words should be reviewed over time. These many components work together to constitute an effective vocabulary curriculum.
Chapter IV: Review of Existing Curricula

In order to determine how to improve vocabulary instruction, an important first step is to review current vocabulary curricula. Based on my review of effective vocabulary instruction, each curriculum is assessed to determine whether or not it meets these criteria.

As discussed in Chapter three, both depth of understanding and active learning are important constructs that characterize effective vocabulary instruction. There are also many vocabulary strategies used in effective vocabulary instruction, such as the use of Tier Two words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002); higher-level vocabulary words that are used in a wide variety of situation. Effective vocabulary instruction should also include student-friendly definitions, explaining the word meaning in clear, simple language (Graves, 2006). Students should have multiple opportunities to interact with the word and should have an active role in the vocabulary lesson. They should not be passive recipients of vocabulary instruction; instead, students should participate in their own learning (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). I use these concepts to evaluate three curricula that teach vocabulary to kindergarten students: Houghton Mifflin (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003), Rigby: On Our Way to English (Freeman et al., 2006), and Project GLAD, which stands for Guided Language Acquisition Design (Brechtel, 2001). These programs are used in my school district and are common ones found throughout California. Houghton Mifflin is a language arts program, while Rigby and Project GLAD are programs designed to teach English to language learners.
Houghton Mifflin

My district uses the Houghton Mifflin (HM) language arts program, a comprehensive curriculum that provides instruction in reading and writing (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003). HM is a widely used program, one of the most common in California. Lesson plans are laid out on a weekly basis and include different activities to support that week’s area of focus. Because it is a comprehensive curriculum, there are many different aspects of the program. The plans include reading activities such as a read aloud, where a teacher reads aloud a story and asks students reading comprehension activities. Another reading activity featured in Houghton Mifflin is ideas on how to foster phonemic awareness. Students are taught to differentiate between the different sounds in a word. Phonics is also a large aspect of reading instruction in kindergarten and is covered by Houghton Mifflin. Through the Alphafriends, animals that correspond with each letter in the alphabet, students learn letter names and sounds. The HM program also comes with a number of big books. These large books are meant to be read interactively with the students. Because of their size, teachers are better able to model concepts of print, such as identifying the front cover and reading left to right.

While my school uses many of the activities from Houghton Mifflin, we are not required to strictly follow the teacher’s guide. Instead, we can decide what components best meet the needs of our students. Each week of the teacher’s guide contains some components with a few ideas about how to augment the lesson to support ELLs. These ideas are brief, usually only a
paragraph or two for an entire week’s worth of lessons. There is also a supplementary English language learner handbook, which provides ideas and worksheets that supplement the lessons outlined in Houghton Mifflin. The handbook does not feature new vocabulary; instead, it presents simplified versions of the lessons featured in Houghton Mifflin.

In the kindergarten edition of HM, only one vocabulary activity is included per week, and it is intended for the general population of kindergarteners, not just English language learners. Houghton Mifflin does not give a list of specific vocabulary words that should be taught. Instead, the vocabulary lesson is titled as vocabulary expansion, providing teachers with different oral prompts meant to get students to use language related to the theme of the week. Houghton Mifflin gives teachers oral prompts to help students describe objects, such as naming body parts or using comparison words like bigger or smaller. One example of this is using size words. Houghton Mifflin recommends asking questions like “Who is bigger, you or a mouse?” and suggests that the teacher use his or her hands to help demonstrate the concept of size. The teacher’s edition uses simple words and refers to more advanced vocabulary, like enormous, as a “grownup word.” Houghton Mifflin advises that you teach students words like these, but the sections on vocabulary do not include them. The vocabulary in HM is mostly made up of simple vocabulary that can be used to describe objects, such as big, small, purple, and busy. Most of these words can be categorized as Tier One words.
The words come from the theme of the week; they do not appear to be from stories. All of the vocabulary is presented orally through whole-class discussions.

Houghton Mifflin is used throughout all grades at my elementary school, and its approach to vocabulary changes in the upper elementary grades. In fourth and fifth grade, the type of words HM focuses on moves from Tier One to Tier Three words. Each week, HM highlights ten words from the short story students are reading. HM includes multiple worksheets for students to complete on the selected vocabulary. Many of the words are very specific to the story and not applicable to multiple settings. As an upper-grade teacher, my grade level teams found the HM-selected words insufficient, finding them too specific to the individual story. To address this deficit, we would go through the weekly stories and pick new vocabulary words, focusing on more Tier Two words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). We wanted students to learn words that had a wider utility. Houghton Mifflin’s approach to vocabulary is problematic in both the upper and lower grades, missing key elements of effective vocabulary curriculum.

There are many limitations to HM’s approach to vocabulary. In kindergarten, HM presents vocabulary at an introductory level, providing only brief explanations of the words in narrow contexts, providing students with limited information about the words. This basic introduction to the words does not lead to in-depth understanding (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp,
Rather than teaching students words that they will use in literature, the selected words are primarily used to describe objects. While it is important for students to have this vocabulary, other words also need to be taught. The words HM chooses to emphasize are not the Tier Two words, instead the words are either simple words using for labeling, such as big or green, or specific words only applicable to a single story, such as funnel cloud or heifer.

Vocabulary should also be taught more than once a week in order for students to develop a deep understanding of the words' meanings (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). It needs to be a larger part of a language arts block. Because vocabulary is infrequently discussed, students do not have time to develop word consciousness. The curriculum does not promote students asking about unknown words and making connections between words (Scott & Nagy, 2004). Students need multiple opportunities to interact with words in order to gain a deeper meaning. All of these features are missing from HM’s vocabulary curriculum.

**Rigby: On Our Way to English**

Rigby (Freeman et al., 2006) is a curriculum that my school uses specifically for English language development (ELD). Its goal is to teach students in listening, reading, speaking, and writing English. The areas of instruction are oral language development, comprehension strategy, literacy skills, learning objectives for specific subject areas (such as science or math), language learning strategies, and writing skills. Rigby incorporates many
different tools and approaches to teach the new language, including charts, books, posters, and hand movements. There is a lot of repetition in the program, such as singing the same chant everyday for a week, and labeling of images. The program does not specifically list vocabulary to teach the students. Instead, it lists general concepts that students should be able to name, such as the seasons or animals.

Rigby suggests multiple approaches to develop vocabulary. Students have more than one opportunity to interact with words, using gestures, songs, and pictures to help students learn. These are helpful ways for ELLs to learn the vocabulary necessary to describe the world around them.

While the program teaches basic vocabulary, it does not focus on academic vocabulary, words which are important for understanding key academic concepts such as character or theme. Like Houghton Mifflin, it focuses more on labeling items and pictures. Academic vocabulary is important for students to succeed in school and needs to be explicitly taught in classrooms (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Rigby’s program includes some methods of effective vocabulary instruction, but the word choice limits the program’s effectiveness in teaching ELLs the breadth of vocabulary they need in order to be successful in academic environments.

**Project GLAD**

Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) is a language acquisition program designed to improve the reading, writing, speaking, and
listening of English language learners. This program uses science and social studies curriculum to improve language acquisition. It focuses on the California English language development (ELD) standards (California Department of Education, 1999) and intertwines them with the science and social studies standards. Because it is covering two aspects of curriculum, science/social studies and ELD, it is easier for teachers to fit it in during the day. They can meet two sets of standards with one lesson. Through the use of chants, charts, big books, and team work, students are taught high-level vocabulary and concepts in science and social studies.

In order to use Project GLAD, teachers must undergo a six-day training program. Two days are spent learning the theories behind the program, while four days are spent in a classroom, observing a model GLAD teacher. In the afternoon, teachers have the opportunity to begin creating GLAD materials with the help of a GLAD trainer. Because teachers need to see the lessons being taught in front of a class, most of the trainings occur during the school year.

The GLAD social studies and science units do not come with a complete set of materials. Instead, teachers are given an outline of how the lessons are to proceed and ideas for images and key concepts. The texts for big books and narrative are provided but it is up to the teacher to find the images and put together the materials. The work can include finding and printing out specific images on the internet, writing out songs and chants,
tracing posters, and binding books together. This is a time consuming process, though many of the materials can be used for multiple years.

Project GLAD covers vocabulary in multiple ways. Students and teachers work together to create a chart called a cognitive content dictionary. Important words are added to this chart and students are asked to make a prediction about the word meaning. The word is used frequently throughout the next few days. After students have been hearing and interacting with the word, they go back to the cognitive content dictionary. The students, with the teacher’s guidance, decide on a definition for the word. The students then get the opportunity, in small groups, to create a sentence using the word. As students progress through the unit, they start suggesting words to add to the cognitive content dictionary. Project GLAD often provides a suggested list of words but the actual word choice is left up to the teacher and students. There are no guidelines for the teacher regarding which specific words to choose for inclusion in their GLAD units.

Another way students develop vocabulary in the GLAD unit is through songs and chants, which are written out and hung around the room. After hearing the songs multiple times, students are asked to highlight words they find important in the songs. The students explain to the teacher the choices they made and why they viewed the word as important.

Another activity in Project GLAD that helps students develop vocabulary is the sentence patterning chart. Using the new vocabulary they
have been learning, students create a song to the tune of “Farmer and the Dell.” Students do this by listing nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These parts of speech are used to create silly songs that students sing that serve to familiarize them with grammatically correct sentence structure, as well as parts of speech.

While there are many elements that make Project GLAD successful, there is room for improvement. The materials are time consuming and difficult to make. I have heard teachers say that they do not use GLAD in their classrooms because do not have time to create the materials. There is also a lot of room for interpretations when creating the materials, meaning that there is no guarantee that lessons are being implemented correctly. The program is so open-ended that there are many areas for a teacher to take liberties when implementing it. The training for GLAD is long and requires a teacher to be out of the classroom for more than a week. Even after the extensive training, the program can be confusing and not all of the elements get utilized in the classroom.

The program also focuses on academic vocabulary in science and social studies. These words are important Tier Two and Tier Three academic vocabulary that students need to learn, but Project GLAD does not cover vocabulary from other domains which students need to be successful. While Project GLAD comes closest to being an effective vocabulary program, there are still some other areas of need.
After reviewing three different vocabulary curricula, I have determined several key deficits of these programs. Students need to be taught high-level vocabulary related to literacy and language arts (Nagy, 1989); this feature was not present in the programs I reviewed. Effective vocabulary instruction also gives students multiple opportunities to hear and discuss word meaning, allowing students to take an active role in their own learning (Meyers, 1993). The programs I reviewed do not feature these key aspects of effective instruction. Houghton Mifflin does not focus on high-level vocabulary and does not offer enough opportunities for students to interact with the vocabulary. Rigby does not address academic vocabulary, focusing instead on Tier One words. Project GLAD does use high-level academic words, but the program is prep-intensive, making it harder to implement. The program is also limited in that it only addresses science and social studies vocabulary. After reviewing these curriculums and determining what constitutes an effective vocabulary program, I began to design a curriculum that allowed for active learning by the students, promoted word consciousness, used vocabulary from the literature, and gave students time and opportunities to learn the new words.
Chapter V: Wondrous Words

As I began to design my curriculum on vocabulary instruction, I reflected on current literacy practices in the kindergarten classroom. In kindergarten, an important way students attain literacy skills is through teacher read alouds. During a read aloud, the whole class listens to a book being read aloud by the teacher. The teacher uses this time to introduce concepts of print, such as identifying the author and illustrator, and reading left to right and from top to bottom. Through read alouds, teachers can also model good reading strategies, such as rereading for comprehension, asking questions, and sounding out words. During the read aloud, teachers often ask comprehension questions, asking students about the main characters, or what animals were described in the book. Through read alouds, teachers model good oral reading skills and increase students interest in books. Read alouds also provide young readers a way to interact with and discuss books while they are still learning to read and are a recommended aspect of good reading programs (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Read alouds are done with a variety of books to expose students to multiple genres.

Very little time in my school is spent discussing the vocabulary used in read alouds. While I tried to explain some of the words that come up during read alouds, I wondered how much my English language learners (ELL) were getting out of the read alouds. Are they missing critical vocabulary understanding and is this omission impacting their reading comprehension? Throughout read alouds, I ask my students comprehension questions. Without
the necessary vocabulary background, students might not be able to answer these types of questions. These experiences led me to design Wondrous Words, a vocabulary curriculum to use with read alouds in kindergarten.

Wondrous Words is a vocabulary instruction curriculum applicable to any book. Wondrous Words guides teachers through selecting a vocabulary word, creating a definition of the word, and engaging students in learning the word. Through Wondrous Words, students receive explicit vocabulary instruction, which shows a greater rate of learning than implicit instruction as shown in a meta-analysis of research studies by Marulis and Neuman (2010). Rather than giving teachers a list of vocabulary words that might not meet the needs of their classes, Wondrous Words incorporates a six-step plan that guides teachers on how to choose a word and teach it to their class. Because Wondrous Words is applicable to different books, it allows teachers to differentiate instruction by teaching words at a level which best meets the specific needs of their class. Teachers can select vocabulary words they feel their students need to learn. By increasing teacher control of word selection, educators can take a more active role in what is taught in their classroom.

Wondrous Words uses six steps to teach vocabulary, shown in Table 1. The first step in implementing Wondrous Words is word selection. Teachers start by selecting a specific vocabulary word to teach. The types of words that are most effective to teach are words that are either critical to the story comprehension or high-utility words that will be used in multiple settings (Nagy,
1989). Words that can be found in a variety of texts are often referred to as Tier Two words (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002). These Tier Two words are complex words used in a variety of settings and occur frequently in school. *Specific, petite, and exclaimed* are examples of tier two words.

**Table 1: Steps to Wondrous Words**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Select a vocabulary word. Chose either a word students need to know in order to understand the book or a complex word used in a variety of texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Create multiple sentences using word in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Share sentences with students and work with students to come up with a definition of word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Provide the part of speech for the chosen word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Students complete activity for word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Review vocabulary word</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the word has been selected, the teacher then uses the word in an example sentence. Listening to the new sentence gives students another opportunity to hear the word in context, and to start thinking about the meaning of the word. Hearing the word in multiple contexts provides students with more information about the word and its meaning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). When creating an example sentence, I first thought about how the word was used in the book. I wanted to think of a sentence that used the
word in a different way to provide students with an example of the word in a new context. I also thought of sentences that gave information about the meaning of the word. I tried to avoid sentences that did not add any new information about the word, such as “I like pretty things.” This sentence does not give any information about the meaning of the word pretty. Instead, the sentence, “The colorful flower was pretty,” provides students with meaningful context about the word pretty.

After students have an opportunity to think about the word in context, the students and teacher work together to decide on a definition for the word in step three. *Wondrous Words* follows the recommendation of Phillips, Foote, and Harper (2008) that students actively create meaning as they learn new vocabulary. In *Wondrous Words*, the students and teacher work together to come up with examples of correct word use. After the teacher introduces the word, the students participate in different activities to help them learn the word by writing, drawing, and moving to show word meaning. Students are not just passively receiving the definition of a vocabulary word; they are engaged in making meaning through different activities and feedback by the teacher. Active engagement in the lessons helps students better retain the teaching (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

After determining meaning as a class, the teacher will continue to provide more information about the word by giving the students its part of speech. My students were familiar with the parts of speech because we used
sentence-writing modeling throughout the day. Knowing the part of speech will help students place the new word in existing schemas and give them more information about the word use. Knowing that pretty is another example of a describing word provides the students with more information about the word.

After the class and teacher finish discussing the word, students then complete an activity using the new word. Wondrous Words provides multiple vocabulary activities to choose from. Depending on the type of word, students can act out the word, complete a journal entry, or identify pictures that match the word. Wondrous Words makes a point of giving students more than one opportunity to hear the target word and provides activities for students to review the vocabulary being taught.

Goals

Wondrous Words is designed to improve the vocabulary acquisition of early–elementary students, with a focus on supporting ELL students. English language learners benefit from general good teaching practices, as well as, direct vocabulary instruction (Goldenberg, 2008) and by reviewing and reinforcing the vocabulary word (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Wondrous Words also develops higher-level thinking about words. Rather than just requiring students to recite definitions, Wondrous Words helps students develop a deeper understanding of words, by providing students with multiple examples of the word and different active learning activities to help engage
students in learning word meaning. Wondrous Words offers a cohesive set of strategies that helps students remember the vocabulary and recall the word meaning in the future. The objectives of this curriculum can be broken down into three main goals.

**Goal one.**
Wondrous Words provides opportunities for students to develop a deep understanding of word meaning. Students with deep level knowledge of words can notice similarities between word meanings and use words in a variety of settings (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) found that not only do English language learners come to school with less vocabulary than their English only counterparts, but they also have less in-depth knowledge about the words. English language learners need to increase both the breadth and depth of their English vocabulary knowledge. The goal is for students to develop a deeper definition of words, rather than memorizing definitions. Through Wondrous Words, students are given multiple examples of the word in various contexts. These strategies help students develop a deeper understanding of the word. By developing deeper understanding of word meanings, students are more likely to recognize the word in multiple settings and stories, improving the utility of the learned word (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009).

**Goal two.**
One of the goals of learning new vocabulary is recalling the meaning of the word at a later time. If students forget words as soon as they learn
them, they are not making meaningful progress in their vocabulary acquisition. By remembering new vocabulary words, students have the opportunity to use the words in conversations and understand the meaning when they hear the word in a new story. Introducing students to the word is only the start of learning vocabulary; students also need to apply what they have learned by using the vocabulary words at a later time. Wondrous Words is used to foster lasting vocabulary acquisition. The curriculum provides multiple opportunities for students to interact with the word and practice retrieving the meaning of the new vocabulary word. To help reinforce retention, the teacher provides cues to the students about how to store the information in memory by telling students the part of speech the vocabulary word belongs to. The curriculum also provides opportunities to practice previously-learned words. Reviewing vocabulary words multiple times and in varying contexts has been shown to increase the vocabulary acquisition of English language learners (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow. 2005), making it an important aspect of an effective vocabulary curriculum.

**Goal three.**

Before implementing my curriculum, I piloted some of my ideas with my class. I began to notice that my students were asking more questions about words. These questions led to my third research question. I wanted to see if young students could gain a consciousness of words and monitor their own vocabulary learning. Developing word consciousness increases student desire to learn more words (Graves, 2006). It helps students monitor their own
learning and seek out the meaning of new words. By explicitly teaching vocabulary instruction, *Wondrous Words* draws students’ attention to the occurrence of new vocabulary words in books read aloud by teachers and gives students opportunities to be actively engaged in discussing the meaning of these new words. The high level vocabulary discussions lead students to develop greater word consciousness.

Each of these three goals has an associated activity designed to accomplish it, and an assessment to measure success. Table 2 shows the different activities of *Wondrous Words*, how the activities relate to the goals, and how the activities are assessed.
### Table 2: Curriculum Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Students developed a deeper understanding of word meaning. | The students hear the word in multiple contexts.  
   Students use the word in a sentence with Vocabulary Journals.  
   Students act out the meaning of the word with Vocabulary Act Out. | Score Vocabulary Journals and Vocabulary Act Out on a rubric with three possible levels of comprehension: no understanding, partial understanding, or deep understanding. |
| Students did not forget the word over a short period of time. | Review the word meaning on multiple days by using the word to reference situations in the classroom and by reminding students of the definition. | Students take the Vocabulary Picture and Vocabulary Journals assessments twice over a two week period. The first scores are compared with the second scores to see if there are any changes in vocabulary knowledge. |
| Students developed word consciousness. | Explicitly teaching vocabulary by informing students the specific word to learn, and by providing a clear definition and examples of the word. | Recorded instances of students inquiring about the meaning of a new word, making connections between words, and using new vocabulary words. |
Chapter VI: Implementation of Wondrous Words

Wondrous Words was implemented in my kindergarten classroom during a five-week period. During the implementation, two to three words were taught each week. The vocabulary words came from books related to two different science topics and a literature unit. The science units were on plant life and insects, and the literature unit was on folk and fairy tales. The read aloud books were not part of a set curriculum; they were selected by me to enhance the different units. All of these materials corresponded to units taught as part of standard kindergarten lessons meeting the California State Standards. The books were not selected specifically for vocabulary content; instead, the Wondrous Words framework is designed to be used with materials which would be part of a standard elementary school education.

School Setting

I taught my curriculum at San Carlos Elementary School (all names in the paper are pseudonyms), a school that was part of a unified school district in Southern California, with elementary, middle, and high schools. My school served a population of 850 students, 80% of whom were designated English language learners (ELLs). Ninety-two percent of the families in our school were considered economically disadvantaged; most of my students received a free or reduced-price school lunch. Hispanic students made up 96% of the school population. The area around the school was densely populated apartment buildings, with most families living within walking distance of school. San Carlos Elementary School was recently renovated, and 2010-2011 was the
first school year in the new buildings. It was also my first year both at this school and at this grade level; I had previously taught upper elementary grades at a different elementary school in the same school district. San Carlos Elementary had a large kindergarten program, serving over 150 students in seven kindergarten classrooms. Our school was in the first year of piloting an extended-day kindergarten program, in which students attended school from 8:00-2:00. In previous years, students attended half-day kindergarten, coming to school for three and a half hours a day. The extended hours were to improve both English language acquisition and reading performance.

Because of the high concentration of English language learners in the school in general and the emphasis on language arts and English language development in extended day kindergarten in particular, this provides a good setting for effective vocabulary curriculum.

**Classroom Setting**

I taught 22 students in my classroom, 19 of whom were English language learners. In October of 2010, my students who did not speak English as their first language took the California English Language Development Test (CEDLT), which measures their English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Based on this test, 42% of my English language learners were at the beginning level, 26% were at early intermediate, and 32% were intermediate, in order of increasing proficiency. None of my students scored early advanced or advanced, the highest possible proficiency. All of my English language learners spoke Spanish as their first language. Ninety
percent of my students were Hispanic. Eighty-one percent of my students attended pre-school, either at Head Start or at a state-funded preschool on campus.

**A Typical Day of Extended-Day Kindergarten Instruction**

In order to see how vocabulary instruction fit into extended-day kindergarten, I summarized the details about the schedule of a typical day. Our day in kindergarten usually began with team time. During team time, the grade level received additional help from intervention teachers, who came into the classroom for instruction in small groups. Groups of students were configured based solely on language arts proficiency levels, and specific skills were targeted in 20 minute lessons. After team time, we had a whole group calendar time, where students participated in activities focusing on the days of the week and heard about any special activities we would be doing that day. I then instructed my students in the math topic of the day by introducing a number or a math concept. Students were expected to know the numbers one through 30 by the end of year, as well as have familiarity with math concepts such as addition, subtraction, and estimation. Most of these concepts were learned through manipulation of hands-on math materials in small group work that followed. My class then worked independently at different math centers while I pulled small groups to work on the skill of the day.
After math time, I read aloud a story to the class, focusing on a specific reading skill, such as identifying the characters in the book or sequencing the story. During this time, I also introduced the new vocabulary word from the story. After reading the story, the students then completed an activity related to the vocabulary word. I spent about 30 minutes a day on reading the book, teaching the vocabulary word, and assigning the vocabulary work. Our district adopted the Houghton Mifflin curriculum (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003), so occasionally the read alouds would come from these materials. Our school used the adopted curriculum sparingly; teachers created most of the language arts lessons used on campus. The teachers and administration at my school determined that Houghton Mifflin (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003) did not meet all the educational needs of our population, and decided that teachers needed to supplement these lessons with outside resources and teacher-created materials.

After the read aloud and vocabulary work, the class went outside to play for recess. When the class returned from recess, I was joined by my instructional aide, who assisted me with reading groups for one hour. We then had reading centers, where students read books and worked on developing phonic skills. By the end of the year, the grade-level expectation was that students would be able to read a simple pattern book, such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin & Carle, 2008). My students came to
school knowing very few letter names and sounds, so they needed explicit instruction in phonic skills in order to learn letter-sound correspondence.

After reading centers, my students went to lunch, after which they independently read books. At the beginning of the year, reading time involved students looking through picture books. By the end of the year, students practiced reading familiar simple pattern books that they had read before in reading groups. When students were finished reading books, it was time for English language development. Our district used Project GLAD (Brechtel, 2001), so I supported my students’ instruction in science and social studies through the application of Project GLAD strategies. These GLAD strategies are an example of a class of teaching practices collectively known as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies (Brechtel, 2001) that scaffold academic material, making it easier for English language learners to understand the specific content being taught. Some examples of units in which Project GLAD were used include: the five senses, community workers, and plants and animals. Some of the strategies used by Project GLAD included dictionaries defining content-specific words, specialized read alouds, and posters covering the main topics of a specific subject matter.

**Pre-Implementation**

I began my curriculum plan by looking at the books I was reading aloud, and questioning how I taught the vocabulary from these books. I
realized I needed to be organized in my approach to vocabulary instruction. I wanted to carefully plan out what words I would teach and how I would teach them, making sure I kept in mind effective vocabulary strategies, such as careful word selection and comprehensible definitions. Selecting a Tier Two level word from the story was my first step in my curriculum plan. After selecting the word, I developed a student-friendly definition—a definition using simple words my students could easily understand (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). At first, it took me some time to develop these definitions. I struggled with balancing the two needs I had in teaching vocabulary: on one hand, I needed to use precise words in order to provide a clear definition; while on the other hand I had to make sure I was using simple words with which my students were familiar. The vocabulary words I chose from the books, such as grumble and whimper, were initially difficult to explain to my students. As I practiced creating student-friendly definitions, some words became easier to define but I still struggled creating definitions for other words. The better I knew a word, the easier it was for me to create a definition. I too displayed different levels of word knowledge, from knowing some meaning of the word to having deep understanding (Nagy & Scott, 2000). I realized that the way I talk, my tone of voice, and gestures also helped to convey meaning. My skill grew in choosing words to include in my definitions with which my students were familiar.
When I first provided my students with the definition of the word *bog*, I struggled in conveying the meaning in a way my students could understand. Later in the year, my students and I visited our recently watered school garden. I was then able to relate this experience to our previous discussion about the word *bog*. As we had more shared experiences, I had more material to draw from in creating meaning. For example, for the word *marvelous*, I told my students it was “something very special and awesome,” knowing my students would be familiar with the terms *special* and *awesome*. The word for *special* is Spanish is *especial*, a cognate: words with similar roots that share both similar sounds and meanings in multiple languages. Making use of cognates has been to shown to be an effective means of improving vocabulary acquisition (Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

While I was now providing my students with the definition of the new word in context, they still struggled with its meaning. When listening to them talk with a partner about the word, I noticed that they often stated an incorrect definition or were unsure how to use the word. I realized I needed to provide my students with more examples of the word in context. Instead of just providing the definition for the word *marvelous*, I also included the example sentence of: “The fireworks at Disneyland were marvelous.” This was a sentence my students could relate to and understand. By providing more than one context for the new word, I helped improve their vocabulary acquisition. My next step was thinking of other ways to improve instruction by increasing
student involvement in the lesson. I wanted students to be actively engaged in the lesson, which improves learning (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

When reflecting on my vocabulary lessons after the first week, I realized I was doing all of the talking in the lesson. I wanted my students to play a more active role in the lessons, but my current technique did not facilitate student participation. I would present the word to my students, give them the definition, and discuss how the new word was used in the book. While reading the story *The Mitten* (Brett, 2009) to my class, I discussed the different animals in the story. One of the animals that hides in the mitten is a hedgehog, an animal with which my students were not familiar. We had a discussion about the attributes of a hedgehog and my students enjoyed the discussion. While the class listened and responded to my lecture, I did most of the speaking. I also noticed while talking with the class about the hedgehog that they had difficulty pronouncing the word. It had not previously occurred to me to have the students pronounce the word as part of the vocabulary lesson. The students were passive receivers of my knowledge. This was not the best way to engage the class in the material, so I realized I needed to make a change. My students needed the opportunity to practice saying the word as part of the curriculum in order to be actively involved in their own learning (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995).

I began to revise my lesson by instructing my students to say the new vocabulary word three or four times after I introduced it. Having a choral
response helped the class learn how to pronounce the word and gave my students an opportunity to become more familiar with the word. I wanted students to be able to speak the words we were learning, to help them both learn the words and later use them. I also began to think of other ways I could support my students’ use of the new words. While my class could say the words, they were not always sure about the best way to use them in a sentence. I decided to present my students with more information to help them categorize the words. In my classroom, we often talked about the different words we could use in a sentence. We used terms like “action words” or “describing words” to discuss verbs and adjectives. By providing my students with the part of speech when introducing a new vocabulary word, I helped my students put the information in context with previously discussed ideas.

As I continued the development of my curriculum, I designed several activities for students to do after learning about the word. I first created a Vocabulary Journal, where students filled in a sentence frame and drew a picture that matched the sentence. For the vocabulary word scorching, students filled in the sentence “___________ is scorching,” then drew a corresponding picture as in figure 1.
While Vocabulary Journals were a successful activity for some of the words I taught my class, like enormous or dainty, other words such as swan or hut did not work in the form of a sentence frame. I realized I needed to create different activities depending on the type of word I was teaching my students. Given the reading and writing limitations of kindergarteners, adjectives, nouns, and verbs could not be taught in the same way. At this stage in their academic career, my students were unable to write long sentences explaining their thinking. I needed structured activities in which all students could successfully partake.

I designed the next activity, Vocabulary Pictures, for use with nouns. I provided my students with different images and instructed them to find the picture that matched the new vocabulary word as in figure 2.
For the word sleigh, I showed my class pictures of a sleigh, skies, and ice skates. I found these images through image searches on the Internet. I tried to pick conceptually-related images to challenge students to differentiate between similar words, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the word. Instead of just thinking the word sleigh meant something to do with snow, they had to determine the specific object that went with the word.

I then developed an activity for verbs: Vocabulary Act Out. When I started piloting my curriculum, I taught verbs by explaining what they meant. I realized that this was not the best approach to teaching these types of words. Rather than requiring students to try and picture an action, which led to misinterpretation, I could show my students what the action looked like. Instead of explaining what clumsy meant, my students developed a better understanding of the word if I showed them what clumsy looked like. For Vocabulary Act Out, students worked in groups of four or five. The students
were heterogeneously grouped based on their English language development level, which I determined based on their CELDT scores. The students discussed the word as a group and came up with an action that represented the word. The groups of students then acted out the words for the whole class. This activity helped the students by allowing them to achieve a consensus on the word meaning, and it helped the class as a whole review the word.

As I taught my students new words, I realized that I needed to go back over previously-taught vocabulary. Reviewing vocabulary words gave students an opportunity to practice retrieving the meaning of the word and provided students more practice using the word. I wanted to offer multiple days to review vocabulary. I orally reviewed some of the words by describing different scenarios and asked students to match the scenarios to words, such as: “Which of these descriptions is marvelous: a super-surprise birthday party, cleaning up toys, or coming to school?” Another question I posed to my students was, “Which of these things is enormous: a baby, a monster truck, or a book?” Students did not have to explain their thinking, though this more advanced element could be incorporated in future implementations, as it requires students to think more in-depth about the vocabulary words.

**Implementation**

To prepare for implementation, I selected the read aloud books. I chose books based on the science units we were learning as well books that
highlighted a specific literary skill or genre. I chose these books because the content matched the learning goals for the other subjects in kindergarten. Because we were learning about plants at the beginning of the implementation, many of the books I chose centered around gardens. I wanted the vocabulary curriculum to fit into the rest of what I needed to teach my students. By incorporating other subject matter, such as science topics like plants or insects, I was able to keep pace with our grade level timeline. I went through the books and selected target words to teach my students by looking for words that were critical to comprehending the book as well as words that are widely used. These words are important for students to learn and make for the most effective vocabulary instruction (Nagy, 1989). After selecting the words, I created student-friendly definitions as well as sentences using the word in context. With the definitions I created, I tried to use words with which my students were familiar. I wanted to avoid overly-complex definitions that used too many words. I used the same approach when creating example sentences, picking words and examples that my students knew well based on my informal observations of their language skills as well as shared experiences in the classroom. As I implemented my curriculum, I recorded my students’ responses on a hand-held tape recorder, taking note of their comments on the vocabulary words they were learning. Table 3 shows the order in which the words were taught.
### Table 3: Sequence of Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Word</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Blossoms</td>
<td>Vocabulary Pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
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<td>Vocabulary Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Munching</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Litter</td>
<td>Vocabulary Act Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Vocabulary Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Clumsy</td>
<td>Vocabulary Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Grouchy</td>
<td>Vocabulary Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>Dainty</td>
<td>Vocabulary Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Swan</td>
<td>Vocabulary Pictures</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary Act Out**

Vocabulary Act Out was created to help students learn verbs. In Vocabulary Act Out, students used their hands and body to demonstrate the meaning of a word. For example, a Vocabulary Act Out for the word gentle involved lightly petting a pretend kitten. During the implementation of Wondrous Words, students completed Vocabulary Act Out for five different words: crumbled, melted, munching, littered, and clumsy. Below, I have described how these words were taught.
Crumbled.
The book I selected, *A Grand Old Tree* (Depalma, 2005), describe the life cycle of a tree. The word I chose from this book was crumbled. I selected this word based on my observations of children’s literature. I had seen *crumbled* numerous times in other books, so to me, it was a frequently used word. Learning the word would be beneficial to my students’ vocabulary because they would hear the word in other books. I also thought it unlikely that my students would know the definition for the word, based on my observations of their conversations. I had not heard my students use the word in class. After selecting my word, I created the following sentence to share with my class: “The cookie crumbled as I bit into it.” The key part of the definition I wanted my students to understand is that when something crumbles it breaks into little pieces.

Prior to the lesson, I wrote the word and example sentence on chart paper to share with the class. I began the lesson by introducing the word and reading the example sentence. I then read the book aloud to the class, drawing attention to how *crumbled* was used in the text. In the story, the word describes how the tree decomposes after it dies. As I read the word *crumbled* aloud, several of my students gasped and said, “crumbled.” Ana made hand motions as I read the story over again. Raul said that crumbled means, “ground is moving,” and Jorge B. said, “breaks.” I asked my students if crumbles means “comes together” or “break apart.” Most of the students agreed that it meant break apart. I then wrote the definition on the chart,
telling students that crumbled means something breaks into little pieces. I had students whisper the word and the definition to a partner.

After I finished reading the book, I reviewed the vocabulary word again by repeating the word and the definition. My students again whispered the same to a partner. I then told my students they would be acting out the word in their English language development (ELD) groups, where students were heterogeneously grouped based on their English language development. I had five different ELD groups, composed of students at different levels of English language development. In each group, I had a beginning speaker, an intermediate speaker, and a more advanced speaker. I demonstrated what acting out a vocabulary word looks like, showing them actions for words like fly and swim. Once the students were in their ELD groups, I observed the discussions they were having. I noticed that students were having some difficulty with the task. Some of the students were making the same flying and swimming motions I had made during my examples. The students were not talking within their groups; most were only talking with a partner. During most of our class work, students only speak with one partner. While I had observed other kindergarten students working in groups, I realized I had not sufficiently taught my students how to do this. When I asked the groups to demonstrate their actions, none of them were able to come up with a movement to show the definition of crumbled.
I then asked students to come back together as a group so I could model more actions and demonstrate how to work together as a team. As I did this, Sergio started making a tree with his hands and then mimed breaking it into pieces. Once he demonstrated the action he created to the class, the rest of the students were able to act out the word. I realized that I needed to give the students more examples of actions for new words that students were still learning. My students were in the process of learning what crumbled meant; it was too difficult for them to try to remember the word meaning and determine an action. We had been acting out verbs for a month now but words like crumble are more difficult to conceptualize as an action than fly or walk. My students had seen numerous examples of flying and walking that they could use as their basis for determining actions. Crumbled was a new word for them and I was expecting too much from my students too soon. The class needed time to think about the word and more examples of the word before they could independently determine an action that defined the word.

I realized that while I wanted my students to act out words as a means of remembering word meaning, I needed to take a more active role in creating the action. My students could give me suggestions and help me refine the action, but they still needed more models. I also needed to reevaluate the words I chose from my read alouds, making sure the action words are a concept my students can understand and act out.
Melted.
The next verb I taught was the word melted. Rather than expecting my students to come up with the Vocabulary Act Out on their own, I planned the action before teaching the lesson. I told my students that melted meant, “turns to water when hot.” I selected the word water in the definition rather than the word liquid because I knew my students were more familiar with water. Even though all items that melt clearly do not turn into water, I felt this was a good starting point in explaining the word to my students. The definition I used still conveyed information about the word melt but used terms my students could comprehend. It was not a perfect definition but I could not think of a better way to convey the meaning of the word to my students. The difficulty I had with the definition of melted made me realize I needed to be careful in selecting words from books. When I selected words, I need to keep the definition in mind, so I could adequately explain the words to my students. After determining a definition for melted, I also created a sentence for the word stating that, “The popsicle melted in the hot sun.”

When I first modeled the action of melting, I had students use only their hands. Sergio spoke up and said we should act, “like a popsicle.” I thought his suggestion was a better idea than my action because it provided the students with more information about the meaning of the word, so I told the class to stand up straight and tall like a popsicle, then pretend to melt into a puddle. As we acted like popsicles, Brandon exclaimed, “This is fun.” I found that taking the students input into deciding the action made my students more
involved in the process and led to actions that better demonstrated the meaning of the vocabulary word. While my definitions were no longer co-constructed with my students, some of the activities were influenced by the students. Because one of the goals of my curriculum was to create an active learning environment that increased student involvement in the lesson (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995), it was important that students had opportunities to provide input.

**Munching.**

I introduced the next word, munching, by describing it as eating little bits of food. I used the example sentence, “The boy munched on an apple during snack.” I instructed the class in pantomiming picking up food and eating it. The class enjoyed sharing what type of food they were pretending to eat, sharing that it was French fries or Hot Cheetos.

I then read the story to the class. When they heard the word munching, several of the students pretended to eat food. After finishing the story, students acted out munching in their ELD groups, again spending time discussing the type of food they were eating with friends. As students later went outside to eat snack, I asked them what they would be munching on. I tried to be conscientious about reviewing most of the vocabulary words throughout the day, but I found that some words were easier to review than others because they matched situations that occurred in the classrooms. The other lessons I taught that day also affected my ability to review the words. If I
was struggling with a teaching another new concept, I was less cognizant about reviewing vocabulary. Because this was my first year teaching kindergarten, I needed to spend time thinking about my lessons while I was teaching them. Even when I noticed opportunities to incorporate a vocabulary words, I was unable to take advantage of them because I was so focused on the lesson at hand.

**Litter.**

I started vocabulary time by reviewing the word *munching*; I restated the definition and we pretended to eat some food. I then introduced the vocabulary word for the day, *litter*, and added the word to the vocabulary poster. I defined *litter* as “throwing trash on the ground,” and pantomimed throwing items down. My class copied my actions. I noticed a lot of smiles and excited chatter while students were performing the Vocabulary Act Out. They were having fun learning about a new word. Students have been instructed in the importance of cleaning up after themselves since the beginning of kindergarten; as my class was discussing the word, many of my students informed me that littering was not something they could normally do.

After we finished acting out the word, I read the story. When I got to the part of the story that used *littered*, Brenda said, “littered” Jorge B. asked, “What does litter mean?” I reiterated the definition and we acted out the word again. When we finished acting out littering, we pretended to pick up the trash we left on the ground. I wanted students to make a connection
between the word littered and actions they take in real life when they see litter on the ground.

**Clumsy.**

From the book, *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle* (Carle, 1999), I selected the word clumsy. Because the book is centered around a click beetle with clumsy actions, my students needed to understand the word clumsy in order to understand the story. I began acting out clumsy by pretending to trip. There was lots of laughter from my students as they watched me drop items and exclaim that I was clumsy. I then instructed my students to stand up and act out clumsy on their own. My students called to their friends to watch as they acted out clumsy. Miguel, Noah, Jorge S., and Omar took the opportunity to get a little silly and repeatedly fell to the ground.

Once we finished acting out clumsy, I read the story to the class. Whenever I read aloud the word clumsy, several would exclaim and repeat the word clumsy. After reading the story, students then went to tables and had to decide on a clumsy action with the rest of their table groups. We had fun referencing clumsy throughout the rest of the school day. When students packed up their backpacks at the end of the day, I told the class to be careful and not be clumsy. This led several students to remind one another not to be clumsy. As we waited for parents to pick up the students at the end of the day, Arriana, Javier, and Steven continued to act out clumsy, laughing as they pretended to trip and fall. Students used less structured time in class to review the word we learned that day.
I later reviewed clumsy. Students again talked to a partner about the meaning of the word. Sergio summed up clumsy as, “whoops.” Raul gave the example of slipping on a banana peel. Jorge S. did not use words to explain clumsy; instead, he stood up and pretended to fall.

**Vocabulary Pictures**

Vocabulary Pictures was used as a means to teach students nouns. After learning the new vocabulary word, students identified a picture that matched the word. For example, for the word flamingo, students were presented with three different images: a flamingo, a robin, and an alligator. Students circled the correct picture. For the implementation of Wondrous Words, students completed two Vocabulary Picture activities, for the words blossoms and swans.

**Blossom.**

I began teaching the word blossom by telling students the word and reading a sentence using it in context; next, I read the story; then I discussed the word with students; and finally I helped them develop a definition. Compared with other vocabulary words, my students had a difficult time determining what a blossom is. They thought the word was related to growing or rocks, which were other images from the story. I told my class that blossoms were another word for flowers. After my students told the word and definition to a partner, they then independently worked on vocabulary pictures. Students circled the picture that matched the word blossom. As I went around the room, I asked students about why they circled the image that they did.
Jorge S. said he circled flowers because blossoms were flowers. Noah also circled flowers but when I asked him why, he said it was because “blossom means grow.” While grow is one definition for blossom, this is not the definition we were discussing. Javier was also confused about what blossom meant, saying that blossoms were “little rocks.”

I realized that these were the definitions that students had shared with me during our initial classroom discussion when we were jointly trying to determine the meaning of blossom. I realized that I had let the definition become too open-ended. While I wanted students to play a role in creating word meaning, I did not want to distract them with incorrect answers. I needed to balance giving my students a role in defining words, while still providing enough guidance for them to understand what the word means. I decided to provide my students with the correct definition at the beginning of the vocabulary lesson. Students would then give input when we discussed different examples of the word, allowing them to still play an active role in learning vocabulary.

I was continuing to find that some words were more difficult to teach than others. Many factors contributed to my difficulty: how the word was used in the book, both my students’ and my own familiarity with the word, and the ease of creating the definition. Some were words were easier to teach than others, and the specific nature of the word was a large factor in this disparity.
Swan.
I read my class The Ugly Duckling (Anderson, 2005) and chose the word swan from the book. Swans are not animals my students are familiar with and the idea that a swan is a beautiful bird is central to understanding the story. I told my class that swans are beautiful, white birds with long necks. I also explained that swans are birds that can swim, like ducks.

I read the story to the class. When I read the end of the book, several students noticed the swans. While looking at the pictures in the book, the class noticed that when two swans met, their necks formed a heart. My class thought this was because the ugly duckling now had friends and his heart was happy. When the students found the picture of the swan during Vocabulary Images, several of them critiqued the image I had selected, telling me that it was hard to see the swan’s long neck. The class had focused on one aspect of the definition and had looked specifically for that in the images I provided. Even though I gave students multiple pieces of information about swans, they did not discuss all the different attributes of swans, concentrating instead on a detail they determined was important. Although the recognized one salient feature of a swan, the students demonstrated an incomplete understanding of the vocabulary word.

Vocabulary Journals
Vocabulary Journals were used to teach adjectives. In Vocabulary Journals, students filled in a sentence frame relating to the vocabulary word, then drew a picture to match the sentence. For example, if the word was
beautiful, students were given the sentence frame, "The ______ is beautiful." After completing the frame, students drew a picture representing the concept of the sentence. The use of the sentence frame provided students with the structure they needed to complete the work, since many students were still learning how to write a simple sentence. During the implementation, students created Vocabulary Journals for four words: enormous, lonely, grouchy, and dainty. I have described the implementation of each word below.

**Enormous.**

I taught the word enormous from the book *The Enormous Carrot* (Vagin, 1998). I chose the word enormous because understanding its meaning is critical to comprehending the story. I told my students that enormous meant something that was "really, really big." The sentence I shared with my students was, “It took us forever to climb the enormous mountain.” I chose this sentence because, to me, a mountain is very large and would take a long time to climb. We have mountain views from our school and I knew my students would be familiar with the concept. I had the students repeat the word enormous and whisper the definition to a partner sitting next to them.

After reading the story, I gave my students a Vocabulary Journal page with the following sentence frame, “A ____________ is enormous.” I instructed my students to fill in the blank with something they thought was enormous and to draw a matching illustration. As they were completing the journal page, I asked students about what they were writing. Omar told me that he was
making a “big, giant monster,” while Ana drew a “humongous heart.” Her sentence stated, “A heart is enormous.” I also asked students about the meaning of the word enormous. Irene replied non-verbally to the query, by holding her hands widely apart. Miguel stated, “Carrot, monster truck.” I was unsure about what this meant, so I clarified by asking, “Does that mean big or little?” He replied, “Big.” Javier and Yessica also answered, “Big” to my inquires. Yessica also held her hands apart to demonstrate what she meant. My students used both words and actions to help explain the meaning of the word.

Lonely.
The next word I used for Vocabulary Journals was lonely, from the book *The Lonely Firefly* (Carle, 1995). I chose the word lonely because understanding the word was critical to understanding the book, about a firefly who is looking for other fireflies. Before reading the book, I introduced the word lonely and told students the definition, that we feel lonely when we are all by ourselves and miss our friends and family. I then shared with students a sentence that used the word lonely in context, “When my friends went home, I felt lonely.” We discussed how we feel alone when we are all by ourselves and have no one near us. Many of the students felt alone when their parents went to work or they had no friends to play with.

After introducing the vocabulary word, I proceeded to read the book. Once we finished reading the story, we reviewed the definition of lonely
again. The class then completed a Vocabulary Journal entry for the word 
lonely. Most of the entries dealt with parents or friends leaving.

**Grouchy.**

Before teaching the new vocabulary word, grouchy, I reviewed lonely.

I instructed students to talk with a partner about something that made you feel lonely. David said lonely was “when your dad, brother, or sister and mom is not here.” Karla said, “when your sister...” She trailed off then shrugged, unable to finish her sentence. Monica said lonely is “when your dad and mom is not here.” Miguel replied, “sad.” I tried to clarify his answer by asking why he was sad. He responded with the word, “no.” Miguel knew very little English when he entered kindergarten. He did not know enough English words to make sense of the definition. Even though I was trying to provide enough information about the word to help my ELL students learn it in English, some students were still missing critical information. In the future, providing my students with information about the vocabulary word in their first language could help by providing them with necessary information (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

I then moved on to explaining the vocabulary word for the day, grouchy, from the story *The Grouchy Ladybug* (Carle, 1996). Understanding the word grouchy is important to understanding the book, and grouchy is a Tier Two word used often in academic settings. Language arts discussions often center on the salient features of the characters in books, and grouchy is
a key descriptive term used to convey the attitude of the protagonist of the story. Furthermore, grouchy can be a helpful addition to their vocabulary as it explains a common emotion that characters in other stories display as well. I explained that when you are grouchy, “you are not very happy. You are in a bad mood.” I made a grouchy face and instructed my students to do the same. Ana said, “grouchy when you don’t sleep.” She then made grunting noises to illustrate her point. After reading the story, the students collectively worked on their Vocabulary Journals, while I went around the classroom and individually asked students to explain what they knew about the word grouchy. As the implementation progressed, I tried to ask more detailed questions about vocabulary to see what my students were thinking. David said, “When you do all of things. Pick all the toys, I feel grouchy.” Gloria said, “like you are mad at your sister.” Brenda said, “When you feel angry,” then pantomimed punching someone. She added, “When you do all the work.” My students seemed to associate grouchy with being in a bad mood or having to do more work than other people. While this might not be the best definition of the word, it does show understanding of the concept.

Dainty.

I taught the word dainty by defining it as “little and cute,” stating that the, “ballerina was dainty.” The definition for dainty I provided for my students was limited by my students’ word knowledge, preventing me from providing them with as accurate a definition as possible. Once again, it was difficult for me to determine a student-friendly definition. As soon as I gave the definition
of dainty, Brenda exclaimed, “a ladybug.” Brandon then said, “a snake.” I asked him if a snake was little and cute. Other students raised their hands and said that a snake was not cute. As a class, we decided that a snake was not cute, so we could not consider it dainty. Brandon agreed with this decision, saying that a snake was not cute, it was scary. After reading the story, the class worked on Vocabulary Journals, filling in the cloze sentence, “A _______ is dainty.” Karla suggested “a mouse,” which, given the depictions of mice in children’s literature, met the definition I gave the class for dainty. When I asked Miguel to tell me something that was dainty, he too said “a mouse.” It was unclear if this was Miguel’s own observation, or he was simply repeating Karla’s idea. Throughout the implementation, the class often talked to one another about their thoughts on vocabulary, making it difficult track who first came up with an idea. Irene replied, “a butterfly,” to the same question. Brenda drew a ladybug, keeping with her initial idea about the word dainty. She attempted to read her sentence, “A ledebug [ladybug] is dainty,” but got stuck on the word dainty. She knew the concept but was unable to recall the specific vocabulary word we were working on.

**Post-Implementation Thoughts**

I made a few changes to Wondrous Words during its implementation, based on feedback from my students and my own reflections. One area I made changes to was how I presented the definition to the class. When I began the curriculum, I did not give students the correct definition at first; instead, I tried to determine the meaning with the help of the students.
Sometimes students would fixate on an incorrect definition discussed during this co-creation of meaning phase, so I decided to remove this step and instead present the complete definition to the class. When creating the definition, I first thought about the main idea of the word. I then thought about how I could convey this message in words my students would understand. Some of the definitions I used were more successful than others. It took time for me to develop these definitions because I needed to think about the word and all of its different connotations.

I still wanted my students’ feedback throughout the activities because having students play an active role in learning vocabulary is an effective means of vocabulary instructions (Phillips, Foote, & Harper, 2008), so I would ask for their ideas regarding examples of the word. I also created a new, simplified version of the vocabulary chart. The new chart only included the vocabulary word and definition.

I had a number of difficulties that I came across as I implemented my curriculum. It was challenging to find enough time in class to review the previously-taught vocabulary words. Because my curriculum focused so heavily on the initial introduction to the word, this is where I spent the bulk of my instruction time. I also occasionally struggled with creating student-friendly definitions. Some of my definitions better captured the meaning of the word than others. I felt my definition for enormous, “really, really big,” was a better definition than the one I developed for melting, “turns to water when hot.” The
definition I used for melting did not convey the whole meaning of the word and could lead to future confusion. More experience creating student friendly definitions and more examples of other student-friendly definitions from other experienced teachers could make it easier to create future definitions.

While implementing my curriculum and reflecting on the activities I created, I identified areas where I could make improvements and then made the necessary adjustments to the curriculum. Providing students with the definition, rather than co-creating them with the students, streamlined the lessons and led to less confusion. Students provided feedback and participated in the lessons by giving input to the actions and sentences we used to describe the word. I also reduced the number of words I taught per week to an average of two. Because of these changes, I was able to cover each word in more detail.

One potential addition to the curriculum is different activities for reviewing words after they have been initially taught. While I did this verbally in whole-class lessons, there is room to improve my method. Another modification that could be made to the curriculum is providing students with more information about the word in their first language. The ability to do this would depend on the teacher’s knowledge of the language and the number of languages in the class. Other additions to the curriculum could require more in-depth discussions of the word from the students. The different activities I used do not require students to provide explanations for their
thinking. As students gain more experience working with vocabulary, they can be taught to explain what they know about the word and why. Because the curriculum was only implemented for five weeks, there were limitations in terms of what could be expected from the students. Implementing the curriculum from the start of the year would give students more time and opportunities to explain their reasoning and develop word consciousness.
Chapter VII: Evaluation of Wondrous Words

Wondrous Words was designed to improve students’ vocabulary by increasing both the students’ breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, as well as the students’ level of word consciousness. To see how effective the curriculum was in meeting these goals, I analyzed the following aspects of my students’ vocabulary work.

I looked at the following data sets as I evaluated my curriculum implementation: the students’ Vocabulary Journals, scores on Vocabulary Act Out, the students’ Vocabulary Pictures, and field notes based on my observations in the classroom. These data allowed me to assess the amount of vocabulary words students learned, the quality of their definitions, and students’ thoughts on their own vocabulary learning.

Each day during the curriculum implementation, I wrote down my observations from the vocabulary lessons. Using a tape recorder, I recorded what my students said about vocabulary. I transcribed these conversations and included them with my previous notes. At the end of the implementation, I reviewed my field notes, looking for any patterns or insights into what my students gained from explicit vocabulary instruction. I counted every instance a child asked about the meaning of word, used a vocabulary word correctly, or made connections between words.

Developing assessments for kindergarten students was difficult. Because their ability to read and write independently was limited, this shaped
the type of assessments I administered. I used the students’ work from Vocabulary Journals, Vocabulary Act Out, and Vocabulary Pictures to assess their learning. For Vocabulary Journals, I evaluated students work on a rubric. I used a similar rubric in scoring students’ actions during Vocabulary Act Out. I scored Vocabulary Pictures based on a correct or incorrect response. I scaffolded students’ writing in Vocabulary Journals by providing them with a sentence frame. Students only had to write one word, rather than a whole sentence. Vocabulary Pictures required students to circle the correct answer, an activity they could do without reading or writing. In Vocabulary Act Out, students worked in groups to determine the action. Having peer support allowed all students to participate in the activity.

I had three different goals for Wondrous Words. I wanted students to demonstrate a deep understanding of words, remember words over time, and display word consciousness. These goals are ordered chronologically based on how they developed over the course of the implementation.

**Goal One:**

One goal of the curriculum was for students to develop a deeper understanding of word meaning, rather than simply restating the word and definition. While many vocabulary studies look at the number of words learned, how well students understand words is also important. English language learners (ELLs) often have less depth of vocabulary knowledge than English only students (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). English language
learners also make fewer connections between words and know less about the different aspects of a word (Verhallen & Schoonen, 1993). For example, when asked to describe a simple word, such as table, ELLS used fewer words and examples to describe it than native English speakers. I wanted students to have a deeper level definition of a word to increase their depth of word understanding. I wanted to support my students’ understanding of the applications and nuances of the word meaning. I wanted my students to learn more about the words: to be able to use the words in multiple contexts and give multiple examples of the word.

**Goal Two:**

The second goal of the curriculum implementation involved recalling word meaning at a later time. I wanted students to retain meaning of words over time. I did not want students to forget the words immediately after learning them. When I taught vocabulary in the past, students focused just on learning words for the test or the story. They forgot what the word means over time, having trouble recalling the word the next week. I wanted to improve the students’ memory of the word over a two–week period of time.

**Goal Three:**

The last goal was to foster a growing consciousness about words in my students. Word consciousness was not one of the original goals in my curriculum. Before implementing *Wondrous Words*, I piloted some of my vocabulary ideas with my class. I began to notice that my students were
asking more questions about words. They were displaying word consciousness, showing an increased consciousness and curiosity about words. Increasing word consciousness in students is important because it leads to increased vocabulary learning, especially for less advantaged youth (Graves, 2006). My observations lead to my third goal. I wanted to increase the amount of word consciousness displayed by my students, helping them gain an awareness of words and monitor their own vocabulary learning.

**Vocabulary Journals**

The first item I evaluated was my students’ Vocabulary Journals, looking at how the students used the words and how the word use changed over time. I scored the journals on a scale of one to three. A score of one meant the student’s work did not show any understanding of the vocabulary definition. For example, I defined the word *marvelous* as “something very special and awesome.” If a student filled in the following phrase, “the ___ is marvelous,” with the word *look*, it did not demonstrate any understanding of *marvelous*. A score of two was for work that showed some understanding of the definition of the vocabulary word. If a student wrote and drew a tree for the word *marvelous*, that would receive a score of two. A simple tree does not demonstrate knowledge that something marvelous is “very special and awesome.” The use of the word *tree* does not specifically indicate that the student understands all the meanings for the word *marvelous*; however, they chose the correct part of speech, and it was possible that there was something special about the tree the student had in mind. It was not a clearly
correct definition of the word, but it was also not clearly incorrect. A three was the highest score a Vocabulary Journal could receive. A score of three was for work that showed a deep understanding of the word. For the word *marvelous*, a picture and sentence of fireworks would rate a three. Fireworks are exciting and not a common subject in writing. They are something special and awesome, meeting the definition for the word *marvelous*. The word *fireworks*, in this instance, would be considered marvelous. While students were working on their Vocabulary Journals, I asked each student twice about their work, providing students with an opportunity to discuss their work.

There are limitations to using Vocabulary Journals in determining students’ understanding. Students might not be able to articulate or draw all that they know about a word. Students also spoke to one another while working on the assignment, so it was unclear if they came up with ideas on their own. Despite these limitations, the Vocabulary Journals did provide information regarding what the students knew about the vocabulary words.

I also used my students’ Vocabulary Journals to observe any changes in the scores of their sentences over time, to see if they forgot the meaning of the new vocabulary words. Students completed one sentence frame for a word, and then completed the same sentence frame two weeks later. I looked at how my students work in their Vocabulary Journal changed, comparing the score of the initial entry to an entry done two weeks later.
Vocabulary Pictures

I also used the work from the Vocabulary Pictures as a way of assessing how well my students remembered the meaning of the vocabulary words. I counted the number of correct responses my students circled on their first assessment taken the day they first learned the word. I gave my students the same assessment two weeks later and scored it in the same manner, using the same images. I then compared the two scores to what percentage of students knew the words during the first assessment versus the second assessment.

Vocabulary Act Out

I evaluated the actions my students did during the Vocabulary Act Out to see if they demonstrated no understanding of the word, some understanding of the word, or a deep level understanding. I wanted to see if students demonstrated depth of word knowledge. During Vocabulary Act Out, I wrote down the actions the students made, and later scored it on a rubric with a score of one to three, one being no understanding of the word and three being deep understanding. To help the students come up with the action, they worked together in heterogeneous groups based on their English language development level. Rating the actions of groups rather than individual students made it easier for me to record the information. For the word dive, if students acted out writing with a pencil, I marked this as no understanding and scored a one. Students that showed the action of swimming would be credited some understanding and a score of two. They
knew that the word was related to water, but they did not know the specific diving action. I considered the action of diving, by making a pointed shape with their hand and leaning over as if to dive into a pool, to be a deeper level of understanding, demonstrating knowledge of what the word meant and receiving a score of three.

Field Notes

As I implemented my curriculum, I took detailed notes about what I observed in the classroom. I used a tape recorder to record my conversations about vocabulary with students during the time I was actively teaching vocabulary lessons, for about 20 minutes a day. At the end of each class period, I wrote down my thoughts and observations from the lesson. I spoke with each student twice during implementation, asking him or her to clarify the vocabulary work and give his or her thoughts on the words we were learning. I spoke with students about different words, talking to about six students a day.

I also noted when students asked questions about vocabulary or used the new vocabulary words in a classroom discussion. I wrote down what the student said about vocabulary, what time of day it was said, and in what context. I noted whether the students asked a question about a new word, made a connection between words (either previously taught words or new vocabulary), or used one of the previously taught vocabulary words. I
analyzed the success of each of my three goals using the data that I recorded.

**Analysis of Goal One**

One of the goals for my curriculum was for my students to develop higher-level definitions of words. I wanted my students to demonstrate a depth of word knowledge by providing different examples of the word that help illustrate its meaning. I examined my students' work from Vocabulary Journals and Vocabulary Act Out to see if they had no knowledge of word-meaning, partial understanding of the word, or deep understanding of the word.

After rating the students' work, I determined what percentage of the work met each criterion. I then looked at each word, to see if there were any patterns in understanding. I wanted to see if students used similar words to fill in the sentence frame. I compared the scores of different words to see if some words were easier for my students to understand than others.

**Table 4: Examples of student responses for Vocabulary Journals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No understanding</th>
<th>Partial understanding</th>
<th>Deep understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-I feel lonely when my talk toy superman.</td>
<td>-I feel lonely when my dad and mom don’t take me to the park.</td>
<td>-I feel lonely when my family are not here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-I feel grouchy when me grouchy.</td>
<td>-I feel grouchy when my robot catch me.</td>
<td>-I feel grouchy when my mom wakes me up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings.

During implementation, students completed four different Vocabulary Journals, which were scored on an individual student basis, and five different Vocabulary Act Outs, which were scored on a group basis. I tabulated the individual scores for the Vocabulary Journal words enormous, grouchy, dainty, and lonely, as well as group scores for Vocabulary Act Outs words clumsy, litter, munching, crumbled, and melted.

I began my analysis by reviewing the results for Vocabulary Journal words. When I calculated the responses for all four words, I found that 24% of my students showed no understanding of the word, 39% showed partial understanding, and 38% showed deep understanding of the word, as shown in Table 5. The total number of students represents the number of students in class that day; the numbers differ due to students’ absences.

Table 5: Vocabulary Journal Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>No understanding</th>
<th>Partial understanding</th>
<th>Deep understanding</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enormous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grouchy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dainty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lonely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found that the entries for the word enormous had the smallest number of responses that showed no understanding and the most responses that
showed partial understanding. Lonely had the most responses that showed deep understanding of the word. My students showed the most understanding for the words enormous and lonely. This higher-level understanding could be due to how well my students could relate to the meaning of the word. Words that describe size are familiar to young children. They use words like big, small, and little on a daily basis. Enormous fits into a category of words—in this case size—that my students use in their daily life. Enormous is also a cognate for the word enorme, which means enormous in Spanish. The connection between these two words may have helped my students better understand the meaning of enormous.

The class could similarly relate to the word lonely, with 41% of the class showing deep understanding. In their Vocabulary Journals, the students wrote about how they felt lonely when their parents or friends went away. Lonely had the same root as alone, a word my students heard often. The connection between these two words could have helped explain why more students were able to correctly use lonely. While my students did not verbally identify the connection between the words, it could be one reason why it was easier for my students to remember its meaning. In analyzing the students’ work, I speculated on possible explanations for the differences in vocabulary scores.

I also found it easier to provide definitions for enormous and lonely. Because student-friendly definitions improve vocabulary acquisition (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002), I created the definitions using words and terms my
students were familiar with. *Enormous* and *lonely* were easier for me to explain, as I found the words were less nuanced than *dainty* or *grumpy*. Since *enormous* and *lonely* were easier for me to explain, I was able to come up with better definitions and examples. Teacher experience and understanding played a large role in determining the definitions. Other teachers might find *dainty* or *grumpy* easier to teach, which could affect how well students learned those words. I was also more confident in teaching *enormous* and *lonely*. Because I was confident with the definitions I created, I was less hesitant when I taught these words. After the vocabulary lessons for *dainty* and *grumpy*, I still questioned the definitions I gave my students. I did not have the same doubt with *enormous* and *lonely*. The experience of the teacher could have impacted how well my students learned the words.

My results for Vocabulary Act Out followed a similar pattern: some words were easier for my students to develop a deep understanding for than others. All of the groups had expert level actions for the words *clumsy* and *munching*. These two words were easy to review in class. The subject of food came up often, and it was easy to tie into *munching*. When students ate a snack, they often referred to it as “munching.” I also gave my students plenty of opportunities to use the word *clumsy*. When I dropped a pen or fumbled with a book, my students recognized the action as *clumsy*. Because we reviewed the words so frequently in class, students had more opportunities to learn and understand the words.
Table 6: Vocabulary Act Out Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>No understanding</th>
<th>Partial understanding</th>
<th>Deep understanding</th>
<th>Total number of groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>crumbled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melted</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munching</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>litter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clumsy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other words had more mixed results. For the word *crumbled*, three out of four groups were able to provide actions that showed a deep understanding of the word, by miming an object breaking apart into little pieces. The last group showed no understanding of the word *crumble*, using an action that best resembled flying. They did not remember the meaning for the word *crumbled*. *Crumbled* was one of the first words I taught my class. Because I was new at teaching vocabulary this way, my techniques were not as well developed as they would be for later words. This difference in my own experience could help explain why some students misunderstood the meaning of the word.

The nature of group work could also lead to differences in learning the new vocabulary words. Students worked with their peers in heterogeneous groups based on their English language development level. Because students
were encouraged to work with their peers, the actions for Vocabulary Act Out represent a collaborative activity.

Two of the four groups were able to provide an expert definition for \textit{litter}, while the other two only showed partial understanding. The groups that showed partial understanding combined the meaning of \textit{litter} with that of \textit{munching}. Their definition of \textit{litter} involved pretending to eat food, then throwing it on the ground. They did not seem to realize that other items could become \textit{litter}; they had linked the term with eating. Their action for \textit{litter} always involved pretending to first eat food. I taught both \textit{litter} and \textit{munching} during the same week, one right after the other. Because the words were taught close together, it is possible that students combined the meaning of \textit{litter} with that of \textit{munching}. I may not have given my students enough time to learn one word before moving on to the next one. During this extra time, I could have given my students more feedback about their actions, helping them to determine more accurate ones. I needed to correct student misconceptions as they were working to learn new vocabulary in order to help them develop deep understanding of the words. I could have also provided my students with more examples of \textit{litter}, to show them that the word was not only limited to food.

Similarly, students showed different levels of understanding for the word \textit{melted}. Of the four groups, only one group showed deep understanding of the word, by standing tall, then "melting" to the ground. Two groups showed
partial understanding, using their hands to make an object, then taking it apart. One group showed no understanding of the word, jumping up and down to demonstrate meaning. We did not spend as much time in class reviewing this word as we did with other words, partially because there were fewer opportunities to bring up the word *melting*. *Melting* was also one of the first words I taught during implementation. Because I was still making adjustments to my curriculum, *melting* did not benefit from some of my later improvements to the process. The definition I provided for *melting* could have also contributed to the students’ lack of understanding. I struggled with the definition, trying to balance the need for an accurate definition with terms my students could understand. The definition I used for *melting* was, “turns to water when hot.” This definition is not entirely accurate, which could have led to confusion for my students.

For both Vocabulary Pictures and Vocabulary Journals, the students’ level of English proficiency could have impacted their depth of understanding. One method of improving depth of understanding in ELLs is through reviewing the words and reinforcing the learning (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). While there were some opportunities for reviewing the vocabulary words throughout the implementation, more time spent reviewing could have led to more students displaying deep understanding of the words.
Analysis of Goal Two

The second goal for my curriculum was that the students would remember the meaning of the vocabulary words over time. Too often vocabulary instruction focuses on short term learning of new words. Because I wanted my students to remember the vocabulary words I taught, I measured what vocabulary knowledge they retained over time. In order to determine memory retention of the new vocabulary words, I gave my students the same activities two weeks apart. They took the first assessment immediately after being introduced to the words. The second assessments were on-going, beginning two weeks after implementation began and stopping two weeks after the end of the curriculum implementation. Students completed identical Vocabulary Journals and Vocabulary Pictures for each assessment. I then compared the scores from the initial assessment and the delayed assessment.

Findings.

The students’ individual scores on Vocabulary Journals remained fairly stable over time. In the initial assessment, 24% of the class showed no understanding, while on the delayed assessment, 27% demonstrated no understanding. When looking at partial understanding, 39% of students showed some knowledge of the word during the initial assessment with 38% showing this on the later assessment. Thirty-seven percent of the students showed deeper understanding on the first assessment, and 35% scored in this group on the second assessment. While there was a slight increase in no
understanding and a slight decrease in the other two categories, the numbers were very consistent as shown in Table 5. Students did not immediately forget the word meanings of the vocabulary words they wrote about in their journals.

**Table 7: First and second assessment results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No understanding</th>
<th>Partial understanding</th>
<th>Deeper understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First assessment</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second assessment</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While students were completing the Vocabulary Journals, I noticed that a few of the students that did not remember the correct definition still remembered aspects of the word. For the word enormous, some of the students knew that the word was related to size; but they could not remember if the word meant something big or small. Of the different words we studied, the students forgot the least about the word grouchy as shown in Figures 3 and 4. On the initial assessment, seven students showed deep understanding of the word, but that number increased on the second assessment, during which nine students gave a definition showing deep meaning. Figures 3 and 4 show that the word students remembered the least about was dainty. The number of students who displayed deep understanding on the first assessment was five, but the number dropped to two on the second assessment.

The difference in scores could be due to how often we referenced the vocabulary words in the classroom. While I did spend time in class reviewing each vocabulary word, some words lent themselves to being used more often
in class than others. I found that *dainty* was the most difficult word to discuss in class because we came across fewer examples of *dainty* than *grouchy*, *lonely*, and *enormous*. We also spent time in class graphing our favorite Eric Carle books, giving students another chance to remember the words as we discussed *The Lonely Firefly* (Carle, 1995) and *The Grouchy Ladybug* (Carle, 1996). By referencing back to the book, I provided my students with more opportunities to review the word. The graphing activity also gave my students a different type of learning environment in which to review the words. In the new activity, students were given information about the word in a novel way. By providing my students with different ways to learn about the word, I gave them more opportunities to make connections with the vocabulary.

**Figure 3: Vocabulary Journal Results**

I also looked at the results of Vocabulary Pictures to determine the students’ ability to retain knowledge of the new vocabulary words. The two words used in Vocabulary Pictures, *blossom* and *swan*, showed very different results. In the initial assessment for the word *blossom*, 14 students gave a
correct response while four students gave an incorrect response as seen in Figure 5. In the second assessment given two weeks later, seven students were able to identify blossom correctly, with 12 students giving an incorrect response. After two weeks, there was a noticeable drop-off in correct answers for the word blossom.

The results for swan showed a different pattern. Unlike blossom, the recall of swan did not show a drop-off in correct responses. On the initial assessment, 16 students identified swan correctly and three students identified swan incorrectly. Figure 5 shows that on the second assessment given two weeks later, 18 students answered correctly, while three students were unable to identify the word swan.

**Figure 4: Vocabulary Pictures Results**

The difference in responses between blossom and swan could be due to the amount of time spent discussing each book. The word blossom was
from a book about gardening that I read once and discussed briefly with the class. The vocabulary word swan came from *The Ugly Duckling* (Anderson, 2005) and we spent a week discussing the story in detail, practicing story retelling and identifying key elements from the story, such as characters and setting. The class also heard a version of the story in Spanish, which can aide in learning new vocabulary by giving them an opportunity to hear the word in their first language (Goldenberg, 2008).

**Analysis of Goal Three**

Word consciousness was not one of my original goals but was something I noticed early on in my implementation. My students began to display an interest in new words. When I read aloud a story to the class, students inquired about the meaning of unknown words. My class also began to make connections between the words they were learning. Before I began implementing Wondrous Words, my students did not demonstrate word consciousness. During this time, I was often thinking about vocabulary and planning my curriculum, so I was conscientious of my students’ vocabulary consciousness. I noticed a considerable increase in questions about vocabulary after my implementation began.

Once I noticed the pattern of word consciousness that my students were now displaying, I began to record all instances of it. I recorded the student’s name, the type of inquiry, and what prompted the remark from the
student. I wanted to see which students were demonstrating word consciousness and what situations prompted discussions about words.

For the purpose of my note-taking, I defined word consciousness in three ways. The first definition was students who made an inquiry about the meaning of a word. If students heard a word they did not know and asked what it meant, I counted this as an example of word consciousness. I also looked for connections between words. If students shared that mad and angry meant the same thing, it counted as word consciousness. When students used one of the previously taught vocabulary words, I considered it word consciousness. All of these examples showed the students thinking about vocabulary and had an awareness of their own vocabulary learning. Since these are all examples of students thinking about words (Scott & Nagy, 2004), all were considered equal examples of word consciousness.

During the five-week-long implementation of Wondrous Words, 45% of students in my class displayed at least one instance of word consciousness, for a total of 17 different examples of word consciousness. Out of the 17 examples, seven came during read alouds. Most of the remarks from students during the read alouds were inquiries into the meaning of unknown words. While reading aloud from a book on gardens, Jorge B. asked, “What is nectar?” Students would raise their hand and ask me about the meaning of a word I had just read. I often responded to vocabulary queries in a positive manner, because I was trying to foster word consciousness. Teacher
encouragement was another tool I used to increase word consciousness. Recognizing and encouraging students to participate in conversations about vocabulary helps promote increase word consciousness (Graves, 2006).

Students also made connections between words during read alouds. Raul made the observations that "soil is the same" as dirt, while Brenda realized that chewing and munching had similar meanings.

My students also displayed word consciousness during reading groups. During this time, I met with students in groups of four to seven students, reading books at the students’ specific reading level. While discussing the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, I said that Goldilocks was worried that the bears would gobble her up. Elizabeth asked me what gobble meant. I explained that it meant to eat something very quickly and in a hurry, and I mimed the action with my hands. Elizabeth responded, "Ooohh, like munching," making a connection to a previously learned vocabulary word.

Students made other comments about words throughout the day, often precipitated by an event that reminded them of a word meaning. When I dropped a pen I was reaching for, Omar observed that I was clumsy. He applied a previously-learned vocabulary word to a current situation. Sergio also recalled vocabulary words, though he sometimes struggled in remembering the word name. He remembered the definition but did not remember the name of the word. When reading a book that featured a large volcano in it, he drew my attention to the picture. He mentioned that it was
big and it was like"..." He trailed off here, and after some prompting, I determined he was thinking of the word enormous. When I said the word enormous to him, he nodded and agreed that was the word he was thinking about. These examples of word consciousness show that my students are actively thinking about vocabulary. Word consciousness is important aspect of vocabulary instruction because interest in words is a key aspect for continued vocabulary growth (Scott & Nagy, 2004).

I also looked closely at the language arts skills of the students who displayed examples of word consciousness. Out of the ten students who showed word consciousness, eight were proficient or advanced in language arts, based on their scores on different reading assessments given throughout the year. These students were more likely to ask questions and show a general awareness in their own learning in other subjects, not just vocabulary. For example, these students were more likely to volunteer an answer to a comprehension question about a story or point out a shape they recognized on the playground. These students learned sight words and phonics quickly, showing their ability to perform well in academic settings. It is possible that these students' increased word consciousness was a reflection of their active learning style. For future work, it would interesting to see if a longer implementation of Wondrous Word evoked word consciousness in students with a broader range of language arts abilities.
I also looked at the students' English language proficiency. I compared students' scores on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), which students took in October of 2010. The CELDT test measured English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. My class had three proficient English speaking students; the rest of the class took the CELDT test. I did not have any students test at the higher levels of language development. My students were considered either beginner, early intermediate, or intermediate. The students who showed word consciousness had varied levels of English language proficiencies as shown in Table 6.

Table 8: CELDT levels of students who displayed word consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CELDT level</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Early Intermediate</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>English only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CELDT level of my students did not appear to be related to the word consciousness they displayed in class. Students at different levels of English proficiencies asked questions about new words and made connections between words. The level of word consciousness displayed seems to be more correlated with language arts proficiency than English language proficiency.

Through Wondrous Words, nearly half the students in my class developed word consciousness. They displayed their word consciousness throughout the school day, though usually it was related to a language arts
lesson. The students most likely to display word consciousness were those students who were at or above grade level in language arts. As students continue to receive effective vocabulary instruction through school, they should develop more sophistication in their use of word consciousness (Graves, 2006).

Summary and Discussion

The goals of Wondrous Words were to provide students with deeper level understanding of words, promote retention of these vocabulary words, and increase word consciousness. I analyzed different aspects of my students’ work to see if these goals were met.

By analyzing my students’ work in Vocabulary Act Out and Vocabulary Journals, I found that some students were able to develop a deeper level of understanding. Students demonstrated deeper understanding by providing correct examples of the word using pictures, words, and actions. I used a vocabulary rubric to grade the work of my students to see if it showed no understanding of word meaning, partial understanding, or deep understanding. The level of depth my students displayed about the word varied depending on the word. Fifty-three percent of my students showed deep understanding of the word lonely while only 26% showed the same depth of knowledge for dainty. The specifics of the vocabulary word played a large role in how well my students understood it. Students showed deeper understanding on words that had cognates in Spanish and familiar sounding
roots, like *enormous* and *lonely*. Some words, such as *clumsy* and *munching*, were easier to review in class than others because they were more applicable to situations that occurred in the classroom. The ease in reviewing gave the students more opportunities to review the word and demonstrated more contexts in which the word could be used. Reviewing and reinforcing the vocabulary learning does increase the depth of understanding in English language learners (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

Vocabulary words that sounded similar to other words my students already knew were easier for my students to learn. Students’ prior knowledge and first language helped improve their vocabulary knowledge. Taking advantage of cognates, words that sound similar and have the same meaning, improved vocabulary learning in ELLs (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Using the students’ native language also improves vocabulary acquisition; the few times I was able to do this could have increased students’ knowledge about the word (Goldenberg, 2008).

The role of the teacher also played a part in vocabulary learning. Because effective vocabulary curriculums require teachers to play an active role, the quality and nature of the lesson varies. When I provided my students with better examples of the word in context and more clear definition, some students acquired a deeper understanding of the word. More of my students understood *munching* than *melting*. My definition for *munching* was clearer and I was able to provide my students with more accurate examples of the
word. More experience in teaching vocabulary and creating definitions, as well as clear guidance in vocabulary instruction, could help teachers provide their students with the most effective vocabulary instruction.

My students also showed some ability to remember words over time. My class did not immediately forget the vocabulary words we had spent class time learning. Those students that did not forget the words were able to provide examples of the words to show the word meanings and identified a picture that matched a target vocabulary word. The specific vocabulary word also affected students’ ability to remember. *Grouchy* and *swan* were remembered more frequently than *blossom* or *dainty*. The ease of connecting the vocabulary word to other situations in class affected how well the word was remembered. Providing more contexts in which to use the word provided my students with more information about its meaning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

The explicit instruction provided by *Wondrous Words* led to an increased consciousness in vocabulary by the students. This increase in word consciousness led the students to notice new vocabulary words throughout the day and make more inquires about word meanings of previously unknown words. An increased consciousness of words is beneficial because it has been shown to lead to more robust vocabularies with less advantaged students (Graves, 2005). Because many of the students are English language learners, increased word consciousness is an important skill for them to develop.
because it is likely to lead to continued vocabulary growth in the future (Scott & Nagy, 2004). Forty-five percent of the students displayed at least one example of word consciousness. Those students most likely to display word consciousness were those that performed at proficient and advanced in language arts. The English language level of the student mattered less than the language arts level. Examples of word consciousness occurred throughout the school day.

I was surprised with how my students' consciousness of words increased throughout the implementation of my curriculum. Before I began teaching vocabulary in a targeted, precise way, I did not notice my students asking questions about words they heard in books I read aloud. As I began to draw their attention to new words and how the words were used in books, my students started asking questions about other words I used in the classroom. My class did not limit their questions to the specific words I was teaching them; they asked questions about other words in the read alouds and words I spoke throughout the day.

Kindergarten students can take a more active role in their vocabulary learning. They can be taught to seek out the meaning of new words they come across and monitor their own awareness of words. This vocabulary initiative and consciousness was an important skill that will help them as they continue their education. Word consciousness is an important element of learning vocabulary (Scott & Nagy, 2004). I cannot anticipate all the
vocabulary words my students will need to know in school. Instead, I can
inspire my students to monitor their own learning and take action when they
find a new vocabulary word.
Chapter VIII: Conclusion

I created Wondrous Words as a way to expand vocabulary instruction for kindergarten students. Building off the high-level vocabulary students are exposed to in read alouds, Wondrous Words guides teachers in selecting vocabulary to be taught. It also provides multiple ways for young students to interact with these new words and gives students access to definitions they can understand. Early exposure to high-level vocabulary is especially critical for English language learners (ELLS). ELLs are more likely to learn new vocabulary when it is directly taught to them and the new words are presented in context (Goldenberg, 2008).

When I originally designed Wondrous Words, I had two goals for the students: to develop flexible, deep understandings of the words; and to retain word meaning over a period of time. As I worked with my students, I developed a new goal based on what I was seeing in my classroom. While implementing this curriculum, I was surprised with how curious my students were about words. They began to ask me questions about words, inquiring what new vocabulary in books meant. This led me to develop a third goal: increased consciousness of vocabulary.

I originally hoped to teach my students a larger number of vocabulary words and have them retain the meanings of these new words. As I worked on implementing my curriculum, I realized that I needed to readjust these goals. Students were overwhelmed at learning more than two to three new words a
week, and some students had a more difficult time remembering the meanings of the new words. By limiting the number of words that I taught my students each week, I was able to focus more on the depth of their vocabulary knowledge.

Developing my curriculum helped me become more aware of all the opportunities I had during the day to teach my students new vocabulary. As a result, I became more purposeful in my vocabulary instruction throughout the school day. I realized that I also needed to explicitly teach my students the vocabulary they read about in their leveled readers. Books aimed at kindergarten readers used words such as skyscraper and path, words that challenged my students. The more aware of vocabulary I became, the more purposeful I became in my instruction. Instead of just giving my students a brief explanation of new vocabulary, I took the time to teach it.

I also saw how often explicit vocabulary instruction is neglected in school. One day during my implementation, I was in the office making copies of Vocabulary Journals for the word dainty. One of my colleagues saw my paper and exclaimed, “Dainty! That’s a big word for kindergarten.” I explained that the word figured prominently in one of the books I would be reading aloud that day. The teacher then shared that she had read that word with her third-grade class the previous week and none of her students knew what the word meant. She mentioned again that she thought it was too difficult a word to teach in kindergarten.
My interaction with this teacher helps to illustrate one of the problems with vocabulary instruction. Teachers in the lower grades are not expected to explicitly teach vocabulary, yet by third grade students are expected to have a robust vocabulary. Without explicit vocabulary instruction, students will not develop the vocabulary they need to be successful in school. Wondrous Words provides a means to help develop the necessary vocabulary, teaching students about the words they encounter in read alouds. Hopefully, Wondrous Words will increase consciousness about the importance of vocabulary instruction and provide insight into what kindergarten students can accomplish.

Throughout my implementation, my students showed they have the ability to think critically about words and demonstrate a growing consciousness about new words. Too often kindergarten students are dismissed as “little kids who come to school to play.” This perception does them a disservice. I have found my kindergarten students to be curious learners who want to know more about new words. Teachers can take advantage of this curiosity and begin instructing students in vocabulary used daily in the classroom. This will help students build awareness about words and help them grow the vocabulary necessary for success in school.

Changes can also be made to Wondrous Words to aid in kindergarten students' learning. Much of my curriculum is focused on direct vocabulary instruction, but within the rich context of the selected readings. Nevertheless, it
should be possible to improve this framework by further enriching the context. For example, selecting words based on a theme would provide students with more contexts in which to learn the words. Focusing only on size words or emotion words at a time could make it easier for students to learn the words and for the teacher to reference the words. Incorporating words throughout the day in the classroom gives students more natural opportunities to hear the words in context. A program that balanced direct instruction with learning in context could be successful in helping students learn new vocabulary.

I am proud of the vocabulary work my students did in Wondrous Words and I am curious to see where this consciousness of words takes my students. Hopefully this increased consciousness of words will lead to improved language arts performance in two different ways. First, explicit interest in words and definitions should help improve vocabulary as students progress through school. Secondly, this increased curiosity may foster further success in reading as students cease regarding new vocabulary they come across while reading as an obstacle and start treating it as an exciting new challenge.
Appendix

Wondrous Words
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Dear Teachers:

*Wondrous Words* is a curriculum designed to teach vocabulary in the kindergarten classroom. A large vocabulary is an important tool in reading comprehension; however, reading strategies in kindergarten typically focus solely on phonics. While phonics instruction is a critical element in learning to read, it is not the only factor in becoming a successful reader. Effective vocabulary instruction is especially important for English language learners, who come to school with less vocabulary than their English-only peers. Currently, there are few programs teachers can use to help make up this difference in vocabulary. In kindergarten, teacher read alouds are the most common method of introducing new vocabulary to students. *Wondrous Words* provides explicit vocabulary instruction for these new words. Too often vocabulary instruction involves just rote memorization. *Wondrous Words* gives students an active role in making meaning with the new word.

*Wondrous Words* can be used with any teacher read aloud, differentiating to the needs of a specific classroom. *Wondrous Words* starts by providing guidelines on how to select a word to teach to the class. Once the word has been selected, the teacher develops sentences using the word in context and helps the class create a student-friendly definition. After the word has been defined, the teacher has multiple activities to choose from in teaching the word. Students can write about the word in their vocabulary journal, act out the word, or select a picture that matches the meaning of the word. The instruction does not end after the word is taught to the class. *Wondrous Words* recognizes the importance of reviewing vocabulary to help new words become a part of the students’ long-term memory.
While *Wondrous Words* was designed for the kindergarten classroom, it can be used in other grade levels. It provides a flexible and effective student-oriented approach to improving vocabulary.

Sincerely,

Amy Hammon
6 Steps to Wondrous Words

- Step 1: Select a vocabulary word
- Step 2: Create multiple sentences using word in context
- Step 3: Share sentences with students & co-create definition of word
- Step 4: Tell students what part of speech the word is
- Step 5: Students complete activity for word
- Step 6: Review vocabulary word
Guide to selecting vocabulary

It is important to select a word that is either necessary to understanding the book you have selected or a useful addition to a growing vocabulary. Follow these guidelines to help you make your word selection.

Is there a word students need to know in order to understand the book?

yes

no

teach that word

Is there a high utility word students need to know in school? (such as enormous, coward, exclaimed)

yes

no

Think of a high utility word that matches the theme of the book and teach that word. For a book about a pet dog, a potential word could be *beg*. 
Guide to creating a vocabulary sentence

It is important to create a sentence that provides information about the word in a different context than that used in the book. Follow these guidelines to help you make your word selection.

• First, look at how the word is used in the book.

• Think about other ways the word can be used. Doing so provides students with the word in a new context.

• Make sure the sentence provides information about the meaning of the word
  
  ○ Example of a sentence using the word in context: The colorful flower was pretty.
  
  ○ Example of a sentence NOT using the word in context: I like pretty things.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>book</th>
<th>Tier two word</th>
<th>Sentence using word in context</th>
<th>key words to include in definition</th>
<th>Part of speech</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patty's pumpkin patch</td>
<td>blossoms</td>
<td>The rose blossoms smelled beautiful.</td>
<td>flower</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>vocab. pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A grand old tree</td>
<td>crumbled</td>
<td>The cookie crumbled as I bit into it.</td>
<td>break into little pieces</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>vocabulary act out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tiny seed</td>
<td>Melted</td>
<td>The popsicle melted in the hot sun.</td>
<td>turns to liquid when hot</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>vocabulary act out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The enormous carrot</td>
<td>enormous</td>
<td>It took us forever to climb the enormous mountain.</td>
<td>really big</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>vocab journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinnia's flower garden</td>
<td>inspects</td>
<td>The child closely inspected the beautiful butterfly</td>
<td>look closely at something</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>vocabulary act out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, weed, and wait</td>
<td>Littered</td>
<td>Throw your trash away, don't litter.</td>
<td>trash on the ground</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>vocabulary act out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working cotton</td>
<td>Sack</td>
<td>Santa put all of the presents into his big sack.</td>
<td>a big bag</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>vocab. pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This tree counts</td>
<td>munching</td>
<td>The boy munching on an apple during snack.</td>
<td>eating little bits of food</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>vocabulary act out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Vocabulary Act Out lesson plan

Purpose: Students will learn a new vocabulary word

Materials: A read aloud book and vocabulary chart

Preparation:

- Select a vocabulary word from the book (see guide). For Vocabulary Act Out, select a verb.
- Create a student-friendly definition.
- Create a sentence using the word in context (see guide).
- Determine an action that demonstrates meaning of the word.

Procedure:

- Introduce vocabulary word to the class. Share the word’s definition and use it in the example sentence
- Read aloud chosen book
- After reading the book, review vocabulary word by having students tell a partner the word and definition
- Introduce Vocabulary Act for the word
- Have students practice acting out the word. Use the Vocabulary Act out scoring guide to assess students’ work

Review: Over the next few days, bring up the vocabulary word to review with the class. Ask students for examples of vocabulary word or practice acting out the vocabulary word.
Sample Vocabulary Journals lesson plan

Purpose: Students will learn a new vocabulary word

Materials: A read aloud book and vocabulary chart

Preparation:

- Select a vocabulary word from the book (see guide). For Vocabulary Journals, select an adjective.
- Create a student-friendly definition.
- Create a sentence using the word in context (see guide).
- Write a sentence frame for the word, using the following model as a guide:
  - The ____________ is (vocabulary word).

Procedure:

- Introduce vocabulary word to the class. Share the word’s definition and use it in the example sentence
- Read aloud chosen book
- After reading the book, review vocabulary word by having students tell a partner the word and definition
- Introduce the Vocabulary Journal for the word
- Have students fill in the sentence frame and draw a picture to match the sentence

Review: Over the next few days, bring up the vocabulary word to review with the class. Ask students for examples of vocabulary word or practice acting out the vocabulary word.
Sample Vocabulary Pictures lesson plan

Purpose: Students will learn a new vocabulary word

Materials: A read aloud book and vocabulary chart

Preparation:

- Select a vocabulary word from the book (see guide). For Vocabulary Pictures, select a noun.
- Create a student-friendly definition.
- Create a sentence using the word in context (see guide).
- Find a picture that represents the word. Pictures can be found on the internet or books. Also, select other images to include to give students multiple options (only one of which will be correct)

Procedure:

- Introduce vocabulary word to the class. Share the word’s definition and use it in the example sentence
- Read aloud chosen book
- After reading the book, review vocabulary word by having students tell a partner the word and definition
- Have students complete Vocabulary Pictures by circling the correct image that matches the word

Review: Over the next few days, bring up the vocabulary word to review with the class. Ask students for examples of vocabulary word or practice acting out the vocabulary word.
# Blank Vocabulary Planning

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<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Vocabulary word</th>
<th>Sentence using word in context</th>
<th>Key words to include in definition</th>
<th>Part of speech</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</table>
Vocabulary Pictures

Thermometer
A ________________ is marvelous.
# Vocabulary ACT OUT SCORING

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<tr>
<th>Word:</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Group 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review activities

Word/picture match

scorching  icy  blizzard
References


