Guide for planning and implementing explicit vocabulary instruction

Overview

This guide for planning and implementing explicit vocabulary instruction is designed to build teacher understanding of the Three Tier framework for classifying vocabulary (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013) the SEEC process for explicit vocabulary instruction (Quigley, 2018).

Vocabulary knowledge is critical for reading, writing, speaking and listening in all subject areas. The Three Tier framework and SEEC process described in this guide can be adapted for use in all subject areas and in all year levels. As the English learning area has a particular role in developing literacy, the NSW English K-10 syllabus outcomes aligned to literacy skills have been identified. Vocabulary is included within and across sub-elements in the National Literacy Learning Progression, however, relevant indicators from the Understanding texts sub-element have been identified.

Syllabus outcomes

EN1-9B – uses basic grammatical features, punctuation conventions and vocabulary appropriate to the type of text when responding to and composing texts.

EN2-9B – uses effective and accurate sentence structure, grammatical features, punctuation conventions and vocabulary relevant to the type of text when responding to and composing texts.

EN3-6B – uses knowledge of sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary to respond to and compose clear and cohesive texts in different media and technologies.

EN4-3B – uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts.

EN5-3B – selects and uses language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts, describing and explaining their effects on meaning.

Literacy learning progression guide

Understanding texts (UnT6 – UnT10)

UnT6

- uses morphological knowledge to explain words (help (base) + less (suffix) = helpless)

UnT7

- recognises how synonyms are used to enhance a text (transport, carry, transfer)

UnT8

- use knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to read and interpret unfamiliar words
- recognises how the use of antonyms, synonyms and common idiomatic language enhance meaning in a text

UnT9

- applies knowledge of root words and word origins to understand the meaning of unfamiliar, discipline-specific words

UnT10

- demonstrates an understanding of nuances and subtleties in words of similar meaning (frustrated, discouraged, baffled)

What works best

Explicit teaching practices involve teachers clearly explaining to students why they are learning something, how it connects to what they already know, what they are expected to do, how to do it and what it looks like when they have succeeded. Students are given opportunities and time to check their understanding, ask questions and receive clear, effective feedback.

This resource reflects the latest evidence base and can be used by teachers as they plan for explicit teaching.

Teachers can use assessment information to make decisions about when and how they use this resource as they design teaching and learning sequences to meet the learning needs of their students.

Further support with What works best is available.

Differentiation

When using this resource in the classroom, it is important for teachers to consider the needs of all students, including Aboriginal and EAL/D learners.

EAL/D learners will require explicit English language support and scaffolding, informed by the Enhanced EAL/D enhanced teaching and learning cycle and the student's phase on the EAL/D Learning Progression. Teachers can access information about supporting EAL/D learners and literacy and numeracy support specific to EAL/D learners.

Learning adjustments enable students with disability and additional learning and support needs to access syllabus outcomes and content on the same basis as their peers. Teachers can use a range of adjustments to ensure a personalised approach to student learning.

Assessing and identifying high potential and gifted learners will help teachers decide which students may benefit from extension and additional challenge. Effective strategies and contributors to achievement for high potential and gifted learners helps teachers to identify and target areas for growth and improvement. A differentiation adjustment tool can be found on the High potential and gifted education website.

Text selection

An example text is used throughout this resource. Teachers can adjust the activity to use texts which are linked to their unit of learning.

Further support with text selection can be found within the National Literacy Learning Progression Text Complexity appendix.

The NESA website has additional information on text requirements within the NSW English K-10 syllabus.

Background information

The three tiers of vocabulary

It is not possible to directly teach the meaning of every single word that a student will encounter when reading or writing. It is therefore important to know how to think about words and their power for communicating ideas. This understanding will support teachers to choose the best words to explicitly teach.

The three-tiered model of vocabulary development, described by Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2013), is a framework to classify words.

Tier 1: These are common, everyday words that most children enter school knowing already, either in English or their first language. These words will continue to be acquired from everyday life including through school. These words are readily learned as they are used frequently in conversation and are concrete. For example, book, girl, sad, baby, clock, dog and orange.

Tier 2: These words appear more frequently in text than in oral language, so children are less likely to learn them without assistance. They add precision by providing new ways to express concepts that are already understood. (e.g., stale, awful, snuggle, twitch). These words require explicit teaching as they may not be part of children's everyday oral language. Tier 2 words:

- usually have multiple meanings,
- are essential for building formal academic language across subject areas
- are necessary for reading comprehension
- are characteristic of a mature language user, and
- are descriptive words that add detail.

Tier 3: These are encountered less frequently and are often limited to specific topics and domains. Tier 3 words are likely to be new for all students. Some examples of Tier 3 words might be filibuster, pantheon and epidermis. These words are probably best learned when there is a specific need in a subject area.

(Beck, McKeown and Kucan, (2013) Bringing words to life, page 9.)

Explicit teaching

Explicit vocabulary instruction supports the development of vocabulary breadth (the number of words an individual knows the meaning of) and depth (being able to define words, provide attributes of the word, and supply examples of other semantically related words) of students.

The following SEEC process can be used to explicitly teach vocabulary:

Process	Explanation of the process
Select	Selecting words in texts is an important part of vocabulary teaching and learning. Prior to learning, preview material and identify 2-4 target words for explicit instruction. Some considerations for choosing high value words: Which words are most important to understanding the text or situation? Which words will help build important concept knowledge? Which words will be encountered frequently outside this particular context? Which words have multiple meanings? Which words can be figured out from the context? Which words provide an opportunity to use morphology to determine the meaning? (Konza, D., 2011)
Explain	After selecting words to target, teachers move into explicit instruction and explanation of the word. The steps for explaining a word should include: **Say**- Say the word and notice the phonemes and syllables. **Write**- Write the word and draw attention to the spelling. **Define**- Provide a student-friendly definition. **Demonstrate**- Provide examples of the word in different contexts. Draw attention to the function, morphology and synonyms and antonyms for the word. **Clarify**- Re-contextualise the word within the text and ask questions that clarify any misunderstandings.
Explore	Explore the words using a range of teaching strategies: • Frayer model • Word web • Vocabulary map • Highlighting key vocabulary and using dictionaries and glossaries to define • Reword definition into own words.
Consolidate	Contextualise and consolidate knowledge of the new vocabulary and provide students with frequent opportunities to revise and use the vocabulary through games, speaking and writing.

Adapted from Quigley (2018). Closing the vocabulary gap, Routledge Publications, New York.

Example use of the SEEC process for explicit vocabulary instruction

This learning resource is intended for printed use in the classroom. Some activities will not work appropriately on screen readers, please make contact for an alternative learning solution.

The following example is based on a Stage 3 PDHPE teaching and learning sequence.

Content focus

PD3-2- Investigates information, community resources and strategies to demonstrate resilience and seek help for themselves and others.

- plan for healthy eating habits which reflect the Australian government dietary guidelines and advice for children.

Vocabulary focus

The vocabulary focus from the Understanding texts sub-element of the National Literacy Learning Progression is:

UnT7

- explains how unfamiliar words can be understood using grammatical knowledge, morphological knowledge and etymological knowledge

UnT9

- uses a range of context and grammatical cues to understand unfamiliar words

Focus text

The focus text is the page 5 of the Australian Dietary Guidelines- Summary on the Eat for Health Australian government website.

Select

From the focus text, the following focus vocabulary has been selected:

Tier 2 focus vocabulary	Tier 3 focus vocabulary
maintain sufficient processed commercial predominately	adolescents nutritious polyun-/monoun-/saturated fats wholegrain legumes

Explain: sufficient

The following steps are used throughout the teaching and learning sequence to explicitly teach the focus vocabulary:

Contextualise the word within the text: The text has this sentence with our focus vocabulary, "Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally." Let's learn about the word sufficient.

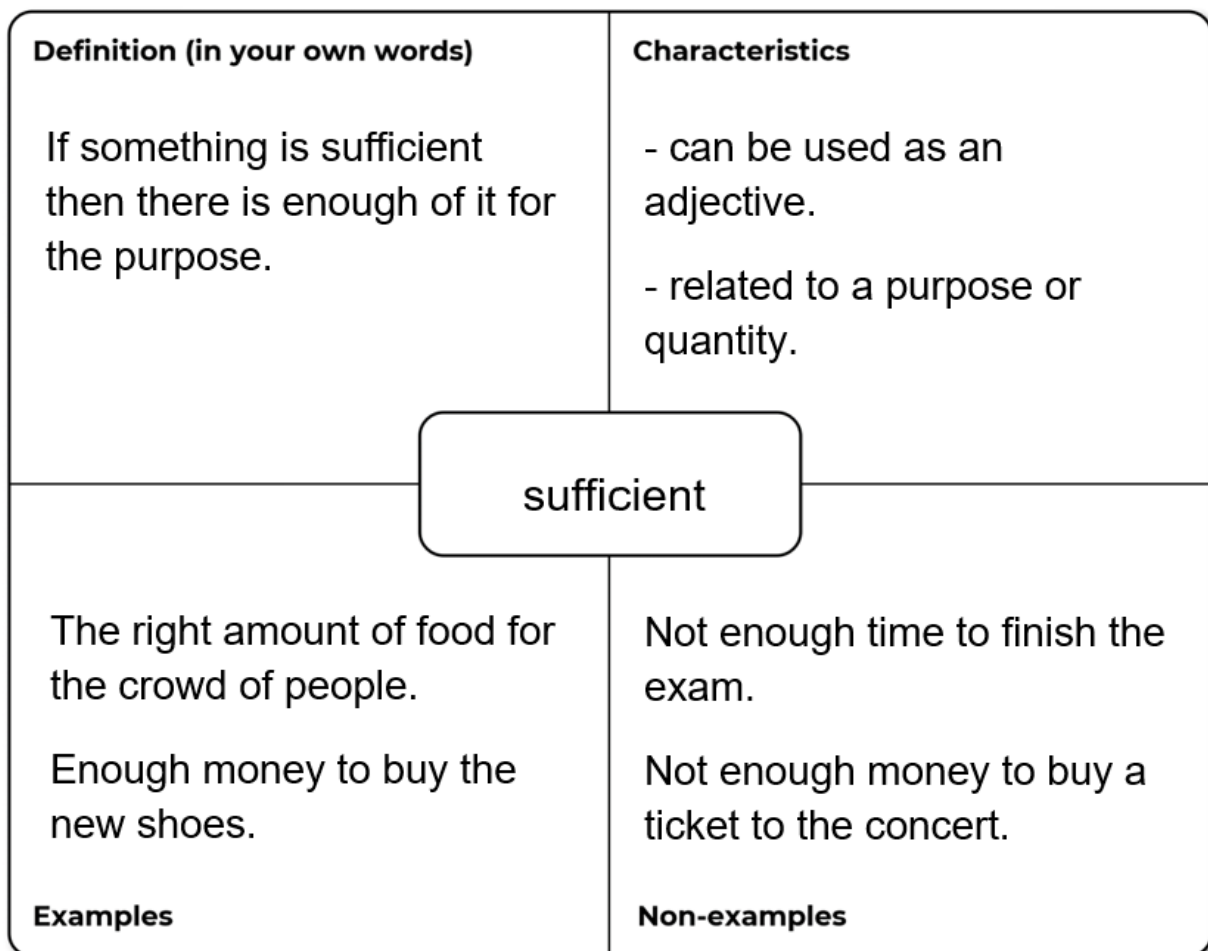| Step	Explanation of the step	Example script for teacher
Say	Say the word and notice the phonemes and syllables.	Sufficient has three syllables.
Write	Write the word and draw attention to the spelling.	Sufficient has a base word, suffice, with the split digraph i-e. It has the suffix –ient. I'm also noticing that there is a double 'f'.
Define	Provide a student-friendly definition.	If something is sufficient for a particular purpose, there is enough of it for the purpose.
Demonstrate	Provide examples of the word in different contexts. Draw attention to the function, morphology and synonyms and antonyms for the word.	Let's think about some more examples: • One metre of fabric is sufficient to make a cushion. • There was sufficient evidence to know who had stolen the jewels. • The amount of money we were given was sufficient to buy the groceries. We can consider the function and morphology of the word: • The base word, suffice, is a verb which means enough or adequate. • If you say that something will suffice, you mean

Step	Explanation of the step	Example script for teacher
		it will be enough to achieve a purpose or fulfil a need.
		• The suffix –ient is used to form adjectives that describes a state or quality.
		• The suffix has been added to the base word to create sufficient. This new word is an adjective.
		• Related words: in- + sufficient = insufficient (meaning not sufficient), sufficient + -cy = sufficiency (meaning the quality or state of being sufficient, -cy forms nouns).
		Considering the synonyms and antonyms of the word to help us deepen our understanding:
		• Some synonyms of sufficient are adequate, enough, ample and satisfactory.
		• Some antonyms of sufficient are insufficient, inadequate, incomplete, scant and meagre.
Clarify	Re-contextualise the word within the text and ask questions that clarify any misunderstandings.	Let's revisit the word in our text. The sentence is, "Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally." Sufficient means enough of something for the purpose so, the guidelines are that children and adolescents eat enough nutritious foods to grow and develop normally.
		I am going to say some more sentences. You need to decide if the sentence is an example or a non-example of using sufficient in a sentence. An example will have sufficient used correctly and a non-example will have sufficient used incorrectly.
		• He gets paid a sufficient amount so he does not have enough money to support his family.
		Is this an example or non-example?
		This sentence says he does not have enough but we know sufficient means enough. So this is a non-example- the word sufficient has not been used correctly. To make this sentence make sense, we would need to use an antonym for the word sufficient- we would need a word that means not sufficient or not enough. In this case, we could use the word insufficient.
		Let's try another sentence.
		• My explanation was sufficient and the students were able to understand the concept.
		Is this an example or non-example?
		The sentence tells us that the students were able to understand the concept so the explanation was enough or sufficient. This is an example of using sufficient correctly.

Step	Explanation of the step	Example script for teacher
		What is another time when we would use the word sufficient?
		Turn to a partner and explain the word fleeing and together create a sentence that uses the word fleeing.

Explore

A [Frayer model](#) is one of the many graphic organisers that can be used to explore, develop and deepen student understanding of vocabulary. Traditionally, the Frayer model has the word or concept in the middle of four boxes. The four boxes can be titled in various ways, including: definition, essential characteristics, examples, non-examples, synonyms, antonyms, morphology, and function. Refer to the Digital learning selector for a range of [Frayer model templates](#).

Figure 1. Worked example of a Frayer model using the focus word 'sufficient.'

Definition (in your own words)	Characteristics
If something is sufficient then there is enough of it for the purpose.	- can be used as an adjective. - related to a purpose or quantity.

sufficient

The right amount of food for the crowd of people. Enough money to buy the new shoes. **Examples**	Not enough time to finish the exam. Not enough money to buy a ticket to the concert. **Non-examples**

Consolidate

There are numerous way to consolidate student understanding of new vocabulary. In this scenario, students had previously learnt the word 'adequate' so the following activity was used to explore the subtle difference between the two words in order to further consolidate understanding.

Word	sufficient	adequate
Definition	**What is the definition of the word?** If something is sufficient for a particular purpose, there is enough of it for the purpose.	**What is the definition of the word?** If something is adequate, there is enough of it or it is good enough to be used or accepted.
Use	**Use the word in a sentence.** Despite more people turning up to the party than expected, the food and drinks proved **sufficient**.	**Use the word in a sentence.** The training he received for the job was **adequate** but he did not feel very confident.

What is similar about the two words? Both describe there being a quantity or level of something that meet the requirements.
What is the difference between the two words? The difference is that 'adequate' refers to there being a level or amount of something that is barely covering the requirements whereas, 'sufficient' refers to a comfortable level or amount.

Further information

Use the following links for more information and resources for teaching and assessing vocabulary:

- A video explaining the three tier framework for vocabulary
- A video explaining morphology
- Effective reading: Vocabulary PL
- Effective reading in the early years of school- Vocabulary page
- Focus on vocabulary PL
- Podcast- Vocabulary for reading

References

Beck, McKeown and Kucan, (2013). Bringing words to life. Guildford Publications.

Quigley, A., (2018). Closing the Vocabulary Gap. Taylor & Francis Ltd.