

EXPLICIT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION  
FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Marijane Davis

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Queen's University  
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## Abstract

Learning to read begins at home as children hear their families talk and interact with one another (Hart & Risely, 1995). By age three children living in advantaged homes hear three times as many words as children living in disadvantaged homes (Hart & Risely, 1995). Words that are not heard cannot be learned (Biemiller, 2007). This can impact a child's ability to comprehend written text as reading requires the ability to not only decode written words but also the ability to understand word meaning. This project summarizes the research on the factors that promote a pre-school child's vocabulary development and the research on vocabulary instruction throughout the early school years. Research on curriculum design is also summarized and a curriculum unit was developed based on the principles of backwards design and evidence based instructional approaches to teach vocabulary explicitly in kindergarten.

Current research at the Kindergarten level suggests that children can learn the meanings of sophisticated words (refined labels for concepts children are already familiar with) found in read alouds using an explicit method of instruction (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). This method of instruction, referred to as Rich Instruction, provides students with more than just the dictionary definition of the word in order to promote deep and refined knowledge of word meanings (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Researchers have found that this type of explicit instruction supports students' comprehension. Therefore, the lessons in this curriculum unit are modelled after Beck and McKeown's (2007) Rich Instruction approach. The lessons also align with Ontario's Full Day Early Learning curriculum document (2010) that suggests the early learning team can guide oral language development by introducing new vocabulary to students.

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## Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Rationale .....	3
Purpose .....	4
CHAPTER 2: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
Vocabulary Development .....	7
Factors that Promote Vocabulary Development .....	10
Defining Vocabulary in the School Setting .....	18
Vocabulary Instruction in the Primary Grades .....	22
Curriculum Design .....	28
Text Selection .....	31
Developmental Sequence of the Curriculum Sequence .....	35
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION .....	38
REFERENCES .....	39
APPENDICES .....	44
APPENDIX A: Curriculum Unit .....	44

APPENDIX A: <i>Big Words for Little People</i> (Curtis, 2008) .....	44
APPENDIX B: <i>A Day at the Pumpkin Patch</i> (Faulkner, 2006) .....	51
APPENDIX C: <i>Face to Face with Frogs</i> (Moffet, 2008) .....	55
APPENDIX D: <i>Beetle</i> (Hartley, Marco and Taylor, 2008) .....	60
APPENDIX E: <i>Owen &amp; Mzee</i> (Hatkoff and Kahumbu, 2007) .....	65
APPENDIX F: <i>Giraffe and Bird</i> (Bender, 2010) .....	70
APPENDIX G <i>Scaredy Squirrel</i> (Watt, 2008) .....	75
APPENDIX H: <i>Stanley's Party</i> (Bailey, 2003) .....	79
APPENDIX I: Assessment of Learning Checklist .....	84

## List of Tables

**Table 1:** Weekly Lesson Format .....36

**Table 2:** Text Selection .....39

## Chapter 1 – Background Information

### *Introduction*

The size of a child's vocabulary has been demonstrated to be a significant predictor of academic achievement, more specifically, reading achievement. Over the years, research has highlighted a critical link between early vocabulary knowledge and successful reading achievement (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; National Reading Panel, 2000; Senechal, Ouellette & Rodney, 2006). In fact, a longitudinal study led by Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) reported that vocabulary size in first grade strongly predicted reading comprehension in eleventh grade, a full ten years later. As noted by The National Reading Panel (2000) this predictive relationship exists because readers cannot understand text without knowing what the majority of the words mean. Researchers agree that acceptable levels of comprehension occur when the reader knows at least 90 to 95 percent of the words in the text (Hirsch, 2003). Consequently, young children with smaller vocabularies comprehend less well and as a result, they often choose to read less which affects their ability to acquire vocabulary through independent reading (Biemiller, 2007). Therefore, children with smaller vocabularies continue to fall behind their peers in developing their vocabulary knowledge.

Clearly, individual differences in vocabulary knowledge contribute to achievement gaps. Unfortunately, research has shown that there are significant differences in rates of vocabulary growth between children from different socio-economic backgrounds (Hart and Risley, 1995). This seminal study revealed that during the first three years of life children in economically disadvantaged households were exposed to significantly fewer words than children in middle to upper class income households. A child's socioeconomic status thus contributes to a potential

``Matthew Effect`` meaning that over time the rich get richer, their vocabulary increases, and the poor get poorer, they fall further and further behind (Mashburn, Justice, Downer, & Pianta, 2009). As a large and rich vocabulary is strongly related to reading proficiency, vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in a child's process of becoming a reader (Beck, McKeown, 2007). Children who begin school with limited vocabularies are at significant risk for experiencing reading difficulties and ultimately, being identified as having a language or reading disability (Coyne, McCoach & Kapp, 2007).

In light of these issues it is comforting to know that a body of research demonstrates that a child's vocabulary can be increased through early educational intervention (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Specifically, explicit methods of instruction used within the context of a storybook have been shown to promote word learning in Kindergarten and grade one students (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Nonetheless, there is evidence that a year in Kindergarten typically adds nothing to a child's vocabulary (Christian, Morrison, Frazier & Massetti, 2000). Time and time again, research has demonstrated that there is a lack of intentional, explicit vocabulary instruction in primary grade curricular materials and classrooms (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000, National Reading Panel, 2000).

### *Rationale*

As an experienced elementary teacher, I am passionate about teaching young children how to read. Nothing pleases me more than hearing a child read a text independently with understanding. Therefore, I am always looking for ways to improve my practice pertaining to literacy instruction. This pursuit for instructional refinement in combination with my teaching experiences has led to my intensive study of vocabulary.

My teaching experiences have been mainly in the early primary years, as a classroom teacher, special education resource teacher, as well as a literacy coach. Most recently, I have spent time teaching Kindergarten in a lower socio-economic community with a predominantly large number of at-risk students. On the whole, these students begin school with limited oral language skills and background knowledge which places them at-risk for reading difficulties or reading failure (Coyne et al., 2007). Drawing on my own experiences I have found vocabulary to be taught incidentally in Kindergarten through storybooks and curriculum content areas. It has been my experience that a great deal of time is spent on developing a child's phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension skills yet limited time is spend on developing a child's vocabulary knowledge. The research certainly supports my experiences and has led me to question how to best support and foster vocabulary development in Kindergarten.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this project is threefold: (a) to examine the research on the factors that promote a pre-school child's vocabulary development, (b) to examine the research on the teaching of vocabulary, particularly in relation to teaching Kindergarten students (c) to develop a curriculum unit for Kindergarten teachers to teach vocabulary using an evidence based instructional approach.

This project is composed of four key components which are: (a) a literature review of the factors that promote a pre-school child's vocabulary development, (b) a literature review of effective instruction approaches to teaching vocabulary, (c) a literature review of effective curriculum design, (d) a curriculum unit for Kindergarten teachers to effectively teach vocabulary.

A review of the literature regarding vocabulary development will be used to frame the instructional approach used to teach vocabulary explicitly in Kindergarten. The purpose of this literature review is to outline how a child's vocabulary develops, highlighting the reasons why individual differences exist in word knowledge upon school entrance.

The second component of this project is a literature review of the research on instructional approaches to vocabulary instruction with kindergarten children. Based upon this analysis I chose the most effective approach to utilize in designing my curriculum unit.

The third component is a review of the literature on curriculum design, criterion for text selection, genre and young children's preferences.

The fourth component of the project is a curriculum unit based upon the three previous components. This unit is a vehicle to share evidence based instructional approaches with teachers. My intent for this unit is to provide teachers with lessons that they can readily use to teach vocabulary in kindergarten.

The purpose of this Masters project is to inform teachers about the research pertaining to how children acquire vocabulary; the current evidence based instructional approaches to teach vocabulary, and to develop a curriculum unit for educators to support effective vocabulary instruction in Kindergarten.

## Chapter 2 – Vocabulary Development: A Literature Review

### *Introduction*

Children acquire language in a social context where they are given opportunities to communicate with others and listen to others model the various components of language. As such, early language development is grounded in the interactions children have with their parents (Lucchese & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007). Children growing up in families with attentive, nurturing parents who offer a plethora of communicative opportunities ultimately provide the best environment in which to foster language development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). Nevertheless, barring any genetic difficulties almost all children learn to speak at least one language in the first few years of life (Hoff, 2005). However, not all children learn to talk well (Bardige and Bardige, 2008). As a kindergarten teacher each year I am amazed by the vast differences that exist among children's vocabularies upon school entrance. Some children begin school with an abundant amount of words to express themselves and their knowledge of the world. Other children enter the classroom barely able to string a few words together to indicate their most essential needs and concerns. Research has shown that there are significant differences in rates of vocabulary growth between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Moats (1999) estimates that children in poverty enter kindergarten with a vocabulary of about 5000 words as compared to 20,000 words for children from higher-income families. This gap in word knowledge that exists upon school entrance is problematic as a pre-school child's vocabulary size is correlated with overall school achievement, reading comprehension, and general intellectual ability (Ewers & Brownsen, 1999). Clearly, what happens in the home environment throughout the first few years of life influences a child's vocabulary development. The purpose of this paper is to examine the factors that promote pre-school children's learning of vocabulary.

## Vocabulary Development

To the amazement of many parents, the majority of children speak their first recognizable words around the time of their first birthday. Prior to expressing the initial words a child or more appropriately, an infant must engage in two tasks that are considered to be prerequisites to learning vocabulary: segmentation and storing sounds that comprise words (Saffran, Werker, & Werner, 2006). Segmentation, which refers to an infant's ability to identify individual words within the stream of fluent speech, is central to learning a language as most of the utterances infants hear in the first year of life are not words in isolation (Saffran et al., 2006). Instead, infants hear continuous speech without pauses between the words (Kooijman, Hagoort, & Cutler, 2005). Uncovering how babies segment words is an active research goal (Harris, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011). Jusczyk and Aslin (1995) pursued this research goal by familiarizing a group of 6 and 7.5 month old infants with word pairs such as *feet* and *bike*, or *cup* and *dog*. The infants were exposed to the isolated word pairs for the duration of 30 seconds prior to hearing the words in the context of a continuous passage of speech. Jusczyk and Aslin (1995) predicted that infants would listen longer to passages that contained the familiarized targets than they would to passages without the familiarized targets. These researchers found that the 7.5 month old infants did listen longer to the test passages with familiarized terms; however, the 6-month-old infants did not. Therefore, these findings suggest that English-learning infants first demonstrate some capacity for word segmentation at about 7.5 months of age.

More recently, Bortfeld, Morgan, Golinkoff, and Rathburn (2005) led a series of three experiments pertaining to word segmentation and an infant's ability to recognize sound patterns such as their own names and appellations for parents. As infants begin to recognize the sound patterns of their own names as early as four and a half months (Mandel, Jusczyk & Pisoni,

1995) Bortfeld et al. (2005) questioned whether or not knowing the sound patterns of their own names as well as the appellations for parents would help infants' segment adjoining words from the stream of speech. In the first experiment, twenty-four six-month-old infants were familiarized with two sets of sentences. The first set of sentences contained the infants' name followed by the same novel word. The second set of sentences contained another name followed by a second novel word. While sitting on their parents lap, infants listened significantly longer to the novel word linked with their own name as opposed to the novel word linked with an unfamiliar name. These findings suggest that six-month-old infants have the ability to segment and recognize a novel word that has been linked to their own name but not a novel word that has been linked with another name.

Similarly, in the second experiment Bortfeld et al. (2005) familiarized the six-month-old infants with two different sets of sentences. One set of six sentences contained the name used most often for the infant's mother followed by a novel word. The other set of six sentences consisted of an alternate name followed by a second novel word. Again, findings revealed a partiality for the word that had been paired with the familiar name suggesting that six month old infants can use names as anchors to segment subsequent novel words from speech streams (Bortfeld et al, 2005).

In the third and final experiment Bortfeld et al. (2005) examined whether infants at six months of age are using stored phonological knowledge of familiar words to support word segmentation. If so, as indicated by Bortfeld et al. (2005) the word *Tommy* which has the same sounds except for the initial consonant sound as the word *Mommy*, should not provide an effective anchor for speech segmentation. To test the infants' phonological knowledge, again, six month old infants were familiarized with two sets of sentences. The first set of sentences contained the name

*Tommy* followed by a novel word. The second set of sentences contained the name *Lola* followed by a second novel word. While sitting on their parents lap infants listened to both sets of sentences and showed no preference for one target word over the other thus revealing that by six months of age babies have stored knowledge about the phonological forms of some words that they can use to support word segmentation (Bortfeld et al., 2005).

### *Word Learning*

As babies segment and store the phonological forms of familiar words they are also beginning to attach meanings to words. This initial word learning according to Werner and Kaplan (1950) occurs in two very distinctive ways either through explicit referencing or implicit referencing. Explicit referencing involves labeling or naming an object to which a child is specifically attending. This kind of referencing requires adults to respond to their child's interests by naming the object and offering further information about the object and what it does to facilitate vocabulary growth. Implicit referencing requires that the child herself use the context of the conversation to make an inference about the meaning of an unknown word. As noted by Sell (2012) the process involved in learning a word through implicit referencing is rather involved; implying that a child can participate in or overhear a conversation, evaluate the context of the conversation, and infer the meaning of a novel word. Sell (2012) suggests that adult expectations with regard to word learning change as children grow and mature. Meaning, adults respond and use more explicit referencing while children are younger and expect children themselves to engage in more implicit referencing as they age.

The initial exposure to a word either through explicit or implicit means results in what many researchers refer to as *fast mapping*. Fast mapping is essentially the preliminary mapping of a word onto a referent; it represents the first lexical entry (Carey & Barlett, 1978). This first

entry of a word in a child's lexicon significantly contributes to a child's breadth of vocabulary knowledge. As a child encounters the word on other occasions the initial lexical entry is expanded and developed to encompass a deeper understanding of the word that as noted by Carey and Barlett (1978) captures the relationship between the word, its referent, and related concepts. This later process that leads to a depth of word knowledge is referred to as *slow mapping* and can take an extended period of time. Developing a more extensive lexical entry may take weeks, months or years depending on the frequency with which the word is used and the semantic complexity of the word to be learned (Bloom, 2000). As noted by Ouellete (2006) "over time, word meanings are refined, adding to the child's depth of vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary growth thus encompasses adding and refining phonological representations to the lexicon as well as storing and elaborating the associated semantic knowledge" (p. 555).

### **Factors that Promote Vocabulary Development**

There are many factors that contribute to and promote a child's vocabulary development throughout the first few years of life. Generally speaking, these factors can be grouped together as they all are related to parenting practices. More specifically, researchers have examined key aspects of parenting practices and revealed three core components of parenting that promote vocabulary development. These core components consist of: the quantity of interactions with children, the quality of interactions with children, and participation in literacy activities.

#### *Quantity of Input*

As Neuman and Dwyer (2009) put forth, "Talk may be cheap but it is priceless for young developing minds" (p. 384). It has long been known, that children learn the words that they are exposed to, that they hear in their own home environment. As such, exposure to speech is an important factor in vocabulary growth. Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, and Lyons (1991)

observed middle class mothers interacting with their child at both 14 and 26 months of age during daily activities. These researchers found that the total amount of parent speech addressed to children at 14 and 24 months of age strongly correlated with variation in the children's vocabulary growth. Basically, when parents produced more speech, the children displayed a larger growth in vocabulary. Furthermore, the data collected throughout this study demonstrated that the more children were exposed to particular words, the more quickly they added those words to their own vocabularies. These findings then suggest that the frequency of which children are exposed to words influences word knowledge and is therefore an important factor in vocabulary growth.

Multiple researchers have produced sufficient evidence that the quantity of language input is a critical contributor to vocabulary growth (Hart & Risley, 1995; Weizman & Snow, 2001). For example, Hart & Risely (1995) observed 42 children from the ages of 10 months to 3 years of age once a week for the duration of an hour, in their home setting. The 42 families who participated in the longitudinal study represented different socio-economic backgrounds. Throughout the observation sessions, parents were told to "do what you usually do."

Not surprisingly, all families, regardless of social class, spent time interacting with their children while engaged in the daily acts of feeding, dressing and changing. Nonetheless, what varied among the social classes was the sheer amount of talk that took place while engaged in these similar contexts. As noted by Hart and Risley (1995), some families talked more to their children than others. After examining the observational data, Hart and Risley (1995) determined that children in professional families heard an average of 2,150 words per waking hour, compared to 1,250 words for children in working class families and 620 words for children in

welfare families. It is important to note that the number of words to which a child was exposed was highly related to their vocabulary size at age 3.

### *Quality of Input*

The quality of the language children hear also has been demonstrated as a factor affecting vocabulary growth. Weizman and Snow (2001) bring to our attention that this factor refers to several features of input. One particular feature encompasses the range of words that children hear. Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Waterfall, Vevea, and Hedges (2007) examined the complexity of caregiver speech to young children during the early period of language development. Fifty mother-child dyads were visited in the home setting and interactions between the mother and child were videotaped at 14, 18, 22, and 30 months of age. Examining the individual differences amongst caregivers, Huttenlocher et al. (2007) found that the education level of the primary caregiver, in this case the child's mother, was closely associated to features of parental speech. Mothers who had attained a graduate or bachelor's degree spoke more; spoke a larger number of different words and a larger number of different kinds of sentences. Earlier studies such as that of Hart and Risley (1995) who may have treated income and education as a single variable had similar findings. Professional parents spoke to their children using a greater complexity of words including different words of all kinds, more multi-clause sentences, more past and future verb tenses and more questions of all kinds (Hart & Risley, 1995). It is important to note that both studies demonstrated that professional parents spoke more to their children. Hart and Risley (1995) concluded that talking more means parents are constantly responding to subtle changes in the context of the conversation and therefore presents an opportunity for parents to use a greater number of different words. Subsequent to Hart and Risley's (1995) seminal study many researchers have demonstrated that demographic factors, most notably the socio-economic status

of parents influences the amount and lexical complexity of words spoken to children which in turn influences a child's vocabulary growth (Huttenlocher, Waterfall, Vasilyeva, Vevea & Hedges, 2010; Weizman & Snow, 2001)

### *Parenting Style*

How adults interact with children has an impact on the child's ability to learn new vocabulary and is therefore another feature pertaining to the quality of input. The initial entry of a word into a child's lexicon is best supported when the learner and the adult are mutually engaged in a joint attentional state (Tomasello & Todd, 1983). This joint attentional state is best established early in word learning by the parent who can easily recognize the child's focus and "join in" by providing the language model for the experience. There are many opportunities throughout the child's first year of life for this responsive type of parenting as the child explores various objects in their immediate environment and produces vocalizations pertaining to the objects that interest them. Bloom (2000) states that this kind of responsive mode of interaction where parents are following their child's interests and attentional state, provides the optimum occasions for language learning. A multitude of empirical studies support the notion that word learning is aided when the learner and speaker are mutually engaged (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, Baumwell, & Damast, 1996; Tomasello & Todd, 1983). Essentially, mutual engagement involves a parent's interactional style. Some parents have a tendency to initiate interactions by directing the child's attention away from their current focus. Other parents follow their child's attention and offer vocabulary to support the experience however they do not maintain the interaction through action or further language input.

Tomasello & Todd (1983) visited six mother-child dyads in the home setting for a period of five months beginning when the child was between 12 or 13 months of age. On a bi-weekly

basis researchers videotaped parent/child play sessions. The verbal interactions that occurred during the play sessions between the parent-child dyad were transcribed and analyzed for time spent engaged in joint interactions. Tomasello & Todd (1983) coded the interactions and labelled a *joint interaction* as a time of at least three seconds where the child and mother were interacting and both focused on the same object or activity. During this time, the child also needed to acknowledge the mothers participation with a verbalization or look towards the mother to be coded as a *joint interaction*. Findings revealed that children of dyads who spent more time in joint interactions had larger vocabularies than the children of dyads who spent more time engaged in interactions led by the parent. Tamis-Lemonda et al. (1996) also found children whose mothers were verbally responsive to their 13 month olds interests and behaviours, had children with greater productive vocabularies at both 13 and 20 months of age.

Hart and Risley (1995) also observed parental responsiveness throughout their data collection and commented specifically on how a parent's affirmative responses contributed to a child's vocabulary growth. As defined by Hart and Risely (1995), affirmations consist of words spoken immediately following a child's utterance that exhibits parental approval. These responses consist of positive words and phrases such as "good/right". They may also encompass repeating a word the child is trying to say or expanding upon that word or thought expressed by the child. In direct contrast to affirmative responses Hart and Risley (1995) labelled parental responses that exhibited parent disapproval such as "don't" and "that's bad" as prohibitions. Children whose parents led interactions with such negative prohibitive phrases such as ("Don't" or "Stop") experienced a less rapid growth in vocabulary in comparison to children who experienced a greater number of affirmative parental responses.

Building upon Hart & Risely's (1995) findings as well as Tomasello & Todd (1983), Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, and Baumwell (2001) found that certain forms of parental responsiveness are most appropriate at certain stages of a child's development. For example, after observing the interactions between 40 mother-child dyads from middle to upper class families (during a ten minute play session at both nine and fourteen months of age), Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2001) found that joint attention and affirmative responses are most beneficial to a child's vocabulary development at nine months of age. Yet by fourteen months of age as children are becoming more linguistically sophisticated, Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2001) found that parental responses that elaborated the child's response most appropriately contributed to a child's vocabulary development. These findings suggest that quality interactions encompass different components at different stages of a child's development in order to positively contribute to a child's vocabulary growth.

### *Pedagogical Support*

Language quality may also refer to parents efforts to teach their children something about a sophisticated word's meaning and its use in certain contexts. Sophisticated words can be defined as words used by mature language learners that represent familiar concepts (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Weizman and Snow (2001) identified several contexts in which conversational interactions are likely to help children increase their lexicons. These contexts include meal times, play times, during family excursions (e.g., to the corner store or park), and during shared book reading. Weizman and Snow (2001) assert that it is in these contexts that parents are able to provide both information about word meanings and scaffold the learning experience for the child to help them process and attain a deeper level of word knowledge.

While engaged in activities that consisted of playing with toys, reading storybooks, eating at mealtimes, playing with magnets and reading informational books, Weizman and Snow (2001) recorded the interactions that occurred between 53 mothers and their 5-year-old children during a 30 minute visit in the home setting. After coding the recorded data Weizman and Snow (2001) found marked differences among the mother's efforts to teach their children something about a sophisticated words meaning and its use. Children who heard and experienced a greater number of helpful instructive interactions with words scored higher on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test in both Kindergarten and Grade Two.

### *Participation in Literacy Activities*

Over the years, the importance of shared book reading experiences for vocabulary growth has been strongly established (Raikes et al., 2006; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998). In fact, many studies have demonstrated that the frequency of reading during the preschool years predicts vocabulary size at kindergarten, even when controlling for other important variables, such as nonverbal intelligence and parents' education (Raikes et al., 2006; Rodriguez et al., 2009; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). After examining shared reading in the home environment, Senechal et al. (1998) asserted that that there are two distinct ways in which children experience shared book reading: informally or throughout more explicit/formal means. Informal (or implicit) interactions occur when parents read to the child and talk with their children about what is being read as opposed to focusing on the printed words. Formal (or explicit) interactions occur when parents focus attention on the printed words and use the book reading activity to teach children about words and letters (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal et al., 1998). Senechal and LeFevre (2002) noted that informal interactions are more strongly related with the development of vocabulary growth and listening comprehension while

formal interactions relate to early literacy skills such as phonetic decoding. Similarly, Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal (2005) found that the amount of mothers' input related to stories (providing information about the plot or making text-to-self connections or text-to-world connections) during book reading with 2-to 4-year-olds was even more predictive of children's vocabulary growth than book reading frequency.

### *Combined Components*

A few studies have examined the combined influence of the factors that promote a child's vocabulary across various ages. Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) observed 1,852 children and families interacting with one another in their own homes when the children were 15, 25, 37, and 63 months of age. During home visits Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) assessed the following: children's participation in literacy activities, the quality of mothers' engagements with their children, and the availability of learning materials. Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) also interviewed parents at the 15, 25, and 37<sup>th</sup> month mark asking questions about the frequency of shared book reading experiences in the home environment and whether or not book reading was a part of their children's bedtime routine. At 37 months, the questions became more in-depth and focused on a series of pre-literacy skills. Mothers were asked if they helped their child learn numbers, shapes, colours and the letters of the alphabet. Much like Hart and Risley (1995) during the home visits Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) assessed the mother's responsiveness with regard to sensitivity and use of speech. Rodriguez and Tamis-LeMonda (2011) used both the interview responses and observation notes to assess the provision of learning materials such as role playing toys (teddy bear, kitchen set) children's books, and toys supporting fine motor skills (crayons, alphabet blocks). The data collected in this study revealed strong associations between the learning environments and children's pre-kindergarten vocabulary and emergent

literacy skills. Children raised in consistently low learning environments scored significantly lower (1 *SD*) on the vocabulary and literacy assessments at 63 months of age. In an earlier study, Rodriguez et al. (2009) examined the combined influences of the same components of the literacy environment and found children growing up in lower socio-economic families who were raised in a consistently rich literacy environment had vocabulary scores that fell in the normal developmental range at 36 months of age.

### *Summary*

Pre-school children acquire vocabulary in a social environment that is responsive and supportive (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2001). Research has demonstrated that some home environments are more supportive and responsive than others. As a result, large individual differences exist in the vocabulary development of young children (Hart & Risely, 1995). Children who grow up in lower socio-economic families are often exposed to fewer words, engage in fewer literacy experiences and hear fewer positive affirmations. There is no denying that environmental exposure to language is critical to child's vocabulary development. Conversations that are based on a child's interest, filled with lexically rich words and affirmations promote a child's vocabulary development (Weizman & Snow, 2001). This research offers us direction for analyzing what occurs in the elementary school system. The next section will discuss the literature on vocabulary as it is understood in a classroom setting.

### **Defining Vocabulary In the School Setting**

The previous section's studies were from a development perspective of language acquisition. This section examines vocabulary learning from an education perspective.

In its broadest sense, vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. Nonetheless, vocabulary is far more complex than this definition suggests. To begin with, Kamil

and Hierbert (2005), bring to our attention that words and our knowledge of words come in different forms. They provide a clear description of vocabulary starting with the fact that we encounter words both orally and in print. Oral vocabulary consists of the words that we recognize and use in listening and speaking. Print vocabulary includes the words that we recognize and use in reading and writing. Secondly, our knowledge of words comes in two forms: receptive and productive. Receptive vocabulary encompasses words that we recognize or assign meaning to when we hear or see them. Productive vocabulary includes words that we use when we speak or write. Our receptive vocabularies are typically larger than our productive vocabularies as we can assign some meaning to a word even if we do not know the full definition or have the ability to use the word when speaking or writing (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005). Beginning readers rely on their oral vocabularies to understand text. If the words they encounter are not in their oral vocabulary comprehension will break down and the reading experience will cease to be meaningful. Therefore, developing a child's vocabulary is a critical component of any reading program.

### *Vocabulary Knowledge*

Due to the complexities of vocabulary knowledge it is no surprise to discover that knowing a word is not an all-or-nothing proposition (Beck et al., 2002). A child's knowledge of a word develops incrementally over time beginning with no knowledge of the word and then moving through various levels of partial knowledge towards more full and complete knowledge (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Following the constructivist approach, learning is viewed as an active internal process whereby the learner makes sense of new information based on the knowledge they have already acquired. Meaningful learning occurs when the individual is able to connect new information to existing knowledge (Mayer, 2008). Knowing a word implies knowing how it

relates to other knowledge. The more we know about a specific concept, for example, the more we bring to our understanding of that concept. Children with limited background knowledge usually have a small vocabulary and therefore will need direct instructional support to make connections. Mayer's constructivist model of instruction outlines how educators can help students make connections by engaging students in the following cognitive processes: selection, organization and integration. Essentially teachers help students attend to the relevant information, organize or build verbal or visual models of the information, and integrate the information with existing knowledge. As teachers guide students in using these active cognitive processes meaningful learning occurs.

As noted by Stahl (2005), "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world." For the purpose of this paper, word knowledge and vocabulary knowledge refer to the students' ability to define and use words that have been introduced to them in the correct context. Students that know words are able to define the words using their own language and use the words appropriately in conversation. This definition calls for a deep kind of knowledge thus requiring a depth of instruction. The most recent research on vocabulary acquisition and instructional practices (Butler, Urrutia, Buenger, Gonzalez, Hunt & Eisenhart, 2010) reveals that children in the Kindergarten to grade two range are more likely to acquire a depth of word knowledge if they receive explicit instruction using an interactive approach with multiple exposures to target vocabulary words.

### *Selecting Words for Instruction*

Currently, there are two approaches for identifying words to teach children in the primary grades. Beck and McKeown (2007), developed a three-tier model for selecting words to teach

based on each word's level of utility. The first tier consists of words which can be learned without educational intervention such as *house, car, and toy*. Tier 2 encompasses words that are often used by mature language users such as *drowsy and mysterious*. According to Beck and McKeown (2007) the meanings of these tier 2 words should be taught, used and discussed in order to facilitate reading comprehension. Essentially, tier 2 words are sophisticated labels for more familiar concepts. Teaching tier 2 words increases the depth of a child's vocabulary as each new word can be connected or linked to familiar words. This draws on Mayer's (2008) constructivist approach to meaningful learning. Beck and McKeown (2007) recommend teaching tier 2 words as they occur in books read to children. Nonetheless, they do not specify a list of words to be taught. The last level of words, tier 3 words, include words that are relatively rare, usually associated with specific disciplinary topics such as *photosynthesis* and *chlorophyll*. Beck and McKeown (2007) suggest that tier 3 words can be taught when they are encountered within the specific discipline.

Biemiller (2007) developed the other approach to teaching words which is based on teaching the root word meanings known by 40 to 80 percent of children by the end of grade two. Root word meanings encompass word forms with different meanings. For example the word *lean (slant to the side)* and the word *lean (without fat)* would be considered a word form with different meanings. Biemiller (2007) suggests that by the end of grade two an average child knows about 6000 root word meanings. In direct contrast a child whose vocabulary is in the lowest 25 percent know an average of 4000 root word meanings. As research has shown that children learn words in a predictable sequence, the goal of this approach is to accelerate the normal sequence of word acquisition thus increasing the breadth of vocabulary for children with

small vocabularies (Biemiller, 2007). The National Reading Panel (2000) suggests that both depth and breadth of vocabulary instruction are necessary for strong vocabulary development.

### **Vocabulary Instruction In The Primary Grades**

Current research results suggest that shared storybook reading is one way to enhance a child's vocabulary as the words found in children's literature are far richer than the words they encounter through day to day conversations (Coyne et al., 2007). Studies have found that children can learn the meanings of unknown words through incidental exposure during shared storybook activities (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Senechal & Cornell, 1993). However, these activities are not equally effective for all students. Children who are at-risk for reading difficulties due to smaller vocabularies are less likely than their peers with larger vocabularies to learn words incidentally while listening to stories (Coyne, Simmons, Karme'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004). This finding corresponds nicely with Mayer's (2008) constructivist approach to learning. Children with small vocabularies simply do not have the background knowledge required to learn new words independently. For example, a child with a large vocabulary may be able to independently connect with the word *miserable* while listening to a story because they have heard their parent use the word and can infer the meaning of the word and connect the word *miserable* with *sad* or *unhappy*. A child with a smaller vocabulary may require explicit instruction to make the connection.

### **Explicit Instruction**

Explicitly teaching the meaning of unknown words to children with smaller vocabularies (in the context of storybook reading) has been shown to be effective when young children are provided with more than just definitional explanations of words. As noted by The National Reading Panel (2000), explicit vocabulary instruction is characterized by direct teaching that

includes contextual and definitional information, multiple exposures to target words in varied contexts, and opportunities for deep processing. Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown (1982) developed an explicit method of teaching vocabulary referred to as the “rich instruction model”. This model of teaching (Beck & McKeown, 2007) explains the meaning of tier 2 (as described above) words using student-friendly language (for example, a feast is a big special meal with lots of delicious food). Multiple examples and multiple contexts (we all had a feast on Thanksgiving day) are given to children to support a depth of learning. Children are also given opportunities to process words deeply by identifying and explaining appropriate and inappropriate uses of the word (Which would be a feast: eating an ice cream cone or eating at a big table full of food?). Following this approach, three to six tier two words are explicitly taught to children after the story has been read to the class. Drawing on Mayer’s (2008) constructivist approach, the teacher selects the words and helps the children organize the words by providing kid friendly definitions. When the child is asked to repeat the word this further supports the organization of the new information as the child is creating a phonological representation of the word in their mind. Furthermore, when children are given examples of the word used in contexts outside of the story this helps the child to begin to connect the new word to existing knowledge resulting in meaningful learning. Recent perspectives on learning word meanings suggest that knowledge of a word can be enhanced by encountering the word in several contexts. As noted by McKeown and Beck (2011) an individual’s understanding of a word’s meaning accumulates as they encounter the word in different contexts.

In 2007, Beck and McKeown led two seminal studies to investigate whether Kindergarten and Grade one children in language impoverished environments could learn and use sophisticated tier two words. Using a quasi-experimental design, Beck and McKeown

compared the gains made by children who received the *rich instruction* approach to those children who received incidental exposure to vocabulary through daily read alouds. They found that children who received the *rich instruction* made significantly greater gains in vocabulary learning than the children who received incidental exposure through daily read alouds.

Nonetheless, they questioned why the children who received the *rich instruction* approach to vocabulary did not make greater gains in word knowledge. As a result, Beck and McKeown led a second study to investigate whether students with limited vocabularies need more encounters with words across a span of several days in order to learn and develop an understanding of sophisticated tier two words. To determine the extent to which more instruction enhances learning the Kindergarten and Grade one students in the experimental group received twenty minutes of vocabulary instruction everyday over the course of a nine week period. Children in this group were taught six words per week using the *rich instruction* approach. These children also received additional teaching on three of the six words per week using the *rich instruction* approach. Children in the control group did not receive the additional lessons on three words per week. The results indicated that more instruction can be equated with an increase in word knowledge. Several teams of researchers have provided evidence that rich instruction is an effective method of vocabulary instruction for students at-risk of reading difficulties (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007; Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010). As noted by Ritchey (2011), reading instruction that is explicit, intensive and systematic helps students with learning disabilities become competent readers. Considering the three evidence based principles of reading instruction for students with learning disabilities it is no surprise that Beck and McKeown's *rich instruction* approach has proven to be successful. Our students at-risk of

reading difficulties due to limited word knowledge, clearly need explicit vocabulary instruction to acquire word knowledge.

### **Comparing Embedded Instruction to Rich Instruction**

Many researchers and educators have investigated different approaches to increasing the vocabulary of students at-risk for reading difficulties. Coyne et al. (2007) compared explicit vocabulary instruction to embedded vocabulary instruction within the context of the read aloud. Embedded instruction consists of providing students with simple definitions of words within the context of the story. This approach to vocabulary instruction is far less time consuming than the explicit approach to teaching vocabulary. Due to the vast number of words children at-risk for reading difficulties need to acquire and the time required for explicit instruction, some researchers and educators have begun to question the feasibility of explicit vocabulary instruction. Nonetheless, Coyne et al. (2007) found that Kindergarten students at-risk for reading difficulties, made greater gains in word knowledge when they received small group explicit vocabulary instruction as opposed to small group embedded instruction. Coyne, et al. (2007) assessed the Kindergarten student's word knowledge using both expressive and receptive measures. Students were asked not only to define the target words but also respond appropriately to yes or no questions pertaining to the meaning of the target words. For example, for the word *cauldron*, students were asked, "Is a cauldron a big pot?" and "Is a cauldron a mean person?" Students were also assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test both before and after the intervention. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test is a standardized, individually administered test of receptive language and vocabulary that assesses students' ability to comprehend word meanings (Coyne et al., 2007). The results of Coyne et al.' (2007) study suggest that students with a higher PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) score who received

explicit instruction learned more words than the students who received explicit instruction with a lower PPVT score. Essentially, students most at-risk for reading disabilities did not respond as strongly to explicit instruction as students less at risk. However, the students who received explicit instruction learned a greater number of words than the average student learned with embedded instruction. Overall, these results suggest that students with lower levels of vocabulary knowledge may require further instructional support in order to make gains comparable to that of their peers with higher levels of vocabulary knowledge (Coyne et al., 2007).

### **Tiered Intervention Approach**

Considering that students at-risk for reading difficulties may require further instructional support, researchers have begun to expand the rich explicit model of vocabulary instruction using a tiered format (Pullen, Tuckwiller, Konold, Maynard, & Coyne, 2010). Tiers are simply the different levels of instruction used by educators to meet the learner's needs (Pullen et al., 2010). Whole class explicit instruction is considered to be tier 1 instruction. Further small group instruction provided to children to enhance their understandings and knowledge is more intense and recognized as tier 2 instruction. Some children may require further intensive support to learn concepts which is labelled tier 3 instruction. Pullent et al. (2010) explored the response of 98 first grade students at risk of reading difficulties due to limited vocabularies using a tier 1 and tier 2 rich approach to vocabulary instruction. Children who were identified as being at-risk of reading difficulty (determined by PPVT scores below the 39<sup>th</sup> percentile) were randomly assigned to either a treatment (receive tier 1 and tier 2 instruction) or comparison condition group (only receive tier 1 instruction). Tier 1 instruction exposed children to word-rich stories through class-wide storybook reading. Explicit vocabulary instruction was provided for selected words which consisted of kid friendly definitions, multiple exposures to target words in sentences within and

outside of the story, and multiple opportunities to interact with target words (Pullen et al., 2010). Tier 2 instruction was provided with the sole purpose of intensifying instruction for students at-risk of reading difficulties. In small groups (three to five children) target vocabulary words were reviewed and students were given further opportunities to “actively interact with target words” (Pullen et al., 2010). Students who received whole class and small group instruction (tier 2) made significantly greater gains in vocabulary learning than students who received only tier 1, whole class instruction. Findings suggest that whole class explicit rich vocabulary instruction alone may not be robust enough for children at-risk of reading difficulties to acquire word knowledge. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate the potential benefits of small group intensive vocabulary instruction.

### **Word Learning Through Category Formation**

Neuman, Dwyer, Koh, & Wright (2007) developed another instructional approach labelled as World of Words, to foster vocabulary development and conceptual knowledge amongst low-income pre-school aged children. These researchers developed a multimedia vocabulary curriculum unit with a focus on word learning through category membership. As noted by Bloom (2000) category membership is a major component of word learning. Neuman and Dwyer (2011) highlight this component of word learning stating, “Learning to identify a furry, four-legged animal as a dog, for example, involves not just mapping the label dog to one’s household pet but actually establishing a concept of what is and what is not a dog” (p. 105).

To support word learning through category membership, this curriculum targets science, math and health related concepts and words. The curriculum draws upon Beck and McKeown’s (2007) tiered approach to word selection and is formatted around an eight day instructional

sequence. Five to seven content rich words (classified as tier two words) as well as a few familiar words (to help children talk about the new concept) are explicitly taught to children during daily 12 minute sessions. The instructional sequence consists of five distinct features: an opening activity, content video, information book reading, discussion, and writing and review. The initial lesson encompasses the first three components of the instructional sequence.

### *Instructional Sequence*

The instructional sequence begins with a minds on activity such as a song or finger play to essentially capture the children's attention. This introductory activity is followed by a video that concentrates on the content and definition of the category. For example, the video used to introduce children to the topic "Insects" highlights the following vocabulary words: *antennae*, *segments*, *camouflage*, and *familiar*. Following the video, instruction consists of a series of questions such as, "What is an insect?" and "Where does an insect live?" Asking children these "wh" questions ultimately supports word learning through category membership. An information book is then shared with the children to reinforce the new vocabulary words.

To continue to help build a child's word knowledge and conceptual development the remaining seven lessons encompass all five components. The videos and questions asked provide children with additional information (insects have six legs and three body segments) to further development word learning through category membership. Essentially a child's knowledge of the properties related to the categories is being developed. In addition to the videos children are asked to apply the conceptual knowledge they have acquired regarding category membership. For example, children may be asked, "Is a bat an insect?" As a final instructional component children are asked to record their recent word learning experiences in a journal. This provides

children with an opportunity to review their learning and engage in developmental (phonetic) writing experiences (Neuman et al., 2007).

Neuman and Dwyer (2011) led a two phase design experiment with low-income preschoolers to essentially test the effectiveness of the World of Words (Neuman et al., 2007) vocabulary intervention. Eighty-nine children across six pre-school classrooms received the World of Words (Neuman et al., 2007) intervention and an additional eighty-nine children (across six classrooms) were selected to serve as a comparison group. Initial vocabulary assessments administered prior to the start of the study showed that children's receptive vocabularies across both the treatment and comparison classrooms were similar. After eight weeks of instruction (considered to be the first phase of the study) assessment results revealed that children were not retaining the tier 2 level words explicitly taught. As a result, for the second phase of the study Neuman and Dwyer (2011) decided to include additional opportunities to practice and review the tier 2 words within the eight day lesson format. Again, after eight weeks of instruction post unit assessments revealed significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups. As demonstrated by the strong effect size (Cohen's  $d = .64$ ) treatment children scored significantly higher on the expressive language assessment in comparison to those children in the control group. Furthermore, retention of both tier 2 and familiar words increased for children in the treatment group with added review and practice. Treatment children also scored significantly higher when asked to apply their categorical information and infer the meaning of words not explicitly taught. These findings suggest that learning words through category memberships helps children infer word meanings and make generalizations.

In summary, the research demonstrates that young children can acquire word knowledge if they are exposed to the target words on multiple occasions while receiving explicit instruction

that follows an interactive approach. Although Neuman and Dwyer's (2007) World of Words intervention has shown positive results, I question the ease with which teachers could implement this approach in their day to day instruction. Following Ontario's curriculum, teachers would need to develop a variety of units across subject areas, searching for appropriate multimedia resources. Finding the multimedia videos to align with instruction may be considered by many teachers as an overly time consuming task. Beck and McKeown's (2007) Rich instruction approach that is implemented through the mandated daily read-aloud (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003) may be viewed by teachers as a more favourable user friendly approach to vocabulary instruction. Regardless of what approach is pursued, there is little evidence of explicit vocabulary instruction throughout the early grades (Beck & McKeown 2007; The National Reading Panel, 2000). Due to the paucity of explicit vocabulary instruction many researchers have begun to examine why much of the recommended teaching strategies driven by research findings are not evident in early literacy classrooms.

### *Ontario Curriculum*

As noted by Neuman and Dwyer (2009) "curriculum can play an important role in promoting research-based practices" (p. 384). Ontario's Full Day Early Learning curriculum document (2010) clearly recognizes and values the role oral language plays in a child's development. The document states that "oral language must be the foundation of literacy development in the kindergarten program" (p. 68). Furthermore, the document acknowledges that the early learning team can guide oral language development by introducing new vocabulary. As such, specific learning expectations address vocabulary within the language portion of the document. Learning expectation 1.7 states that children will "use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes (e.g. terms for things they are building or equipment they

are using).” (p. 76). Similarly, learning expectation 1.9 states that students will “describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.” (p. 78). The document also recognizes that a child’s vocabulary can be enhanced while addressing all six areas of learning: Personal and Social Development, Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Health and Physical Activity and the Arts. Nevertheless, the document does not specify what instructional approaches educators are to use to teach vocabulary in kindergarten. This absence of instructional clarity is problematic as researchers have found a lack of understanding pertaining to what denotes best practice in vocabulary instruction amongst educators. Berne & Blachowicz (2008) conducted a survey asking reading educators interested in vocabulary about their concerns and questions regarding vocabulary instruction. Teachers reported an overall lack of understanding regarding vocabulary instruction. More specifically, teachers questioned what parameters should be followed to guide their selection of words (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Essentially, Berne and Blachowicz (2008) found that teachers are looking for a shared understanding and a consistent approach to vocabulary instruction.

Neuman and Dwyer (2009) examined ten commercially prepared early literacy curricula to see if any of the programs reflected the current vocabulary research. Neuman and Dwyer (2009) found that although each of the ten curricula did explicitly identify and introduce children to specific target words not one of the ten programs outlined any clear guidelines pertaining to how the words for instruction were selected. Furthermore, there was an overall lack of strategic teaching. Not one of the commercially prepared resources drew upon the evidence based instructional approaches to teaching vocabulary. Overall, Neuman and Dwyer (2009) found little evidence across the early literacy curricula of a deliberate effort to build word knowledge.

Clearly, vocabulary is a neglected area in teacher education, professional development, and professional resources. Developing a curriculum unit based on the instructional methods used by Beck and McKeown (2007) will provide teachers with a consistent and effective approach to vocabulary instruction that can be used throughout the early years.

### **Curriculum Design: Backward Design**

“When teachers know what they want students to learn and how students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills, they are more likely to plan instruction that will help students succeed” (Taylor & Nolen, 2008, p. 64). This approach to curriculum design and instruction matches Wiggins and McTighe’s (1998) backwards design planning. As argued by Childre, Sands and Pope (2009) “you cannot plan how you’re going to teach until you know exactly what you want your students to learn” (p. 7-8). This backwards design approach begins first with the consideration of curriculum expectations. Planning begins from a standards-focused approach that differs markedly from the coverage-focused approach of traditional curriculum design. Using the traditional approach to curriculum design the push to cover material drives the planning and subsequent assessment practices. As noted by Childre et al. (2009) the coverage based approach to curriculum usually leads to rote learning as the focus on covering expectations supersedes developing instruction that scaffolds a child’s learning to promote a greater depth of conceptual understanding.

The backwards design approach to planning consists of three main steps or stages (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Daugherty (2006) outlines these stages: “The steps in backward course design include: (1) identify the desired results, (2) determine the acceptable evidence, and (3) plan learning experiences and instruction” (p. 1).

Identifying the desired results for the Ontario classroom teacher would encompass careful examination of the Ontario curriculum documents. As noted by McTighe and Thomas (2003) Ontario classroom teachers must “unpack” the curriculum expectations to gain a deep understanding of the key concepts the expectations are addressing. This process usually involves clarification of the big ideas and accompanying essential questions. It is important to note that the essential questions teachers develop may vary within classrooms to address the needs of all students as the result of individual learning profiles or class profiles pertaining to the demographics of the population (Childre et al., 2009). Further to the development of essential questions, in classrooms throughout Ontario teachers are deconstructing curriculum expectations and turning the expectations into child friendly learning goals.

In the second stage of the backwards design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) teachers begin to think about what evidence is needed to conclude that students have met the learning goals. Teachers need to think critically about the kinds of assessments that will enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding pertaining to the learning goals. Planning the assessment tasks prior to instruction allows educators to design lessons that align with learning goals or as noted by Wiggins & McTighe (1998) such upfront planning makes it easier to know what content should be taught.

The third and final stage in Wiggins and McTighe’s (1998) backward design process is planning the learning experiences and instruction. Throughout this stage teachers plan a sequence of lessons that scaffold student learning and allow students to not only build knowledge and skills but promote a deeper understanding of key concepts (Childre et al., 2009). Unlike the traditional approach to curriculum design that plans lessons prior to assessment the backwards design approach creates lessons based on the learning goals once the assessment pieces have

been developed. Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) backward design process is certainly attuned to aligning the learning goals with assessment and instruction. Beginning with the end in mind, allows educators to focus their planning and as noted by Wiggins and McTighe (1998) direct "purposeful action toward the intended results" (p. 13). Recognizing the need to design curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of all learners in an inclusive classroom setting, Childre et al. (2009) suggest educators add another fundamental step to Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) backward design approach. This initial step entitled: Identify learners, calls upon educators to essentially develop a classroom profile that considers a child's interests, experiences, prior knowledge and any learning needs that will influence student learning. Childre et al. (2009) also call upon educators to think about the contextual variables such as socio-economic level, educational background, and extracurricular activities when unpacking curriculum expectations and designing learning goals as these variables deeply impact students' background knowledge pertaining to various concepts. Ultimately, Childre et al. (2009) recognize that student strengths and needs "must shape instructional design" (p. 8).

The backward design approach draws on the constructivist approach to learning; recognizing that students acquire new learning when given varied opportunities to connect their prior knowledge with new information (Childre et al., 2009). As noted by Childre et al. (2009) the backwards design approach acknowledges that curricular design begins with the students. Therefore, I have chosen a backward design approach for the achievement of primarily language expectations as outlined in the Full Day Early Learning Program. Teachers can plan and provide appropriate learning experiences and scaffold students learning when they have themselves have a clear understanding of their students' current knowledge and skill set. As teachers plan and provide appropriate learning experiences they can support students as they use and build their

schemas for understanding new ideas and information. Essentially, educators can scaffold the learning for students as they gradually build new knowledge and skills. As noted by Childre et al. (2009) students can move beyond rote learning and develop a deeper understanding of concepts when educators provide students with multiple opportunities to connect new information to existing knowledge. Therefore, the curriculum unit I have designed to teach vocabulary explicitly consists of a series of lessons whereby children are given multiple opportunities to connect new information to existing knowledge.

The focus on student strengths and needs as articulated by Childre et al. (2009) exemplifies good teaching. Further to this student emphasis, the backward design approach also focuses on curriculum expectations. As all teachers in Ontario are using the same curriculum documents, this method of unpacking expectations is accessible to all Ontario teachers. As well, this approach can be used within the inclusive classroom setting across all content areas and grade levels (Childre et al., 2009). The backward design approach cohesively connects students' needs with curriculum expectations, assessment and instruction.

### Text Selection

To enhance a child's vocabulary development upon school entrance, teachers need to carefully select books that children will find appealing and engaging. When selecting books for read-alouds, Shedd and Duke (2008) recommend choosing books with high quality writing, powerful illustrations and opportunities to teach vocabulary. They also suggest educators review recommended book lists to find high quality books that have educational potential. Finally, Shedd and Duke (2008) recommend teachers select books that encompass a variety of genres including both informational texts as well as narratives.

Drawing upon Duke and Bennett-Armistead's (2003) genre framework, narrative texts are written with the primary purpose to entertain or relate an experience; they also follow a familiar story structure. Informational texts use text features and structures unfamiliar to children and are written with the primary purpose of conveying information about the natural and social world (Duke, 2003). Unfortunately, research has found that young children have very limited exposure to informational text through read aloud experiences in the school setting (Saul & Dieckman, 2005; Yopp & Yopp, 2006). In her ground breaking study of 20 first-grade classrooms throughout both low and high socio-economic communities in the greater Boston area, Duke (2000) observed a total of 282 minutes of instructional time throughout the course of one school year. An average of 3.6 minutes per day was spent on activities involving informational text. Grade one classrooms within the lower socio-economic communities spent even less time using informational text. Such classrooms spent an average of 1.4 minutes per day using informational text. Not surprisingly, Duke (2000) also found that the most common genres in classroom libraries were fictional narratives.

Similarly, in a study led by Yopp and Yopp (2006), early elementary teachers gathered at a workshop were asked to record (on an index card, the grade they taught, pre-school through to grade three) whether they read aloud to their students during the previous school day, and if they did read to their students teachers were asked to record the titles of the books read. Book titles were acquired from 1,144 teachers and coded by genres. Findings revealed: "Informational texts make up a very small proportion of read-alouds in early childhood classrooms" (p. 45). The mean percentage of informational texts read across grades was 8%, with no statistical significant difference between preschool through grade 3 classrooms. Subsequently, Bortnem (2008) led a survey study and found a marked difference between the number of days early childhood

teachers read fiction verses non-fiction texts. Two hundred and seven early childhood educators received an anonymous survey to which 101 individuals responded. Ninety percent of the participants reported that they engaged in a read-aloud experience between 5 to 10 days out of the 10. Most notably, teachers reported that out of the 10 days, less than five would include exposure to informational texts and more than five would encompass sharing a narrative with students.

Interestingly, as a classroom teacher, Correia (2011) led a small scale study to investigate the reading interests of her 15 Kindergarten students over the course of a 19 week period. Throughout the 19 weeks, Correia (2011) tracked and recorded the various book titles each Kindergarten student signed out from the library 14 out of the 19 weeks a greater number of informational texts were signed out of the library by the students in comparison to narrative texts. Prior to leading this investigation Correia (2011) presumed that Kindergarten students preferred reading narrative texts over reading informational texts.

Research has been conducted to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the use of informational texts to support student learning. Donovan and Smolkin (2001) found that teachers lack an overall familiarity with informational texts and therefore prefer to use narrative texts with which they have developed a sense of comfort and ease. These researchers also found that teachers presumed informational texts would be too difficult for the children to understand perhaps due to the various text features or topic specific vocabulary. Further more, teachers assumed that children would find the informational texts unappealing (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001).

This lack of exposure to informational text is highly problematic for students with limited word and conceptual knowledge, as informational texts can be used as a bridge between a

students' prior knowledge and the content knowledge being introduced through the curriculum (Saul & Dieckman, 2005). The link between informational text and vocabulary development is clearly noted by Saul and Dieckman (2005) through the following statement: "Non-fiction can also draw children more fully into the real world, expand their knowledge, enhance comprehension, teach concepts and introduce vocabulary about things they may never experience in real life" (p. 508). Therefore, researchers have recommended a shift in classroom practice that encompasses the reading of informational texts to children. There is a definitely a call for a more balanced read aloud diet that encompasses both narrative and informational texts.

Based on the reviewed literature, the kindergarten vocabulary unit included as an appendix will intentionally select both narrative and informational texts with high quality writing, captivating illustrations and opportunities to teach children sophisticated words for concepts they already know. Additionally, following Shedd and Duke's (2008) recommendation to review book lists for appropriate titles, many of the books selected for this unit won the highly recognized Blue Spruce Award. Developed by the Ontario Library Association, the Blue Spruce is a primary reading program designed for students in Kindergarten to grade two. Each year a committee of educators read a plethora of newly released Canadian picture books. Together the committee nominates ten book titles for that year's Blue Spruce reading list. Classroom teachers and teacher librarians from across the province share these titles with their students in a variety of engaging read aloud experiences. Once the titles have been shared, the children then cast their ballots and vote for the book title they most enjoyed. Votes are submitted and tabulated by the Ontario Library Association. As children vote and decide which of the nominated books will win the award each year, this is an appropriate and fitting way to select engaging titles. Furthermore, it is important to note that the initial ten titles nominated to receive the award each year are

selected by members of an expert committee thereby providing the assurance that the books chosen are of high quality.

Finally, the books selected to explicitly teach vocabulary can also be used to address the big ideas in two of the learning areas as outlined in the Full-Day Early Learning program: personal and social development and science and technology.

### **Developmental Sequence of the Curriculum Unit**

“I know some Big Words.

I’ll teach them to you.

Although you are small,  
you can use Big Words too.

Big Words

aren’t scary.

They’re big fun to learn.

I was taught once

and now it’s your turn” (Curtis, 2008, p.2).

*Big Words for Little People* (Curtis, 2008) clearly sets the tone for explicitly teaching sophisticated words to children. The book not only contains a plethora of tier 2 words but also has illustrations that are both captivating and engaging. Therefore, I have chosen this text to frame the unit and provide teachers with a strong title to begin teaching vocabulary words to children in kindergarten in an explicit way. It is important to note that the eight lessons I have included in this unit are simply a starting point for teachers to use as a model for vocabulary instruction in kindergarten. As play based pedagogy is child centered, kindergarten teachers need

to be choosing read alouds and subsequent sophisticated words for vocabulary instruction, based on student interest and need.

Following the instructional methods used by McKeown and Beck (2011) a minimum of two tier 2 words have been selected from each text in the unit to teach explicitly through a series of interactive lessons. Initial instruction for each word is direct, as teachers will explain the meanings of words using student-friendly language. Student-friendly definitions are also provided in a familiar context thus allowing children to form connections to new words based on background knowledge and experiences. As noted by Mayer (2008) connecting new words to existing knowledge results in meaningful learning. To strengthen the connections to new words and build word knowledge, students need to be given opportunities to encounter the words in different contexts. This of course, requires instructional time and planned activities. The following standard format modeled after McKeown and Beck (2011) is used throughout the weekly lessons to build word knowledge.

Table 1.

*Weekly Lesson Format – Building Word Knowledge*

Day One	Introduce Words
Day Two	Review with Questions
Day Three	Practice with Words
Day Four	Further Practice with Words
Day Five	Generative Activity

Adapted from “Making vocabulary interventions engaging and effective.” By M. G. McKeown & I. L. Beck, 2011. In R. E. O’Connor & P. r. Vadasy (Eds.), *Handbook of reading interventions* (pp. 138-168). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Essentially, throughout the series of weekly lessons, students are engaged in a variety of daily oral language activities whereby they not only respond and recognize the correct use of the words but also use and talk about the words in their own ways (McKeown and Beck, 2011). This extended talk provides teachers with an opportunity to assess a child's knowledge of a newly acquired word during the lesson interactions. Therefore, I have created a learning checklist that teachers can use to track student progress and identify who is making gains with word knowledge and who is having difficulty acquiring word knowledge. Each week teachers can select three or four students to observe and document their oral responses pertaining to whether or not they can use words correctly in other contexts and make decisions about words in various contexts. Teachers should be using the new words in various contexts throughout the day to generate new connections for children and model the appropriate use of new vocabulary terms. In turn, teachers can observe and assess a child's independent use of vocabulary terms throughout the day in various contexts. Ultimately, the assessment piece should be used to identify students who may require additional instruction or tiered support. The assessment piece should not be regarded as a tool to track each student's response to each question. It should be used in conjunction with instruction to highlight students requiring additional support.

### **Book Titles**

After using the introductory text *Big Words for Little People* (Curtis, 2008), the other book titles and corresponding weekly lessons can be used by kindergarten teachers throughout the year based on student need and interest. As well as teaching word knowledge the four fictional titles and one of the informational texts can also be shared with children to enhance a child's growing self-concept and well-being. As such, kindergarten teachers may find an opportunity to teach these lessons throughout the fall term. The three remaining informational

text lessons can be used by teachers to increase word knowledge as well as increase a child's cognitive knowledge. Concrete learning experiences connected to the child's world can easily be planned based on information shared throughout these three particular book titles. For example, after reading the book entitled *A Day at the Pumpkin Patch* (Faulkner, 2006) teachers may want to take their students to a pumpkin patch to extend the learning experience and revisit concepts in an interactive way to solidify learning.

### *Professional Judgement*

When preparing to use the book titles throughout this unit teachers will need to use their professional judgement pertaining to how much of each text they will read in one read aloud session. Due to the length and content of these books teachers may want to read the text over a two day period to help students self-regulate their learning and maintain a positive read aloud experience. Similarly teachers will also need to use their professional judgement when teaching the daily lessons. Some groups of kindergarten students will need the daily activities to be taught over the course of two ten minute sessions as opposed to a consecutive twenty minute lesson. Again, these types of decisions are made based on student need and interest.

The following table lists the pertinent information regarding the books chosen for this curriculum unit. The curriculum expectations listed in the table have been drawn from the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). It is important to note that the stated expectations will not be formally assessed throughout the curriculum unit. The specific expectations that will be assessed are clearly identified at the beginning of each lesson within the curriculum unit. The specific expectations have been deconstructed and learning goals have been created based on the work of Beck and McKeown (2007).

Table 2.  
Text Selection

Book Title	Text Type	Rationale	Curriculum Expectations
<i>Big Words for Little People</i> (Curtis, 2008)	Fiction	This book can be used to introduce sophisticated vocabulary to children.	Personal and Social Development Big Idea: children are connected to others and contribute to their world p. 52
<i>A Day at the Pumpkin Patch</i> (Faulkner, 2006)	Informational Text	Concrete experience	Science and Technology Big Idea: children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new contexts in order to understand the world around them. p. 52
<i>Face to Face with Frogs</i> (Moffett, 2008)	Informational Text	Concrete experience	Science and Technology Big Idea: children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new contexts in order to understand the world around them. p. 114
<i>Beetle</i> (Hartley, Marco and Taylor, 2008)	Informational Text	Concrete experience	Science and Technology Big Idea: children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new contexts in order to understand the world around them. p. 114
<i>Owen &amp; Mzee</i> (Hatkoﬀ and Kahumbu, 2007)	Informational Text	Listed as a recommended read by the National Council of Teachers of English 2007 – Orbis Pictus Award Committee	Personal and Social Development Big Idea: children are connected to others and contribute to their world.p. 52
<i>Giraffe and Bird</i> (Bender, 2010)	Fiction	Blue Spruce Award 2011	Personal and Social Development Big Idea: children are connected to others and contribute to their world p. 52
<i>Scaredy Squirrel</i> (Watt, 2008)	Fiction	Blue Spruce Award 2007	Emotional Development Big Idea: children have a strong sense of identity and well-being. p. 60
<i>Stanley's Party</i> (Bailey, 2003)	Fiction	Blue Spruce Award 2004	Emotional Development Big Idea: children have a strong sense of identity and well-being. p. 60

## Chapter 3

### Conclusion

Almost all children learn to speak at least one language in the first few years of life. However, not all children learn to talk well (Bardige and Bardige, 2008). Differences in parenting practices related to the quantity, quality and sources of language input have a long lasting effect on a child's vocabulary development. Research has demonstrated that children who grow up in lower socio-economic households hear fewer words and engage in fewer literacy experiences than children in middle to upper class households (Hart & Risely, 1995). These pre-school language experiences contribute to achievement gaps as vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in a child's process of becoming a reader (Beck, McKeown, 2007). Fortunately, there is a growing body of research that demonstrates that a child's vocabulary can be increased through early educational intervention (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Explicit methods of instruction used within the context of a storybook read aloud have been shown to promote word learning in kindergarten and grade one students (Beck et al., 2002).

Ontario's Full Day Early Learning curriculum document (2010) acknowledges that "oral language must be the foundation of literacy development in the kindergarten program" (p. 68). Consequently, teachers are encouraged to follow Beck and McKeown's (2007) rich instruction approach when developing lessons to promote a depth of word and conceptual knowledge. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to draw upon Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) backwards curriculum design in order to develop instruction that scaffolds a child's learning thereby promoting a greater depth of conceptual and word knowledge.

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## Appendix A: Curriculum Unit

*Big Words for Little People (Curtis, 2008)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled, *Big Words for Little People* (Curtis, 2008) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*irate, celebrate, cooperate*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011), Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Irate:** In the story the shoe salesman is pretty irate. This means that the salesman is very angry.

*Friendly Explanation*

Someone who is irate is very angry about something.

*Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *irate*.

### *Interactive Practice*

- Let's think about situations that might make you feel irate. I will give some examples and if you think the situation would make you feel irate, say "*Irate.*" If not, say, "*No!*"
- Your sister ate all of your Hallowe'en candy. (irate)
- Your best friend invited you over to play at her house after school. (No)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why would you feel irate?"***

2. **Celebrate:** In the story the boys and girls celebrate the fact that they are able to correctly spell big words.

#### *Friendly Definition*

If you celebrate, it means you do something enjoyable or fun to mark (recognize, acknowledge) someone's success or a special occasion.

#### *Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *celebrate*.
- Let's think about what things we might celebrate. I will say some things and if you think these are things you would celebrate, say, "*celebrate.*" If not, say, "*no!*"
- Your sixth birthday. (celebrate)
- Valentine's Day (celebrate)
- Falling off your bike. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "How would you celebrate?"***

3. **Cooperate:** In the story the Dad wants the children to behave and cooperate while they are shopping for new shoes. This means the Dad wants the children to work together and help one another each find a new pair of shoes.

#### *Friendly Explanation*

If you cooperate with someone, you work with them or help them complete or do something.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *cooperate*

Let's think about someone cooperating. I'm going to say some things and if you think the person is cooperating, say, "*cooperate.*" *If not, say, "No!"*

- Matthew sits with Fred at the puzzle table and together they complete the 50 piece puzzle. (*cooperate*)
- Sally joins in at the craft table and works with Mary to make a macaroni necklace for their teacher. (*cooperate*)
- Natalie spills the red paint all over the floor. When Colin comes over to help Natalie clean up the paint, Natalie tells Colin to go away and she just sits on the floor crying. (*No*)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "What makes you think Matthew cooperated?"***

## **Day 2: Review and Practice**

### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *irate*, *celebrate*, and *cooperate*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

1. Does *irate* mean someone is very angry about something? Or does *irate* mean someone is very surprised about something?
2. Who is *irate*, the child who just found out that his brother traded all of his pokemon cards or the child who just found out that his brother bought him a pokemon game for his birthday?
3. Does *celebrate* mean to do something enjoyable because of a special occasion or to mark someone's success? Or does *celebrate* mean you forget something that someone did?
4. What would you *celebrate*, the last day of school or the first day of school?
5. Does *cooperate* mean you help someone to complete a task? Or does *cooperate* mean you do things on your own?
6. Who is *cooperating*, the child who is working with others to build the lego tower or the child who won't let others use the lego pieces during activity time?

### ***Situations and Examples***

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

Think about the word *irate*. You may feel *irate* if your Mom and Dad take away your computer time after school. Can you think of another situation that might make you feel *irate*? (*For example, when your sister wore and stretched your favourite sweater, when you have to go grocery shopping with your Mom during Saturday morning cartoons*)

1. Let's think about the word *celebrate*. What things in your life do you want to celebrate? (*birthdays, certain holidays, school successes such as counting to 100 or reading my first book*)
2. Think about the word *cooperate*. When might you cooperate with your family members? (*washing the dishes after dinner to get to dessert, working with my Mom to pack the car so that we can get to the beach, playing quietly when your Mom has a headache*)

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### ***Actions with Words***

In this activity students respond physically to the word.

1. Let's think about the word *irate*. If I told you that we were no longer allowed to play on the playground equipment you might be *irate*! Who can show me what an *irate* Kindergarten student might look like?
2. Now I want you to think about the word *celebrate*. Who can show me what they may be doing if they were celebrating their birthday? (*pretending to eat cake, opening presents, dancing*).
3. Think about the word *cooperate*. I need two Kindergarten students to show me how they would cooperate at clean up time. (*one student holds the dust pan and the other one the broom, one student puts away the scissors and the other the glue*)

#### ***Yes/No***

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen carefully.

1. Katie was invited to Brett's house to celebrate his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. (yes)

2. My Mom was irate when she found out that I ate all of my vegetables at dinner time. (no)
3. Today I worked with Karen to measure our height. We worked so well together that our teacher gave us an award for cooperating. (yes)

#### **Day 4: Practice with Words**

##### ***Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*irate*, *celebrate*, *cooperate*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. When I saw my sister riding my new bike I was very angry. (*irate*)  
Now let's say the sentence but use the word *irate* in it. When I saw my sister riding my new bike I was (pause for the students to say *irate*.)
2. After my baseball team won the game we wanted to party! (*celebrate*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word *celebrate* in it. After my baseball team won the game we wanted to (pause for the students to say *celebrate*.)
3. When you work with others things get done a lot faster! (*cooperate*)  
Now let's say the sentence again but use the word *cooperate* in it. When you (pause for the students to say *cooperate*) with others things get done a lot faster!

#### **Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you became *irate* about something.
2. Tell me about a time that you *celebrated* something.
3. Tell me about a time when you *cooperated* with someone.

## Appendix B

*A Day at the Pumpkin Patch (Faulkner, 2006)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled, *A Day at the Pumpkin Patch* (Faulkner, 2006) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, two words (*strangest* and *delicious*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lesson will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Delicious:** In the story the author tells us that sweet pumpkins are the best choice for making delicious pumpkin treats. This means that sweet pumpkins have a very pleasant taste.

*Friendly Explanation*

If you describe something as delicious, you mean that it tastes really good.

*Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *delicious*

*Interactive Practice:*

Let's think about things that can be described as being delicious. I will give some examples and if you think the things are delicious, say, ``delicious.'' If not, say, ``No!''

- Apple pie (delicious)
- broccoli (no)
- chicken noodle soup (delicious)

*For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, ``What makes apple pie delicious?''*

2. **Tiny:** In the story the author tells us that gourds are a tiny fruit. That means gourds can be described as being a small fruit.

*Friendly Definition*

Tiny means very small. Something or someone that is tiny is extremely small.

*Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *tiny*

*Interactive Practice*

Let's think about some things that are tiny. I will give some examples and if you think these things are tiny say, "Tiny." If not, say, "No!"

- An elephant (no)
- Babies' feet (tiny)
- A kitten (tiny)

*For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why don't you think that an elephant is tiny?"*

**Day 2: Review and Practice***Review with Questions*

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *delicious* and *tiny*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

1. Does delicious mean something is very yummy? Or, does delicious mean something is bad tasting?
2. What could be described as being delicious, the smell of freshly washed clothes or the smell of dirty old socks?
3. Does tiny mean very small? Or, does tiny mean huge?
4. What could be described as being tiny, an ant or an apartment building?

### ***Situations and Examples***

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word delicious. Many people think that chocolate ice cream tastes delicious! Can you think of any other items that taste delicious? (*For example, pumpkin pie, spaghetti*)
2. Now I want you to think about the word tiny. Why would you want to appear tiny when playing hide and go seek?

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### ***Actions with Words***

1. Let's think about the word delicious. Who can show me what they look like when they are eating a delicious meal?
2. Now I want you to think about the word tiny. Who can show me what they would look like if they were a tiny ant?

#### ***Yes/No***

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen carefully.

1. Homemade butter tarts taste absolutely delicious! (Yes)
2. I am always amazed at how tiny kittens are when they are born. (yes)
3. The giraffe is a tiny animal. (no)

**Day 4: Practice with Words*****Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*delicious, tiny*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. The sweet pie pumpkin looked very small sitting in the palm of the giant's hand. (*tiny*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word *tiny* in it. The sweet pie pumpkin looked very (pause for the students to say *tiny*) sitting in the palm of the giant's hand.
2. The hot apple pie smells really good. (*delicious*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word *delicious* in it. The apple spice candle smells (pause for the students to say *delicious*).

**Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you tasted something that was *delicious*.
2. Tell me about something that is *tiny*.

## Appendix C

*Face to Face with Frogs (Moffet, 2008)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled, *Face to Face with Frogs* (Moffett, 2008) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*curious*, *frightened* and *dangerous*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Curious:** In the story the author tells us that when he went to take a picture of the terribilis frog, the frog appeared to be rather curious, showing little fear. This means that the terribilis frog was interested in what the author was doing.

*Friendly Definition*

If you are curious about something, you are interested in it and want to know more about it.

*Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *curious*

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about things that you are curious about. I will give some examples and if you think you would be curious about the situation say, "*curious.*" *If not, say, "No!"*

- Your birthday present. (curious)
- The first day of school. (student dependent)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why would you be curious about your birthday present?"***

2. **Frightened:** The author tells us that that the terribilis frog has little to be frightened of. This means that the terribilis frog has little to be afraid of.

### *Friendly Definition*

If you are frightened you are afraid.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *frightened.*

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about being frightened of something. I'm going to say some things and if you think you would be frightened, say, "*frightened.*" *If not, say, "No!"*

- Roller coasters (student dependent)
- Finding a skunk in your garage.(student dependent)
- Going for a ride in a hot air ballon. (student dependent)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why would you be frightened of going on a roller coaster?"***

3. **Feast:** The author tells us that the coquis frog climbs into the treetops to feast on insects. This means that the coquis frog climbs into the treetops to eat a variety of good things.

### *Friendly Definition*

A feast is a large and special meal.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *feast.*

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about situations in which you might have a feast. I will give some examples and if you think the situation calls for a feast say, "*feast.*" *If not, say, "No!"*

- Your birthday. (feast)
- Christmas, Diwali, Hanukah, Ede. (feast)
- A trip to the dentist. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why might you want to have a feast on your birthday?"***

## **Day 2: Review and Practice**

### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *curious*, *frightened* and *feast*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words.

1. Does curious mean you are interested in something and want to learn more about it? Or, does curious mean you are uninterested in something because it is a common, everyday thing?
2. What might you be curious about, going for a swim in the ocean or brushing your teeth?
3. Does frightened mean you are afraid of something? Or, does frightened mean you are excited about something?
4. What might frighten you, a Halloween movie or a Franklin movie about friendship?
5. Is a feast a large and special meal? Or is a feast a light snack you might have just before lunch?
6. When might you have a feast, to celebrate your Grandmother's birthday or a trip to see the dentist?

### ***Situations and Examples***

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word curious. You may be curious about all of the fruits and vegetables that are growing in your garden. Can you think of something else that you might be curious about? (*For example, finding out how much money the tooth fairy has left under your pillow, finding out whether you are going to have a baby brother or baby sister*)
2. Let's think about the word frightened. When might you become frightened? (*For example, during a rain storm, jumping off the diving board at the community pool*)
3. Think about the word feast. When might you want to have a feast? (*For example, to celebrate a family member's birthday*)

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### ***Actions with Words***

In this activity students respond physically to the word.

1. Let's think about the word curious. I'm looking for a volunteer who can pretend that they are curious about finding out what is making a scratching noise in their basement.
2. Now I want you to think about the word frightened. Who can show us what they would look like if they were frightened of something?
3. Think about the word feast. I want you to pretend that you are having a feast of your favourite foods to celebrate your birthday. Show me what you would look like at the feast?

#### ***Yes/No***

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think the sentence makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen carefully.

1. I was so frightened that I was going to wake up and find another birthday present waiting for me! (no)

2. Every Sunday my Mom cooks special yummy food and so we have a feast! (yes)
3. I'm always curious to find out what will happen when listening to a good book. (yes)

#### **Day 4: Practice with Words**

##### ***Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*curious, frightened, feast*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. A lot of people are afraid of heights. (*frightened*)  
Now let's say the sentence but use the word frightened in it. A lot of people are (pause for the students to say frightened) of heights.
2. Each year we have a special meal to celebrate my birthday. (*feast*)  
Now let's say the sentence but use the word feast in it. Each year we have a (pause for the students to say feast) to celebrate Canada's birthday.
3. I'm puzzled about space travel. (*curious*)  
Now let's say the sentence but use the word curious in it. I'm (pause for the students to say curious) about space travel.

#### **Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you were curious about something.
2. Tell me about a time you felt frightened.
3. Tell me about a time that you had a feast.

## Appendix D

*Beetle (Hartley, Marco and Taylor, 2008)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Introduction

After sharing the book entitled, *Beetle* (Hartley, Marco and Taylor, 2008) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*delicate, fierce* and *guard*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Delicate:** In the story the author tells us that two of the beetle's wings protect the delicate flying wings. If something is delicate, it is easy to hurt or break.

*Friendly Explanation*

If something is delicate, it is easy to hurt or break and needs to be handled or treated carefully.

*Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *delicate*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about things that might be described as being delicate. I will give you some examples and if you think these items are delicate, say, "Delicate." If not, say, "No!"

- A butterfly (delicate)
- A kite (delicate)
- A bowling ball (no)

**For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why do you think a butterfly is delicate?"**

2. **Fierce:** In the book the author tells us that beetle larvae can be very fierce. That means that the beetle larvae can be very angry and eager to fight or kill.

### *Friendly Definition*

A fierce animal or person is full of energy and forcefully goes after what they want not letting anyone or anything stop them from getting what they want.

### *Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *fierce*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about other animals that can be described as being fierce. I will give some examples and if you think the animals can be described as being fierce, say, "Fierce." If not, say, "No!"

- Polar Bears (fierce)
- Lions (fierce)
- Butterfly (no)

**For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "What makes the polar bear a fierce animal?"**

**Guard:** In the book the author tells us that some beetles guard their eggs until they hatch. That means that some beetles stay near the eggs in order to watch and protect them.

### *Friendly Definition:*

If you guard a place, person or object, you stand near them in order to watch and protect them.

### *Phonological Representation*

- Say the word with me: *guard*.

### *Interactive Practice:*

Let`s think about situations in which you might guard something or someone. I will give some examples and if you think the situation would cause you to guard say, `Guard.`` If not, say, ``No!``

- People who watch over you while swimming in a public pool or at the beach. (guard)
- Sometimes people have a watch dog for protection. (guard)
- Sharing a bowl of popcorn with a friend. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the item ask, “Why might you want someone to guard you at the pool?”***

## **Day 2: Review and Practice**

### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *delicate*, *fierce*, and *guard*. I`m going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I`m asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

1. If something is delicate does it mean that it is easy to harm, damage or break it? Or, if something is delicate does it mean that it is strong and won`t break easily?
2. What is delicate, the petals on a flower or the bark on a tree?
3. Does fierce mean aggressive and harmful? Or does fierce mean calm and gentle?
4. Who is fierce, a lion or a puppy dog?
5. Does guard mean you watch and protect something or someone? Or, does guard mean you let people do whatever they want with your things?
6. What might you guard, your Halloween candy or you laundry?

### *Situations and Examples*

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word delicate. There are a lot of things that can be described as being delicate such as certain pieces of jewellery: rings, earrings, bracelets or necklaces. Can you think of anything that can be described as being delicate?
2. Let's think about the word fierce. Sometimes we describe the weather as being rather fierce. We say, "that was a fierce rain storm." Can you think of anything else that can be described as being fierce?
3. Now I want you to think about the word guard. Why would you guard your Hallowe'en candy? (*For example, so my brothers and sisters don't eat it all!*)

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### *Actions with Words*

In this activity students respond physically to the word.

1. Let's think about the word delicate. I'm looking for someone who can show me how they would carry their Mom's delicate dishes from the kitchen table to the sink.
2. Now I want you to think about the word fierce. I'm looking for someone who can pretend to be as fierce as a tiger!
3. Think about the word guard. I'm looking for someone who can show me how they would guard their sand castle at the beach.

#### *Yes/No*

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No!"

Listen carefully.

1. Julie spent time today guarding her shell collection as her brother would love to get a hold of those special shells. (yes)
2. When the hippo shows his teeth he looks fierce! (yes)

3. The elephant is such a delicate animal. (no)

#### **Day 4: Practice with Words**

##### ***Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*delicate, fierce, guard*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. Police officers sometimes watch prisoners. (*guard*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word guard in it. Police officers sometimes (pause for the students to say guard) prisoners.
2. What a dainty bracelet! Now let's say the sentence but use the word delicate in it. What a (pause for the students to say delicate) bracelet!
3. Some of the animals at the zoo look angry and threatening. Now let's say the sentence but use the word fierce in it. Some of the animals at the zoo look (pause for the students to say fierce) and threatening.

#### **Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you saw something that was delicate.
2. Tell me about a time you described something as being fierce.
3. Tell me about a time you saw something or someone being guarded.

## Appendix E

*Owen & Mzee (Hatkoff and Kahumbu, 2007)*

### Identify Desired Results

#### *Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

#### *Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled, *Owen & Mzee* (Hatkoff and Kahumbu, 2007) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*doubt, scurried, gentle*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### **Day 1: Introduction**

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Doubt:** In the story Dr. Paula, Sabine, and Stephen doubted that the friendship between the baby hippo and the tortoise would last. That means they didn't believe that such a friendship was possible.

#### *Friendly Explanation*

If you doubt whether something is true or possible, you believe that it is probably not true or possible. If you doubt something, you believe it might not be true or possible.

*Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *doubt*

*Interactive Practice*

Let's think about things or situations that you might doubt. I will give some examples and if you think that the situation would cause you doubt, say "*Doubt.*" If not, say, "*No!*"

- In a few years you will be attending school on the planet Mars. (doubt)
- We will be getting new toys for the water table. (no)
- When you leave school today your Mom will be picking you up in a helicopter. (doubt)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example for the first item ask, "Why do you doubt that you will be going to school on the planet Mars?"***

2. **Gentle:** In the story Mzee is described as being a gentle care giver to Owen. This means that Mzee shows great kindness and calmness towards Owen.

*Friendly Definition*

Someone who is gentle is kind, and calm.

*Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *gentle*.

*Interactive Practice*

Let's think about the word gentle. I'm going to say some things and if you think the person is being gentle, say, "*Gentle.*" If not, say, "*No!*"

- Rubbing a friend's back when they are feeling sick. (gentle)
- Grabbing a doll from a classmate at the house centre. (no)
- Helping your Grandmother get out of bed. (gentle)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why do you think rubbing a friend's back is a gentle act?"***

3. **Scurried:** In the story Owen often scurried behind Mzee for safety. This means that Owen moved quickly behind Mzee because something or someone frightened him.

*Friendly Definition*

When people or animals scurry somewhere it means that they move quickly and hurriedly especially because they are frightened.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *scurried*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about scurrying. I'm going to say some things and if you think that the person would scurry say, "Scurry." If not, say, "No!"

- While out for a walk a dog begins chasing after you. (scurry)
- While out walking you meet up with friends from school. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example for the first item ask, "Why would you scurry if a dog was chasing you?"***

## **Day 2: Review and Practice**

### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *doubt*, *gentle*, and *scurried*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

1. If you doubt something does that mean that you believe it might not be true or possible? Or does doubt mean that you believe something is true or possible?
2. What situation might you doubt, being allowed to eat candy for dinner or being told you need to eat all your vegetables?
3. Does gentle mean kind and calm or does gentle mean rough and wild?
4. Who is being gentle, the dog who licks the boy's cuts and scrapes or the boy who hits and kicks the dog?
5. Does scurry mean to move quickly and hurriedly because you are frightened or does scurry mean to move slowly because you are sleepy?
6. Who would scurry, the boy who is trying to get in from the thunderstorm, or the boy who is going inside to get a drink of water?

### ***Situations and Examples***

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word doubt. You may doubt that you will ever be tall enough to go on all the rides at Wonderland. Can you think of any other things that you might doubt? (*For example, reading chapter books, playing hockey*)
2. Let's think about the word gentle. When might you be gentle? (*when petting my cat or dog, when pulling my pants up over my scrapped knees, when brushing my Mom's hair*)
3. Think about the word scurry. When might you scurry in from recess? (*when I hear thunder and see lightening, when a bigger student is chasing me*)

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### ***Actions with Words***

In this activity students respond physically to the word.

1. Let's think about the word doubt. How could you show me through your facial expressions that you doubt I will ever live with the tigers at the zoo.
2. Now I want you to think about the word gentle. Who can show me how they would gently pat a kitten?
3. Think about the word scurry. I'm looking for a volunteer who can pretend that they are a cat scurrying away from a dog.

#### ***Yes/No***

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen carefully.

1. Once I saw the storm clouds roll in, I scurried home on my bike. (yes)
2. That cat certainly is gentle, biting and scratching people all the time. (no)
3. I doubt that pigs can fly. (yes)

**Day 4: Practice with Words*****Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*doubt, gentle, scurry*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. I question whether or not there is life on other planetets. (*doubt*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word doubt in it. I (pause for the students to say doubt) whether or not there is life on other planets.
2. When I scrapped my knee, my Mom carefully washed and covered my knee with band aides. (*gently*) Now let's say the sentence again but use the word gently in it. When I scrapped my knee, my Mom (pause for the students to say gently) washed and covered my knee with band aides.
3. Ashleigh raced home from school because she thought a few older girls were chasing her. (*scurried*) Now let's say the sentence again but use the word scurried it it. Ashleigh (pause for the students to say scurried) home from school because she thought a few older girls were chasing her.

**Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you tell me about a time you doubted something.
2. Tell me about a time you were gentle towards something or someone.
3. Tell me about a time you scurried away from something or someone.

## Appendix F

*Giraffe and Bird (Bender, 2010)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught. .*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

### Instruction

After the sharing the book entitled, *Giraffe and Bird* (Bender, 2010) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*glum, invade and pester*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Glum:** In the story the bird feels glum because he has nowhere to sit and no one to bother. This means that the bird feels sad, and unhappy that he is no longer spending time with the giraffe.

*Friendly explanation*

Someone who is glum is sad because they are disappointed or unhappy about something.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *glum*.

### *Interactive Practice*

- Let's think about situations that might make you feel glum. I will give some examples and if you think the situation would make you feel glum, say ``Glum.`` If not, say, ``No!``
- Your best friend moves to another school. (Glum)
- After school, your Mom takes you to the park to play at the playground. (No)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, ``Why would you feel glum?``***

2. **Invade:** In the story the giraffe invades the bird's personal space. This means the giraffe entered the bird's personal space without being invited.

### *Friendly Definition*

Invade means to enter someone's personal space without being invited.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *invade*.

### *Interactive Practice*

- Let's think about someone invading your space. I will say some things and if you think the person is invading, say, "invade." If not, say, "No!"
- Sitting too closely to someone on the carpet (invade)
- Making room for someone at the table (no)
- Holding your sister or brothers hand while crossing the street. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, ``Why is sitting too closely to someone on the carpet is an example of invading someone's space?``***

3. **Pester:** In the story the giraffe feels lonely. There is no one around to pester him.

### *Friendly Definition*

Pester means to bother someone.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *pester*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about pestering someone. I'm going to say some things and if you think the person would be pestering, say, "Pester". If not, say, "No!"

- Asking your Mom to take you to the park over and over again! (pester)
- Waiting for your Dad to finish the dishes before you ask him to play with you (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "What makes you think this person is pestering their Mom?"***

## **Day 2: Review and Practice**

### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *glum*, *invade*, and *pester*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer.

1. Does glum mean someone is feeling sad and unhappy about something? Or, does glum mean someone is feeling excited and hopeful?
2. Who is feeling glum, a child who forgot to return their library book, or a child who found a chocolate treat in their lunch box?
3. Does invade mean to enter someone's personal space or to share with others?
4. Who is invading, a child who is helping a friend put on their outdoor clothes, or a child who is standing too close to others in line to try and get out faster for recess?
5. Does pester mean to help someone or to bother someone?
6. Would you pester your Mom and tell her it's your bedtime or would you pester your Mom when it's time for dessert?

### ***Situations and Examples***

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word glum. You may feel glum if you miss out on going to a birthday party because you are sick. Can you think of another situation that might make you feel glum? *(For example, when you can't find your indoor shoes, when your big sister or brother won't let you play with a game with them.)*
2. Let's think about the word invade. When might you invade a friend's personal space? *(For example, when they are sad and they need a hug, when they need help getting dressed for outdoor play, when they need a helping hand.)*
3. Think about the word pester. Why would you pester your Dad to take you swimming on a hot day? *(For example, because swimming is a great way to cool down on a hot, hot, day!)*

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### ***Actions with Words***

In this activity students respond physically to the word.

1. Let's think about the word invade. I'm looking for a volunteer who can pretend that they are an ant outside who has found a family having a picnic lunch. Who can show us what you would look like if you were invading the picnic?
2. Now I want you to think about the word pester. If I told you that I had a surprise for you today, which one of you can show me what you would do if you were to pester me to find about the surprise.
3. Think about the word glum. Pretend that you just found out that your best friend is moving and will no longer be going to your school. Who can show us how glum you might look?

#### ***Yes/No***

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If the sentence doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen Carefully.

1. Bill kept pestering his Mother to go to the park to play with his friends. (yes)

2. When Julie found out she did not get invited to Heather's party, she felt glum. (yes)
3. My sister invades my personal space all the time by sitting in front of me so I can't see the T.V. (yes)
4. Ellie kept pestering the doctor to give her a bigger needle. (no)

#### **Day 4: Practice with Words**

##### ***Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*invade, pester, glum*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. Billy usually annoys me until I take him for a bike ride. (*pesters*) Now let's say the sentence again but use the word *pesters* in it. Billy usually (pause for the students to say *pesters*) me until I take him for a bike ride.
2. The ants entered our picnic space in an unpleasant way. (*invade*) Now let's say the sentence but use the word *invaded* in it. The ants (pause for the students to say *invaded*) our picnic space in an unpleasant way.
3. When my sister doesn't let me play with her, I feel sad. Now let's say the sentence but use the word *glum* in it. When my sister doesn't let me play with her, I feel (pause for the students to say *glum*.)

#### **Day 5 Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you invaded someone's personal space.
2. Tell me about a time you felt glum.
3. Tell me about a time you pestered someone.

## Appendix G

*Scaredy Squirrel (Watt, 2008)*

### Identify Desired Results

*Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

*Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix B).

### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled, *Scaredy Squirrel* (Watt, 2008) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*incredible, horrible and overjoyed*) from the text will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1: Introduction

*First the word will be contextualized for its role in the story.*

- 1. Incredible:** In the story something incredible happens to Scaredy Squirrel. That means something happened that surprised Scaredy Squirrel.

*Friendly Explanation*

If you say something is incredible, it means something unusual or surprising has happened and you can hardly believe that it is true!

*Phonological Representation*

Let's say that word again. (*incredible*)

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about things that happen that we can describe as being incredible. I will say some things and if you think they could be described as incredible, say, "Incredible." If not, say, "No."

- A spaceship landed in your backyard. (*incredible*)
- Swimming in your neighbours pool. (no)
- Riding all the rollercoasters at Canada's Wonderland. (*incredible*)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "What makes a spaceship landing in your backyard incredible?"***

2. **Horrible:** In the story Scaredy Squirrel begins to understand that nothing horrible will happen to him when he leaves his tree. That means Scaredy Squirrel begins to realize that nothing bad will happen to him if he leaves his home.

### *Friendly Explanation*

Horrible means very bad.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *horrible*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about things that happen that can be described as being horrible. I will say some things and if you think they would be horrible, say, "*Horrible*." If not, say, "*No!*"

- Having the flu. (horrible)
- Finding a five dollar bill in your coat pocket. (no)
- Being sprayed by a skunk. (horrible)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "What is so horrible about having the flu?"***

3. **Overjoyed:** In the story Scaredy Squirrel feels overjoyed when he is soaring through the air. That means he felt extremely happy while flying.

### *Friendly Explanation*

If you are overjoyed you are extremely pleased or happy about something.

### *Phonological Representation*

Let's say the word again. (*overjoyed*)

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about feeling overjoyed. I will say some things and if you think you would feel overjoyed, say, "*Overjoyed.*" If not, say, "*No!*"

- Watching the Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup. (*overjoyed*)
- Grocery shopping with your Mom (no)
- Finding out you are going to Disney World for the March break. (*overjoyed*)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why would you feel overjoyed?"***

### **Day 2: Review and Practice**

#### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *incredible*, *horrible*, and *overjoyed*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer. First listen and think, then answer

I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words.

1. Does incredible mean something unusual or surprising has happened? Or, does incredible mean something believable has happened?
2. What would be incredible: skiing in the mountains or tobogganing in your backyard?
3. Does horrible mean bad? Or does horrible mean wonderful?
4. What experience would you describe as being horrible: finding a snake in your shoes or finding a cupcake in your lunch?
5. Does overjoyed mean that you are extremely happy? Or does overjoyed mean that you are disappointed about something?
6. What would make you feel overjoyed: spending the day at the beach with all of your friends or spending the day cleaning your room?

### *Situations and Examples*

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word *incredible*.  
Climbing the stairs all the way to the top of the C.N. tower was incredible! Tell me about a time you did something incredible. (*skating the length of the arena, riding my bike without training wheels, catching a popfly in tee ball.*)
2. Let's think about the word *horrible*.  
Something horrible happened at my house last night. Our family dog bit my sister. Tell me about a time something horrible happened at your house.
3. Think about the word *overjoyed*.  
Why would you feel overjoyed to find out that school was getting a new playground?

### **Day 3: Practice with Words**

#### **Actions with Words**

In this activity students respond physically to the words.

1. Let's think about the word *incredible*.
  - Pretend that you are riding the world's largest roller coaster. Show me how you would look during this incredible ride.
2. Let's think about the word *horrible*.
  - If I told you that we all drank spoiled milk at lunch you might start to feel horrible. How could you show me that you were feeling horrible?
3. Let's think about the word *overjoyed*.
  - If I told you that we were spending the day at the zoo you would probably feel overjoyed. Show me what that would look like.

#### **Yes-No**

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If it doesn't make sense, say, "No."

1. Celebrating my birthday at the Monster truck jam was incredible. (yes)
2. I ate too much Hallowe'en candy and now I feel horrible. (yes)
3. I was overjoyed when I fell off my bike. (no)

**Day 4: Practice with Words**

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words (*incredible, horrible, overjoyed*). I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. Swimming with the dolphins in the ocean was amazing. (*incredible*) Now let's say the sentence but use *incredible* in it. Swimming with the dolphins in the ocean was (*pause for students to say incredible*).
2. When I broke my arm I felt terrible. (*horrible*) Now let's say the sentence but use *horrible* in it. When I broke my arm I felt (*pause for students to say horrible*).
3. I felt happy when I saw the smart board in our classroom. (*overjoyed*) Now let's say the sentence but use *overjoyed* in it. I felt (*pause for students to say overjoyed*) when I saw the smart board in our classroom.

**Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you saw something incredible happen.
2. Tell me about a time you felt overjoyed.
3. Tell me about a time you felt horrible.

## Appendix H

### *Stanley's Party (Bailey, 2003)*

#### Identify Desired Results

##### *Curriculum Expectations*

*1.7 Children will use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes.*

*1.9 Children will describe personal experiences using vocabulary and details appropriate to the situation.*

##### *Specific Learning Goals:*

- 1. Students will learn the meanings of words explicitly taught.*
- 2. Students will use the words correctly in contexts other than the one used in the story.*
- 3. Students will make decisions about the use of the words in various contexts.*

#### Determine Evidence

During instruction teachers can track students' knowledge of vocabulary using the assessment of learning checklist (see Appendix I).

#### Instruction

After sharing the book entitled *Stanley's Party* (Bailey, 2003) with the Kindergarten class as a read aloud, three words (*clever*, *humongous*, and *noticed*) will be taught explicitly. The following outlines the instructional steps taken to teach each word using interactive activities over the course of a week. The instructional steps and activities are modelled after McKeown and Beck's (2011) Rich Instruction format. The daily large group lessons will take approximately twenty minutes.

#### Day 1 Introduction

- 1. Clever:** In this story Stanley felt clever. This means Stanley felt very smart.

##### *Friendly Explanation*

Someone who is clever understands things easily. They are bright, talented and smart.

##### *Phonological Representaiton*

Say the word with me: *clever*.

*Interactive Practice*

Let's think about feeling clever. I am going to say some things and if you think you would feel clever say, "Clever." If not, say, "No!"

- Writing your name. (*Clever*)
- Fixing the chain on your bike. (*Clever*)
- Your Mom finds out you have been feeding the dog your dinner. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why would you feel clever?"***

2. **Humongous:** Humongous dogs showed up at Stanley's party. This means that very large dogs came to Stanley's party.

*Friendly Explanation*

Humongous means very large or big.

*Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *humongous*

*Interactive Practice*

Let's think about that word humongous. I will say some things and if you think they could be described as humongous say, "humongous" if not say, "No."

- A whale (*humongous*)
- A pair of glasses (no)
- A dinosaur (*humongous*)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why do you think a whale is humongous?"***

3. **Noticed:** In the story Stanley noticed that his people listened to music while sitting on the couch. This means Stanley became aware of what his people did while sitting on the couch.

*Friendly Explanation*

If you notice something or someone, it means you become aware of them.

### *Phonological Representation*

Say the word with me: *notice*.

### *Interactive Practice*

Let's think about the things that we notice. I will say some things and if you think they are things that you might notice, say, "*Notice.*" If not, say, "*No!*"

- Your teacher got a new haircut. (*notice*)
- Your shoes are too small. (*notice*)
- It's raining in Italy. (no)

***For each item, call on a student to explain his or her response. For example, for the first item ask, "Why might you notice your if your teacher got a new haircut?"***

### **Day 2: Review and Practice**

#### ***Review with Questions***

We learned some new words yesterday. These words were *clever*, *humongous*, and *noticed*. I'm going to ask you some questions to review these words. First I want you to listen and think about the questions I'm asking. Then I will ask the questions again and at that time you can answer.

First listen and think, then answer

1. Does clever mean that you are able to understand things easily or that you are very clumsy?
2. Who is clever: someone who can count to 100 or someone who cannot count to 100?
3. Does humongous mean very big or very small?
4. What would be a humongous meal: a Big Mac, fries and a pop or a carrot stick?
5. Does notice mean you become aware of something or you forget something?
6. What might you notice: your parents tidying the house or the new television in the living room?

## Situations and Examples

In this activity students are asked to explain contexts that contain the target words.

1. Think about the word clever.  
If you helped your Mom put an adult puzzle together, your Mom might say that you are a clever child! Can you think of something else that might cause your Mom to say that you are a clever child? (*making a healthy snack for yourself, dressing for the weather*)
2. Let's think about the word humongous. What things could you describe as being humongous? (*an elephant, a dinosaur, a limousine*)
3. Think about the word notice. What might you notice about the weather as we get closer to the winter season? (*shorter days, cooler temperatures, frost, birds flying south*)

## Day 3: Practice with Words

### *Actions with Words*

1. Let's think about the word clever.
  - Stanley felt clever when he was able to enjoy the comforts of his home without his people owners finding out. Pretend you are Stanley, show me how you would enjoy the comforts of your home without your people owners finding out.
2. Let's think about the word humongous.
  - Pretend that you are a humongous animal. Show me what you would look like if you were a humongous elephant.
3. Now I want you to think about the word notice.

Sometimes people want to be noticed. That means sometimes people want others to become aware of them. What might you do to get noticed? Call upon students one at a time for demonstrations. (*For example, someone may slide across the floor, use an outdoor voice to introduce themselves, dance*),

### *Yes-No*

I have some sentences that make sense and some that don't make sense. You decide. If you think it makes sense, everybody say, "Yes." If it doesn't make sense, say, "No."

Listen carefully!

1. When my Mom was pregnant with my sister her stomach looked humongous! (yes)
2. Doctors are clever people; they can make you feel better when you are sick or hurt. (yes)
3. That ant is humongous! (no)
4. I noticed that my Dad is going bald. (yes)

**Day 4: Practice with Words*****Idea Substitution***

I am going to read a sentence that has something to do with one of your vocabulary words. Then I want you to tell me which new word goes with that sentence.

1. The first two words we are using are *clever* and *humongous*.

Most dinosaurs were big animals. What word goes with that sentence, clever or humongous? (humongous) Now let's say the sentence but use humongous in it. Most dinosaurs were (*pause for students to say humongous*) animals.

2. My Mom told me that I am a smart kid because I tied my lace up shoes all by myself. What word goes with that sentence, clever or humongous? (clever) Now let's say the sentence but use clever in it. My Mom told me that I am a (*pause for students to say clever*) kid because I tied my lace up shoes all by myself.

3. The two words that I want you to think about are clever and noticed. I saw that you only had an apple in your lunch bag today. What word goes with that sentence, clever or noticed? (noticed) Now let's say the sentence but use the word noticed in it. I (*pause for the students to say noticed*) that you only had an apple in your lunch bad today.

**Day 5: Review**

1. To review the words we have been learning this week, I want you to tell me about a time you felt clever.
2. Tell me about a time you described something or someone as being humongous.
3. Tell me about a time you noticed something.



