

## **A Rationale for Steps in the Process of Explicitly Teaching a Critical Word With a Goal of Developing Expressive Vocabulary Knowledge**

### **1) Contextualize the word within the lesson content.**

Students will have an easier time grasping both the relevance of a word and the meaning if the teacher establishes a vivid connection to the immediate lesson focus and content.

### **2) Guide students in hearing, reading and pronouncing the word several times.**

Students need to read and hear the word pronounced correctly several times to form an accurate auditory imprint. If they aren't directly looking at the word while the teacher is pronouncing the word, many students will engage in "linguistic approximations," guessing what they have heard. While the teacher may be clearly pronouncing "lexicon," many may be hearing "ex-con." Students also need practice saying the word correctly to make sure they are decoding appropriately. Otherwise, they may fail to even recognize the word when they encounter it in a reading selection. If the word has multiple syllables, students should be guided in saying the word slowly in parts, then quickly a few times. This helps ensure that they are actually pronouncing each syllable.

### **3) Provide a relatively brief, accessible explanation using familiar vocabulary.**

Dictionary definitions are both concise and precise and often include more challenging vocabulary or another form of the target word (*e.g., to categorize = to place in relevant categories; classify*). Learners across the K-12 grade levels benefit from clearly worded explanations, using familiar language and common synonyms or "*it's kind of like*" words for terms that lack a precise synonym.

### **4) Provide illustrative examples using contexts different from the actual lesson story/text.**

Learners need to see the word applied in more than one context to develop a strong mental model. Strive to provide examples within their experiential realm. Move beyond the specific context of the lesson text or learners can narrowly generalize that a *stereotype* is always about adolescent drivers and that the adjective *ecstatic* always relates to winning awards in science fairs.

### **5) Engage students in processing the word, moving from non-verbal to brief verbal responses.**

Students can't be expected to move confidently from just hearing what a word means to effective application in original sentences. Learners with language and literacy challenges will need to be safely guided in processing the new word, moving from less to more demanding illustrations of comprehension. Frequently, teachers move on after briefly introducing a word without adequately assessing whether students have even a rudimentary grasp. Students can be guided in demonstrating comprehension by 1) answering questions using gestures and/or facial expressions; 2) providing an example with a partner; 3) discriminating between examples and non-examples.

**6) Structure students' initial spoken and written use of the word using linguistic frames.**

Students need structured and guided practice to be able to use a newly-taught word confidently and competently in speaking and writing. Simply listening to the teacher use a word in a sentence will not increase their syntactic and grammatical competence with the word. Sentence starters that frame correct usage will help ensure that students develop expressive word knowledge. After structured application to ensure accuracy, students can be assigned independent writing tasks.