

**LANGUAGE DIVERSITY & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT:
LEADING ADVANCED LITERACY INSTRUCTION TO FOSTER ELLS' ACHIEVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

OCTOBER 2013-MAY 2014

Nonie K. Lesaux, Ph.D.
Sky H. Marietta, Ed.D.
Emily Phillips Galloway, M.S.Ed.

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Leadership Meeting #2 Agenda

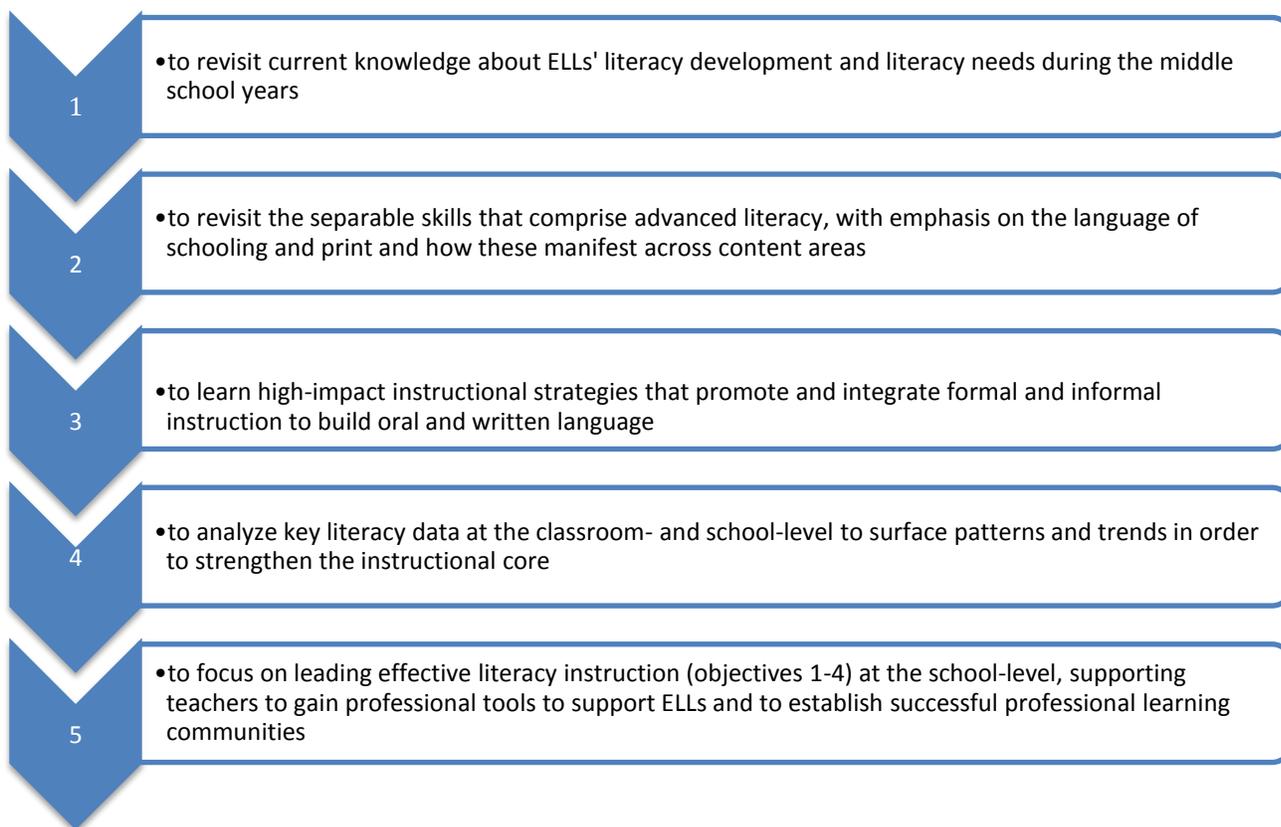
- 9:00 a.m. Last Week's Session & Institute Goals
- 9:30 a.m. Blueprint Step 1
- 10:15 a.m. Sources of Literacy Breakdown
- Our Conceptual Framework
 - Application: Text Analysis
 - Application: Blueprint Step 2
- Lunch
- 12:45 p.m. Application: Case Analysis & Synthesis
- 1:45 p.m. Discussion: School-Based Literacy Systems for Support

Table of Contents

Institute Purpose & Objectives	4
Institute Guiding Principals	4
Institute Design and Products	5
Conceptualizing Literacy Breakdowns	6
ELLs and Literacy Breakdowns: Code v. Meaning	8
Unpacking Oral Language to Support ELLs	10
The Institutes Case Study Students	13
Sources of Breakdown	18
Breakdown?: A Protocol	19

I. Purpose and Objectives

This 9-day institute is designed to address the pervasive challenge for today's middle school instructional leaders serving linguistically diverse populations: how to ensure that their classrooms and instruction are designed to develop students' *advanced* literacy skills, rather than *basic* literacy skills. The institute is designed around 5 specific objectives for participants' professional learning:

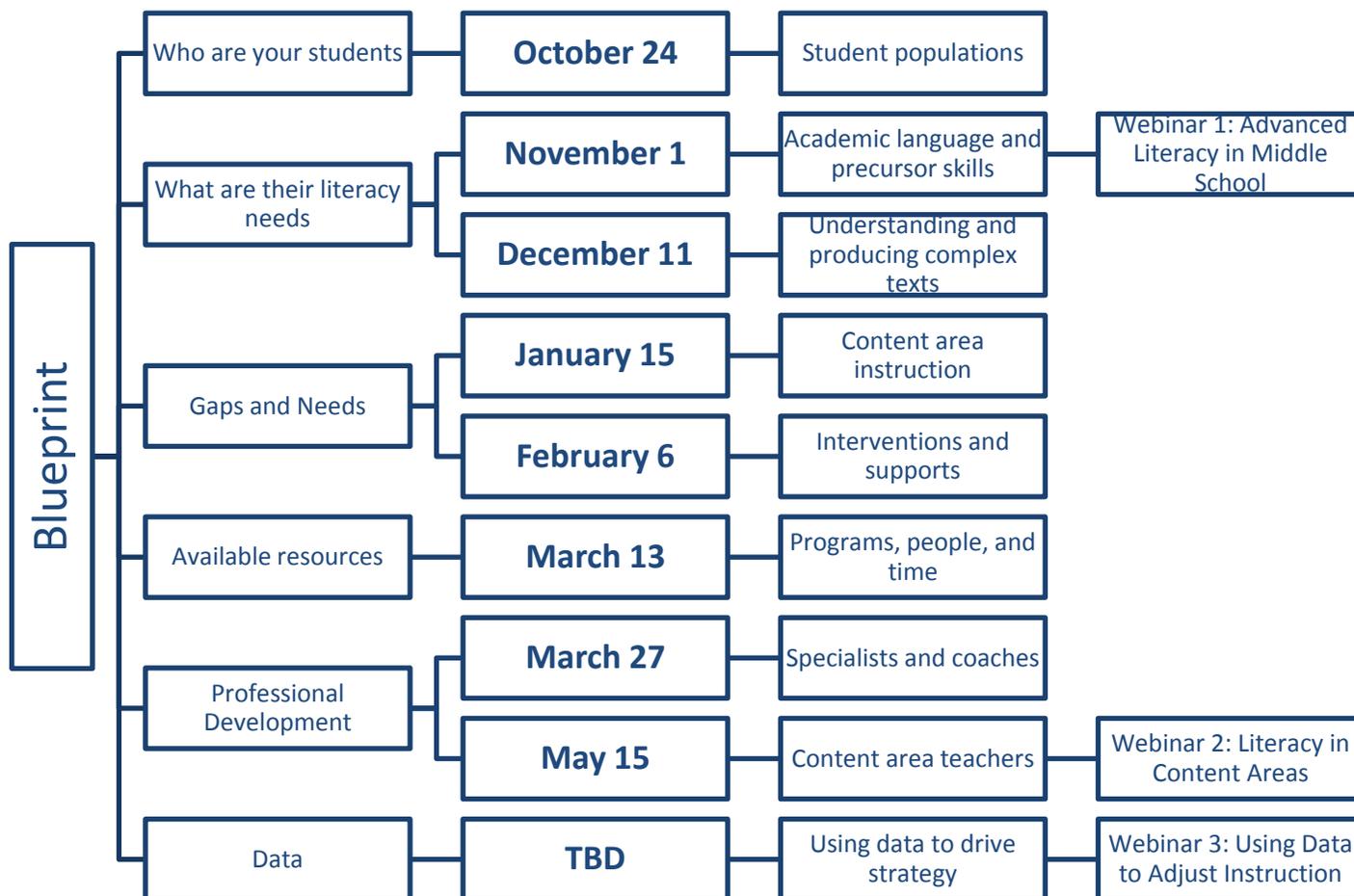


II. Institute Guiding Principles

For literacy instruction and supports to be effective in any school, but especially schools with high numbers of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds, there are at least 3 guiding principles to consider:

1. Struggling readers are not struggling thinkers
2. The aim of literacy instruction is to give students access to high-level ideas and content
3. There are multiple potential sources of students' literacy breakdowns, related to the learner, text, and the learning context

II. Institute Design & Product



Institute Product As a main product, each participant will have the opportunity to develop a “blueprint” for their school—to bring together and guide efforts to promote advanced literacy skills among the student population, including ELLs. The blueprint process has several steps, including a baseline analysis, resource allocation analysis, and action planning (e.g., professional development) to determine appropriate supports and next steps. We will facilitate this process over the course of this institute; all work will take place within institute hours.

III. Conceptualizing Literacy Breakdowns

Sample Text: *CPO Focus on Earth Science, Grade 6*



Waves

Wind causes waves Ocean waves at a beach occur as a repeating pattern of wave crests and troughs. A **crest** is the high point of a wave, and a **trough** is the low point. The height of a wave is the distance between the wave crest and trough.

Wave height The wind is the most common cause of ocean waves. The height of a wave is influenced by:

- The strength of the wind.
- How long the wind blows.
- How much open water the wind blows over.

Wavelength The distance between two wave crests is called the **wavelength** of a wave. The ability of a wave to disturb the ocean bottom as it approaches a beach depends on its wavelength. A passing wave can “reach” down about half its wavelength. That means that a wave with a wavelength of 10 meters can only disturb the ocean bottom if it is five meters deep or less.

Waves stir up sediment on the ocean bottom Most waves will reach deep enough to affect the part of the shoreface nearest the beach. The lower part of the shoreface is only affected by the strongest waves with the longest wavelengths.

VOCABULARY

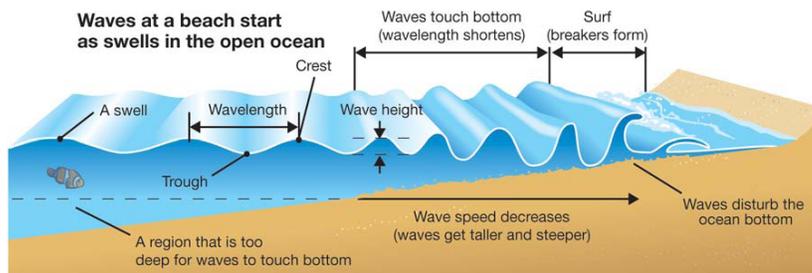
crest - the high point of a wave.
trough - the low point of a wave.
wavelength - the distance between two wave crests, or the distance between two wave troughs.

Swells

In the open ocean, most waves look like moving humps of water called swells. Swells can travel great distances over open water without losing much energy because although the swell moves, the water stays close to the same place.

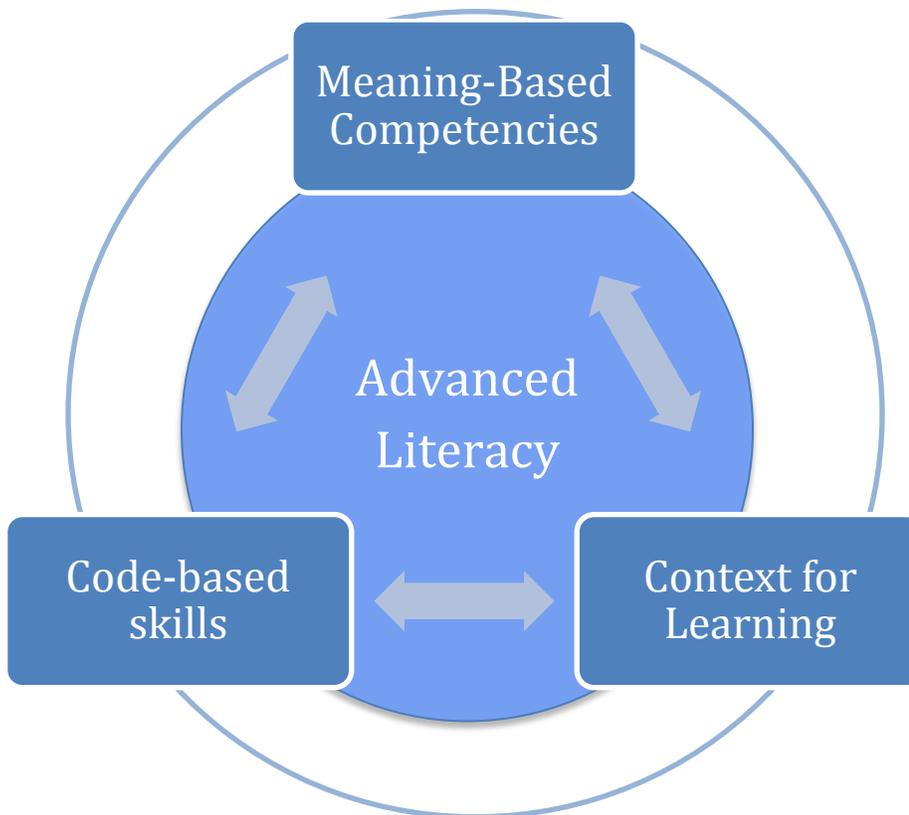
If you could watch a blob of water as a swell passed by, you would see it move in a circle. First the blob would drop and move toward the approaching swell. Then the swell would lift the blob and push it forward. Finally, the blob would drop back to its starting place. Because the blob would end up right where it started, little energy is lost. That's why swells can travel great distances without losing much energy.

By the time a swell reaches a beach, if it has a lot of energy, it can become a huge breaker! A breaker is a wave that becomes foamy as it hits the beach.



What might be challenging about this text? What background knowledge does the reader need to support comprehension? Anything else you are struck by?

Conceptualizing Literacy Breakdowns (con't)



Code-Based Skills	Meaning-Based Competencies	Context for Learning
Skills involved in accurate and efficient word reading	Skills involved in comprehending the language and meaning of complex texts and ideas when reading or listening	Contextual and affective factors that influence learning

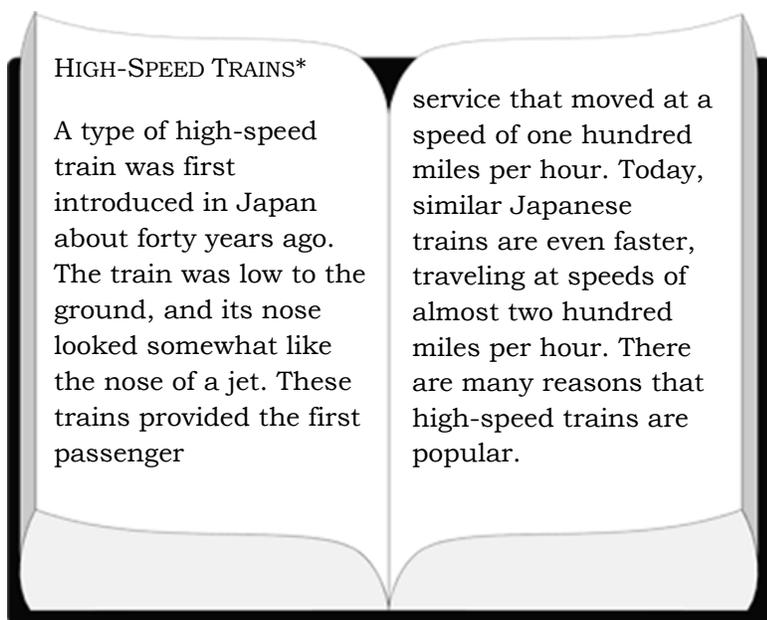
IV. ELLs & Literacy Breakdowns: Code v. Meaning

Why do many ELLs struggle to comprehend texts? One major problem lies in whether they acquire both the *skills* and *knowledge* needed to read and understand complex texts.

Code-based skills are those that allow students to master the mechanics of reading—for example, the ability to map the 26 letters onto their respective sounds in combinations (44 in total), and thus read wordsⁱ.

Meaning-based competencies, on the other hand, are comprised of the range of abilities and knowledge necessary for making meaning from text. They include the skills associated with language development, such as oral language, vocabulary, and listening comprehension skills, as well as the foundational knowledge needed to access and apply a text's message.

The passage, *High-Speed Trains*ⁱⁱ, adapted from a reading assessment commonly used in elementary schools, illustrates the distinction between skills-based and knowledge-based competencies in reading.



To read even this short passage, the reader must be able to map sounds onto letters (for example, /s/ /p/ /ee/ /d/) and blend these to form a word. She must also recognize common spelling patterns, such as the “-igh” family found in the word “high.” And she must do this quickly enough in order to then spend some time attending to the passage's meaning; if the reader takes too long, the information from the beginning of the passage is no longer in memoryⁱⁱⁱ. At 5th grade, a student must read at least 115 words a minute.

Having these **skills-based competencies** is necessary but not sufficient to support reading comprehension.

Students also need **knowledge-based competencies**, including understanding the meaning of the words in their contexts and other relevant language skills. Without well-developed knowledge based competencies, having mastered the mechanics of reading becomes less and less valuable with time—the core benefit of mastering the mechanics of print is that the reader has the “mental space” to devote to making meaning from print.

For example, to make meaning from the passage above, students need:

- conceptual knowledge about both trains and jets;
- vocabulary knowledge that’s embedded in the passage. For example, the many possible meanings of the word “service” makes this especially challenging. (Dictionary.com provides 37 entries under the word “service,” including noun, adjective, and verb forms along with a number of idioms.)
- cognitive strategies necessary to monitor their comprehension and repair any misunderstandings
 - e.g., a child who pictures a human nose upon coming to the word “nose” in the text must adjust this misunderstanding when reading the comparison to a jet’s nose

For many children, especially children from low-income or non-English speaking homes, knowledge-based competencies are more likely to be key sources of academic difficulties—these populations often have difficulty comprehending more advanced text^{iv}.

Skills-Based Competencies	Knowledge-Based Competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constrained, i.e., mastery oriented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ e.g., 26 letters, 44 sounds ➤ e.g., word reading automaticity - Typically in place by 3rd grade - Highly susceptible to instruction in a relatively brief period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unconstrained, i.e., not mastered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ e.g., 50,000 words by 12th grade ➤ e.g., relevant cross-content knowledge - Develops from infancy through adulthood - Requires sustained instruction, through adolescence

V. Unpacking Oral Language to Support ELLs

What is oral language?

Oral language is the system through which we use spoken words to express knowledge, ideas, and feelings. Developing English Language Learners' (ELLs) oral language, then, means developing the skills and knowledge that provide the foundation for their listening, speaking, and writing. Broadly, oral language is made up of five components:

- ❖ *Vocabulary (understanding the meaning of words and phrases)*
- ❖ *Syntax (understanding word order and grammar rules)*
- ❖ *Morphological skills (understanding the meaning of word forms and parts)*
- ❖ *Pragmatics (understanding the social rules of communication)*
- ❖ *Phonological skills (an awareness of sounds, such as syllables and rhymes)*

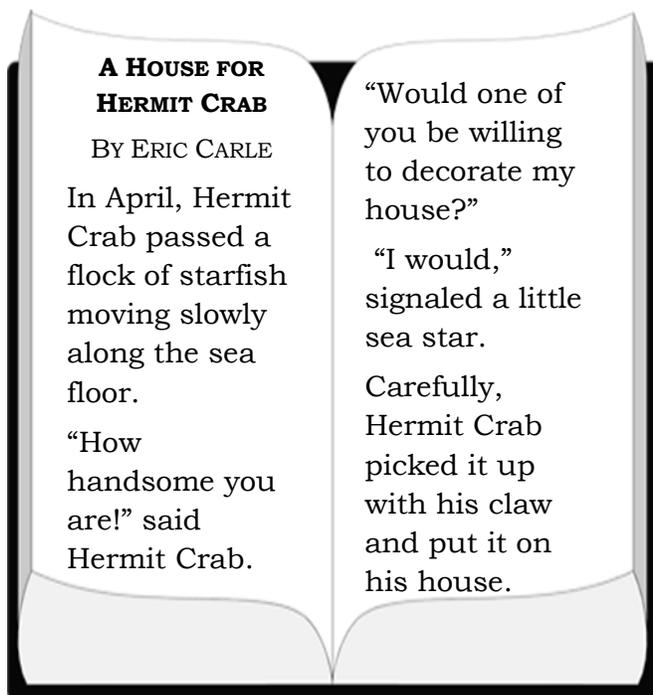
What makes these components distinct?

All of these components of oral language are necessary to communicate and learn through conversation and spoken interaction, but there are important distinctions among them that have implications for instruction.

Vocabulary: A Cornerstone Of Oral Language	Syntax, Morphological Skills, And Pragmatics: The Glue Of Oral Language	Phonological Skills: Pre-Cursors to Early Word Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents a learner's conceptual knowledge about the world. After all, you can't separate big ideas from the words that represent them! • Develops from infancy through adulthood • Requires sustained instruction, PK-12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable learners to make sense of what they hear and to communicate ideas in ways that make sense to others • Develop from infancy through adulthood • Require sustained instruction, PK-12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable a listener to differentiate the words in a stream of spoken language • Unlike the other components of oral language, these skills are discrete and typically mastered by 1st grade • Require limited instruction, PK-primary grades

A student's **phonological** skills are foundational to her oral language and word reading development, but typically do not present lasting sources of difficulty for most learners, including ELLs. Students' skills in the domains of **syntax**, **morphology**, and **pragmatics** are central for putting together and taking apart the meaning of sentences and paragraphs, and for oral and written dialogue. In turn, having the **words** to engage in the dialogue—the **vocabulary knowledge**—is also a key part of oral language. These skills must be fostered from early childhood through adolescence, and are often sources of difficulty for ELLs, hindering their literacy development.^v

What oral language competencies do learners need to make sense of this read aloud?



Vocabulary

- Understand the meaning of words in this context (e.g., *pass* has 85 possible definitions!)

Syntax

- Understand Hermit Crab is doing the action—*passing*—and the flock of starfish is receiving the action, being *passed*

Morphological skills

- Understand that the suffix “-ly” changes the words “slow” and “careful” from action words to words that describe actions

Pragmatics

- Understand that read-aloud time is a time to listen and think about the story; spoken responses are appropriate when the teacher asks a question

Phonological skills

- “Hear” the four different words that make up the phrase, “how handsome you are”

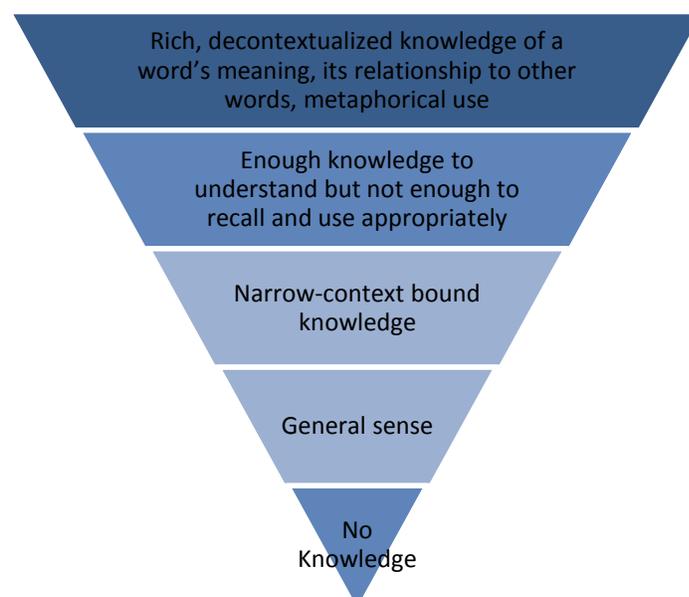
Spotlight on Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge involves understanding the meanings of words and phrases (aka *receptive vocabulary*) and using those words and phrases to communicate effectively (aka *expressive vocabulary*). Vocabulary knowledge is a key component of oral language, but it is not constrained to oral language; it is also integral to comprehending and communicating using print.

Vocabulary knowledge exists in degrees, such that any learner has a particular “level” of knowledge of any given word (see diagram).^{vivii} This begins with the word sounding familiar and moves toward the ability to use the word flexibly, even metaphorically, when speaking and writing.

What does it mean to know a word?

5 levels of word knowledge



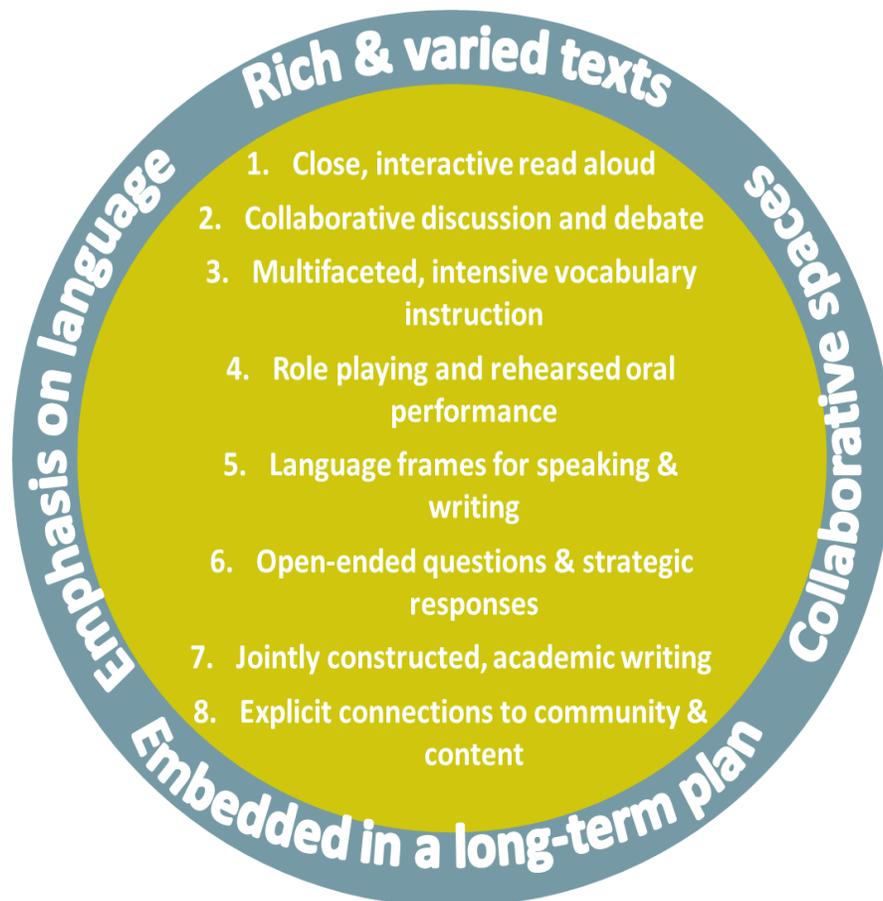
What does this mean for instruction?

Promoting children's oral language, including the rich vocabulary knowledge needed for academic success, means much more than rote memorization and choral repetition! Effective instruction to build up oral language provides students with deep, language- and content-based learning experiences that provide plenty of opportunities for reading, writing, and meaningful discussion.^{viii}

Instruction that promotes oral language development requires organizing classroom learning around content-based, thematic units of study in which the overarching instructional plan is based on topics that lend themselves to big questions without easy answers. These units of study feature:

- ❖ *Rich, complex texts that serve as platforms for learning and discussion*
- ❖ *A small number of academic words studied throughout, taking time to explore nuanced meanings and uses*
- ❖ *Spaces and activities organized for collaborative learning like labs, demonstrations, debates, and role plays*

To promote oral language, organize classroom learning around content-based, thematic units of study in which the overarching instructional plan is based on topics that lend themselves to big questions without easy answers



Within each content-based, thematic unit of study, it is important to weave in classroom practices that are useful for promoting oral language development and for putting Common Core Language, Listening, and Speaking Standards into action. In the diagram to the left, you will find eight strategies, which together, support learners as they build language and an academic identity in a way that is both fun and purposeful.

VI. The Institute's Case Students

Josie is a 7th grader who has been attending New York City schools since kindergarten, but is still classified as ELL (intermediate level). During elementary school, she did well through the primary grades but received a number of academic supports to try to accelerate her reading during the upper elementary years. She is conversationally very proficient and participatory during class discussions—sometimes funny, and often outgoing. Some teachers find this behavior disruptive, but others embrace her gregarious personality. She has had her cell phone confiscated several times, and is often at the center of conflicts within her circle of friends. Her parents, immigrants from Haiti, said that Josie's 5th grade teachers had communicated concerns that she was “stuck” at her reading level; her parents have been hoping that she would outgrow these difficulties. Josie's teachers agree that she's a good candidate for tutoring (via CityYear) and for after-school support. They also agree that she doesn't have clear indicators of a learning problem. One teacher is concerned that she's never actually received targeted instruction to support her language development for academic success.

Josie's Assessment Data

NYSESLAT	Level (II)
	Listening and Speaking-Proficient
	Reading and Writing- Intermediate
NYS-ELA	Level 2
LAB-R	2
DIBELS	ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) (Grade 6)- Low Risk

Marcia is a 6th grade student who entered school at P.S. 555 in 2nd grade. She completed kindergarten and 1st grade in Puerto Rico, in Spanish, and then moved to the Bronx during the summer after grade 1. She has been receiving ELL supports since school entry (4 years); while her 5th grade NYS-ELA scores placed her at a Level 2, Marcia is doing a poor job with (1) homework assignments, (2) answering text-based questions, and (3) participating in content-based discussions in the classroom. She is on track to fail math and science, but her ELA teacher describes her as eager to learn, and knows that Marcia loves writing and generating stories. He doesn't think that Marcia's performance is related to lack of effort or motivation. Marcia lives with mother. The two of them travel to PR to visit relatives 2-3 times/year.

Marcia's Assessment Data

NYSESLAT	Level (A) Listening and Speaking-Advanced Reading and Writing- Advanced
NYS-ELA	Level 2
LAB-R	13
F&P Benchmark	Level P (beginning of 4th grade) last administered at the end of 5th grade

Anthony is a 14 year-old enrolled in the 8th grade for the second time. He is a monolingual English speaker with native-English speaking parents. He does not have an identified disability. Anthony performs at the fourth-grade level on reading assessments and he struggles in science, social studies and ELA, especially when working independently. His math scores are in the average range. Anthony was retained a grade level in order to give him a chance to “catch up.” This year, 3 times each week he receives web-based reading support designed to boost his skills. When there is independent reading time, Anthony can often be found reading the sports page of the newspaper or a sports magazine.

Anthony’s Assessment Data

NYSESLAT Not applicable

NYS-ELA **Level 2**

LAB-R **Not Applicable**

Easy CBM

Progress Monitoring Score Interpretations (Grade 7 Reading Measures)

	PASSAGE READING FLUENCY 50 th Percentile			MC READING COMPREHENSION 20 th Percentile			VOCABULARY 20 th Percentile			CCSS READING 20 th Percentile		
	Fall	Win	Spr	Fall	Win	Spr	Fall	Win	Spr	Fall	Win	Spr
	138	157	163	11	12	10	14	16	15	15	18	17

David is a 12-year old who has just arrived from a rural part of the Dominican Republic. His aunt, who walks him to school each day, along with his two sisters, has shared a great deal about the family with the school secretary. David's father has been living in the United States for many years and was joined by David's mother two years ago. By working double shifts, David's parents saved enough money to bring their children to New York, along with the children's maternal grandmother—who had been raising the children—and his aunt. In the DR, David received a few years of formal schooling, picking up some basic Spanish reading and writing skills. David and his siblings are starting to use a mix of Spanish and English at home. His mother and aunt speak mostly Spanish; his father has good conversational English. David knows a handful of English words and phrases his father has taught him in preparation for attending school: "hello," "my name is David," "goodbye."

David's Assessment Data

NYSESLAT	Not Available
NYS-ELA	Exempt
LAB-R	Beginning

Soojin arrived to the U.S. from Korea in the middle of what would be her 7th grade year, based on age. Now, in the spring of 7th grade, she has very limited proficiency in English. Her Korean schooling records indicated that she was a very strong student there—she had A's across the board and was considered an “honors” student based on the exam system. Although Soojin took some English classes in Korea, the instruction was mostly focused on written English and Soojin is realizing that she knows much less than she thought she did, and she's very anxious about school. She spends a lot of time online chatting with her friends in Korea. Soojin and her parents live in the Bronx; her father has just started a research position at Fordham University and her mom is at home during the day. She brings Soojin to and from school, and is hoping that Soojin's grandmother will come for an extended period of time to help them get settled in.

Soojin's Assessment Data

NYSESLAT	Not Available
NYS-ELA	Exempt
LAB-R	Beginning

VII. Sources of Breakdown

	Breakdown Source	Description
Code-Based Skills	Word Reading Accuracy	One of the most basic reading skills is the ability to read words accurately. Reading words accurately in middle school requires a student to have a broad range of words that are read automatically (i.e., “sight words”) as well as the ability to decode unfamiliar words. In middle school, this includes reading multi-syllabic words with complex spelling.
	Word Reading Fluency	Along with accuracy, an important basic reading skill is fluency. This includes reading at a pace that allows a student to focus on the meaning of a passage rather than the process of reading.
Meaning-Based Competencies	Conversational Language	Participating in everyday, face-to-face interactions with peers and adults requires conversational language skills. Students with preliminary English experiences are still developing conversational language skills in English.
	Academic Language	In order to understand the abstract and decontextualized language of text, students need a suite of abilities, often called “academic language.” This includes knowledge of academic vocabulary words, an ability to formulate ideas with increasing precision and nuance, and an understanding of how information is structured through text and discussion. All of these abilities are moderated through language, and thus require increasingly sophisticated language abilities for all students.
	Conceptual Knowledge	Every discipline has an associated set of conceptual knowledge, often termed “schema.” Without the necessary background knowledge and experience, a student will struggle regardless of reading and language skills.
	Strategic Knowledge	Strategies support students as they grapple with learning and sharing new ideas and information. Strategic knowledge includes the awareness that a strategy would be helpful, a repertoire of tactics that can support consolidation and transfer of new knowledge, and the ability to select and put to use an appropriate strategy.
Context for Learning	Out-of-School Experiences	All students come to school with rich personal experiences that can be used to support reading and learning. However, there are big differences in how directly these out-of-school experiences support school-based learning. Indeed, some families and neighborhoods face pressing challenges that can disrupt a student’s schooling.
	Within-School Experiences	Teacher-student relationships, classroom climate, and quality of the learning environment all exert tremendous influence on student learning. Given the right classroom context, students can often master challenging material.
	Engagement	Ultimately, learning new ideas requires engaging with the material—often in spite of difficulties or hurdles. In adolescence, attention and motivation waxes and wanes in response to particular topics and activity.

Breakdown?

A Protocol for Understanding Potential Sources of Reading Difficulty for Individuals and Groups of Learners

Purpose:

This protocol is designed to facilitate identification of potential causes of reading difficulty or sources of 'breakdown' for the purpose of recognizing trends within heterogeneous student populations. This is the first step in designing impactful classroom instruction that meets the needs of most learners and in designing a blueprint to maximize the efficiency of auxiliary supports for reading provided across the school.

Step 1. Categorizing Ideas

As a Group: Now, you will be given a piece of chart paper that contains a column for each category that may contribute to breakdowns in reading skill in populations of middle grade students (Code-based, Meaning-Based and Context for Learning) as well as a category for 'lingering questions.' In this portion of the discussion, work with your colleagues to group the causes you wrote on post-its in the prior step into the three categories we just discussed. This is a helpful organizing framework for leading case discussions at your school sites and for making decisions about how to support students.

<i>Code-Based</i>	<i>Meaning-Based</i>	<i>Context for Learning</i>	<i>Lingering Questions</i>
			

Step 2. Case Presentation

As a Group: Select a team member to present your case study student to the larger group (5 minutes). In presenting your case, use the organizing framework of Code-Based, Meaning-Based and Context for Learning. You will address the following questions in your presentation:

What may be the sources of breakdown?

What additional information do we need to determine primary source of breakdown and to craft supportive instruction?

Analyzing our Case Students

Student	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What can we rule out as a source of breakdown with this information?	Evidence and case notes
Josie	<input type="checkbox"/> Code-based skills <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning-based competencies <input type="checkbox"/> Context for learning	
Marcia	<input type="checkbox"/> Code-based skills <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning-based competencies <input type="checkbox"/> Context for learning	
Anthony	<input type="checkbox"/> Code-based skills <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning-based competencies <input type="checkbox"/> Context for learning	
David	<input type="checkbox"/> Code-based skills <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning-based competencies <input type="checkbox"/> Context for learning	
Soojin	<input type="checkbox"/> Code-based skills <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning-based competencies <input type="checkbox"/> Context for learning	

Step 3. Synthesis

As a Group: In this portion of the discussion, work with your colleagues to compare the primary sources of difficulty across learners. Pose questions such as these to identify some shared trends across learner needs:



What seem to be common sources of difficulty across students?



Do some students have difficulties that are unlike their peers?



Are the needs of ELLs different across classification?



What questions do you have?

-
- ⁱ Chall, J.S. (1996). *Stages of reading development*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- ⁱⁱ Passage adapted from Good & Kaminski (2007), *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*, 6th ed.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Chall, J.S. (1996). *Stages of reading development*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- ^{iv} Lesaux & Kieffer (2010). Exploring Sources of Reading Comprehension Difficulties Among Language Minority Learners and their Classmates in Early Adolescence. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47.
- ^v August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.) (2006), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- ^{vi} Graves, M. F. (1986). Vocabulary learning and instruction. *Review of Research in Education*, 13, 49-89.
- ^{vii} Nagy, W.E., & Scott, J.A. (2000). Vocabulary processes. In M.L. Kamil, P.B. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (Vol 3, pp. 269-289). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- ^{viii} Lesaux, N. K. (2012). Reading and reading instruction for children from low-income and non-English-speaking households. *The Future of Children*, 22(2), 73-88.