INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

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Vocabulary knowledge is at the heart of school learning. As early as kindergarten, it predicts later academic achievement. It is the largest contributing factor to reading comprehension, and it plays a critical role in the success that English language learners and struggling readers experience. Similarly, knowledge of academic vocabulary (words that are commonly used across academic disciplines and the specialized words characteristic of specific content areas) is at the core of student achievement.

Effective learning of academic vocabulary is a difficult, complex, and ongoing process. Research is clear that no one method or strategy is sufficient for deep word learning (for example, understanding a word well enough to use it appropriately in written and oral language). Research is also clear that direct instruction of academic vocabulary, the pedagogical foundation of **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE**, plays a significant role in academic achievement. The requirements of effective, direct instruction of academic vocabulary are myriad. **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE** meets these requirements, described below, through a range of approaches.

Effective direct instruction promotes word consciousness.

One purpose of direct vocabulary instruction, especially in the English classroom, where language itself is a focus of study, is the cultivation of students' word consciousness (their enthusiasm for, interest in, and ability to understand words as meaning-bearing entities). Effective teachers of word consciousness demonstrate their own curiosity about and fascination with academic language and develop students' self-consciousness about how to acquire deep knowledge of vocabulary independently.

Effective direct instruction of academic vocabulary treats word learning as an active, generative, integrative, and meaning-making process.

Over the grades, academic vocabulary becomes increasingly technical, abstract, and conceptual, and over time, the contribution of word knowledge to successful reading comprehension increases as well. From the upper elementary grades on, successful readers have self-knowledge about when, how, and why it is appropriate to apply specific word-learning skills, strategies, and processes, such as those introduced in **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE**, to gain significant meaning from a text. They understand that vocabulary knowledge plays a significant role at all stages of the meaning-making process required for comprehension (for example, preparation for, guidance through, and the consolidation of learning from text). Through explicit instruction about the application of vocabulary skills, strategies, and processes introduced in **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE**, teachers support students' reading comprehension as well as their ability to be independent and ongoing learners.

Effective direct instruction of academic vocabulary focuses on explicitly, purposefully, and systematically chosen words.

A common dilemma for teachers using content-area texts is choosing words for direct instruction. Teachers need to consider the words' utility across disciplines and within particular content areas, the depth of students' familiarity with the words, and the contribution that those words can make to disciplinary learning and achievement. The word lists for **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE** meet these criteria and provide students with appropriate grade-level challenges.

Researchers agree that it is better to teach fewer academic words thoroughly than to teach more words in a cursory manner. In **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE**, instruction and practice focus on 10 of the Unit's 20 words at a time, promoting deep knowledge of those words and contributing to the development of word consciousness.

Effective direct instruction of academic vocabulary provides students with multiple exposures to focal words in multiple contexts and offers them multiple opportunities to apply new vocabulary using a variety of strategies in oral and written language.

Multiple exposures to and varied practice with academic vocabulary contributes to students' understanding of and appreciation for the purposefulness with which writers and speakers choose their words. **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE** exposes students to new words across a variety of exercises and contexts. Each Unit provides students with opportunities to understand words in text (receptively) and to apply that understanding through writing (expressively). Teachers can reinforce word learning by providing students with opportunities to investigate the nuanced meanings of each Unit word and how those meanings depend on the context of their use. Teachers can use writing prompts in class or as exit tickets that formatively assess how well students are synthesizing the meanings of new conceptual vocabulary words with their previous knowledge.

Effective direct instruction contributes to success on standardized tests.

Another purpose for direct instruction in academic language is to prepare students for standardized tests of verbal ability (including reading comprehension and essay writing). To perform well on standardized tests, students must have not only a wide range of vocabulary knowledge but also the ability to apply appropriate word learning strategies to determine the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary.

Standards-aligned and state exams measure students' ability to use semantic and syntactic clues from illustrations and surrounding text in order to infer word meanings. **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE** provides students with practice in using context to determine word meanings and nuances of meaning, as well as practice in reading skills assessed on standardized tests, including the ability to identify and cite textual evidence.

[Note: A full discussion of the research base supporting **VOCABULARY WORKSHOP ACHIEVE**, together with references to research sources, is available in the form of professional development papers by Vicki A. Jacobs at Professional Development in the Teacher Resources section at **SadlierConnect.com**.]