

# Promoting Evidence-based Language Facilitation Practices

## Teaching New Vocabulary Words And Concepts

Most teachers introduce new vocabulary words without much thought, i.e. they provide labels and descriptive words on a regular basis during their conversations with children. However, many teachers rely on the same methods for introducing and teaching new words and concepts, and the some words become over-used. Using an expanded variety of strategies and repeating these new words in a variety of settings can teach children a more thorough understanding of the new words and concepts.

“Timing” is very important when teaching vocabulary. New words and concepts need to be introduced in a meaningful context when a child’s attention is focused on the ongoing event or novel object. Providing descriptions of ongoing activities and explorations is a simple way for teachers to introduce synonyms (e.g. “Wow! Your building is getting very tall! It so high that it is almost a *skyscraper!*”) and new modifying words (e.g. “Look at the *delicate* hummingbird’s egg. The egg is tiny, and the shell is so smooth. Be very careful. It is fragile so it can easily crack and break.”)

### **Goal:** Increase vocabulary

- Teachers recognize opportunities and methods to introduce new words.
- Teachers select a core set of concept words to target on a weekly basis.

**How:** Through using combination of strategies, repeating new words and concepts in several contexts, and being cognizant of teachable moments to introduce words

**When:** Initially introduce core concepts targeted to whole class during group settings; introduce appropriate vocabulary during ongoing conversations with children and while providing enhanced descriptions of children’s activities.

### **Strategies:**

- Define words verbally (e.g. “*Putrid* is when something smells really, really nasty”).
- Provide examples or comparisons (e.g. “*Rough* is what your daddy’s beard feels like in the morning...ouch!”).
- Use concrete words to label objects and events (e.g. “Listen. That dog is not barking. It sounds like he is whining; he’s *howling*”).
- Use words to express relational and categorical concepts (e.g. “This kiwi is a *fruit*. So are apples. What else is a *fruit*?”)
- Demonstrate concepts with appropriate words and/or props (e.g. “This is a *hoe*; you use it to scrape away the weeds in the garden like this.” *Demonstrate action.*)

One simple way to introduce new words is to replace the overused complimentary words, “good” and “special”, with more specific compliments (e.g. “That painting is so *colorful and bright!* It reminds me of the sunset.” “You are such *responsible* helpers! I only asked you one time to stop playing and to pick up this area. Thank you.”

If teachers plan weekly a curriculum in advance, teachers can easily expand vocabulary and concept knowledge by adopting a core set of words to incorporate on a daily basis throughout the curriculum unit in a wide range of activities. Words and concepts can be selected from story books, planned activities, general developmental curriculum, or for the purpose of preparing children for a future field trip experience. Core concept words are best introduced during group activities, but learning should not be limited to this setting.

