

Vocabulary

Vocabulary that students are taught will arise from four main sources:

1. Literary terms listed in the English curriculum
2. Words and phrases in literature being read as part of the English curriculum
Teachers will identify which words are:
 - **depth words** (words of high enough utility that students should be reviewing and maintaining)
 - **breadth words** (needed to understand a particular selection, but not of high enough utility to expect long-term retention)
3. Words which appear in readings (magazines, newspapers, etc.) or are used in speaking which are of high enough utility to warrant teaching (more depth words).
4. Words taught to develop the writing trait of **word choice**.

Procedure for teaching vocabulary:

Words need to be introduced by the teacher through definitions and mostly importantly, in meaningful sentence contexts. Ten sentences would not be an unreasonable number to use to give students examples of the variety of ways that a particular word can be used. Students should be taught denotative and connotative meanings of words as appropriate for the words and the grade level. Identifying roots of high utility and teaching related words, as well as teaching prefixes and suffixes, lead to student acquisition of a wider vocabulary without direct teaching of all words.

Having students look words up in a dictionary is a useful study skill (which should be taught), but vocabulary development is most efficiently accomplished by teachers using high-quality examples of definitions and context, and then providing opportunities for students to practice using the vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Distributed practice is critical for words that teachers have identified as depth words (to insure long-term memory) and should be part of an end-of-semester or end-of-year vocabulary test.