Differentiating Language Development in Middle and High Schools

Promoting Oral Language Development and Reading Comprehension
Language precedes thought. Abstract thought requires words as vehicles for thinking. Language enables us to link with the thinking and experiences of other human beings, generate new ideas and concepts, and transcend and expand on our own thoughts.

Jerome Bruner
Research on Vocabulary Development: Impact of Poverty

Hart and Risley, 1995

Recorded Vocabulary Size

Professional

Working Class

Welfare

Preschool Children

Parents

Parent

Child

Colorado Reading First
Research on Vocabulary Development: Impact of Poverty

New Words Per Grade Level

Grade 1
Grade 2
Grade 3

Disadvantaged
Middle Class

Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1997

Colorado Reading First
Research on Vocabulary Development: Impact of Poverty

- By the age of 3, the average child of a professional has heard about
  - 500,000 encouragements and
  - 80,000 discouragements.

- By the age of 3, the average low-income child had heard about
  - 75,000 encouragements and
  - 200,000 discouragements.

Hart & Risley
Discuss at Tables

- Thinking about the earlier article on the needs of ELLs and this research on the language development of students of poverty,

What are the implications for schools?
Oral comprehension typically places an upper limit on reading comprehension; if you don’t recognize and understand the word when you hear it, you also won’t be able to comprehend it when reading. Oral comprehension needs to be developed in our youngest students if we want them to be good readers.

Thomas Sticht
Concerns

- Students in early grades are moving up reading levels, but their language isn’t expanding.

- Students reach a plateau in reading, and their progress stalls.

- Students are able to word call, but they aren’t able to retell or talk about what they read.
Secondary Resources

- Inquiry Based Planning Guides and Springboard curricula for Core Instruction for Language Arts
- Shining Star for Core Instruction for ELLs
- CELA Results
Inquiry Based Language Arts Instruction

- Increased student literacy performance includes
  - Discussion-based approaches to instruction and
  - Challenging academic demands

- National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement at the State University of New York at Albany
Indications of Inquiry Approach

- Open-ended questioning and discussion,
- The nurturing of multiple perspectives on a text
- Continual class conversations about literature
Indications of Academic Rigor

- The amount of homework completed that require active reasoning and high-thinking demand
- The number of revisions to assignments they typically completed.
"We found a significant effect for discussion-based approaches and high academic demands on spring performance, controlling for fall performance and other related background variables. I think the interesting part [of this study] is the broad range of situations in which these approaches were effective—for students of widely varying abilities at both middle and high school, and urban and suburban school contexts."

Arthur Applebee
All English Language Learners receive ELD instruction and Sheltered Content Instruction

- 2 periods every day
- Sheltered instruction throughout the day
Shining Star for ELLs

- English Language Development Program
  - Systematic development of reading and writing skills as well as learning strategies.
  - Thematically linked readings
    - including both content readings and literature selections, as well as
    - poems and songs.
Use the *Developmental Checklist of Language Patterns* to assess the student’s oral language skills

- *What do you notice about the indicators?*
- *How would you determine where a student is with this checklist?*
Looking at a student

- Watch the following video of a student
  - What do you notice about this student’s use of oral English?
  - How does this student perform on the checklist?
  - How do you think this student will perform on written tasks?
Looking at Student Work

- Examine this piece of student work.
  - Get up and find a partner across the room to discuss:
    - How does this writing compare to the student’s oral language in the taped conversation?
    - What supports does this student need?
    - What supports does this student’s teacher need?
Use the book, *When Kids Can’t Read, What Teachers can Do*, to find ideas to support students like the one on the video tape.

- In particular, reference
  - Chapter 9: Vocabulary
  - Chapter 13: Creating the Confidence to Respond

At your table, create a chart of the ideas you would suggest for the student we watched.
Differentiating in the Classroom

- How can we ensure that students like the one on our videotape have opportunities in the classroom:
  - To have comprehensible instruction
  - To interact with others
  - To do higher order thinking
  - To build academic language and vocabulary
- Select one of these issues to discuss.
- We’ll chart your ideas in the PowerPoint.
What can teachers do to make their instruction *comprehensible* for our student?
What can teachers do to offer our student opportunities to **interact** with others?
What can teachers do to offer our student opportunities to **think at higher levels**?
What can teachers do to build our student’s academic language and vocabulary?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comprehensible Input for all</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Higher Order Thinking</th>
<th>Academic Language and Vocabulary</th>
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<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>English-speaking students with limited language</strong></td>
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Teacher Moves To Encourage Accountable Talk

- **Keeping the channels open:**
  - “What did Maria just say?”
  - “Maria, can you say that again so everyone can hear?”

- **Keeping everyone together:**
  - “Can you repeat what Tyrone just said in your own words?”

- **Linking contributions:**
  - “Who wants to add on to what Kelly said?”
  - “Who agrees or disagrees with that?”

- **Verifying and clarifying:**
  - “So, are you saying _____?”

- **Recapping or summarizing:**
  - “So what we have been talking about is ______.”
  - “To recap, we seem to have reached an agreement that ______.”
Findings Reported by Teachers Focusing on Oral Language Development

- Students initially had difficulty with listening and having a conversation - it needs to be taught.

- At times, it’s important to group students at similar language levels if you want to focus on the opportunity to meet the needs of students with lower language levels.

- As students participated in small group oral language development instruction, they gained in both their language and their literacy.
Oral Language and Reading Comprehension

- Books for guided reading need to align and support the students’ oral language.

- It is important for teachers to take students’ language proficiency into consideration when selecting books.

- A good professional development activity is to have teachers look at a student’s language level and their reading books and discuss which books seem most appropriate for them.
In closing...

From the earliest ages, reading is much more than decoding. From the start, reading is also accessing and further acquiring language knowledge and domain knowledge. This means that instruction and practice in fluency of decoding need to be accompanied by instruction and practice in vocabulary and domain knowledge...
If we want to raise later achievement and avoid the fourth-grade slump, we need to combine early instruction in the procedures of literacy with early instruction in the content of literacy, specifically: vocabulary, conventions of language, and knowledge of the world.
Discuss:

- How are teachers in your school using *Shining Star* to build students’ oral language?

- Do you see development of vocabulary occurring in your schools that goes beyond lists of words to memorize?

- How can you support your school to ensure that all students have opportunities to increase their language and literacy skills?