

ABSTRACT

PROMOTING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Nicole Amber Long

After reviewing the literature, this paper seeks to show the importance and significance of direct vocabulary instruction on students' critical literacy skills; specifically, reading comprehension. Although some may suggest that the greatest amount of vocabulary growth occurs through incidental word learning in wide reading, research indicates that, "direct instruction in word meaning [is] an important vehicle for vocabulary learning (Anderson & Nagy, as cited in Harmon, 1992, p. 306). Being that word knowledge is highly correlated to successful reading and comprehension, it is crucial that teachers equip students with methodological tools to be employed upon encountering unknown words. Anderson and Nagy (1992, as cited in Harmon, 1999) "calculated that the average students in elementary school and high school learn about 2,000 to 3,000 new words each year" (p. 306). This astounding number of words reinforces the concept that not all words will be fully understood and retained through wide reading. There are strong reasons for a principled approach to vocabulary instruction. First, there are calculated and systematic approaches for discerning which skills and words a teacher should focus upon. Second, there are guided and meaningful classroom application activities to reinforce the words and strategies. And third, research indicates that developing students' vocabulary skills correlates with success in all areas of

curriculum (Ediger, 1999). The key to success in vocabulary development is geared toward the active process of learning and ultimately the facilitation of a richer listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary.