

Vocabulary Assessment and Organization



When we mention the term *vocabulary assessment* to middle grades and high school teachers, multiple-choice tests usually spring to mind. This is probably because the multiple-choice format was the predominant method of vocabulary assessment used for many of us in school. To get a sense of the nature of multiple-choice tests, please read the vocabulary test item in Figure 8.1. Choose the synonym that most closely matches the meaning of the underlined word in the sentence.

What was your answer? (We intended item C—*flexible*—as the answer). How did you arrive at your answer? As you can imagine, a student could have arrived at the correct answer in any number of ways. Consider the following three possibilities:

- *Jackie*. As an avid reader who has always had an excellent vocabulary, Jackie not surprisingly has a deep understanding of the word *resilient* and realizes that the synonym *flexible* is the closest answer. However, she also thinks to herself that there is more to *resilient* than simply being *flexible*. *Resilient* also carries the additional connotation of being able to “bounce back” from difficult situations. Because she doesn’t see any choice that reflects this additional information, she chooses the closest answer, C. (Having taken many vocabulary tests like this, Jackie realizes that this is a common problem with the multiple-choice format—one word synonyms alone do not usually include this more precise information she often knows about words).
- *Miller*. Although he has heard the word *resilient* before, Miller is not sure what it means beyond having a vague sense that it is a positive quality for someone to possess. In this particular case, Miller’s vague sense of the word actually helps a lot; *flexible* is the only positive synonym to choose from (because *depressing*, *dishonest*, and *anxious* are decidedly not positive).
- *Leslie*. Although she also has never heard the word *resilient* before, Leslie realizes from the context of the sentence that *resilient* is the only choice that makes sense (because being *flexible* is the only quality that would help a person overcome difficult situations—being *depressed*, *anxious*, or *dishonest* wouldn’t help).

As you can see, multiple-choice vocabulary tests may not assess the depth or breadth or vocabulary knowledge with the precision that you want. It is entirely possible that students could choose the correct choice for *resilient*—either through context clues or partial word knowledge—and still not be able to adequately understand the word *resilient* while reading or use it appropriately while writing. We are not against the use of multiple-choice tests; in fact, well-constructed multiple-choice tests can be useful for certain purposes, such as quickly measuring students’ basic knowledge of word meanings in a whole-class format. However, if we want to move our struggling readers’

Figure 8.1 Vocabulary Multiple-Choice Test Item

Her resilient attitude toward life enabled her to overcome difficult situations.

- A. depressing
- B. dishonest
- C. flexible
- D. anxious

vocabulary knowledge beyond a superficial level, we need a variety of assessments that are up to the task.

In this chapter, we discuss the different *purposes* you may have for assessing your students' vocabulary knowledge and different *methods* of assessment that match your purposes. The crux of this chapter centers on three principles of vocabulary assessment:

- *Identify your purpose for assessing.* Do you want to know if your students can supply basic information about a word, like the definition of a *homesteader* in an American history unit on the Westward Expansion? Or are you after more in-depth knowledge, like asking your physics students to describe Newton's first law of motion using the following key vocabulary terms—*inertia*, *state of motion*, and *unbalanced force*? Or are you an English teacher who is more interested in students being able to use vivid vocabulary and the "just right" word in their compositions? Identify *what* and *why* you are assessing before deciding *how* to assess.

- *Match your method of assessment to your purpose.* If your purpose is to assess students' basic definitional knowledge, then a multiple-choice test like the one described might be appropriate. If your purpose is to assess more in-depth conceptual knowledge, then assessments that tap this type of knowledge would be a better match. Match the *what* and *why* of vocabulary assessment (your purposes) to the *how* (your assessment method).

Using a variety of assessment methods will give you a more complete picture of your students' vocabulary knowledge and growth.

- *Include students in the assessment process.* Honestly and respectfully sharing assessment results with your students, teaching your students how to self-assess and set word learning goals, and providing feedback on their growth will improve student buy-in, motivation, and learning.



Self-assessments can be powerful motivators for struggling readers, many of whom have never been asked to share their thoughts with teachers regarding what they know and how they learn best.

Assessing Vocabulary: What Does It Mean to Know a Word?

Consider the following three words:

- ambitious
- clemency
- procrustean

Please rate your knowledge of each of these three words on the scale found in Figure 8.2. (This scale is a modified version of a vocabulary rating scale that we will describe later in this chapter as part of the Vocabulary Fist-to-Five activity {Patterson, Patterson, & Collins, 2002; Templeton et al., 2010}).

Figure 8.2 Vocabulary Knowledge Rating Scale

1	2	3	4
<i>I don't know the word.</i>	<i>I know a little.</i>	<i>I know a fair amount.</i>	<i>I know a lot.</i>
I have never heard the word before and I have no idea what you're talking about.	I have heard the word before, but I am not certain of its meaning.	When I read, I know what the word means, but I might <i>not</i> be able to use it in a conversation with precision.	I could explain the word to others and use it in writing and discussion.

Many people rate *ambitious* (“eager to achieve success, power, or wealth”) as a 4—they can and do use this word in their writing and discussion. *Clemency* (“forgiveness, mercy”) is often rated as a 2 or 3; the majority have either (2) heard the word before, but aren’t sure of its meaning or (3) can understand it when they read it, but aren’t completely comfortable using it in conversations or writing. *Procrustean* is nearly always rated a 1—most people have never heard the word before (*procrustean* means “inflexible; producing conformity by arbitrary means” and comes from the Greek myth of Procrustes, a horrible giant who waylaid hapless travelers and forced them to fit the exact length of his iron bed by either stretching their limbs—if they were too short—or chopping their limbs off—if they were too long.).

Assessing Developmental Word Knowledge

As you can see from the *ambitious/clemency/procrustean* example, learning a word is not like turning on a light, where one moment we do not know a word (the light is *off*), and the next moment we suddenly learn the word completely (the light is *on*). Learning word meanings is more like a dimmer switch on a light; we learn words gradually as the light slowly becomes brighter and brighter over time (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2010). Put another way, we learn and acquire words by degrees. For some words, the first step might be to learn the definition of the word. However, learning a definition is only the first step—definitional knowledge does not equal deep word knowledge. The more we see the word used in context and try to use the word ourselves, the deeper and more flexible our knowledge of that word will become. We learn words developmentally, moving on a continuum from never having heard a word before to being able to use it effectively in writing and discussion. Of course, as we mentioned before, we will probably learn new words more quickly if they represent familiar concepts.

One of the purposes of vocabulary assessments is to find out where your students are on the word learning continuum of development with respect to (1) their knowledge of specific content area words—word-specific vocabulary assessment, and (2) their knowledge of the meaning system—generative vocabulary assessment.

- For *word-specific vocabulary knowledge*, developmental assessments will help you determine how familiar your students are with respect to the key words, terms, and concepts in your content area (e.g., using the vocabulary knowledge rating scale above to find out how familiar your students are with the *Westward Expansion* in Social Studies, *personification* in English, or *radioactive decay* in science).
- For *generative vocabulary knowledge*, developmental assessments will help you determine approximately where your students’ morphological knowledge lies on the strand 1—strand 2 continuum (i.e., determining whether they would benefit best from strand 1 instruction in basic prefixes, suffixes, and base words or strand 2 instruction in more sophisticated Latin and Greek roots).

Developmental assessments that pinpoint where students are on a continuum of word knowledge are particularly important for struggling readers because they allow you to differentiate instruction based on what your students already know about words and what they are best ready to learn next. Developmental assessments, which we describe in this chapter, can also help you track your struggling readers’ growth as they proceed forward along the continuum.



engagement
LINK

Developmental assessments, by their very nature, are constructed to show growth. Instead of telling your struggling readers that they are still behind most of their peers—as some assessments do—developmental assessments can be motivating by showing struggling readers how far they have come in their vocabulary knowledge.

Specific Aspects of Vocabulary: Matching Assessments and Purposes

In addition to finding out where your students are in their word knowledge development, vocabulary assessments should also directly target the aspect of word knowledge

you want to assess. What exactly do you want students to know about a word/concept? Take the example of an American history class studying *Eleanor Roosevelt*. If your purpose is to examine her many contributions to twentieth-century America, a semantic web might be the best form of assessment. If, however, you want students to compare and contrast Eleanor Roosevelt's accomplishments with other great twentieth-century humanitarians, like Martin Luther King and Ghandi, then a compare/contrast chart would better assess this type of knowledge. These two activities assess two different aspects of understanding Eleanor Roosevelt and points to the fact that there are many aspects of knowing a word or concept. Identifying the particular aspect of word knowledge you want your students to know—your purpose—enables you to match it with the appropriate activity and assessment.

Many of the vocabulary activities described in this book can also be used as vocabulary assessments. For example, we introduced concept sorting in Chapter 2 as an effective activity for vocabulary instruction. In this chapter, we describe how concept sorting can also be an extremely informative assessment of student vocabulary knowledge. Using activities as assessments is a practice that can (1) save you time in the classroom and (2) help your students see the connection between *what* you are teaching and *how* they are being assessed (because they are being tested in the same format that they are being taught).

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 are two charts that provide a framework for matching assessment purposes with assessment methods (with the page numbers where the assessments can be found noted following the assessments). Table 8.1 presents assessments that target word-specific vocabulary knowledge. Table 8.2 presents assessments that target generative vocabulary knowledge. Many of the assessments are also activities that have been

Table 8.1 Matching Purposes and Assessments for Word-Specific Vocabulary Learning

Assessment Purpose	Assessments
Depth of knowledge of key vocabulary terms/concepts on a continuum. Students' vocabulary growth as they proceed along a continuum of knowledge. Self-assessment.	Vocabulary self-assessment (p. 00) Fist-to-Five (p. 00)
Depth of knowledge of one major concept and knowledge of how supporting concepts are related.	Brainstorming (p. 00) Concept sort (p. 00) Power map (p. 00) Four-square/Frayer model (p. 00)
Knowledge of the defining features and non-features of a concept.	Four-square/Frayer model (p. 00)
Ability to compare/contrast two or more concepts across a set of features.	Venn diagram (p. 00) Compare/contrast chart (p. 00) Concept sort (p. 00)
Depth of knowledge of academic vocabulary and, through spelling, orthographic development	Intermediate level academic vocabulary spelling inventory (p. 00)
Ability to organize and categorize related concepts by main ideas, subtopics, and details and justify the organizational scheme	Concept sort (p. 00) Power map (p. 00) Semantic map/web (p. 00)
Ability to use vivid, powerful, and precise vocabulary in their writing	Vocabulary word hunts in writing (p. 00)
General growth of vocabulary over time in a portfolio format	Vocabulary notebook (p. 00)

Table 8.2 Matching Purposes and Assessments for Generative Vocabulary Learning

Assessment Purpose	Assessments
Morphological knowledge on a continuum of development.	Test of Morphological Structure (p. 00) Generating/producing words with the same prefixes and suffixes (p. 00) Generating words from bases and roots (p. 00)
Knowledge of specific roots and meanings of words that contain those roots after a unit of study.	Matching Greek and Latin Roots (p. 00) Word sorting (p. 00)
Ability to extend word learning beyond the classroom.	Word hunt (p. 00) It's All Greek (and Latin) to Me! (p. 00)
General growth of vocabulary over time in a portfolio format.	Vocabulary notebook (p. 00)
Ability to generate words from a root.	Root tree (p. 00) Generating/producing words with the same prefixes and suffixes (p. 00) Generating words from bases and roots (p. 00)
Ability to break down/analyze a word by morpheme.	Morphemic analysis (p. 00) Break It Down (p. 00)
Use of strategies to independently learn words.	Students' Strategies for Learning Vocabulary (p. 00)

described in earlier chapters. In addition to the instructional activities that can be used as assessments, we introduce new assessment activities in this chapter that match a variety of assessment purposes.

Word-Specific Vocabulary Assessment and Learning

As described in Chapter 7, word-specific vocabulary knowledge refers to students' knowledge of particular words and the concepts they represent. The following assessment activities target students' knowledge of word-specific vocabulary.

Vocabulary Self-Assessment

Purpose. (1) Through self-assessment, to make students more aware of the relative depth of their knowledge of specific concepts by rating their vocabulary knowledge on



Visibly tracking the growth of word knowledge provides struggling readers important feedback as they see the tangible results of their efforts.

a scale, (2) When used before and after a lesson or unit, to demonstrate growth in depth of knowledge of key vocabulary terms.

As we have mentioned, knowing a word is not an either/or proposition. Rather, we learn words and concepts by degrees, from never having heard the word before to knowing it well. Based on the scales used in vocabulary assessment research (Pearson et al., 2007), the vocabulary self-assessment (Templeton et al., 2010) provides a format to rate their knowledge of key vocabulary terms on a continuum. As students progress through a unit of study, they can return to the scale to measure how their knowledge of the key concepts has grown. Figure 8.3 presents a vocabulary self-assessment used in an earth science unit, Ocean Systems. (A blank template can be found in Appendix H.)

Procedure

1. Ask students to write the key vocabulary terms/concepts from the upcoming unit or lesson in the left-hand column of the vocabulary self-assessment.
2. If this is the first time students have used the assessment, model how to complete one of the key terms. Describe your thought process. (“I’ve heard of *El Niño* when newscasters report bad weather in California. I think it may have something to do with the ocean’s temperature, but I’m not sure, so I’ll put an X in the “Have Some Ideas” column.”)
3. Ask students to complete the activity with the remaining vocabulary terms. They can share their findings with others in pairs, small groups, or the whole group. Monitor and facilitate group work.
4. Periodically during the unit, students should return to the self-assessment, adding new vocabulary words and using different symbols (X, O, and +) or colors to represent growth in understanding of the key vocabulary.
5. Students can add a column to include source and page numbers to indicate where they found the information. These self-assessments can be added to a student’s vocabulary notebook or quarterly folders and can be used as part of their content area grade.

Vocabulary Brainstorming

Purpose. To assess the depth of students’ prior knowledge about a topic and their knowledge of how key supporting concepts are related.

We often think of brainstorming as an effective instructional activity that helps students activate their prior knowledge about a topic. In addition, brainstorming provides an excellent vehicle for assessing your students’ knowledge of a topic, unit of study, or key vocabulary terms and concepts. Not only can brainstorming tell you what your students already know about a topic, it also allows you to probe their understanding of how these concepts are related to each other. Please see Figure 8.4 (p. 242) for a science example using a semantic web format to brainstorm words related to the unit Earthquakes.

Procedure

1. *Choose a topic.* Choose a keyword related to your content area or unit of study. Make sure the keyword is one that students probably have at least a moderate amount of knowledge about (or more) and will be motivated to discuss (e.g., *earthquakes*). Sometimes reading a brief vignette or part of an article from a newspaper, magazine, or powerful text can spark students’ initial thinking, particularly struggling students who may not have the background knowledge of their classmates.
2. *Model.* If your students have not done this activity before, model the first few steps, explaining your thought process as you go.

Figure 8.3 Vocabulary Self-Assessment for Ocean Systems

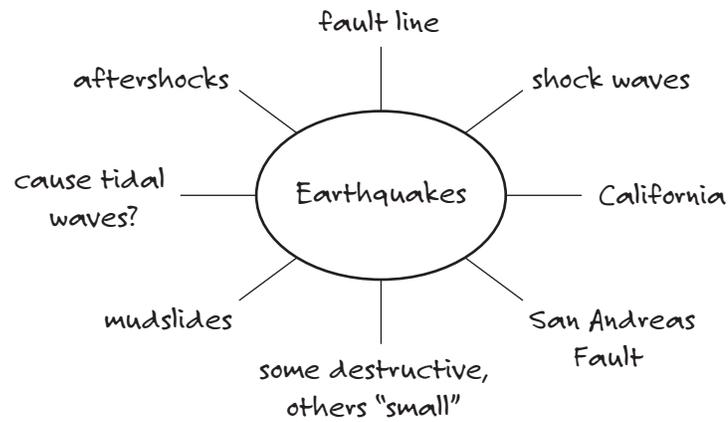
Ocean Systems

Vocabulary Self-Assessment

Student Anwar Dates Sept. 16 (X)
 _____ (O)
 _____ (✓)

Vocabulary	Knowledge Rating			
	Never Heard of It	Heard It	Have Some Ideas	Know It Well
ocean current				I know that there are current in the ocean, like river currencies
surface currents			Currents on "top"?	
deep currents			Currents deep down below are different than surface currents? How are they different?	
El Niño			Something to do with bad weather in California? And ocean temp?	
desalination	X			
Gulf Stream		X		
continental shelf		X		

3. *Individual brainstorm.* Ask students to write the keyword on a piece of paper and then to each write down as many words as they can think of related to the topic. The individual step ensures that no student "cruises" through the activity, allowing other group members to shoulder the load while doing no real individual thinking.

Figure 8.4 Group Brainstorm of Earthquakes Using a Semantic Web Format

4. *Group brainstorm.* Students move into small groups and combine their ideas on chart paper. Student roles could include scribe, timekeeper, reporter, and discussion facilitator. Monitor and facilitate small-group discussions, asking students to elaborate on their thinking. Ask them how supporting ideas are connected to each other and to the main idea.

5. *Group share.* Small groups share their chart paper brainstorms with the class. Encourage groups to include new information they learn from other groups. As in the small-group step, ask students to explain how the concepts are connected. (“How could an earthquake cause a mud slide or a tidal wave?”)

6. *Collect individual and group brainstorm webs.* Looking at both sets of webs allows you to assess the depth of your struggling readers’ knowledge about the topic on their own as well as the collective knowledge of the group. Comparing the individual and group brainstorm webs can give you a sense of your struggling readers’ background knowledge in relation to other students in the class. This will help you decide whether certain students need additional instruction in foundational concepts to better grasp an upcoming topic or concept.

Concept Sorts to Assess Content-Specific Vocabulary

Purpose. To assess students’ overall knowledge of a topic that is hierarchically organized. To assess students’ knowledge of how subtopics and concepts fit into the overall organization.

As with brainstorming, concept sorting is an excellent instructional activity that can also be used to effectively assess students’ vocabulary knowledge (see Chapter 2 for a description of concept sorting as an instructional activity). Concept sorting is a dynamic way to assess students’ conceptual knowledge as they organize, categorize, and arrange related concepts before, during, or after a lesson or unit of study. Asking students to explain their thinking, either in discussion or writing, provides valuable assessment information regarding the depth of their vocabulary knowledge and their ability to make connections across words in the sort.

As with all sorts, students should read the words, categorize the words into groups, and then share the thinking, explaining the rationale behind their sort. Ask students to set aside words that they cannot read or words whose meanings they do not know. If your assessment purpose is to see how students organize the information with no guid-

ance, an open sort is probably your best choice. If your assessment purpose is to see how students organize key concepts according to categories you have already selected, choose a closed sort. Afterward, students can record sorts in their vocabulary notebooks with an accompanying rationale for why they sorted the way they did.

Variations

Concept sorts can be used before, during, and after a unit of study to assess students' growth in vocabulary knowledge. As students proceed through the unit of study, add word cards, key phrases, symbols, and diagrams to the sort. Include more support by providing key categories beforehand (closed sort); increase the difficulty of the sort by asking students to come up with their own categories (open sort). Timing the students can add an element of competition and challenge, requiring students to sort for accuracy and speed. Sorting accurately and quickly indicates a strong grasp of the subject matter. The following example shows a concept sort for a high school world history unit titled Indian Civilization. If this had been a closed sort, the category headers (*physical geography, religion, contributions, and significant figures*) would have been provided and identified by the teacher beforehand. Or for a middle ground of support between a closed and open sort, you could include these header cards in the sort, but not tell the students which cards are the header words and which are the underlying concept words. ("Here are the sort words, class. There are four header words included in the sort, but I am not going to tell you what they are. Try and figure them out as you work through the sort.")

Physical Geography	Religion	Contributions	Significant Figures
Hindu Kush	Hinduism	Hindu-Arabic numerals	Mohandas Gandhi
Himalayas	Bhagavad Gita	decimal system	Kalidasa
Ganges	Brahma	symbol for zero	Siddartha Gautama
Indus	Vishnu	Pi	Buddha
Monsoons	Shiva	Ayurvedic medicine	Jawaharlal Nehru
Subcontinent	reincarnation	Ahimsa (non-violence)	Indira Gandhi
Indian Ocean	Karma	Taj Mahal	Mother Theresa
Bay of Bengal	Buddhism		
Arabian Sea	nirvana		

Assessing Concept Sorts

When assessing students' concept sorts, the following questions can help you gauge the depth and connectedness of your students' vocabulary knowledge:

- *Why did you organize the sort in this way?*
- *Why did you put this word in this category? (Why did you put the Ganges in “Physical Geography”?* How is this river important to India?)
- *Could you have put this word in a different category? (Could you have put Siddhartha Gautama in a different category? Why?)*
- *How are these words related? (How are Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and the concept of ahimsa related?)*
- *What other connections among key vocabulary do you see? (Either within a category or across categories)*

You can ask students to write their completed sorts in vocabulary notebooks for later study and for a grade. Students can write down their justifications for the sort and answer specific questions you pose, like the questions just listed. This additional step is an excellent assessment of student knowledge because it allows you to get at the specific aspects of vocabulary knowledge that you want.

Vocabulary Fist-to-Five

Purpose. To quickly and informally assess your students’ depth of vocabulary knowledge in an engaging whole-class format. To give students’ the opportunity to self-assess.

In Fist-to-Five, students vote with their fingers to indicate how much they know about key vocabulary words or concepts or to indicate the strength of their opinions on different topics (Patterson, Patterson, & Collins, 2002). Adapted from a consensus-building activity, Fist-to-Five is a motivating way to quickly gauge students’ knowledge of the key concepts in a unit of study. Figure 8.5 shows a possible rating system (Templeton et al., 2010).

This activity is easy to teach and implement. First describe the five finger rating system and then practice on motivating topics students will probably know something about, like food, music, clothing styles, or sports. (“I am going to list some different music genres and I want you to tell me how much you know about them. Jazz . . . Okay,

Figure 8.5 Vocabulary Fist-to-Five Rating Scale



it looks like we have a few jazz aficionados in here. Rap . . . Wow, you folks know a lot about rap. Classical . . .”)

Next, instruct students to vote on the five to ten vocabulary words you have chosen to examine for your unit of study. Ask students to hold up their hands long enough for you to get a sense of their knowledge and for them to see how their peers vote. During the voting, feel free to do a “play-by-play” announcement, noting concepts students appear to know a lot about as well as concepts that may be more unfamiliar. The power of this activity comes from the thinking and self-reflection generated by the voting (which immediately gets students invested in the words) and the built-in self-assessment. As students look around the room during the voting, they realize that they are not the only ones who do not know a lot about certain key concepts. This is particularly comforting to struggling readers and can reassure them that they are not alone. If you think your struggling readers may not feel comfortable in this format, you can simply change the format to an individual paper-and-pencil voting procedure.

Vocabulary Word Hunts in Writing: Assessing Students’ Use of Vocabulary in Their Compositions

Purpose. To assess students’ ability to incorporate rich language in their compositions.

Perhaps the most rigorous assessment of knowledge about a particular word meaning is a person’s ability to use the word appropriately in context. The following example shows a student’s attempt to use a vocabulary word for which he has only a superficial knowledge (Flanigan & Greenwood, 2007, p. 226).

- *Definition provided to student.* expel: to throw out
- *Student’s sentence.* “The president *expelled* the first pitch at the season opener of the Washington Nationals’ baseball team.”

As the example demonstrates, definitional knowledge does not ensure the deep, flexible word knowledge writers need when choosing the “just right” words in their compositions. Students’ writing provides us with a treasure trove of information that we can use to assess their vocabulary knowledge and general literacy development. Assessing 10 to 15 minute free writes provides teachers with valuable information on students’ ability to explain, relate, and apply key concepts and important vocabulary terms. The Checklist of Vocabulary in Writing found in Appendix H is an effective tool that can help struggling readers become more aware of including high-powered vocabulary in their writing. The checklist asks students and teachers to rate student compositions on a scale (*always, often, occasionally, never*) in relation to specific questions. For example, the following two questions are from the “Richness” section of the checklist. Teachers would rate the student writing in the first question; students would rate their own writing in the second question.

Richness: Colorful and descriptive vocabulary (*always, often, occasionally, never*)

Teacher question: Was the vocabulary useful and descriptive?

Student question: Did the vocabulary paint a picture and show what I was trying to say?

Procedure

1. Distribute the Checklist of Vocabulary in Writing and discuss with students how authors choose word meanings for very specific purposes. Share with students the following famous quote from Mark Twain: “The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it’s the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning” (Mark Twain, in a letter to George Bainton,

- 10/15/1888). Tell students that this checklist can help them become more aware of their use of vocabulary in writing.
2. Select a piece of text (e.g., a section of text with rich vocabulary from a story the class is reading). Read through the text once with the students. Next, model and think aloud your thought process with the students as you use the checklist to assess vocabulary usage. (“Yes, the author used the word *scuttled* to describe the beetle’s movement rather than just saying *crawled*. This is a more vivid and precise word that lets us know that the beetle is moving quickly, or *scurrying*. This fits under the “Richness” section on the vocabulary checklist, so I’ll mark it there.”)
 3. Ask students to finish analyzing the remainder of the text with the checklist in groups, underlining descriptive vocabulary words, figurative language, and “golden words” that grab them (or words that were *not* descriptive enough and could be improved).
 4. As students become more proficient, this checklist can help them assess their own use of vocabulary in writing. In fact, self-assessment of their own writing is the ultimate goal. Students can employ this checklist for the rest of the year to self-assess vocabulary usage in their own compositions and to do “vocabulary hunts” in their writing. In addition, this checklist is a way you can assess their use of vocabulary.

Vocabulary Notebooks

Purpose. To assess students’ general growth in vocabulary over time in a portfolio format.

Vocabulary notebooks are a critical tool in student word learning, providing a single place for students to record word sorts, concept sorts, graphic organizers, and document other vocabulary activities described in this and other chapters in this book. Because students are collecting all of their vocabulary work in one place, vocabulary notebooks can serve as a portfolio of work—similar to an artist’s portfolio—that can be used to document and assess their vocabulary growth over time. Teachers can design rubrics to grade these vocabulary notebooks, which can be in three-ring binders, spiral-bound notebooks, or composition books. Vocabulary notebooks could include any of the following:

- Weekly word sorts, with an accompanying student explanation of the pattern or meaning of the root describing how all words in a certain category are related.
- Extensions of or word sorts, such as word hunts and word generation activities.
- Concept sorts, word analysis activities, and any of the graphic organizers or other vocabulary activities described in this book.
- New and interesting words that students encounter in their own reading (see steps for recording new vocabulary words in vocabulary notebooks in Chapter 6). Just as English teachers encourage students to record “golden lines” from their reading—turns of phrase that appealed to them while reading—we encourage them to be on the lookout for “golden words” that really strike them.
- Content-specific vocabulary words from science, social studies, math, and English/language arts that can be recorded in sections of the notebook divided by subject (in which students could be awarded extra credit points for finding vocabulary connections across the content areas—(e.g., “We learned about *sanctuaries* as places of refuge for endangered species in science, but the word *sanctuary* was also used in a story we read in English, meaning a sacred or holy place of peace and refuge for anyone”).

To give you an example of how vocabulary notebooks might look, one group of middle school English teachers we worked with planned on organizing their vocabulary notebook into the following three sections:

1. *“Back to our roots.”* This section of the vocabulary notebook focuses on generative vocabulary learning, and thus is organized by meaning parts—prefixes, suffixes, and roots (e.g., *spectator*, *retrospect*, and *spectacles* recorded under the root *spect*). Root sorts, word hunts, It’s All Greek (and Latin) to Me and other activities described in Chapter 6 are all collected and recorded here. As students encounter new words based on a root that has already been studied (*introspection*), they record the words under that particular root.
2. *Teacher-chosen words.* In this section, students record and examine words/concepts that their teachers have chosen as important. Often these words or terms include both content-specific vocabulary required by district or state standards, like *quatrain* and *deus ex machina*, as well as core academic vocabulary gleaned from class stories, like *mesmerize*, *abundant*, and *hard-nosed*.
3. *MY Words.* Students love this section, because it truly is their section. They can record words they find interesting, amusing, or confusing here. Many teachers ask literature circle groups (groups reading a common story or novel) to decide on one to three words per week to nominate for weekly class examination (with four literature circles in a class, that makes roughly five to ten words per week that students can choose). This activity is engaging, as students have the power to choose words for the entire class to study—a truly motivating experience! Many teachers follow the vocabulary self-collection strategy (Haggard, 1986; Ruddell and Shearer, 2002) described in Chapter 2.

Tips for Vocabulary Notebooks

- It may be too much to expect students to work on all three sections of the notebook simultaneously.
- Encourage students to look for connections among the different sections of the vocabulary notebook, and thus among the different types of vocabulary. For example, students might notice an interesting word in a mystery novel, like *cryptograph* (a cipher; a system of secret writing) and include it in the “MY Words” section of the notebook. With teacher prompting, the student may then realize that *cryptograph* also fits in the “Back to our Roots” section under the Greek root *graph* (meaning to write), with related words like *telegraph* (to write from far away) and *phonograph* (to write with sound). Later, in the science unit Natural Disasters, the word *seismograph* (an instrument that measures earthquakes) may come up. From this example, you can see how vocabulary notebooks can be a powerful vehicle for not only collecting interesting and important vocabulary words, but for students to connect vocabulary learning across the school day, across content areas, and beyond the classroom walls.

Intermediate Level Academic Vocabulary Spelling Inventory

This academic vocabulary inventory assesses the depth of students’ knowledge of academic vocabulary and, through spelling, assesses their orthographic development (Townsend, Bear, & Templeton, 2009). There are two parts to the assessment found in Appendix H. First, students spell the words “the best they can” as they have done in other developmental spelling inventories. Second, they go to the top of the spelling form and, for each word, rate their knowledge of the meaning of each word and write down as many related words that they can think of (see pages 000–000 in the Appendix). For example, for the first word, *source*, students could enter *sources*, *resources*, *resourceful*, *sources*, *sourced*, and *sourceless*. Beforehand, students are given examples different from test items as models.

What Is Academic Vocabulary?

Consider briefly what an academic vocabulary tells us about students' learning. As you peruse the vocabulary of students' textbooks, notice that there is a vocabulary that is common in all of the texts no matter the content area. Students need to be able to read and understand this vocabulary to be successful in any of their classes. As examples, notice how the following academic words may appear in each subject's textbooks: *source*, *definition*, *majorities*, *significance*, and *occurrence*. Contrast these words with the *specialized* vocabulary peculiar to particular content areas: *mitochondria* in biology, *egalitarian* in social studies, and *sine* and *cosine* in geometry and trigonometry.

The words in this inventory were found in Coxhead's list of academic words (Coxhead, 2000) and were selected for the spelling features they contain. For example, the word *participants* was chosen for its plural *s*, the suffix *ant*, the reduced vowel spelled with an *i*, and the stem *partic* with its soft *c* sound. Students who say they know the words and can generate two or more related words for most words (e.g., *participant*, *participatory*, *nonparticipants*, *participant*) are likely to have a deeper knowledge of the words, a larger vocabulary, and better reading skills than students who generate only one or no related words in the 15 seconds allotted for this task.

Scoring and Interpretation of the Inventory

Together, the spelling, students' rating of their knowledge, and their brainstorming of related words tap the depth of students' orthographic and academic vocabulary knowledge. In a study of a sample of seventh and eighth graders, we have found that the number of words spelled correctly and the number of related words that they generated were significantly related to standardized measures of vocabulary, reading, and spelling. This indicates that this inventory is a good resource to examine students' orthographic development and academic vocabulary.

Counting the number of words that the students spelled correctly yields a Power Score. With this score, refer to Table 8.3 to determine a stage of spelling for each student. You can see that this table presents gradations within each stage. Once you know what stage of spelling a student is in, refer to Chapters 4 and 5 as guides to instruction in reading and word analysis instruction and Chapters 6 and 7 as guides to vocabulary instruction. It is often useful to choose the stage and gradation that is the most conservative; one of the golden rules for where to begin word study is this: when in doubt, address the stage that is one step back so that the students are secure in their learning. This gives the students a chance to become familiar with the word study schedule, and promotes students' confidence and motivation. It is also useful to examine informally the actual features that students misspelled. Students who misspelled vowel pattern in *source* or the consonant blend in *distinct* need a very different form of word study than students who spelled nearly all of the words correctly, and omitted assimilated prefixes in *occurrence* or *irrelevance*.

The second part of the assessment is scored according to the number of words students say they know, do not know, and may know, along with how many related words they are able to produce for each spelling word. Students who do not know the meaning of many of the words are often English learners who are acquiring this vocabulary in English. As you score the production of related words generated in 15 seconds, you will find that students who produce *two* or *three* related words for the items have a thorough knowledge of the vocabulary, and are likely to have a well-developed vocabulary overall. Students who produce *no* or *one* related word for most words will have a less developed vocabulary and may have difficulty comprehending their texts when there is an abundance of these words in their reading. It will be important for these students to be engaged in contextualized word study with academic vocabulary words.

Table 8.3 Power Scores and Estimated Stages for the Intermediate Level Academic Vocabulary Spelling Inventory

Gradations within Stages →	Number of Words Spelled Correctly		
	Early Gradation	Middle Gradation	Late Gradation
Reading and Spelling Stages ↓			
Within Word Pattern Spelling/Transitional Reading	1	2	4
Syllables and Affixes Spelling/Intermediate Reading	6	8	12
Derivational Relations Spelling/Advanced Reading	14	16	19

Given the synchrony between reading and spelling, and between reading and vocabulary, this inventory is useful in forming differentiated reading groups. The Power Score indicates what stage of spelling students are in, and the spelling stages are usually related to students' reading stages. As outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, students at different spelling and reading stages exhibit different reading behaviors. Students in the transitional stage account for many struggling readers; in our research and teaching, transitional readers comprise up to a third of the struggling sixth- through eighth-graders. They do not generate many related words even if they do know the meaning of the words. Students in this stage who are asked to read in middle or secondary grade level materials will have difficulty with these materials and require the support of the activities discussed in Chapter 4. They will read their texts slowly, often reading aloud or reading silently with lip movement. Students in the syllables and affixes stage are likely to be intermediate readers; they read silently and study the spelling of how multisyllabic words combine. In the related word portion of the inventory, students in the syllables and affixes stage will likely indicate that they know the meaning of the words, but they may generate only one related word. In vocabulary study, these students need to study the meanings of harder prefixes and suffixes and study the relationships between grammar and spelling. As noted in Chapter 5, they are learning the meanings of various roots, they are predominantly reading silently, and they are learning basic outlining and other study skills, mostly with grade-level materials. Keep in mind that this inventory was created with middle school students, whom we would expect to be in the syllables and affixes stage of spelling and the intermediate stage of reading. High school students who score in the within word pattern and the early part of the syllables and affixes stage of spelling are likely to find their reading materials are at a frustration level.

Generative Vocabulary Assessment and Learning

Just as important as assessing students' knowledge of specific words is assessing their understanding of how words work. Generative vocabulary assessments measure students' *morphological knowledge*—understanding of our meaning system. This section presents a set of morphological assessments that are ordered by level of morphological difficulty:

starting with tasks measuring knowledge of easier prefixes and base words, moving to Greek and Latin roots, and finally to more difficult prefixes and suffixes. The items within many of the assessments themselves are also arranged in a developmental sequence.

Using Assessments to Inform Generative Vocabulary Instruction

The assessments we describe in this section, particularly *Generating/Producing Words from the Same Prefixes and Suffixes*, and *Generating Words from Bases and Roots*, provide important information about your students' morphological knowledge. This information can help you decide whether your struggling readers would benefit most from generative vocabulary instruction with the more straightforward and concrete affixes and base words in strand 1 or the more abstract and less transparent—but incredibly powerful—roots and affixes in strand 2. In Appendix H, we provide criteria for helping you decide, based on student scores on these assessments, where to optimally begin instruction.

However, as with all assessments, it is important to keep in mind a number of factors when making the link from assessment to instruction.

- Students whose scores indicate that they should begin instruction in strand 1 can and should still be exposed to and asked to think about and discuss less transparent morphological elements—like Latin and Greek roots. This is particularly true in the content areas. For example, a student in strand 1 can (and should) still benefit greatly from a social studies discussion about how the words *democrat/democracy*, *autocrat/autocracy*, and *theocrat/theocracy* are all derived from the Greek root *crat/crac*, meaning “rule.” However, this student will also need primary instruction in the more straightforward morphological relationships found in strand 1, giving a secure foundation from which to explore the more complex and opaque morphemes.
- As with all assessments, take into account whether your students are applying and demonstrating morphological knowledge in context—in their reading, writing, and content area learning. For example, a student who is “on the bubble” in terms of the assessment criteria, but who is struggling to make morphological connections in content learning and who experiences difficulty breaking apart simple prefixed words—like *unable*—in their reading may benefit from a “step backward” into strand 1 instruction. This student can always be moved quickly into more advanced morpheme study if warranted.

Generating/Producing Words with the Same Prefixes and Suffixes

Purpose. To assess students' morphological knowledge, particularly their ability to generate words from prefixes and suffixes.

One way to assess students' morphological knowledge is to examine their ability to produce, or *generate*, words from a given prefix or suffix. For example, students may be given the prefix *re-* and asked to produce as many words that contain the prefix as possible. The following example item, with a possible student response filled in, is taken from the Student Form for Producing Words with the Same Prefix (Templeton et al., 2010; see also Appendix H).

1. Re- (return) reuse, retire, restart, return
Re- means: again

Developmentally, this assessment may work best with your struggling readers in the syllables and affixes stage of development. Struggling readers in the within word pattern stage of development may experience more difficulty with this assessment. Please use the Student Form for Producing Words with the Same Suffix and the accompanying

form for prefixes in Appendix H for directions and student response forms. Students are given a set amount of time to produce as many words as possible with the given affix (see appendix directions for instructions about time). Students who can generate more words from the given prefixes and suffixes are more likely to have deeper morphological knowledge and larger, more flexible vocabularies.

Matching Greek and Latin Roots with Their Meanings

Purpose: To assess (1) students' knowledge of specific roots, and (2) the meanings of words that contain those roots.

Matching is a commonly used format for vocabulary assessments. A matching assessment on root meanings might look like this:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. ____ spect | A. trust |
| 2. ____ port | B. carry |
| 3. ____ tract | C. see, look at |
| 4. ____ dict | D. pull |
| 5. ____ fid | E. speak, tell |

A matching test like this can provide a quick, surface-level assessment of students' knowledge of root meanings. We recommend that you dig deeper by adding an additional step to the assessment: Call out specific words that contain these roots (e.g., *spectacular*, *speculate*, *extract*, *fidelity*) and ask student to define them in their own words. The test and additional step allow you to assess both general knowledge of roots and knowledge of specific word meanings that contain those roots. In Appendix H, *Matching Greek and Latin Roots* provides an example of this type of matching roots assessment that you can use in your classroom. Students who score 90 percent or higher are considered at mastery level; students who score below 90 percent may need more work with these roots.

Generating Words from Bases and Roots

Purpose. To assess students' morphological knowledge, particularly their ability to generate words from a given base word or root, on a continuum of development.

This activity is similar to Generating/Producing Words with the Same Prefixes and Suffixes described previously; however, instead of prefixes and suffixes, students are asked to generate words from the more complex *base words* and *roots*. Appendix H, *Generating Words from Bases and Roots* presents a wide range of base words (such as *turn*) and Greek and Latin roots (such as *bio* and *tract*) that are found across the content areas. For example, students who are asked to generate words from the Latin root *tract* might answer as follows:

tract: *distraction, extract, retract, traction, attract*

Students who can quickly generate many words from these base words and roots probably have a relatively deep and flexible morphological knowledge. Content area teachers can easily modify this assessment to assess their students' knowledge of roots that occur frequently in their specific content areas. For example, a social studies teacher might assess students' knowledge of the following roots: *civ* (Latin, "citizen"): *civic, civil rights, civil war, city, civilization* and *popul/pub* (Latin, "people"): *population, populace, public, republic*.

Include Students in Assessment-Based Planning and Goal-Setting

Your struggling readers will be more likely to buy into vocabulary instruction if they (1) understand their own strengths and areas of need and (2) have a hand in setting instructional goals based on their strengths and areas of need. Talk directly with your students, honestly and respectfully, about the results from their vocabulary assessments. The following activities can help you include students' in their own assessment and goal-setting.

Students' Strategies for Learning Vocabulary

Purpose. To assess students ability to use strategies to independently learn words

One way to involve your students in the vocabulary assessment and learning process is to ask them reflect on how *they* best learn vocabulary. What strategies do they already use? For example, you can ask your students to answer the following statements on a scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree:

- I learn vocabulary best through reading.
- I prefer classroom activities that promote vocabulary growth.
- I prefer working in small groups or in pairs when studying vocabulary.
- I can think of related words to make meaning connections.



Students gain more ownership over their learning when they are given the tools to self-assess and are made aware of where they are and where they need to go in terms of their vocabulary knowledge.

My Strategies for Learning Vocabulary in Appendix H presents a set of statements like the example that guide students as they self-evaluate their vocabulary learning strategies. Students can individually complete this form before a small- or whole-group class discussion. Or the form can serve as a guide to an upcoming one-on-one meeting with a student. Either way, this assessment provides the following valuable information:

- A format to begin discussing with your students how to learn vocabulary
- A way for students to develop a metacognitive stance toward learning and, by allowing students to take a step back like this, a means of letting them feel in control of their own achievement
- A vehicle by which students can share how they best learn, which immediately gives you important information about ways of learning in a lesson or unit that the students find helpful (e.g., cooperative group learning) and which also sends the powerful message to a struggling reader that learning is a partnership and that you take his or her ideas seriously.

Assessing Students' Overall Content Vocabulary Knowledge from a Lesson, Unit, or Textbook

Purpose. To assess with students their overall familiarity with the key vocabulary terms and concepts in a lesson, unit of study, or textbook chapter.

In addition to knowing how students best learn vocabulary—their vocabulary learning strategies—it is very helpful to get an overall sense of the depth of your students' under-

standing of the key concepts and vocabulary terms in your content area. How familiar are your struggling readers with the vocabulary words in the content area textbook? How well do they understand the meanings of the vocabulary words in an upcoming lesson, story, or unit of study? The Rubric for Vocabulary Learning in Appendix J (Templeton et al., 2010) can be used before, during, or after a period of study to gauge students' initial understandings and to document conceptual growth over time. Students can skim a chapter and look over the bolded vocabulary terms, or you can present your students with a list of the key concepts in a unit. Students can then rate their overall understanding of these words using the following scale:

- 5—I have a complete understanding
- 4—I have a good understanding
- 3—I have some knowledge
- 2—I am learning the vocabulary
- 1—the vocabulary is new to me

As you can see, this assessment is similar to the fist-to-five self-assessment described earlier in the chapter, which assesses students' depth of knowledge for each vocabulary word separately. ("Class, rate your familiarity *with iambic pentameter*.") This assessment, however, asks students to rate their overall understanding of all concepts in a unit or lesson considered together. ("Class, skim through this textbook chapter, look at the bolded vocabulary words, and give me one rating that best represents your overall understanding of the vocabulary in this chapter.") There is also a section on this rubric for teacher input. If struggling readers and their teachers determine that the texts used in class are too difficult, than teachers should identify and incorporate texts and other materials at their struggling readers' instructional levels.

Including Students in Goal-Setting and Self-Directed Learning

When setting vocabulary learning goals with your students, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Differentiate between long-term goals and short-term goals.
- Write short-term goals as clearly and specifically as possible and include a timeline. This lets your struggling reader know exactly what they need to learn, when they need to learn it by, and allows you to give feedback that is clear and specific.
- Use vocabulary assessment information to differentiate instruction, set goals, and modify goals.

As with setting goals for spelling and reading, discussed in Chapter 3, you can think of goals for vocabulary instruction as long-term goals for the year and short-term goals that will serve as stepping stones toward achieving your long-term goal. For vocabulary instruction, these short- and long-term goals will often be driven by the key vocabulary terms and concepts in your content area and as outlined by the district or state curriculum standards. In addition, you should also take into account your struggling readers' strengths and areas of need and their level of development. The following guidelines can assist in the process of setting short- and long-term goals for word-specific and generative vocabulary instruction.

Setting Goals for Word-Specific Vocabulary Instruction

The long-term goals in a content area usually include the big ideas and critical skills that are important to that discipline. For example, a world history teacher might have the following long-term goal for the year:

- *World history long-term goals.* Students will be able to use maps and globes to identify human-made and natural features, identify patterns, and make inferences based on the information in these maps and globes.

An ambitious and general long-term goal like this will take at the very least a quarter and often up to a year (or more) to accomplish. To reach these long-term goals, students must master a set of foundational, related concepts that are represented by the key vocabulary terms in the discipline. From the world history example, students will need to learn at least the following key geographical concepts, among others: *longitude*, *latitude*, *legend*, *hemisphere*, *maps*, *map projections*, and *globes*. However, merely listing these words on a blackboard does not make them a goal. As we discussed in Chapter 7, it is critical for you to set clear, specific vocabulary learning goals for your students. What, exactly, do you want your students to know and be able to do with the concepts of *longitude*, *latitude*, and *map projections*? A clear short-term goal from the key vocabulary might take the following form:

- *Short-term goal.* Students will be able to compare and contrast the defining characteristics of maps and globes and be able to decide when to use each based on their purpose (e.g., globes accurately represent relative sizes of places; it is easier to measure distance on maps).

With this more specific word learning goal in mind, it becomes much clearer which type of vocabulary activity and assessment you should use. For the short-term goal shown, a Venn diagram or compare/contrast chart (described in Chapter 7) might be an appropriate vocabulary assessment activity.

Using Assessment Information to Modify Word-Specific Goals for Struggling Readers

How can assessment information help you differentiate instruction for your struggling readers? Struggling readers may not have the foundational knowledge necessary to learn certain word-specific concepts that your curriculum requires you to teach. If this is the case, you may need to back up and solidify these foundational concepts before moving on. For example, students might not get much out of a geography lesson comparing and contrasting the different types of map projections—such as the Mercator Projection and the Robinson Projection—without having at least a basic understanding of foundational concepts about maps such as *latitude*, *longitude*, *hemisphere*, *prime meridian*, and *scale*. Using a vocabulary self-assessment or fist-to-five activity (described earlier in this chapter) *before* your lesson or unit can help you determine whether your students have a sufficient knowledge of foundational concepts. Although teaching these foundational concepts will require more time, simply pushing ahead with frustration-level concepts will not result in optimal learning or increased motivation to learn more later on. If you do push ahead, you will have to go back and reteach those concepts again later. Taking the time to teach what your students need *now* will save you time *later*.

Setting Goals for Generative Vocabulary Instruction

You can use a similar type of goal-setting process with generative vocabulary instruction. Long-term generative goals are often provided to English/language arts teachers as part of the curriculum. The following example shows a long-term goal for generative vocabulary instruction.

- *English/language arts long-term goal.* Students will be able to analyze words by morphemic units.

As with most long-term goals, this very general goal may take students years to accomplish. The Sequence of Instruction for Core Roots and Affixes (see the appendix to Chapter 6) shows how the study of morphemes takes place over the course of years,

starting in the elementary grades and continuing through middle and high school (and beyond). Thus, it is necessary to break this important long-term goal down into manageable, reasonable short-term goals for your students. The generative vocabulary assessments described earlier in this chapter can help us do this.

Using Assessment Information to Modify Generative Goals for Struggling Readers

Use the generative assessments described earlier in this chapter to give you a sense of your struggling readers' level of morphological knowledge. This information can help you target your instruction in morphological knowledge based on your students' current level of understanding. For example, can your students quickly and easily generate words like *spectator*, *retrospect*, and *introspection* when give the root *spect* (from the Generating Words from Bases and Roots assessment on page 000 in Appendix H)? If so, they are probably ready for strand 2 vocabulary instruction in Latin and Greek roots. If not, they probably need to start with more basic prefixes, suffixes, and base words in strand 1. Struggling readers often benefit from instruction that begins in strand 1. Use the criteria outlined in the generative vocabulary assessments in Appendix H. When making decisions, student scores on these assessments should be balanced with your observations of their ability to apply this knowledge in context.

If your long-term goal is for students to be able to analyze words by morphemic units, how can you modify it for your struggling readers in strand 1 while still meeting this standard? The following two short-term goals (appropriate for an approximately two-week unit of study) show how you can meet this same goal for two groups of students who are developmentally in two different places (strand 1 and strand 2).

- *Short-term goal for students in strand 1.* Students will be able to accurately sort words, generate words, and analyze words that contain the following *prefixes*: *pre-*, *mis-*, *re-*, and *un-* (*premature*, *misjudge*, *research*, *unarmed*)
- *Short-term goal for students in strand 2.* Students will be able to accurately sort words, generate words, and analyze words that contain the following *roots*: *hydra*, *geo*, and *aer* (*hydroplane*, *geode*, *aerodynamic*)

You can see how assessments help target instruction based on students' needs and developmental level, while at the same time meeting the general curriculum standards. In the example, both groups are working on morpheme knowledge. However, the struggling readers (who are most likely in strand 1) are working primarily with the more basic morphemes—prefixes, suffixes, and base words—that they are optimally ready to learn.

Involving Your Students in Goal-Setting

Some content teachers may question how they can involve their students in vocabulary goal-setting when the content goals have already been identified in the textbook or in the local or state curriculum standards. There are a number of ways that you can involve your students in the goal-setting process and still hew to your curriculum guidelines.

- Share assessment information with your students in a goal-setting conference. Allow students the opportunity to share their own feelings about their content and vocabulary knowledge. The self-assessments described in this chapter can help students formalize their thinking in preparation for these conferences. Talking openly, honestly, and respectfully with your students about the assessment information accomplishes a number of important purposes.
 - Shows students that you respect them enough to talk with them about their strengths and needs
 - Makes them aware of their strengths and areas of need
 - Helps students see the why of the next step, setting goals

- Share with your students long-term goals for the year in your content area and short-term goals for the upcoming unit of study. Discuss with students how these short-term goals will help achieve the long-term goals.
- Ask students to add their own content subgoals and try to work at least one of their goals in per quarter. Ask questions such as “What are you interested in that relates to this unit? How can I help you apply what we are learning to your interests and life?” For example, in a physics unit on sound, a student might be interested in exploring how sound *vibrations* and *frequencies*—two key concepts—work on a guitar. Allowing the student extra credit and time to explore this area can make a *significant* difference in student motivation and learning.
- Ask students how they best learn vocabulary words and concepts. The My Strategies for Learning Vocabulary form (Templeton et al., 2010) can help students think through this general question in preparation for your goal-setting conference. Include at least one activity every unit that supports the way students learn and let students know that you are doing it. For example, if a struggling reader learns best by acting out word meanings, try to include a charades game or variation at some point in your unit.
- When possible, give students a choice of words to study. This often works best with core academic words that students choose and “nominate” for instruction in activities similar to the vocabulary self-collection strategy (Chapter 2).
- As we discussed in Chapter 3 for spelling and reading assessments, use a visual to show your students the big picture. This is relatively easy to do. For generative vocabulary instruction, copy (or create a subsection) of the appendix to Chapter 6. Students check off the prefixes, suffixes, and roots as they demonstrate mastery of them in your assessments. For word-specific instruction, copy the table of contents or use a list of the key content vocabulary terms as your checklist. Checking off these concepts gives students a sense of pride and satisfaction and shows them how these small steps are helping move them toward their long-term goals.
- Require students to periodically self-assess their growth. Meet with them on a quarterly basis to provide feedback and set, change, or modify goals.

These simple steps, while taking time, can pay dividends many times over in terms of student motivation and buy-in. When students are involved in goal-setting, they are more likely to hold themselves accountable for their own learning—resulting in increased independence. They feel a sense of satisfaction as you both track their growth over time and they see the tangible results of their efforts. They also feel more in control of their own learning, resulting in increased motivation and engagement. Praise your students for persistence and hard work, acknowledging the reality of setbacks along the way.

Classroom Organization and Scheduling for Vocabulary Instruction

After assessing students’ vocabulary knowledge, you will want to plan and organize instruction that meets your students’ needs. When planning vocabulary activities, take into account (1) the general goals of your unit or lesson, (2) the specific word-learning goals of key vocabulary terms (what exactly you want your students to know about each word), (3) the developmental levels of your students as well as their strengths, and needs, (4) the nature of the words you are teaching, and (5) the time you have allotted for instruction. Because no two teaching situations are exactly the same, there is no single generic weekly schedule of activities for vocabulary instruction that will fit every teacher’s needs. The following guidelines can help as you plan vocabulary activities for your students:

- Incorporate small-group work throughout the unit. Small groups can be based on developmental level (e.g., a small group consisting of students all working on strand 1 morphemes) or a common interest or focus (a small group of students who chose the same subset of content area vocabulary terms to examine together using a four-square concept map).
- Follow the five core guidelines of word study instruction introduced in Chapter 2.
- Ensure that your struggling readers have multiple opportunities to work with and manipulate the vocabulary words in different contexts across the unit.
- “Stack” activities in a logical sequence across a unit of study, so that earlier activities provide a foundation for later activities. For example, you may start the examination of the two roots *port* and *tract* with an open sort. As the unit continues, extend student learning beyond the words found in the original sort with word hunts.
- Remember that completing a vocabulary activity is not the objective; rather, it is the thinking and discussion generated by the activity in a motivating context that will lead to deep and long-term vocabulary knowledge. High-level questions and rich discussions in engaging small- and whole-group settings are critical.

Sample Schedules for Word-Specific Vocabulary

Instruction: Social Studies and English

As mentioned, there is no single perfect schedule for vocabulary instruction; so much depends on your students, your teaching goals, and the nature of the vocabulary words and concepts you and your students are examining. Other books on word study instruction discuss various classroom organization and grouping options in the middle grades and high school (Bear et al., 2008; Templeton et al., 2010). To give you a sense of what a weekly schedule might look in particular teaching contexts, Figures 8.6 (p. 258) and 8.7 (p. 259) present two possible weekly sequences for word-specific vocabulary instruction in a social studies class and an English class, respectively. The key vocabulary terms and the planned vocabulary activities are highlighted in italics.

Social Studies Sample Schedule

An American history class is beginning a unit on the Great Depression. As a major conceptual goal for the unit, the teacher wants the students to understand the causes, consequences, and attempted solutions to the Great Depression. The bulk of the vocabulary consists of content-specific words like *Black Tuesday* and *Hoovervilles*. The teacher gradually adds vocabulary over the course of the unit as students encounter the words in the textbook reading and other related text sources. The teacher decides, based on the vocabulary selection process described in Chapter 7, whether to teach words before, during, or after the readings and lessons.

English Sample Schedule

An English class has been organized into four novel study groups (groups of five to six students reading and discussing the same text) based on two factors: (1) reading level and (2) common interest in a book. In terms of the vocabulary instruction, the teacher wants the students to notice and examine vivid, powerful core academic words used by the authors (words like *curmudgeon* and *meander*) and eventually use more vivid vocabulary in their own writing.

Sample Schedule for Generative Vocabulary Instruction

Figure 8.8 (p. 259) presents a possible two-week sequence of vocabulary activities for a group of students examining the two roots *port* (“to carry”) and *tract* (“to pull”). We have found that providing two weeks to work on a set of two to four roots offers sufficient

Figure 8.6 American History Unit on the Great Depression—First Week of a Three-Week Unit

Days	Teaching Focus	Activity
1	Introduce overarching themes, concepts, and vocabulary terms of Great Depression unit. Plan experiences to assess and build background knowledge and increase student engagement and motivation.	<p>Teacher introduces and discusses with class key vocabulary terms like <i>migrant workers</i>, <i>dust storms</i>, <i>Hoovervilles</i>, and <i>Black Tuesday</i> by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing students powerful pictures of Great Depression by Depression-era photographers like Dorothea Lange • Reading aloud first-person accounts from migrant workers • Showing students 15 minutes of a documentary film on Great Depression
2	Deep study of key words and concepts introduced on day 1	<p>Small heterogeneous groups of five to six students choose one to two vocabulary terms each from day 1 to examine in-depth using the four-square concept map format.</p> <p>Whole class reconvenes at end of period. Small groups share concepts maps with class as teacher facilitates, clarifies misconceptions, emphasizes key points, and adds missing information. Students copy all concept maps into vocabulary notebooks.</p>
3	Deep study of additional keywords and concepts (as class continues reading through the textbook chapter and other sources)	<p>Small-group work continues as above with additional key terms that have been added. A modified concept of definition map for historical figures is used by small groups for an examination of important figures such as <i>Franklin Delano Roosevelt</i> and <i>Herbert Hoover</i>.</p>
4	Organize key words into overall conceptual framework.	<p>Small groups complete a closed concept sort. Teacher asks students to categorize the vocabulary words studied so far this week into three categories: (1) <u>Causes of Great Depression</u> (e.g., <i>Black Tuesday</i>), (2) <u>Consequences of the Great Depression</u> (e.g., displaced <i>Hokies</i> traveling to California), and (3) <u>Attempted Solutions</u> (e.g., <i>Works Progress Administration</i>).</p> <p>Students copy completed sort into vocabulary notebooks using the power map format, in which students justify in writing why they have categorized words under certain columns.</p>
5	Reinforce and review vocabulary words and concepts in motivating format.	<p>Class plays Jeopardy game using vocabulary words as a whole-class review. Game uses same three categories from the concept sort on day 4 (causes, consequences, and attempted solutions of Great Depression). These same three categories will be used and added to as the class continues the unit during the next two weeks.</p>

time for middle grade and high school students to dig deeply enough to ensure long-term learning. Notice how the students are (a) *analyzing* words (Break it Down), (b) *generating* words (Root Tree and Related Roots Web), and (c) *sorting* words (Open Sort) over the two weeks. Whichever activities you choose when planning generative vocabulary instruction, make sure students are using these three processes across the unit of study.

Figure 8.7 English Class Weekly Schedule: Novel Groups Selecting and Examining Vivid Vocabulary Words

Days	Teaching Focus	Activity
1	Select and introduce ten vivid vocabulary words for instruction from novels (students select eight words, teacher selects two words).	Each novel group selects two rich vocabulary words from previously read chapters in their novel for instruction, introduces them to the class, and explains why they were selected (with four groups, this equals eight total student-selected words) as per the vocabulary self-collection strategy. Teacher selects two rich vocabulary words for instruction, introduces them to the class, and explains why she selected them.
2	Deep study of words	Small groups complete vocabulary webs with words using their novels, dictionaries, thesauruses, and online dictionaries. Small groups share their completed vocabulary webs with whole class at end of period. Students record the webs in their vocabulary notebooks.
3.	Extend vocabulary learning beyond the classroom. Connect vocabulary terms to personal lives.	Using the word wizard format, students receive extra credit points for connecting vocabulary words to their own lives (“I was rude toward my sister last night. I have to admit, my lack of sleep turned me into a <i>curmudgeon</i> .”) Word wizard continues for the next two weeks as classes and students compete against each other.
4	Continued deep study and reinforcement of words in a motivating activity.	Small groups act out words for entire class, playing charades.
5	Applying vocabulary to writing.	Small groups respond to their novels in writing based on teacher-created writing prompts, using vivid vocabulary that is important to their story in their written response. For example, if the main character in the story is a <i>curmudgeon</i> , then this vocabulary word can be used in the response.

Figure 8.8 Possible Two-Week Schedule for Class Examining Two Roots *port* and *tract*

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	<i>Open sort</i> of two roots <i>port</i> and <i>tract</i> Copy completed sort in vocabulary notebook	Small-group study of word etymologies using online dictionaries and other sources. Information is shared and recorded in vocabulary notebooks.	Class creates two root trees with <i>port</i> and <i>tract</i> —adding additional words to Monday’s sort		Break it Down review game
Week 2	Dictionary of the Future	Word hunt using http://onelook.com and brainstorming additional words		Related roots web—add synonyms and antonyms to root trees created the first week	Assessment—writing sort

Over the course of the two weeks, the homework includes *It’s All Greek and Latin to Me* (see activities section of Chapter 6), in which students find applications of words outside class and share them in class. For example, one student might share, “My mother was intractable last night! She wouldn’t budge when we repeatedly asked her if we could go out.”

Sample Daily Schedule for Small-Group Instruction

At times, you will want to group students based on their developmental level. Other times you may want to group them based on your instructional focus or topic of study. Either way, a critical question teachers ask is “What are the other students doing while I’m meeting with a small group?” Figure 8.9 presents a simple, straightforward daily schedule that we have used with success for small-group work in the upper grades. This particular schedule is based on the teacher dividing the class into two groups in

Figure 8.9 Sample Daily Small-Group Schedule for Two Small Groups

Time	Group 1	Group 2
9:00–9:10	Whole Class (1) Set agenda for class period, (2) Assign independent work	
9:10–9:30	Small-Group Work with Teacher Teacher-guided vocabulary instruction (<i>possible activities</i> : closed sorts, open sorts, word hunts, etymology study, word analysis, word generation)	Independent Work Grouping Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual • Pair • Small group Activity Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading of novels, textbooks, or other content sources • Individual vocabulary activities • Writing responses to reading • Novel study group discussions • Composition/essay writing
9:30–9:50	Independent Work Grouping Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual • Pair • Small group Activity Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent reading of novels, textbooks, or other content sources • Individual vocabulary activities • Writing responses to reading • Novel study group discussions • Composition/essay writing 	Small Group Work with Teacher Teacher-guided vocabulary instruction (<i>possible activities</i> : closed sorts, open sorts, word hunts, etymology study, word analysis, word generation)
9:50–9:55	Whole Class Assessment, set goals for next day	

a 55-minute period (e.g., group 1 working with strand 1 morphemes, group 2 working with strand 2 morphemes), but can be easily modified for work with three small groups as we discuss later. The schedule is based on a “whole group–small group–whole group” format.

- *Whole class introduction.* The teacher begins the period with the whole class, setting the day’s agenda and assigning the independent work so students know exactly what is expected of them when they are not meeting with the teacher in the small group.
- *Small-group/independent work.* The teacher meets with small group 1 while the rest of the class is working independently. After 20 minutes (or whatever the teacher deems necessary) the teacher meets with small group 2 while the group 1 students move to independent work. Teachers can decide whether this independent work is individual, in pairs, or in small groups. In terms of assigning activities, some teachers prefer to list an agenda on the board that everyone who is not with the teacher follows (e.g., everyone does independent novel reading for the first 15 minutes of independent work and then everyone begins novel response or answers textbook questions for the remaining time and finishes the activity for homework). Other teachers like to give students a list of options to choose from in the form of individual learning contracts. Students are expected to finish these contracts by the end of the week.
- *Whole-class closure.* The teacher wraps up the class in a whole group, assessing learning for the day, assigning homework, and setting the next day’s agenda.

Additional Points

- Model and provide guided practice with any activity before expecting your students to perform it independently as part of their independent work.
- You don’t have to use this schedule every day of the week. Some teachers choose to use it five days per week for a particular unit. Other teachers decide that they only need to meet with small groups three days per week. In the upper grades, students can perform more work independently over extended periods of time.
- If you have three groups, you can modify this schedule fairly easily. On day one you meet with groups 1 and 2. On day two, you meet with groups 2 and 3. On day three, you meet with groups 3 and 1. Thus, each group works with you twice during a three-day rotation.

To make scheduling easier, remember that the different small groups can (and often do) perform the same activities but with different words or morphemes. Take the example of small group 1 studying prefixes and small group 2 studying roots. Both groups could follow the same schedule of activities in Figure 8.9 (open sort on Mondays, root/prefix tree on Wednesday). The only difference would be that group 1 would be doing the activities with the assigned prefixes and group 2 would be doing them with the assigned roots for that week.

