What is Vocabulary?

Vocabulary encompasses the knowledge of word meanings in a language system, as well as the relationships among those words (e.g., categories, analogies). It incorporates both the comprehension and use of words, and requires understanding of concrete and abstract meanings.

What is the role of Vocabulary in learning how to read?

Research shows that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of later reading success. It is critical to the development of both word identification and reading comprehension. Specifically, strong oral language vocabulary improves the student’s ability to recognize words when reading and is necessary for students to understand and connect with the information that they read. Strong vocabulary knowledge also leads to easier acquisition of the background information that is essential for comprehension.

Based on experiences and basic language abilities, children can differ greatly in their vocabulary knowledge. Given the importance of vocabulary in reading development, systematic instruction to enhance vocabulary knowledge is critical.

What is the approach to developing Vocabulary in Lexia Reading Core5®?

Vocabulary instruction must go beyond word definitions in order to affect comprehension. The vocabulary strand in Lexia Reading Core5 is structured to teach word-learning strategies, to provide exposure to rich and varied vocabulary words, and to allow students to develop an awareness of word relationships and associations. These goals are systematically integrated into increasingly more complex skill activities. Throughout the vocabulary strand, activities expose students to new words and concepts, but more importantly, require students to think critically about words and their meanings and to apply strategies to build their own vocabulary for unfamiliar words and concepts. These vocabulary tasks begin by developing oral vocabulary through the association of word meanings with pictures. As students begin to develop word identification skills, they continue to enhance their vocabulary knowledge through activities involving reading.

Early activities allow students to develop word-learning strategies as they deduce the meaning of unfamiliar, high-level words by analyzing pictures for similarities and differences. Other early vocabulary activities are aimed at building categorization skills as students must recognize relationships between words. As vocabulary activities progress, students are explicitly introduced to more abstract vocabulary concepts, such as multiple-meaning words, idioms, similes and metaphors. Through these activities, students develop skills and strategies to use sentence-level context clues to determine the meaning of these words and phrases. The most advanced vocabulary tasks continue to emphasize associations and subtle relationships between words through focus on analogies and shades of meaning. Students think about and recognize nuances in word meaning as they think critically about words and form logical relationships between word meanings.

In addition to targeted vocabulary activities, students also acquire vocabulary and word-building strategies by repeated exposure to the rich language activities that exist in all strands of the Lexia Reading Core5 program. For example, early phonemic awareness and phonics activities require students to match pictures to words, building concrete vocabulary knowledge. Later activities, found throughout the Structural Analysis strand, provide students with the skills to analyze prefixes, roots and suffixes for meaning and encourage the application of this knowledge to connected reading tasks. While the explicit goal of the activities included in the vocabulary strand is to foster the use of word-learning strategies and to build an awareness of word relationships and associations, students are constantly building their vocabulary and word awareness as they progress through all strands of the Lexia Reading Core5 program.