



Course Outline

This course supports high school teachers in implementing a key instructional shift outlined by the Common Core: more strategic selection and instruction of vocabulary words to improve students' reading comprehension and deepen understanding of key content area concepts.

In this course, participants will develop strategies to support students in expanding their general academic language and improving their vocabulary acquisition. This includes:

- Focusing on tier two vocabulary words and the use of student-friendly definitions;
- Exploring activities and graphic organizers (e.g., semantic maps, cloze passages, connotations) that support repeated, contextualized vocabulary instruction in content areas; and
- Organizing instruction to provide students with multiple opportunities for review and practice with independent vocabulary strategies.

Session activities include short quizzes after viewing media or reading course material, a reflection journal, resource library exploration, and practicum assignments that provide participants with opportunities to apply their learning in the classroom. This course encourages reflection on common classroom practice to unpack traditional approaches and explore more effective ones.

Goals & Purpose

Session 1 – Focusing Explicit Instruction on Tier Two Words

- Prioritize your vocabulary instruction more effectively
- Apply appropriate strategies for teaching different types of vocabulary
- Identify tier two words from a text of your choice and practice generating student-friendly definitions for them
- Improve students' reading comprehension
- Deepen understanding of key concepts in content areas through more strategic selection and instruction of vocabulary words
- Reflect on typical classroom practice to unpack traditional approaches and explore more effective ones

Session 2 – Building Academic Vocabulary in Content Areas

- Explore strategies and tools that can be applied to supporting academic language development in your content area

- Learn the importance of creating context-rich vocabulary instruction and its connection to mastering subject-matter content as well as improving reading comprehension
- Complete a semantic mapping activity or other vocabulary graphic organizer
- Explore these ideas as they relate to a teacher's specific content area and the explicit teaching of tier two and tier three words

Session 3 – Independent Learning and Retention of New Vocabulary

- Learn how to teach students specific strategies for inferring word meanings when they come across a word they don't know.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to actively engage with vocabulary words over time (ideally 12-15 exposures)
- Plan a unit or revisit a unit plan to incorporate more review activities that promote independent vocabulary use

Session 4 – Pulling It All Together

- Compare common classroom practice with more effective, research-based practices in vocabulary instruction
- Focus on tier two vocabulary words and student-friendly definitions
- Explore activities and graphic organizers (e.g., semantic maps, word sorts) that support repeated, contextualized vocabulary instruction in content areas

Throughout the course, opportunities are provided for teachers to connect their learning across sessions and to explicitly consider the implications of that learning for classroom practice. Teachers will also be able to revisit their work and reflections by viewing their individual Course Portfolios.