

# Strengthening Literacy and Student Community: Intentional Approaches to Support Vocabulary and Academic Language

This session is for any educator that engages with students in a semi-structured environment. We will focus on three major areas: academic language, vocabulary, and routines. The use of academic language by both teachers and students exposes students to discipline-specific terminology and promotes student speaking opportunities and confidence. Combining academic language with explicit vocabulary instruction supports students in furthering their ability understand discipline specific texts, practices, and communication. As we close our session, we will look at the impact of using routines to maximize time and student ability to focus.

Handouts – Academic Talk: A Key to Literacy (Lesaux)

# Strengthening Literacy and Student Community: Intentional Approaches to Support Vocabulary and Academic Language



FEBRUARY 2025

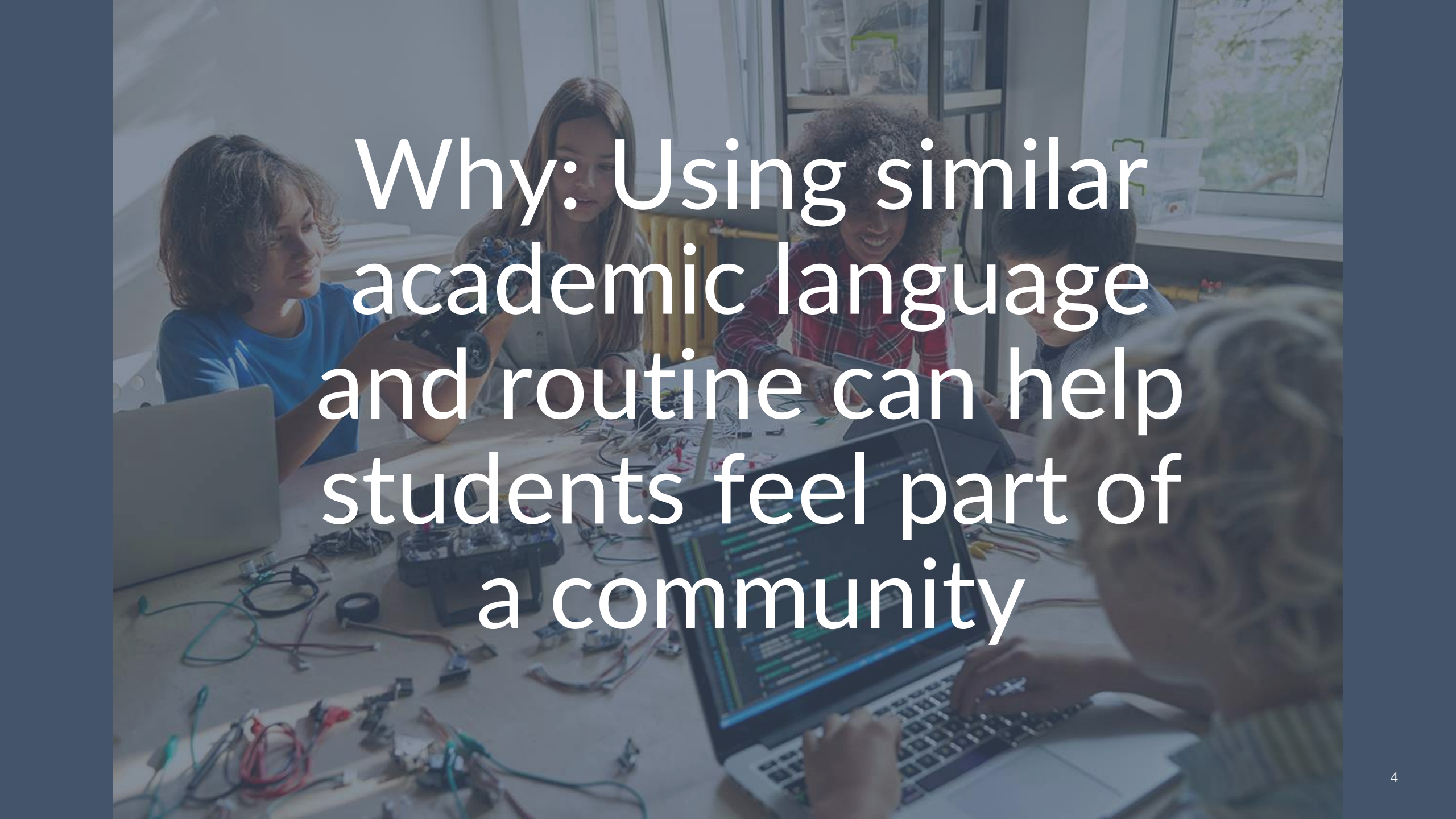
Suzanne Kochheiser  
Ohio Adolescent Literacy  
Specialist  
Mid-Ohio ESC

# Today's Goal...

Understanding how your direct use of

- academic language
- vocabulary and background knowledge
- routines

build student community and literacy achievement

A group of diverse students are gathered around a table in a classroom or workshop, focused on a project. They are using laptops and working with various electronic components like wires and breadboards. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a window in the background. The text is overlaid in white on a semi-transparent dark blue background.

Why: Using similar  
academic language  
and routine can help  
students feel part of  
a community





This presentation applies to anyone working with students in a somewhat structured environment!



## Foundational Knowledge & Skills

Literacy, numeracy and technology



## Well-Rounded Content

Social studies, sciences, languages, arts, health, physical education, etc.



## Leadership & Reasoning

Problem-solving, **design thinking**, creativity, information analytics

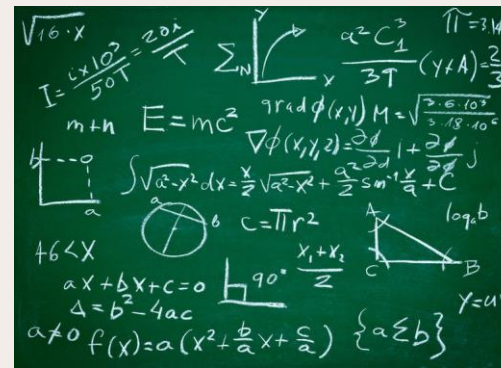


## Social-Emotional Learning

Self-awareness & management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making



Literacy is in ALL Areas!  
How do you read, write, and talk professionally in your content area?





# Career Tech Leadership and Communication Competencies

## Competencies

- 1.2.1. Extract relevant, valid information from materials and cite sources of information.
- 1.2.2. Deliver formal and informal presentations.
- 1.2.3. Identify and use verbal, nonverbal and active listening skills to communicate effectively.
- 1.2.4. Use negotiation and conflict-resolution skills to reach solutions.
- 1.2.5. Communicate information (e.g., directions, ideas, vision, workplace expectations) for an intended audience and purpose.
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- 1.2.10. Use interpersonal skills to provide group leadership, promote collaboration and team.
- 1.2.11. Write professional correspondence, documents, job applications and resumes.
- 1.2.12. Use technical writing skills to complete forms and create reports.

Student knowledge about how to read, write, and speak in different content areas creates community

## Competency D: Relationship Skills

D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups

K-2	3-5	Middle Grades	High School
D1. 1.a Identify and engage in <u>positive communication skills</u>	D1. 1.b Apply active listening and effective communication skills to increase cooperation and relationships	D1. 1.c Demonstrate the ability to actively listen and understand multiple perspectives	D1. 1.d Actively engage in positive interactions to make connections with peers, adults, and community to support and achieve common goals
D1. 2.a Practice giving and receiving <u>feedback in a respectful way</u>	D1. 2.b Demonstrate the ability to give and receive feedback in a respectful way	D1. 2.c Offer and acknowledge <u>constructive feedback</u> to strengthen connections and improve communication outcomes with others	D1. 2.d Apply constructive feedback to strengthen connections and achieve common goals

Social and Emotional Learning Standards

A complex network diagram with numerous nodes and connecting lines, rendered in shades of blue and black, occupies the left side of the slide. The nodes vary in size and are interconnected by thin, light blue lines, creating a dense web of connections.

How do academic  
language and vocabulary  
build student community  
and literacy?

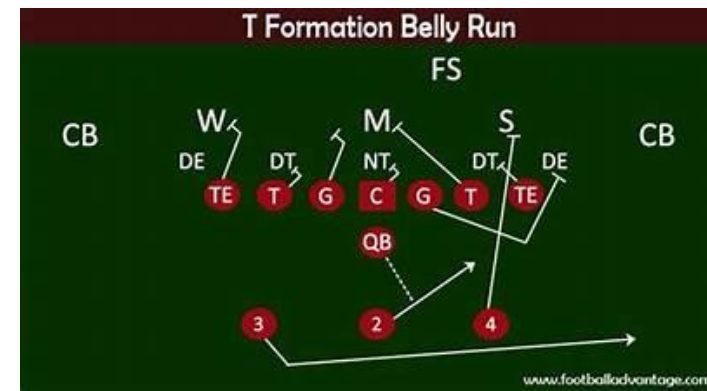


# Science Passage Minus Tier 3 Vocabulary

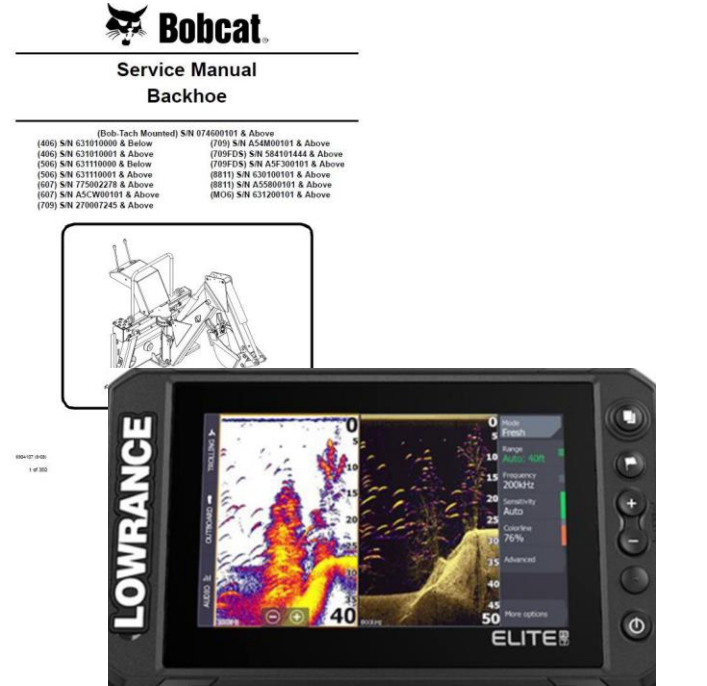
Two useful terms that \_\_\_\_\_ use to describe \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. An \_\_\_\_\_ is its physical appearance, or its visible \_\_\_\_\_. An \_\_\_\_\_ is its \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ combinations. To understand the difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, look at the table in Figure 9.

\_\_\_\_\_ use two additional terms to describe an \_\_\_\_\_. An \_\_\_\_\_ that has two identical \_\_\_\_\_ for a \_\_\_\_\_ is said to be \_\_\_\_\_ for that \_\_\_\_\_. A tall pea plant that has the \_\_\_\_\_ TT and a short pea plant with the \_\_\_\_\_ tt are both \_\_\_\_\_. An \_\_\_\_\_ that has two different \_\_\_\_\_ for a \_\_\_\_\_ is said to be \_\_\_\_\_ for that \_\_\_\_\_. A tall plant with the \_\_\_\_\_ Tt is \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ used the term \_\_\_\_\_ to describe \_\_\_\_\_ pea plants.

Geneticists, organisms, phenotype, genotype...



- MAINTENANCE SAFETY
- ALPHABETICAL INDEX
- CONTENTS
- PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE
- 406 BACKHOE (S/N 631010000 & BELOW, S/N 631010001 & ABOVE) 506 BACKHOE (S/N 631110001 & ABOVE)
- HYDRAULIC SYSTEM
- 406 BACKHOE (S/N 631010000 & BELOW, S/N 631010001 & ABOVE) 506 BACKHOE (S/N 631110001 & ABOVE)
- MAIN FRAME
- 406 BACKHOE (S/N 631010000 & BELOW,



# Vocabulary is in everything!

My favourite dish - **Pepperoni pasta**



**Ingredients**

**Pepperoni sauce:**

- 1 red onion
- 2 red peppers
- 120 g pepperoni
- 1 can (450 g) tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- Olive oil
- Garlic
- Oregano
- 50 g pasta per person

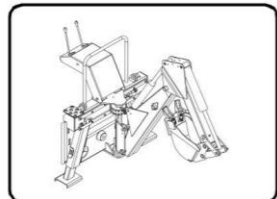


1. Cut the onion, red peppers and pepperoni.
2. Heat some olive oil in a pan and fry the onions, red peppers and pepperoni.
3. Add oregano, garlic, tomatoes and water and cook for 20 minutes.
4. Cook the pasta in a big pan of boiling water.
5. Serve the pasta with the pepperoni sauce. Delicious!

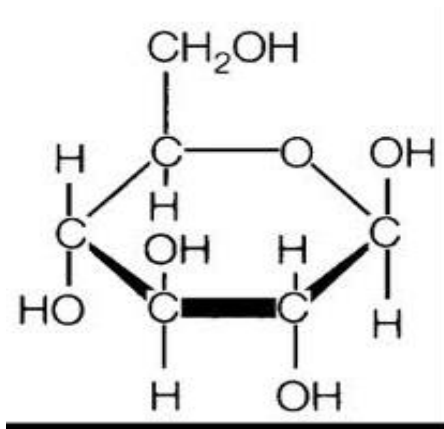
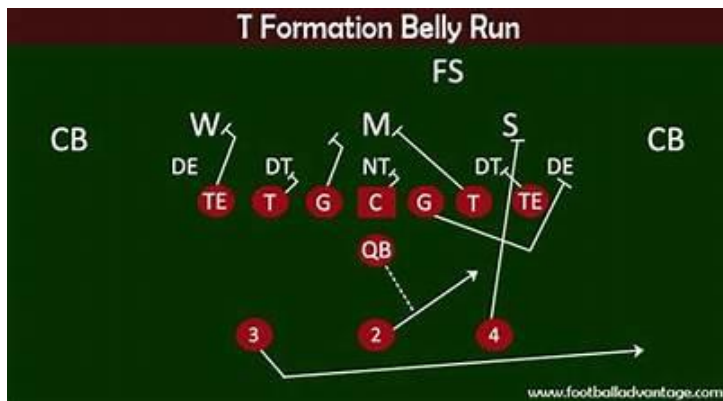
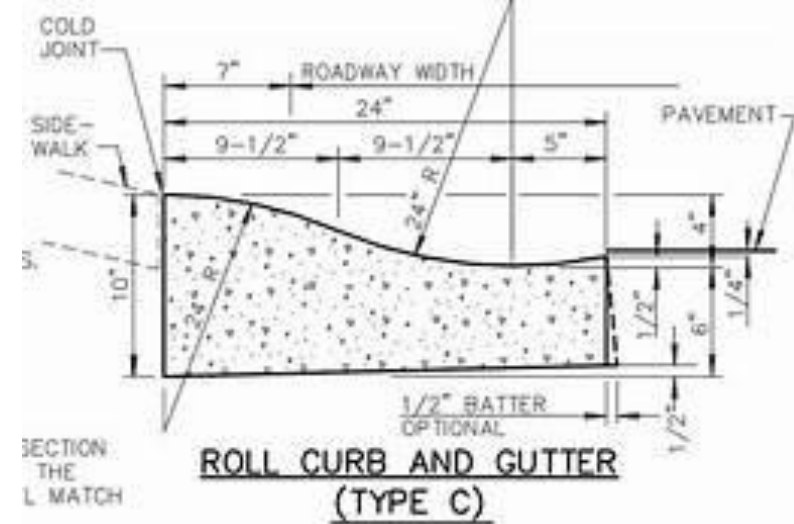


**Service Manual  
Backhoe**

(Bob-Tach Mounted) S/N 074600101 & Above  
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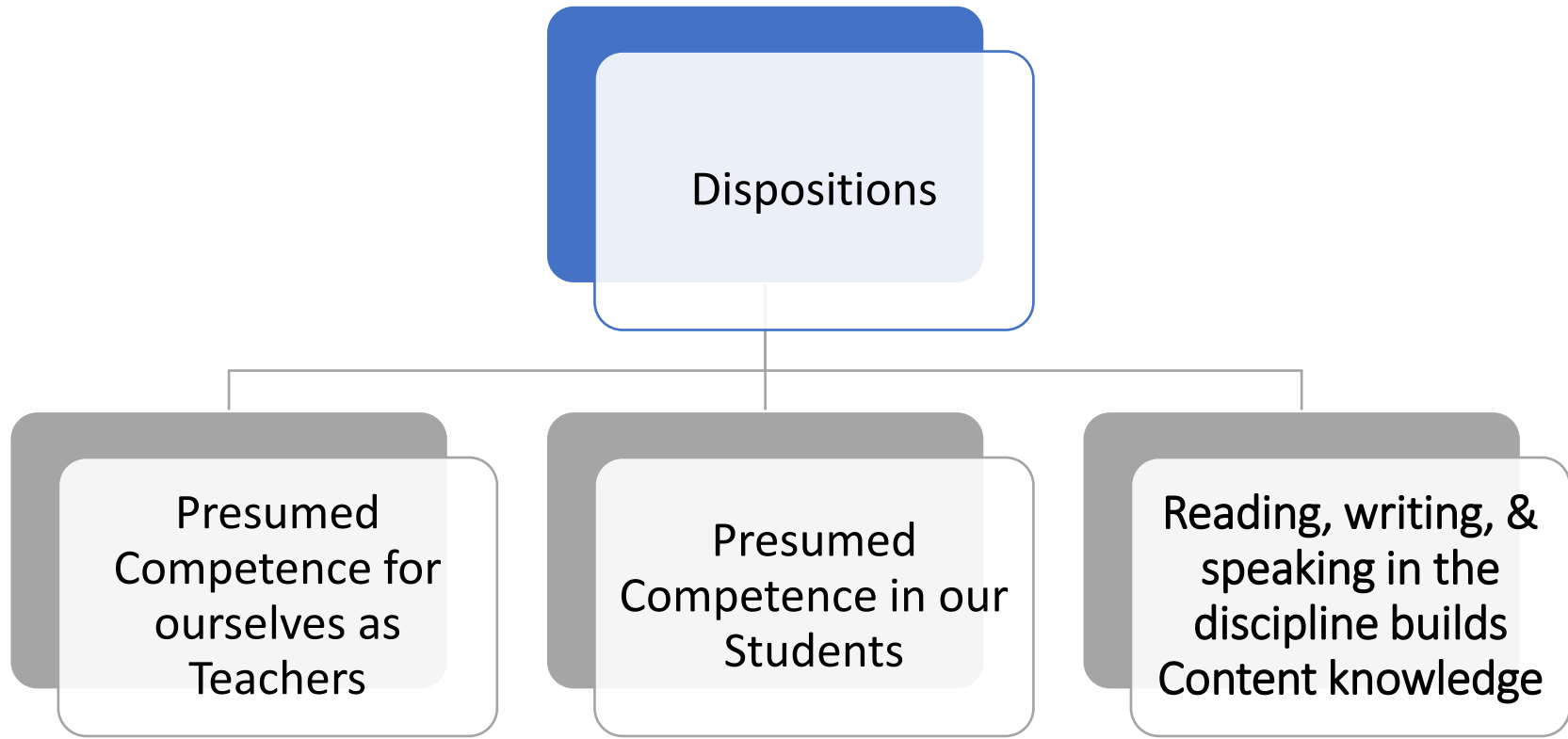


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$$a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + \dots + a_nx_n = b$$

“Text” Comes in Many Forms



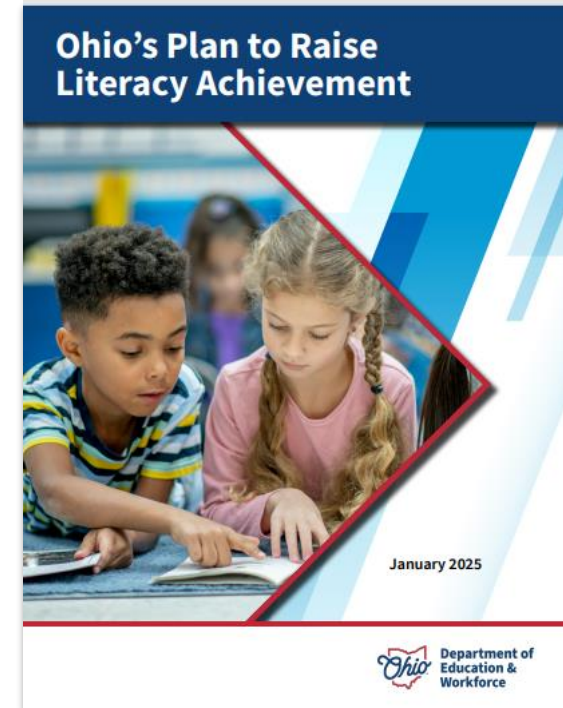
How do we help students to cope, and even improve, while grappling with curriculum?

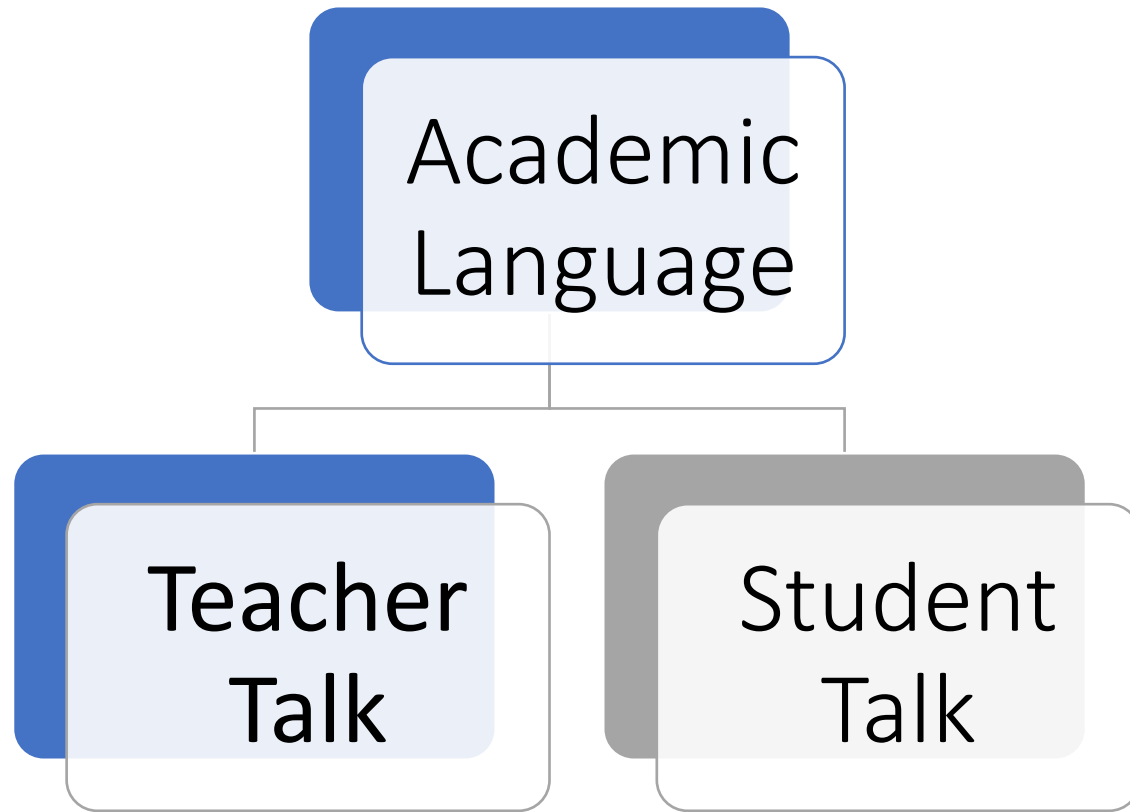


# Dispositions

To address the needs of **all learners** and improve literacy achievement, Ohio educators will be supported in:

- **Believing all students can learn to read at or above grade level** and grow in their skills
- Implementing scientifically based instructional and assessment practices that meet the diverse needs of learners
- Providing **integrated supports and evidence-based interventions** for students with disabilities
- **Prioritizing learner needs** based on data-based decision making





How do we help students to cope, and even improve, while grappling with curriculum?

# Research to Practice - Vocabulary

## Do This

**Explicitly teach** vocabulary words before and after reading a text. Teach the sounds, spelling, meaning, and use of the words. Use pictures and gestures to aid in learning the meaning.

**Model** using new vocabulary in context, through both oral and written language.

**Academic Talk** – Use sophisticated language daily in conversations and interactions with students.

**Complex Texts** – Read aloud and have children read challenging texts with academic language.

## Instead of This

Instruct students to look up all vocabulary in a dictionary or glossary without any direct instruction.

Tell students to write words in a sentence after looking them up in a dictionary.

Simplify language to make things easier for the child to understand.

Read aloud or have children read only texts with simple language or leveled texts.



**Academic Language: Teacher Talk & Student Talk**



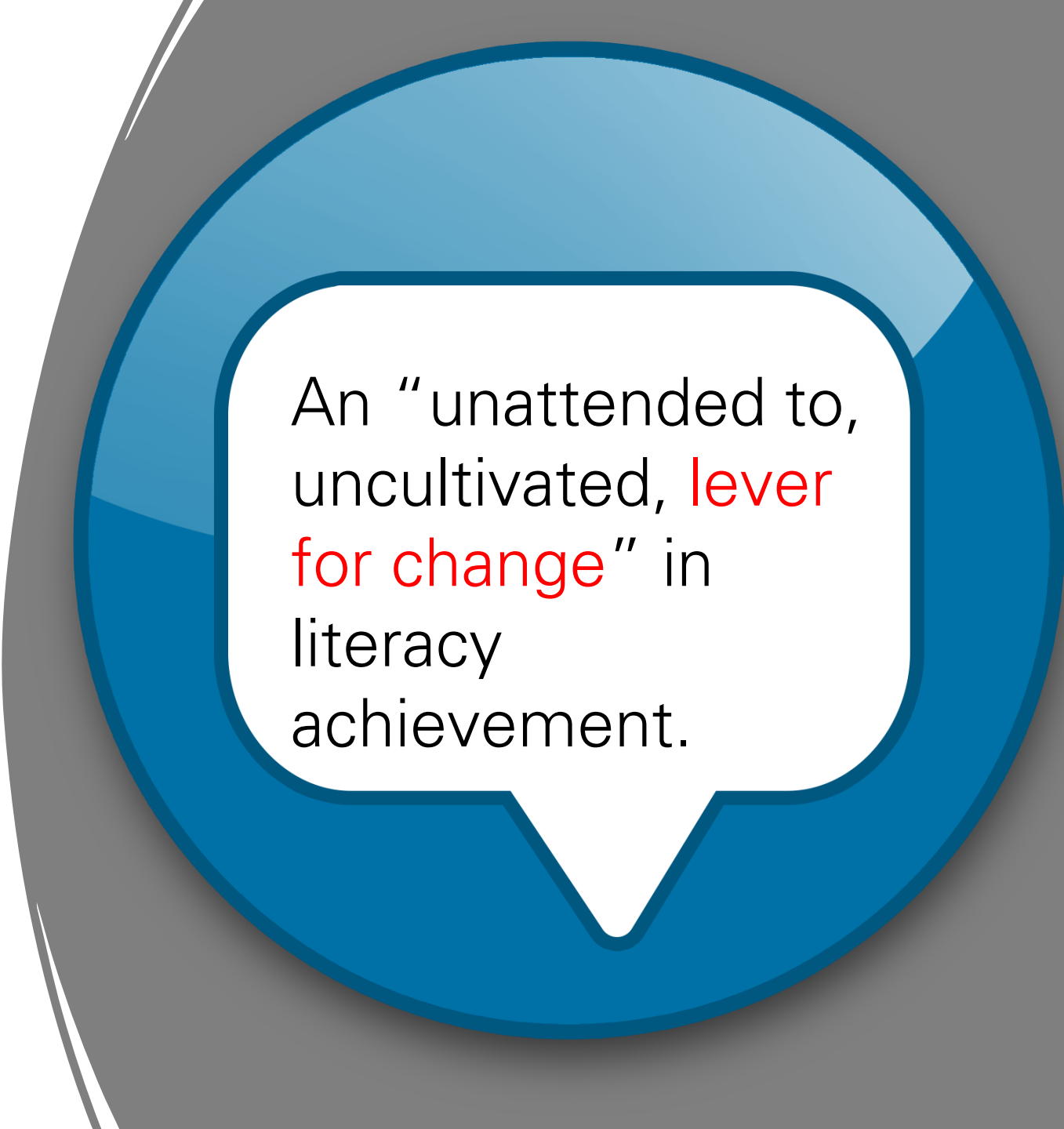
# What is Academic or Professional Talk?

- connected to the specialized and sophisticated language of a discipline
- different from basic or conversational vocabulary and is essential for professional or academic success

# What is Academic Talk?

The number of complex words (academic language) used by educators with students

- Nonie Leseaux – “A Matter of Talk”



An “unattended to, uncultivated, lever for change” in literacy achievement.

## Wash them in Waves of Words

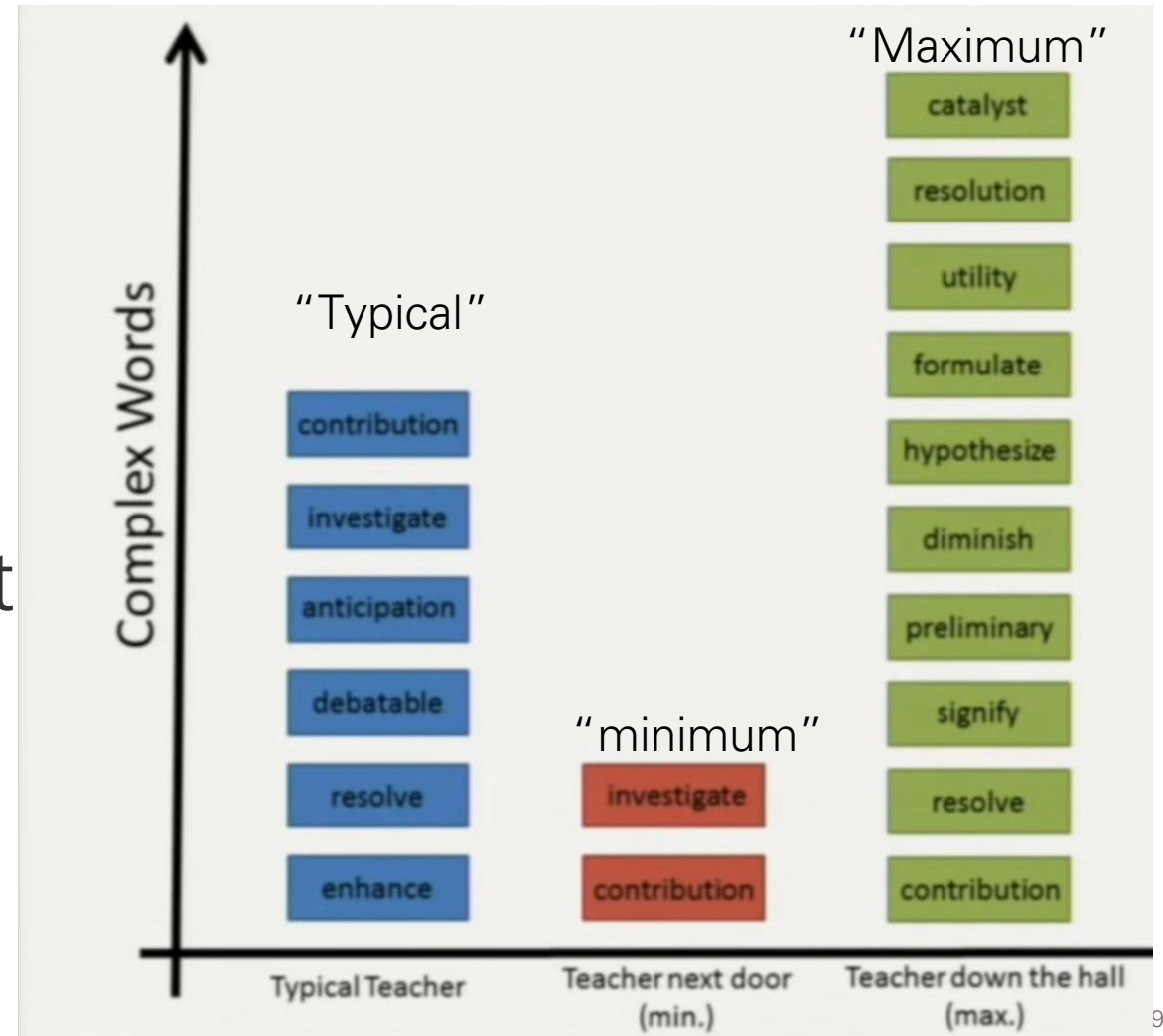
- *Some Children come to school with too little language to support comprehension*
- *Washing our students in words gives them language, background knowledge, and more access to meaning*



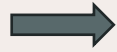
# Impact of “Teacher Talk”

“In fact, we found that if the typical teacher using those 60 complex words in a 20 minute span consistently increased those by what we might call one standard deviation — or used 20 more words during that time — we would see almost a year’s worth of growth, extra growth, in reading in that classroom across the year.”

(Leseaux, 2014)



What you currently say...



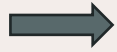
Academic Language connection

"Use the *little feller* to tighten this piece"



Use the 5/32 allen key to tighten the hex screw

"Line up at the door"



Assemble yourselves in a linear fashion  
Queue at the door

Brainstorm... what words can you intentionally use to increase your "Academic Talk" while interacting with students?

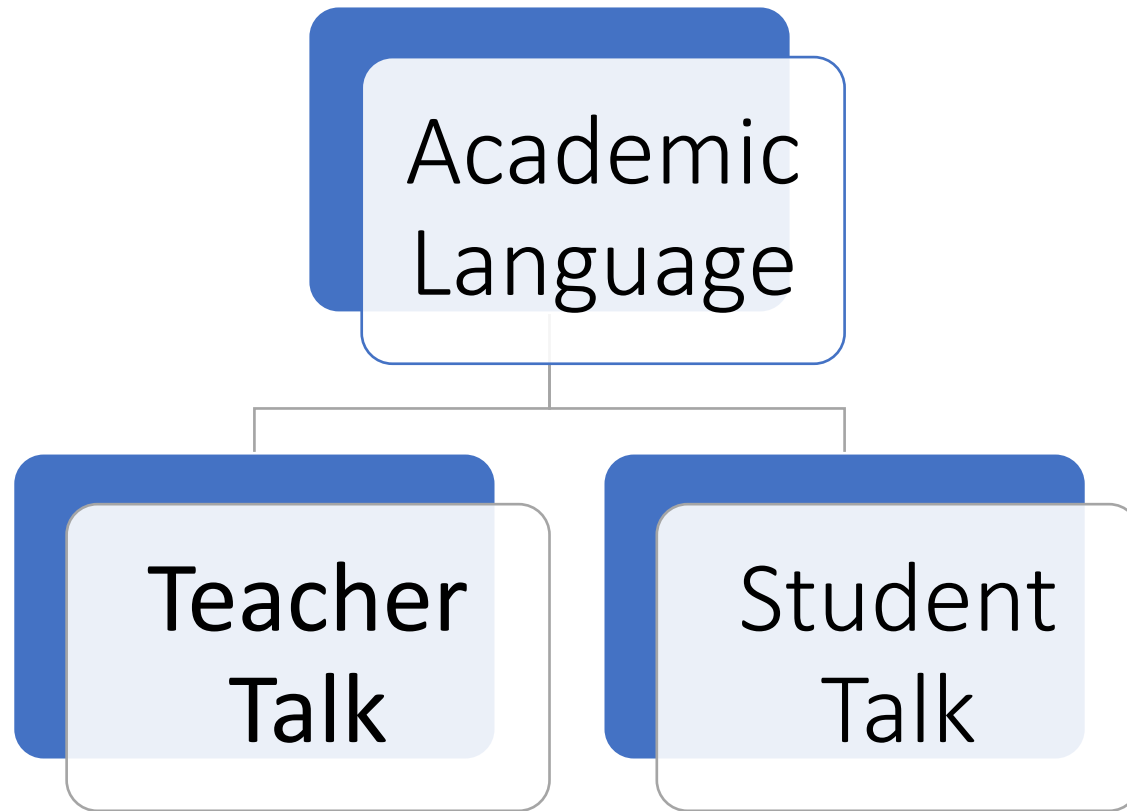
How do we help students feel part of a community and find academic success?

Teach them the vocabulary and language to access that discipline

Communicate like an "insider" or specialist







What do we do about helping students to cope, and even improve, while grappling with curriculum?

# Research to Practice - Vocabulary

Do This	Instead of This
<b>Explicitly teach</b> vocabulary words before and after reading a text. Teach the sounds, spelling, meaning, and use of the words. Use pictures and gestures to aid in learning the meaning.	Instruct students to look up all vocabulary in a dictionary or glossary without any direct instruction.
<b>Model</b> using new vocabulary in context, through both oral and written language.	Tell students to write words in a sentence after looking them up in a dictionary.
<b>Academic Talk</b> – Use sophisticated language daily in conversations and interactions with students.	Simplify language to make things easier for the child to understand.
<b>Complex Texts</b> – Read aloud and have children read challenging texts with academic language.	Read aloud or have children read only texts with simple language or leveled texts.



**Teach Vocabulary**

# Explicit Vocabulary Routine - for any discipline!

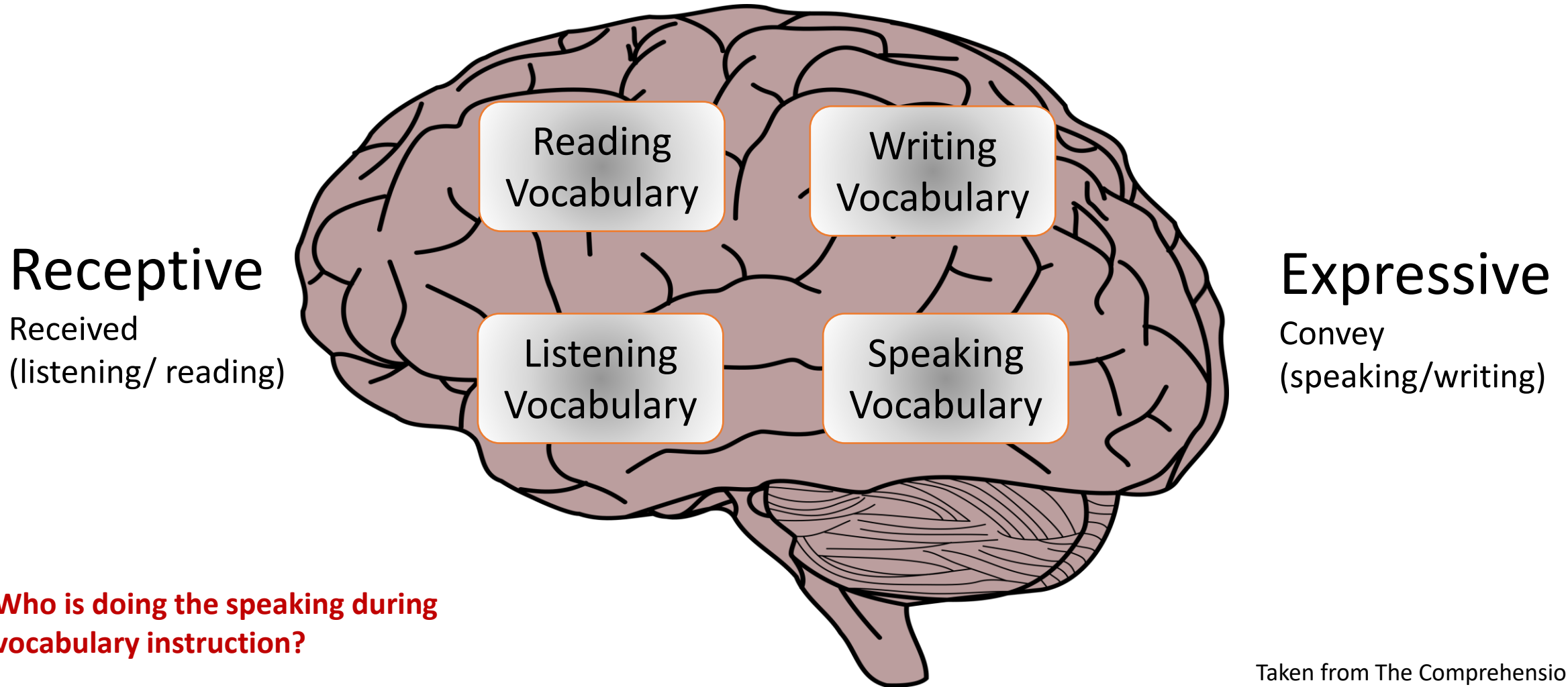
Step 1: Introduce the word's pronunciation and orthographic features.

Step 2: Introduce the word's meaning (student friendly).

Step 3: Illustrate the word with examples (and non-examples)

Step 4: Check students' understanding.

# Blueprint for Vocabulary





# Which words?

- Words that are unknown
- Words that are critical to understanding
- Words that students are likely to encounter in the future and are generally useful (Stahl, 1986)
- Difficult words that need interpretation

Archer & Hughes *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*

## Relieved

Relief from worry or anxiety.  
(relaxed, comforted)

I was **relieved** to hear that the due date was extended!

When something that is difficult is over, you feel \_\_\_\_.

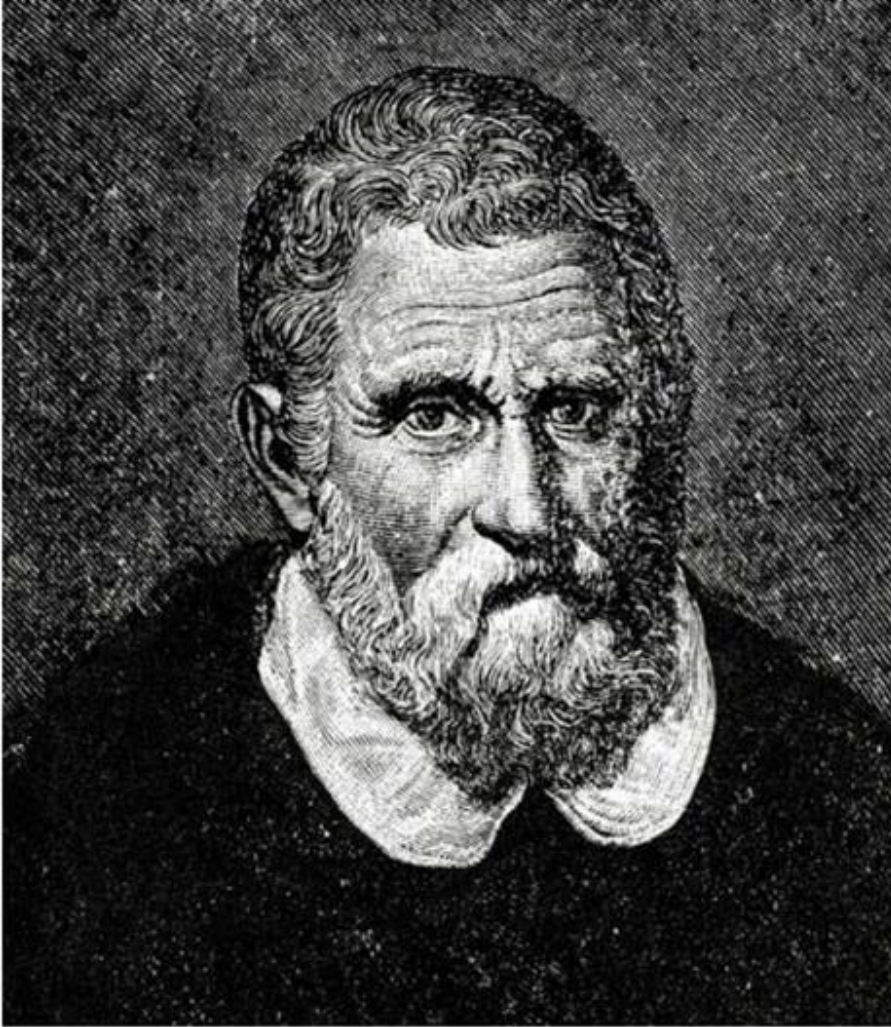
Which face is my **relieved** face?

When Maria was told the soccer game was canceled, she said, "I'm so **relieved**." Why might she feel **relieved**?

Think of a time when you felt **relieved** because something difficult was over.

Tell a partner: One time I was **relieved** was \_\_\_\_

# 1. merchant (noun)



## explanation:

A **merchant** is a person whose job is buying and selling things.

## example:

This is an artist's idea of the **merchant** Marco Polo. Today, we use many other words for **merchant**, including: seller, retailer, vendor, dealer, exporter, shopkeeper, and trader.

Sample Vocab from *REWARDS Plus Social Studies*

# merchant — check for understanding

You just learned that a **merchant** is someone who buys and sells things. But the word **merchant** can also be used as an adjective that describes something that belongs to a **merchant**. So, what is a **merchant** ship?

**Begin by saying:**

A **merchant** ship is . . .



# Impact of Vocabulary Intervention

Explicit instruction of 10 new words per week for a semester yielded one year's growth on the reading diagnostic assessment. (Curtis and Longo, 1999)

Instruction included 10-15 exposures per week to each word, in direct instruction, games, writing, reading, and discussion. (Curtis and Longo, 1999)



# Vocabulary....

IS content

Builds Background

Unlocks Reading  
Comprehension

*...that whether or not readers understand a text depends far more on how much **background knowledge and vocabulary** they have relating to the topic than on how much they've practiced comprehension skills.*

Willingham, 2018

## The "Vocabulary Gap"

In one of the most \_\_\_\_\_ places in the world the \_\_\_\_\_, a people have \_\_\_\_\_ over a \_\_\_\_\_ years. They are the \_\_\_\_\_. For the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ is a place \_\_\_\_\_ with life. Depending on how far north they live, the \_\_\_\_\_ find everything from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

(3<sup>rd</sup> grade passage on a state assessment)

# SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE (2001)

## LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**  
(facts, concepts, etc.)

**VOCABULARY**  
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

**LANGUAGE STRUCTURE**  
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

**VERBAL REASONING**  
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

**LITERACY KNOWLEDGE**  
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

## WORD RECOGNITION

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS**  
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

**DECODING**  
(alphabetic principle,  
spelling–sound correspondences)

**SIGHT RECOGNITION**  
(of familiar words)

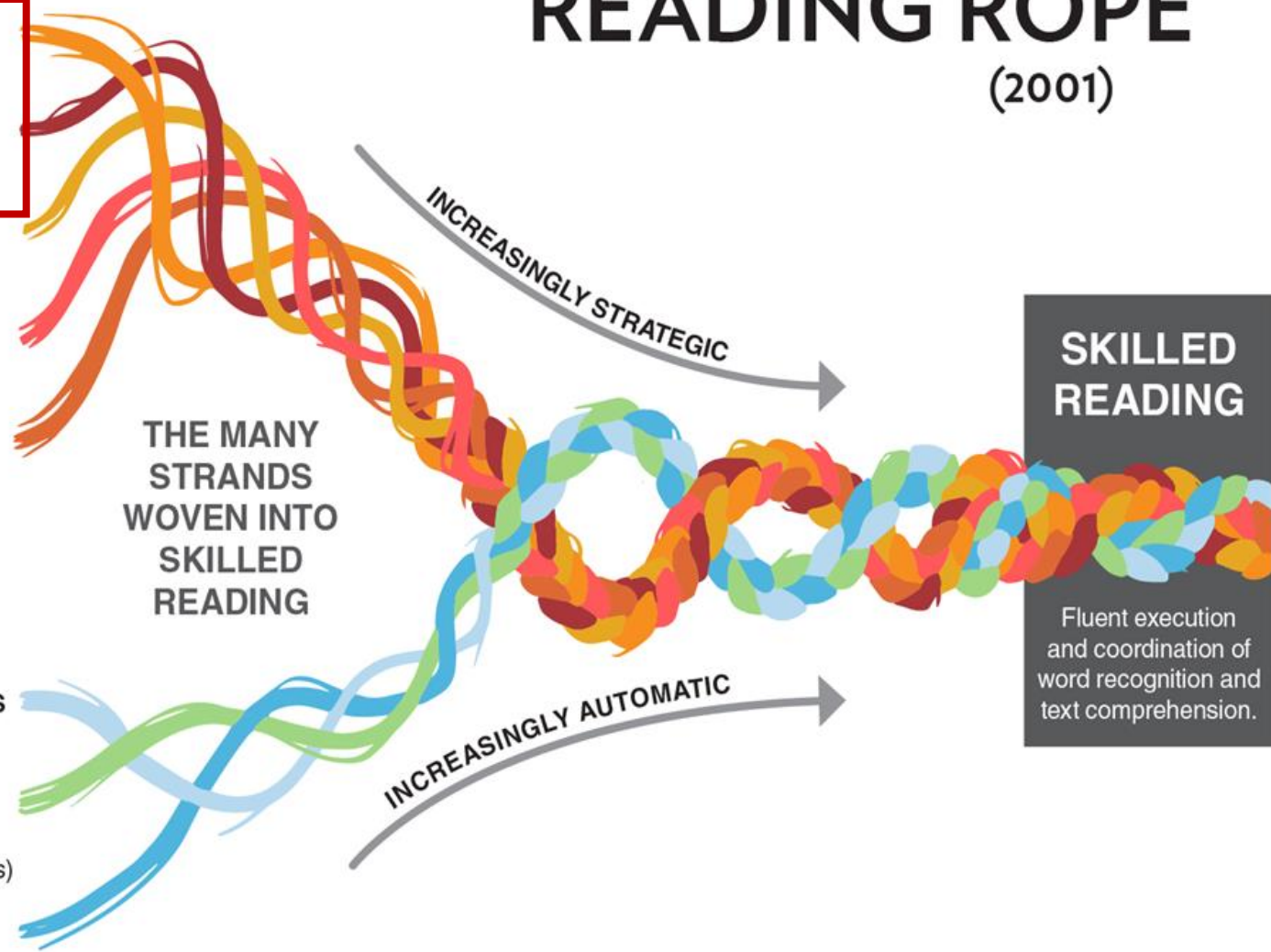
THE MANY  
STRANDS  
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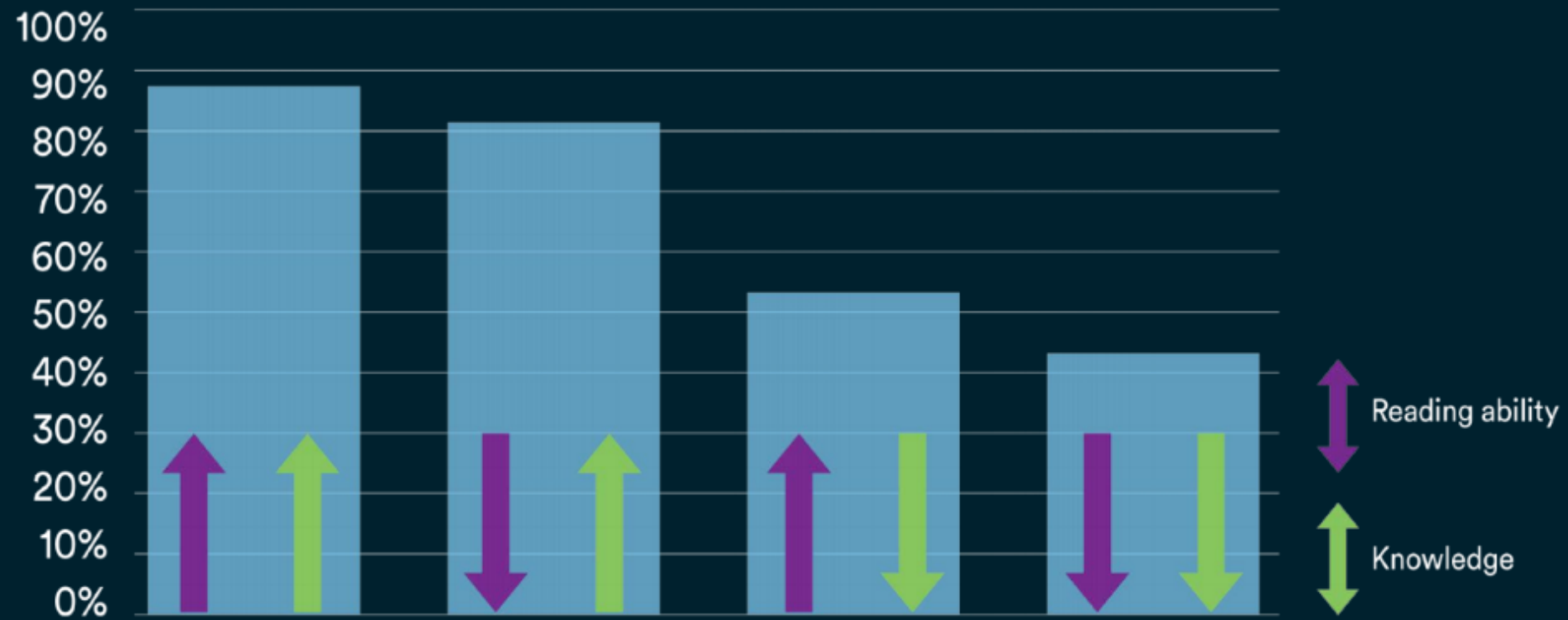
**SKILLED  
READING**

Fluent execution  
and coordination of  
word recognition and  
text comprehension.



# THE BASEBALL STUDY

## Measure of Comprehension



# Why “world” knowledge is so important

“Knowledge erased the comprehension gap. Thus, **knowledge building may be key** to assisting adolescents in understanding **rigorous** texts.”

**“Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets”** Sarah M. Lupo, John Z. Strong, William Lewis, Sharon Walpole and Michael C. McKenna

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## FIND THE MAIN IDEA

Much depended on the two overnight batsmen. But this duo perished either side of lunch—the latter a little unfortunate to be adjudged leg-before—and with Andrew Symonds, too, being shown the dreaded finger off an inside edge, the inevitable beckoned, bar the pyrotechnics of Michael Clarke and the ninth wicket.

Would it been helpful to do some prior vocabulary work with ...

### leg before

- *Leg-before wicket (lbw) is one of the ways in which a batsman can be dismissed in the sport of cricket. Following an appeal by the fielding side, the umpire may rule a batter out lbw if the ball would have struck the wicket, but was instead intercepted by any part of the batter's body (except the hand holding the bat).*

# Quality of Instruction and Our Words

- ❑ Provide daily opportunities for academic talk.
- ❑ Go beyond comprehension questions.
- ❑ Facilitate rich discussion.
- ❑ Connect academic talk to academic writing.
- ❑ Spend more time on planned vocabulary teaching.
- ❑ Focus carefully on the words we choose to teach.
- ❑ Teach word-learning strategies.

**Academic Talk**



**Academic Talk: A Key to Literacy** by Nonie K. Lesaux

To develop stronger readers in classrooms across the country, we need more productive ways—the kinds of student talking and working together on academic tasks. Talk is, in fact, one of the most critical skills in the classroom to promote critical reading and thinking. Consider the following statistics that clearly demonstrate we must strengthen our reading instruction for all students:

- On one International Reading Assessment, only 30 percent and 12 percent of U.S. students scored in the highest category for the reading and problem-solving sections, respectively (Torgesen, 2008).
- According to the National Center on Education Statistics, over 60 percent of students in community colleges and 20 percent of students in four-year institutions require remedial instruction (NCES, 2006b).
- Educators in colleges and universities, including elite universities, report a steady decline in students' critical thinking, reading, and writing skills (Shan & Ma, 2007).

So why have we as educators failed? Well, we know that reading needs a strategy to support comprehension, but it's only a first step. While the reader must be able to successfully decode, he or she must also recognize the meaning of the words themselves and especially the concepts those words represent. To do this, the reader draws on his or her background knowledge, constantly applying what he or she already knows about the text's topic while making his or her way through the word-covered pages. But if the words on the page are completely unfamiliar or just too difficult to grasp independently, then reading can be made more like "reading" but it is simply an exercise, unproductive of learning.

The specialized, sophisticated language and abstract ideas featured in our genre-challenging texts are not just those who are struggling. In fact, we may have a false sense of security that students who reach proficiency in early grades are invulnerable against more difficult and denser texts.

The following guiding principles will help teachers design effective academic language instruction to promote students' academic reading and writing skills:

- Provide daily opportunities for academic talk.
- Go beyond comprehension questions.
- Facilitate rich discussion.
- Connect academic talk to academic writing.



BP13

How do we help students feel part of a community and find academic success?

**Use consistent instructional routines.**







Instructional Routines become “background knowledge” and free up precious cognitive space for more rigorous types of thinking

## Consistent Instructional Routines

Instructional routines are a little bit like a standard play in sports. If everyone knows the play, then the game runs more smoothly.

While instructional routines benefit us as teachers, they are also very helpful to students... students' cognitive energy must be divided between the task and the content.

**However, if an instructional routine is used, students can place their attention solely on the content, which is exactly where we want them to focus** (from *Explicit Instruction*, p. 195).



Using Routines

## **Frees up students' mental "bandwidth"**

Bandwidth is to our cognitive capacity and our ability to pay attention, make good decisions, stick with our plans and resist temptations.

It correlates with intelligence and SAT performance, impulse control and success on diets. (from Scarcity by Sendhil Mullainathan & Eldar Shafir)

Using Routines

**Creates psychological safety**

- **explicit vocabulary routine**

**Explicit Vocabulary Routine** – for any discipline!

Step 1: Introduce the word's pronunciation and orthographic features.

Step 2: Introduce the word's meaning (student friendly).

Step 3: Illustrate the word with examples (and non-examples)

Step 4: Check students' understanding.

Archer & Hughes *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*

Note the routines we discussed to support student vocabulary and access

- **expectation of academic language usage in conversation by both them and you**



# Career Tech Leadership and Communication Competencies

## Competencies

- 1.2.1. Extract relevant, valid information from materials and cite sources of information.
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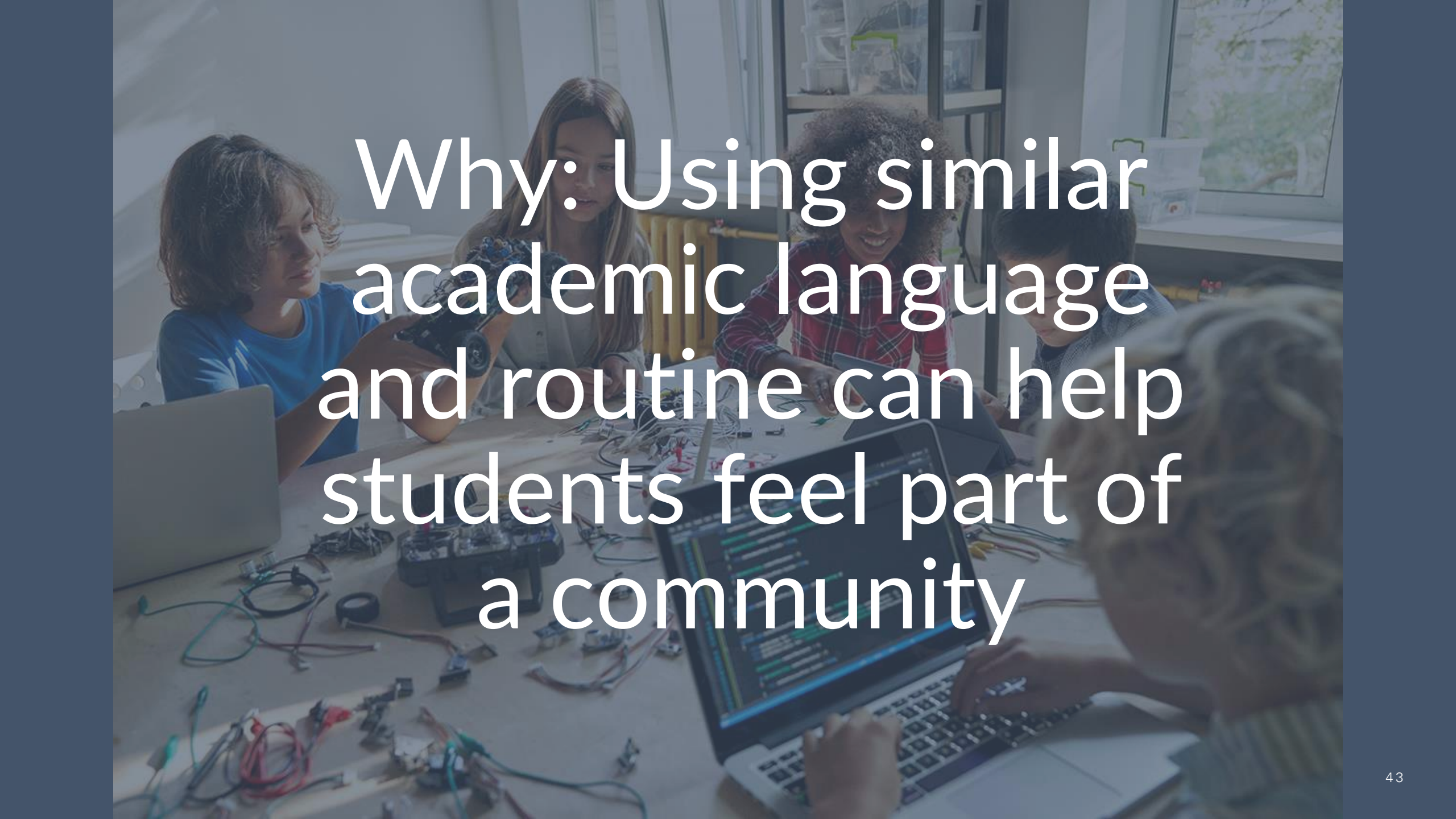
Student knowledge about how to read, write, and speak in different content areas creates community

## Competency D: Relationship Skills

D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups

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D1. 2.a Practice giving and receiving <u>feedback</u> in a respectful way	D1. 2.b Demonstrate the ability to give and receive feedback in a respectful way	D1. 2.c Offer and acknowledge <u>constructive feedback</u> to strengthen connections and improve communication outcomes with others	D1. 2.d Apply constructive feedback to strengthen connections and achieve common goals

## Social and Emotional Learning Standards

A group of diverse students are gathered around a table in a classroom or workshop, focused on a project. They are using laptops and working with various electronic components like wires and breadboards. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a window in the background. The overall atmosphere is one of collaborative learning and hands-on education.

Why: Using similar  
academic language  
and routine can help  
students feel part of  
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