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SECOND EDITION

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

BARBARA R. BLACKBURN

ROUTLEDGE

An **Eye On Education** Book

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eResources

Many of the tools in this book can be downloaded and printed for classroom use. You can access these downloads by visiting the book product page on our website, www.routledge.com/9781138935952. Then click on the tab that says "eResources," and select the files. They will begin downloading to your computer.

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Introduction

I believe in the power of teachers. But I have found that some teachers fall into the trap of looking for the latest "magic pill" to deal with the ever-increasing challenges we face in teaching today's students. The pressure to find an immediate solution to prove that our students are learning—according to a test score—outweighs our focus on long-term growth.

I am the daughter of a teacher and a school secretary. I have taught in elementary school and junior high school, and I have taught beginning swimming to preschoolers and lifeguard training to high school and college students. In addition, I have taught teachers working toward a master's degree, and I now write and speak full-time to teachers and leaders.

Those experiences taught me an important lesson: Teachers are *always* the key to effective instruction. It's not the textbook or the latest program on the market. In classrooms in which all students learn—regardless of gender, ethnicity, poverty level, or background—teachers do two things. First, they care about their students. The old saying is true: Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. But caring alone isn't enough. You also must connect with your students in ways that will help them learn. Throughout this book, the focus will be on foundational instructional strategies that will help you connect with your students. The best teachers use a set of core instructional strategies to positively influence the learning of their students. They don't jump from bandwagon to bandwagon; they do the things that work.

This book will not provide you with a lockstep program, nor does it offer a checklist. It is a set of recommended actions that, when persistently and consistently applied, will help your students learn more effectively. As you read, you'll find 26 chapters—one for each letter of the alphabet. The chapters are not sequential; rather, they are designed so that you can start with any area that interests you or that meets a current need.

Throughout the chapters, you will find stories about how teachers have helped their students succeed. In addition to reading about my own experiences, you'll meet teachers of all levels, from preschool to college, and teachers of various subject areas such as science, math, social studies, language

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arts, and music. The stories serve as lampposts, guiding you and your c room in new directions. At the end of each chapter, you'll see four resources for more information. Two are books; two are electronic resources you can access on the Internet. They will provide more detail on the topic from the chapter.

In this new edition, I've added technology-based examples throughout the text, as well as a new chapter on blended learning. You'll also find new information on academic vocabulary, social and emotional learning, research to inform your instruction, and understanding diverse learners. If you are struggling to balance standardized testing and quality instruction, I'd encourage you to start with Chapter X: X Factor to read how I dealt with that challenge.

It is my hope that you will connect with your students in new ways as you apply the strategies in the following chapters. But I also hope that you will feel a sense of renewal. As I travel across the nation, I am saddened as I listen to teachers share their feelings of discouragement. As you read, you'll find a common thread throughout every chapter. Teachers *do* make a difference in the lives of their students. Despite what you may feel, in spite of the negativity that can drag you down, never forget that you are important. You make a difference for your students, and you can positively influence them in exciting ways as you try the strategies suggested here. Learning is an adventure—enjoy the journey!

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A

Academic Vocabulary Is Foundational

"I never knew words could be so confusing," Milo said to Tock as he bent down to scratch the dog's ear. "Only when you use a lot to say a little," answered Tock. Milo thought this was quite the wisest thing he'd heard all day.

—Norman Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*

Think About It

How deep is the vocabulary level of your students?

Although we have always known the importance of teaching vocabulary, there has recently been a focus on academic vocabulary, especially vocabulary tiers.

Tiers of Vocabulary

Tiers of Vocabulary were introduced by Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown in 1987. As they describe them, Tier One words are acquired

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through everyday speech. These words are common and are typically taught to children in the early grades or learned through everyday use around them. Tier Two includes academic words that appear across all texts. They may change meaning due to use and they present a challenge if experienced in text initially. Vocabulary instruction for these words typically adds to students' understanding of the meaning. Tier Three vocabulary is domain- or content-area specific. These words are critical for building conceptual understanding in content, but they require explicit instruction. These words are best taught when they are needed in the context of the lesson.

Sample Tier Vocabulary

Tier	Examples
Tier One	cold, cat, tired, walk, talk, look
Tier Two	contradict, precede, retrospect, reality, mentioned
Tier Three	chloroplasts, metamorphosed, caste, factorization, traitorous

Tier Two Words provide an opportunity for thorough vocabulary development. These should be words that you focus on in depth, since they will have applications not only in the specified text, but across other texts and areas of the curriculum. Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan give us a sampling of suggested Tier Two Vocabulary for stories and novels.

Suggested Tier Two Vocabulary for Stories and Novels

Grades	Text	Suggested Tier Two Vocabulary
K–2	*Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China*	dusk, disguised, route, cunning, plump, clever, tender, paced
3–5	*Frindle*	reputations, maximum, concentration, alert, disruption, standards, controversial, endures
6–8	*A Wrinkle in Time*	atrophied, fallible, assuaged, emanate, pungent, perplexity, jeopardize, vulnerable, distraught, reiterating, vestige

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9–12	*The Fall of the House of Usher*	oppressively, pervaded, sublime, malady, acute, pallid, solace, morbid, anomalous, palpable, succumbed, paradoxical

Janet Allen's Academic Vocabulary

In *Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary*, Janet Allen organizes academic vocabulary by context. She explains there are four types of words: general academic words, domain- or discipline-specific terms, topic-specific vocabulary, and passage-critical words.

Four Types of Academic Vocabulary

General Academic Vocabulary
Domain- or Discipline-Specific Vocabulary
Topic-Specific Vocabulary
Passage-Critical Vocabulary

First, there is general academic vocabulary, which is not discipline-specific. Students frequently see these words, such as *analyze, synthesize, contrast*, and *restate*. It's important to provide detailed instruction with lots of practice, so that students are very familiar with them.

Next, are domain- or discipline-specific words, which are frequently used within a specific discipline, such as science or math. These words include terms such as *foreshadowing, hypothesis, rational number*, or *aerobic exercise*. Within the content area, these words should be reinforced regularly.

Third, there are topic-specific words. They are needed to understand a specific lesson or topic, and are typically critical to an understanding of the concept. Direct instruction is usually necessary with these terms. Examples include *Holocaust, biome*, and *impressionism*.

Finally, passage-critical words are those that are necessary to understand a specific text. These words are crucial to comprehension of the passage. Particularly for specialized words, direct instruction is needed. Janet explains that in the book *BATS: Biggest! Littlest!* sample passage-critical words include *echolocation, horning, roost* and *wingspan*.

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Whichever structure you use, thinking about the different types of vocabulary will help you teach words in a more meaningful way, as opposed to having students simply memorize definitions of random word lists.

Strategies for Teaching Academic Vocabulary

No matter which categories of academic vocabulary you use, it's important to consider how to teach vocabulary. We'll look at four strategies for vocabulary instruction.

Four Strategies

Using Visuals
Playing Games
Word Logs and Word Walls
Multiple-Meaning Words

Using Visuals to Enhance Understanding

Visuals can help students understand new concepts. I was in a social studies classroom in which the teacher was presenting geography terms such as *equator, latitude,* and *longitude*. She drew a circle on the board to illustrate the Earth, and then she wrote the word *equator* across the center. She wrote the word *latitude* horizontally from west to east where the latitude lines go across the Earth. Finally, she wrote the word *longitude* from north to south to clearly illustrate the meaning of the word. She provided visual context for her students as they encountered the terms for the first time.

I used a graphic organizer to help students demonstrate their understanding in ways that required them to synthesize information about a term or concept, and refine it down to the key points. Using a graphic organizer, students discussed different elements of a particular vocabulary term.

Then, my students could create their own graphic organizers to take notes about and demonstrate their understanding of vocabulary. I remember one student bringing me a graphic organizer she had completed about the Pythagorean Theorem. She had used right triangles to organize the information. Using visuals helps students connect their learning.

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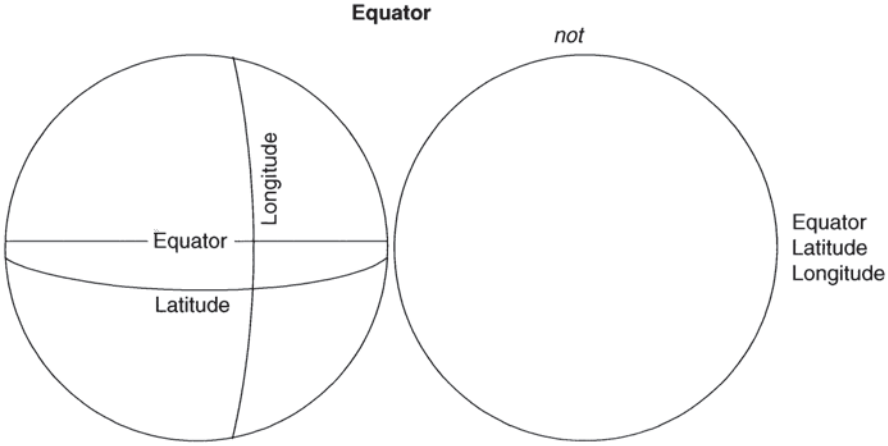
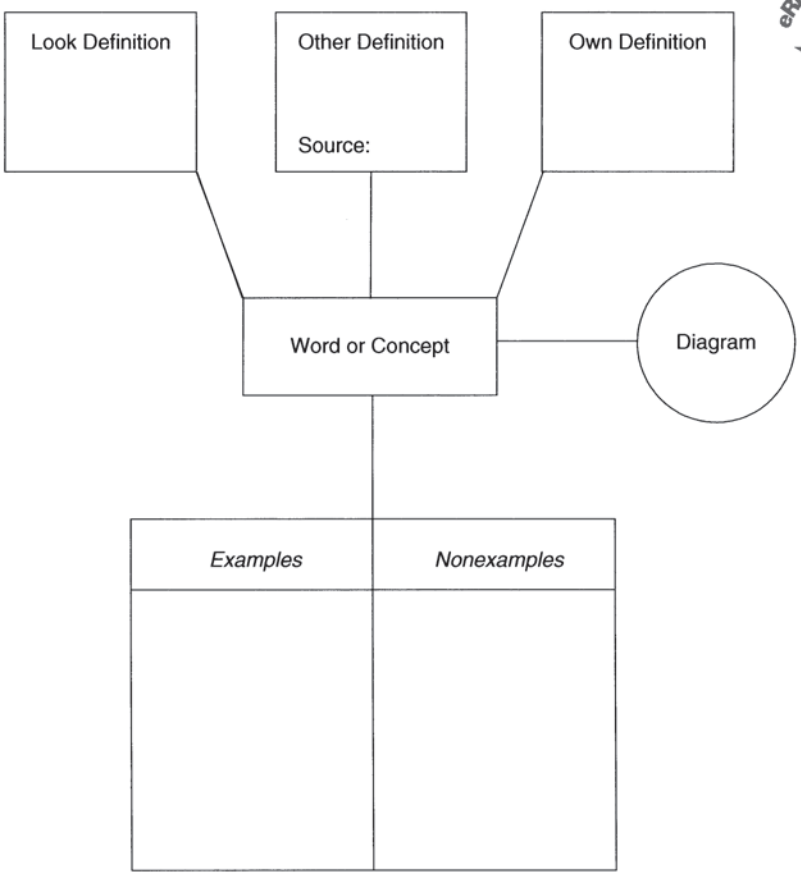
Equator



Vocabulary Chart



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Playing Games

We need to experience new words and concepts multiple times in a variety of ways. Too often, we expect students to fully understand a word after they have read it one time. However, reading a word multiple times doesn't ensure understanding either. Your students need to play with words in fun and different ways to help them learn.

During "Headband," Erin writes a word on a sentence strip and makes it into a headband. First graders in her class give clues to the person wearing the headband, who must guess the word. All students are involved, and the activity encourages her students to learn from each other.

James Good, a middle school drama teacher, points out that his students find the language of Shakespearean plays challenging. For key scenes, students are broken into groups of six, with five acting parts and a group director. "Students identify difficult turns of phrase or specific vocabulary words and make their best educated guess as to meaning. They run lines with one another to improve pronunciation and dramatic reading. The director makes suggestions as to simple stage movements that can be done in the small space at the front of the room. The group discusses appropriate tone, body language, and facial expression. Concerning themselves with the dramatic aspects of presenting to the other three groups more or less forces them to make meaning. Each group takes a turn in a kind of 'drama slam.' They try to outdo the others and get delightfully hammy."

Word Logs and Word Walls

Many teachers use word walls, or sections of a bulletin board or wall to display vocabulary terms. Effective word walls are incorporated into instruction, rather than simply being a list of words on the wall.

Another alternative is for students to collect personal logs or dictionaries. This can be a portion of a notebook, or a folder with sticky notes of various words. I was in a primary classroom where students used coat hangers with words dangling from string as their own dictionaries. The final product isn't important; it's just providing students a way to keep up with their own list of words.

Multiple-Meaning Words

Particularly in specific content areas, it's important to teach words that have multiple meanings. I was observing a student teacher in a science classroom one day, and he asked, "Does anyone know what *grounded* means?"

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It was his opening question for a lesson on electricity. Immediately one student shouted out, "That's what happened to me last week when I made a C on my test!" Everyone laughed, but that's an excellent example of a multiple-meaning word. We need to specifically teach students the different meanings of these words. Janet Allen shares a chart that helps.

Word Chart

Word	In general, this means. . . .	In math, this means. . .	Visual to help me understand
base	*bottom of something, support*	*number that is raised to a power in a mathematical expression*	2^3

Summary

- The three tiers of vocabulary help us understand which words to focus on.
- Janet Allen's four types of vocabulary also assist us as we plan instruction.
- Using explicit strategies increases learning.
- Using visuals helps with vocabulary instruction.
- Playing games increases student engagement and understanding.
- Word logs and teaching multiple meaning words are important parts of teaching vocabulary.

If You Would Like More Information . . .

Bringing Words to Life (Second Edition) by Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan.

Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary by Janet Allen.

Jim Burke and Rick Smith's academic word list (geared to, but not limited to, English teachers): http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/acvocabulary2.pdf

Hyde Park Central School District's list of Tier Two Vocabulary Words, K–12: http://www.hpcsd.org/district.cfm?subpage=29208

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"I like the fact that all key concepts in education are covered in one book. Usually, you h buy and read a long book for each concept. Teachers will appreciate that each section o will help them in their daily work. I will be able to use this book for weekly meetings, as part o ongoing professional development in my district."
—**Betsy Fannin**, *Curriculum Supervisor, Lawrence County Educational Service Center, Lawrence County, Ohio, USA*

"The book summarizes some very good ideas about teaching and learning into one book that is easy to read. Teachers of today, especially during training, are now being exposed to lots of other teaching methods and they will find a book like this, which condenses many popular strategies into one book, very helpful. There are lots of appealing features and effective strategies that are easily transferrable into the classroom."
—**Kate Sida-Nicholls**, *Course Leader of Teacher Training Program in Suffolk and Norfolk, England*

Learn the most effective ways to promote student learning. This second edition of best-selling author Barbara R. Blackburn's *Classroom Instruction from A to Z* covers a broad range of key instructional strategies to help you create more meaningful, engaging learning experiences for your students. Each chapter from A to Z offers guidance on a specific aspect of classroom instruction, such as planning strong lessons, assessing student learning, creating more successful homework assignments, differentiating instruction, and scaffolding students for success.

Throughout the book, you'll find practical strategies and tools that you can implement immediately, no matter what subject area or grade level you teach.

Topics new to this updated edition include:

- Exploring blended learning techniques such as flipped classrooms;
- Strategies for implementing social emotional learning and mindfulness;
- Understanding diverse learners and accommodating all students;
- Teaching academic vocabulary in deeper ways; and
- Integrating subjects and promoting writing across the curriculum.

With 26 chapters, each devoted to a different aspect of instruction, this book has something to offer both new and experienced teachers looking to improve student learning. Additionally, classroom-ready tools are available as free eResources from our website, www.routledge.com/9781138935952.

Barbara R. Blackburn is the best-selling author of 15 books and is a sought-after consultant. She was an award-winning professor at Winthrop University and has taught students of all ages.

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