



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Teaching a Third Grade Vocabulary Unit

Indiantown, FL • April 2007

Topic: Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners

Practice: Teach Vocabulary

Highlights

- Description of instruction across a week to teach a seven-word unit in reading vocabulary; use of pictures, physical motion, graphic organizers and assessment
- Description of how the teacher modifies instruction for ELs

About the Site

Warfield Elementary School (K-4)

Indiantown, FL

Demographics

75% Hispanic, 5% White, 17% Black

96% Free or reduced-price lunch

67% Limited English proficient

Warfield Elementary School uses an inclusive, English immersion approach for their English learners, the majority of whom are of Guatemalan descent and speak either Spanish or one of several Guatemalan Indian dialects, which lack a written language. Distinctive features of the school include:

- A continuous improvement model for instruction; data disaggregation and analysis, facilitated by a reading coach and writing/math coach, drive all instruction
- Instructional calendars for all content areas and grade levels that show standards being taught, instructional activities, and assessments to monitor student progress
- A schoolwide reading program based on an external model, along with a core textbook program
- Data available to teachers on fast turnaround, either in profiles produced by the reading coach or through reports from district and state databases
- Whole-group instruction based on the instructional calendars, combined with flexible small-group instruction based on students' needs
- Interventions provided within the classroom, including several that are technology-based
- Instructional strategies that are research-based; for example, a vocabulary program that is based on Isabel Beck's research
- All teachers with an ESOL endorsement on their teaching certificates
- Paraprofessionals who speak the children's native languages to ease the transition into school and support teachers in working with students

Full Transcript

Hello, my name is Susan Barbieri. I am a third grade teacher at Warfield Elementary in Indiantown, Florida. I have been teaching here for three years, and this was my first year teaching third grade.

At the third grade level, there are seven new words every week, or every unit. It starts off initially with a book read-aloud anthology, and you'll read the story with the basic premise of introducing a story and building background on the first day, and reading the story. During that story, the vocabulary words will be introduced, and after having completed reading the story, I would then introduce the seven words that I would display on the chart that I'm given. It's a chart that allows you to tally throughout the week.

Then I also introduce the photo cards, and there are step-by-step instructions in there that tell you how to do it if you need that, but for my children, as second language learners, I found it was easiest if I could come up with synonyms, like one- or two-word definitions for it. So, sometimes what's in here I have to adapt so that it is something that they can understand, because as second language learners, they don't even understand some of the difficult words that are used as definitions in here, so I try to bring it to a level or a word that they might be familiar with.

So, we have the introduction on the first day, then we'll go back on the second day, and we'll do a word chat, but we'll start with a photo review. These photos are real-life photos, and it helps the children place in their mind a connection that they are seeing visually, because they don't always have a lot of background for these words. So, between the photo they are seeing that makes a connection, and the synonyms that I give them that are basic and help them assimilate it, they can

build that connection and bridge. So, we'll review with that. I review every day, before I do any lesson, all of the words and what they mean.

Even though it's not suggested in here, I try to take the cards down. I distribute them, and I'll have them partner up, as if a match-up game real quick.

Once I do that, I'll do the Word Chat. It could be a physical response. For example, today, one of the words that I did as a physical response activity was "orbit." I would describe situations and they would have to tell me with a physical emotion whether or not it was something that orbited or not. For example, I would take my hand and make a circle motion, and if the word or situation I described was a situation that might involve an orbit, they would make the motion, and if not, they would do nothing. So, I might say, "The plane landed on the runway," and that is not an example of orbiting, so they would do nothing, and then if it involved orbiting like, "the planets circled the sun." So they are listening again for those key words that I have helped them with, like "around" and "circle," and that has to do with orbit, and then they would motion to me. So there is one way I can quickly check who's got the meaning of the words, because you'll see who puts their hands up first, without having to actually give an assessment. I could observe very quickly to see who is with me and who needs help. So, that's usually day two; "word chat," they call it.

Then, they have a day three word chat, where it involves more analytical questioning, where you're comparing. It will say, "Which is more likely to orbit?" or quicker, or faster, and it will make you have to think a little bit. It might take a prior word from what we did the week before, and they might compare it against a word we're doing.

On the fourth day, they suggest the graphic organizers, which there are many different ones that are suggested in the back of our book. There are different maps, different measures of degrees where they have a thermometer. I kind of stick with my kids to certain ones, like I do Four-Square with them. Again, Four-Square, if you're not familiar, is where you write the word in one square—you've divided your paper into four squares, of course—you put the meaning (I usually do synonyms) on one side, I have a sentence square, I use the word in context, and then a picture that matches my sentence.

So, I usually either do that, or I'll do a Yes/No Word Wheel, where the word is in the center, and I draw an oval around it, sectioning off everything on the top, which I do in green for yes, for examples of (orbiting), and everything on the bottom, which I would write in red on the oval in each section, would be things that are not examples. So, I've used that one, and the web, and Four-Square. Those are the ones I pretty much try to stick to, even though they suggest other ones, because I don't want it to be mind-boggling for them. I like to stick to certain graphic organizers they are familiar with.

They suggest you only do it on day four. I do it on days two, three, four, and five. Sometimes I pick one word, sometimes I pick two, depending on what kind of time frame I'm working with that day for instruction. I find that the graphic organizers, and just having that discussion, and making them think gets them to see how other kids are thinking on a more frequent basis than one day. If you've studied

the research, you know how important graphic organizers are for second language learners, so that's why I try to do it most of the days that I can.

The assessment is usually not a kind of question like, "What does orbit mean?" It's not like that. What's great about the assessment that they give you is it's putting the word in action, it's saying, "What might a person who is humorous say?" And then they'll have, "I hate you," "leave me alone," or something that would make someone laugh, I'm trying to think of an example... But they would give you those examples, so you'd have to analyze it. It's not just a basic matching type test. So, I really like that portion of it. So, for instruction, that's pretty much what the days map out to be in a five-day week.