



## Vocabulary is the Key:

# Unlock the Hidden Power of Vocabulary!

### *4 Steps for Success*

1. Understand WHY teaching vocabulary is important
2. Understand WHAT vocabulary really is
3. TIPS and TECHNIQUES for teaching vocabulary in your classroom
4. Action Plan

### **Step 1: Why Vocabulary is Important**

- ✓ The more background knowledge a child has, the larger his or her vocabulary.
- ✓ Marzano's research shows that background knowledge is more important to reading achievement than a child's IQ.
- ✓ Hart & Risley identified the 30 million word gap. Their study proved that vocabulary development in preschool is directly related to reading skills later.
- ✓ Rare words carry most of the CONTENT of the text. (Hayes & Ahrens)
- ✓ If our students know those "rare words" they will be better able to comprehend what is being read.

# The TEACHING TRIBE

Source	Rare Words/Thousand
Abstracts of scientific articles	128
Newspapers	68.3
Popular Magazines	65.7
Comic Books	53.5
Bestselling Novels	52.7
Children's Books	30.9
Cartoon Shows	30.8
Courtroom Expert Witness Testimony	28.4
Prime-time Adult TV shows	22.7
Prime-time Children's shows	20.2
Conversations of college graduates to friends	17.3

Hayes & Ahrens



## Resources

Marzano, Robert J. Building background knowledge for academic achievement. Moorabbin, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education, 2005. Print.

Beck, Isabel L. Bringing Words to Life, Second Edition: Robust Vocabulary Instruction. N.p.: Guilford Publications, Incorporated, 2013. Print.

"The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3 - AFT." N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Mar. 2017.

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>

Hayes, Donald P., and Margaret G. Ahrens. Vocabulary simplification for children: a special case of 'motherese'? Ithaca, NY: Cornell U, Dept. of Sociology, 1987. Print.

### Step 2: What is Vocabulary?

- ✓ Knowing the meaning of the word
- ✓ Being able to pronounce the word – at a developmentally appropriate level
- ✓ Using the word in an authentic or meaningful way
- ✓ Vocabulary development is **NOT** about memorizing a bunch of words on a list, from a dictionary, **OR** words displayed on a wall.
- ✓ Conversational vocabulary is informal.
- ✓ To understand what is being taught in school, children need to have a well-developed **academic vocabulary**.



### Step 3: Tips & Techniques for Teaching Vocabulary

- ✓ Teach “high utility” words
- ✓ Use more descriptive language when speaking
- ✓ Elaborate on student language
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions
- ✓ Ask questions for comprehension before, during, and after a read-aloud.
- ✓ Word learning requires many exposures over an extended period of time. (*Susan B. Neuman*)
- ✓ Books chosen for read-alouds are typically engaging, thus increasing both children's motivation and attention (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004) and the likelihood that new words will be learned (Bloom, 2000)
- ✓ Frontload unknown, rare words in read-alouds.
- ✓ Use songs and rhymes to provide a supportive structure for learning new words that boosts confidence and risk taking.
- ✓ Total Physical Response (TPR): Use gestures, facial expressions, and acting out words to teach vocabulary.
- ✓ Scaffold for support.

### Step 4: Action Plan

1. Identify ways you are already supporting the development of vocabulary in your classroom.
2. Identify at least one tip or technique you can incorporate into your daily routing that will help you provide more intentional vocabulary instruction in your classroom.
3. Identify specific vocabulary words in the books you already have on the shelves in your classrooms and that your students love the most.