How to Bring Language to Life:
An SLP's Guide to Vocabulary Intervention
Kaitlyn Bendlin, MS, CCC-SLP & Katie Weyer, MS, CCC-SLP

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Introduction
- Strong language therapy:
    - Is FUNctional
    - Is interactive and engaging
    - Combines elements of both direct and indirect instruction
    - Promotes curiosity and a love of learning
    - Provides opportunities for authentic and meaningful experiences

How to Bring Words to Life
- Importance of Vocabulary
    - Critical to language acquisition and academic achievement
    - Key component of reading development and strong predictor of students' later reading comprehension abilities (more so than decoding skills)
    - Essential in written expression

- Indirect vs. Direct Instruction of Words
    - We should be doing both
    - However, children with language disorders and learning disabilities often need explicit instruction, especially for tier two words

- Kinds of Words
    - Tier One: Occur frequently in speech; learned easily
        - girl, eat, walk, slow, up
    - Tier Two: Highly prevalent in written language; not common in everyday speech
        - ravenous, surreptitiously, exuberant, scurry, timid
    - Tier Three: Frequency of use is quite low; often subject or discipline specific
        - apraxia, mitochondria, dividends, photosynthesis, filibuster

- Research Tells Us We Should:
    - Focus on tier two words
    - Not rely on definitions
    - Teach word parts
        - A small group of prefixes and suffixes account for 97% of prefixed or suffixed words in English
    - Play with words!
    - Provide repeated exposure to targeted words

- One SLP's Process: Teaching Vocabulary in a Language/Literacy Group
    - SLP and Learning Specialist co-treat

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- ○ Choose engaging, motivating texts with rich vocabulary. Achieve student buy-in: What do they want to read?
- ○ Pre-select tier two words to target
- ○ Utilize auditory bombardment of target word so that students hear multiple repetitions
- ○ When coming across the word in text, pause. Oftentimes students will be able to recognize the word after hearing it multiple times prior to reading
- ○ Briefly present a child friendly definition and continue reading. "Play with" the word after reading text to avoid interfering with comprehension of story
- ○ After reading, point out the word in the text with your finger and highlight any accompanying illustrations if relevant to the word
- ○ Write word on board or table
- ○ Practice pronunciation (especially for multi-syllabic words)
- ○ Connect the word to the student's life experiences
- ○ Provide opportunities for the student to practice using the word in self-generated sentences

- ● One SLP's Process Continued: Extending Word Learning with Wordy Wednesday
  - ○ Name tag stickers: **Ask Me What the Word ____ Means.** This promotes comprehension and use of target words with classroom teachers, peers, and families
  - ○ Student created Wordy Wednesday books compile target words to generalize word learning to home environment. Students share target words with their families, creating more opportunities to develop deep knowledge of tier two words
  - ○ Word walls with pictures
  - ○ Writing challenges to encourage use of target words in written work

- ● Anecdotal Observations
  - ○ Students are curious about words, revel in understanding and using newly learned words in real life contexts, are attending to/connecting more with higher level text, and are excited to share their learning with others
  - ○ Teachers note an increased enthusiasm for word learning and generalization of target words to classroom books/activities
  - ○ Parents are empowered to foster word learning at home and enjoy "playing with words" with their child

How to bring Language to Life as an SLP in a Project-based Learning (PBL) school
- ● Definition of PBL: **"Project Based Learning** is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge"- Buck Institute for Education (2018).

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- An SLP's PBL Mindset
  - Whole-student learning
  - Shift from teacher led to student led; from teacher to facilitator
  - Voice, choice, high-interest activities, authentic experiences, real-world application
  - Learning through the process; "living" and changing work
  - Authenticity
  - *Every step an opportunity for language development
    - Planning
    - Product
    - Reflection
- My interpretation/reflection of SLP's role and opportunities for SLP
  - May best be used for students ready to practice generalization of skills
  - Way to spice up therapy that feels "stale"
  - Great way to promote inclusion
  - Opportunity to generalize understanding of classroom themes/content to novel opportunities
  - Let themes and PBL influence therapy, but not confine it
  - Requires Collaboration
    - Pick teachers and school staff who are willing and ready
    - Don't overlook staff members who may be influential (bus drivers, building engineer, nutrition services)
- Examples of speech and language focused projects
    - Life Skills Collaboration (SSN)
      - Coffee Cart
      - Para luncheon
      - End of Year "Formal"
    - Winter Shop (Vocab driven, focus on specific needs of student)
    - School-wide joke board (Figurative language, humor, JOY!)
    - Novel speaking opportunities
      - Surveys
      - Presentations/design and lead review game show for grade
      - Phone calls
- Writing Goals in PBL school
  - Rubrics have helped
    - Isolation to generalization
    - Visual for parents/teachers
    - Continuum-use again if applicable
    - A way to organize multiple, related skills into one goal
- Final thoughts/Lessons learned
  - Don't be a stranger

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- ■ Collaborate
- ■ Be a regular visitor in classrooms
- ■ Invite teachers and parents to sessions or lunch
- ○ Incorporate classroom themes and skills as much as possible; think big picture, don't get hung up on content
- ○ When possible, make school feel like an inclusive community for students
  - ■ Harmony Brew helping with Winter Shop
  - ■ Including other speech students who will benefit in Winter Shop
  - ■ Life Skills project (para luncheon) showing appreciation for paras
- ○ Include school-wide programs/systems whenever possible
  - ■ Examples: Character traits, Mind-Up
- ○ Inform stakeholders (admin, teachers, parents) about your projects and ask for assistance/support

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Additional Notes:

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