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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving vocabulary development thorough balanced literacy. The targeted population consisted of three elementary classrooms in a community located in a southern suburb of Chicago. A lack of vocabulary knowledge that interfered with student academic success was documented in state and standardized test results, as well as student report cards and reading assessments. Analysis of probable cause data was detailed from parents reading and language survey, student survey of reading habits, an informal diagnostic test and a teacher-made vocabulary test. A review of literature revealed economic status, use of standard English, and prior knowledge are possible factors in the delay of vocabulary development. Research suggested possible solution strategies. Direct student participation, read-alouds, reading in the content areas, and pre-reading activities, combined with cooperative learning, resulted in the development of an action plan to improve vocabulary development. Posttest data indicated an increase in student word meaning and content area vocabulary. An improvement was also noted in improved communication skills: reading, writing and speaking. Contains 14 figures of data and 23 references. Appendixes contain the parent and student survey instruments, and primary and intermediate vocabulary assessment tests. (Author/RS)

ED 473 053

IMPROVING VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BALANCED LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving vocabulary development through balanced literacy. The targeted population consisted of three elementary classrooms in a community located in a southern suburb of Chicago. A lack of vocabulary knowledge that interfered with student academic success was documented in state and standardized test results, as well as student report cards and reading assessments.

Analysis of probable cause data was detailed from parents reading and language survey, student survey of reading habits, an informal diagnostic test and a teacher-made vocabulary test. A review of literature revealed economic status, use of standard English, and prior knowledge are possible factors in the delay of vocabulary development.

Research suggested possible solution strategies. Direct student participation, read-alouds, reading in the content areas, and pre-reading activities, combined with cooperative learning, resulted in the development of an action plan to improve vocabulary development.

Posttest data indicated an increase in student word meaning and content area vocabulary. An improvement was also noted in improved communication skills: reading, writing and speaking.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted regular first and eight grade classes and seventh/eighth grade special education class exhibited a lack of vocabulary knowledge that interfered with their academic success. Evidence for the existence of such a problem included: standardized tests results, that were below the national average norm, students were not meeting state standards (Illinois School Report Cards, 2000), student report cards, reading assessments that documented low achievement, and observations by means of checklists that described student's lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Immediate Problem Context

The three sites (A, B, and C) included in this action research project are located in a district located in the South Suburban Chicago Metropolitan area.

Site A was a second grade self-contained classroom located in a K-8 building. The school, a single story building built in 1959, is located in a low to middle income neighborhood. Most of the students were within walking distance with bus transportation provided for Special Education students. There were 17 certified classroom teachers and six teacher assistants, which included the special service personnel and office staff. There were six males and 22 female employees. The average teaching experience of the staff was 15.5 years. Special service staff provided P.E., music and library once a week for all students. The nurse was on duty one day a week and was on call when needed. A speech

pathologist, psychologist and social worker were assigned to the building on an as needed basis. An art teacher provided lessons for seventh and eighth grade students once a week. A parent coordinator served the school as a liaison between the school and the community. There were 17 classrooms, 3 of which were self-contained special education classes, and one that was used by the reading specialist. In addition, an inclusion team serviced the remaining special education students within the regular classroom setting. There is a multi-purpose room, which is used as a lunchroom, gymnasium, and performance area and for other school related functions. The school is handicapped accessible. The total enrollment was 318 students. The student population consisted of 27.7 % White, 23% Black, 49.1% Hispanic and .03% Asian Pacific Islander. The school was comprised of 52.2% low-income students. The attendance rate was 93.1% and the mobility rate was 39%. There were no truancies reported on the State Report Card.

Academic programs to enhance the curriculum included after school tutoring, where at-risk students attended twice weekly for help in math and reading, Reading Recovery program for at-risk first graders, math club, honor roll and enrichment classes. Extra curricular activities included student council, basketball, and cheerleading. A hot lunch program has been offered with free and reduced lunches available for eligible students. In addition to a talent show, during the winter and spring, students performed concerts. Other opportunities for student involvement included a kid's store, crossing guards and book fairs. The local police department provided the D.A.R.E program for first, second and sixth grades. The site had an active PTA membership, which sponsored educational assemblies and field trips. Although the school did not have a computer lab each classroom was equipped with at least two computers and Internet accessibility.

Site B, a seventh grade Reading classroom and Site C, a seventh/eighth grade self-contained special education classroom, were both located in a 4-8 grade level building. The school is located in an older low-income neighborhood. The original structure, built in 1928, has three stories. An auditorium was added in 1958, and a two-story wing was built in 1964. The building originally housed two schools, the district junior high school and the neighborhood elementary school. Due to restructuring of the district, the schools had been designated for grades 4-8 and grades K-3. Most of the students were within walking distance. Bus transportation was provided for special education students and those students who resided more than 1.5 miles from the school. There were 26 certified classroom teachers, 9 teacher aides and a full time nurse, which included the special service personnel and office staff. There were 12 males and 41 female employees. The average teaching experience of the staff was 14.6 years. There were 12 grade level departmentalized classrooms, 11 self-contained special education classes, one classroom which served as a special education resource classroom, one reading specialist classroom and one classroom served the bilingual students, for a total of 26 classrooms. The site also housed the in-school suspension room, which was available to all schools throughout the district, for disruptive students. Special service staff provided P.E., music and library once a week. An art teacher provided lessons for seventh and eighth grade students once a week. Due to the abundant number of special education students, a full time psychologist, two social workers, a behavior interventionist and a special education assistant to the principal were assigned to the school. In addition to the extensive number of Special Education students, the school had absorbed a cumulative number of foster children housed in group homes, as well as

displaced students from public housing. The housing of these students was at a government subsidized locally based motel. The total school enrollment was 367. The school population consisted of 3.5% White, 59.4% Black, and 37.1% Hispanic. The school was comprised of 70.6% low-income students. The attendance pattern, as reported in the State School Report Card (2000) indicated 91.3% and chronic truancy was reported as 1.4% or 4 students. The mobility rate was 37.5%.

There were two gyms, and a separate lunchroom facility. The complex included an auditorium, which was used by both schools. In addition, district in-services and institutes were held in the auditorium.

Academic programs to enhance the school curriculum included: mathletes, technology club, educational assemblies and field trips, career day, honor roll, Project H.O.P.E., and supplemental reading classes for seventh and eighth graders. A Saturday school program was available to qualifying at-risk students. Extra curricular activities included: student council, Boys and Girls Club, peer mediation, dances, sports teams, and a school newspaper. There was also an opportunity for students to participate in band and choir. A hot lunch program had been offered with free and reduced lunches available to qualifying students. The site had a P.T.O., which had few members other than teachers. The principal and Title teacher served as two of its officers.

The Surrounding Community

The district consisted of twelve elementary schools with a total school population of 3,201 students. The total expenditure per pupil was \$4,024. There was an issue of overcrowding in the district and additions were planned for three of the schools. The racial/ethnic background for the district was 11.6% White, 53.5% Black, and 34.9%

Hispanic. Limited English proficient students made up 6% of the student body. The district attendance rate was 92.8%. The mobility rate was 39.1%. Chronic truancy was 0.7% with the number of chronic truants reported to be 20 students.

The school district administrative staff consisted of a superintendent and three assistants. Each of the schools had an assigned principal. The average administrator salary was \$71,411. There was a seven member elected school board, serving four-year terms. The average teaching experience of the district teachers was 16.7 years. At the time of the report, 76% of the teachers had a bachelor's degree and 24% had a masters degree or above. The average teacher salary was \$40,229. The racial/ethnic background and teacher gender in the school district consisted of 70% White, 23.5% Black, 6% Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander 0.5% with 13.5% male and 86.5% female classroom teachers.

The U.S. Census (2000) reported that the city had a total population of 32,966. The report stated the ethnic/racial breakdown as 14,756 (45%) White, 12,421 (37.9%) Black, and 7,790 (23.8%) Hispanic. Low-income families accounted for 76.9% of the population with a median family income of \$31,534 in this working class community. Home values ranged from \$9,000 to \$235,000 with a median price of \$98,000. The most prominent religion was Protestant, with a total of 34 churches in the community. The Catholic and Jewish faiths were also represented. Although some businesses and institutions were supportive of the school system, overall support by the general community was limited.

National Context of the Problem

The problem of delayed vocabulary development and lack of word recognition has become an issue of great concern at state and national levels. According to Demoulin, et al. (1999), "Standardized test results confirm that the majority of children in public schools in America are not learning English language skills they need to function successfully in society". Among some contributing factors, class, culture and linguistic background, have been associated with these delays.

Much research has been done which links vocabulary and reading delays to disadvantaged students. The latest report from the National Assessment of Education Progress determined that the reading gap, which exists between rich and poor students, has remained consistent (Hirsch, 2001).

Additional research supports the impact of culture and linguistic background upon the academic progress of limited English proficient students. "Communication, language and culture cannot be separated" (Rosa-Luco & Fradd, 2000 as found in Kader, 2002). Kader & Yawkey further state that individualism, basic interpersonal skills and cognitive academic language proficiency have the potential to create problems in verbal communication (2002, para.10).

Considerable research exists which supports a nationwide concern that students entering the public school system lack basic learning skills. The President of the United States and the National Governors' Association at their summit meeting in February 1990, expressed concern regarding the readiness of America's children to learn and succeed in school (Katz, 1999).

On the basis of these findings, which lend credence to the existence of vocabulary development and word recognition delays, there is need to further explore methods and strategies which address this issue.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document and assess the vocabulary knowledge of the targeted second, seventh and seventh/eighth special education students, several data collection methods were used. The data collection methods included: a parents' reading and language survey (Appendix A), a students' survey of reading habits (Appendix B), an informal diagnostic test, Graded Word Opposites (Appendix C), a teacher created primary vocabulary assessment (Appendix D) and an intermediate vocabulary assessment (Appendix E) were administered as pre and post vocabulary tests. All parents received the same parent survey. All students received the same student survey. Two different teacher-created vocabulary pre and posttests were distributed. The students in grade two (Site A) were administered a primary vocabulary test and students in grade seven (Site B) were administered an intermediate vocabulary test. Special education students in grades seven and eight (Site C) were administered both the primary and intermediate vocabulary test. The Graded Word Opposites test was administered orally to students in all three sites.

The parent survey at Site A (grade 2) revealed that more than 60% of the children preferred watching TV to reading a book. Seventy-seven percent of parents felt that their child stayed focused while reading independently and 92% stated they often discussed the books with them. Of those responding to the survey nearly 70% of the students attended preschool, while only about 30% had attended summer school. Fewer than 20% of the

students in Site A received special services, however 75% had been enrolled in the Reading Recovery program as first grade students. No students had ever been retained. In addition to reading being important to all learning, parents also felt reading helped to build confidence and develop an enjoyment of reading. Some parents believed that their child disliked reading because they became frustrated when decoding new words or when reading long books. Most of their children enjoyed reading fairy tales, animal stories, and series books such as Arthur, which were either purchased by the parent or received as gifts. To encourage their child to read, parents stressed the importance of reading, restricted TV/Games, and used computer-reading programs as incentives. As their personal preference for reading, most parents chose books, although magazines, newspapers and the Internet were also mentioned. Homework, games, movies, eating and sporting events were mentioned most often as family activities.

The results of the parent survey for Site B (grade 7) indicated that all of the students would rather watch TV than read a book. Thirty-eight percent of the students at Site B attended pre-school. Seven of the thirteen students were born in Mexico and moved to the United States at the age of 7 or older which eliminated the opportunity to attend preschool. None of the students at Site B had participated in the Reading Recovery program, however 38% had attended summer school. One student had been retained and currently received special services. The surveys also indicated that parents encouraged their children to read but stated that they did not have time to discuss the books with their children. All of the parents were pleased that their children liked to read, although four parents felt that language was a factor in their child's difficulty comprehending what was read. Parents mentioned mysteries, sports and comic books as among children's favorite

reading material. Magazines and the local city newspaper were preferred reading by parents. Cooking, attending church and family gatherings were activities shared by parents and students.

Based on the information provided by the parent surveys, all parents of students in Site C (seventh and eighth grade special education) reported that their children would prefer watching TV to reading a book. Of those responding to the survey, 60% indicated that their child had attended preschool. No students in the survey received assistance through the Reading Recovery program, and only one student had ever participated in summer school. Sixty percent of the students had been retained and all students were receiving special services. All parents felt that reading was important for their child and encouraged reading, while only 40% regularly discussed the books read by their children. They reported that the children liked reading. However, 60% felt their child had difficulty focusing on reading, citing frustration from learning problems as the cause. In addition to checking books out of the library, books were generally acquired new or used at bookstores, or passed down from family and friends. Scary stories, children's books, cookbooks and the Bible were among the types of books most often read. Parents reported magazines as their personal reading preference rather than newspapers and books. Family activities reported included cooking, church, games and sledding.

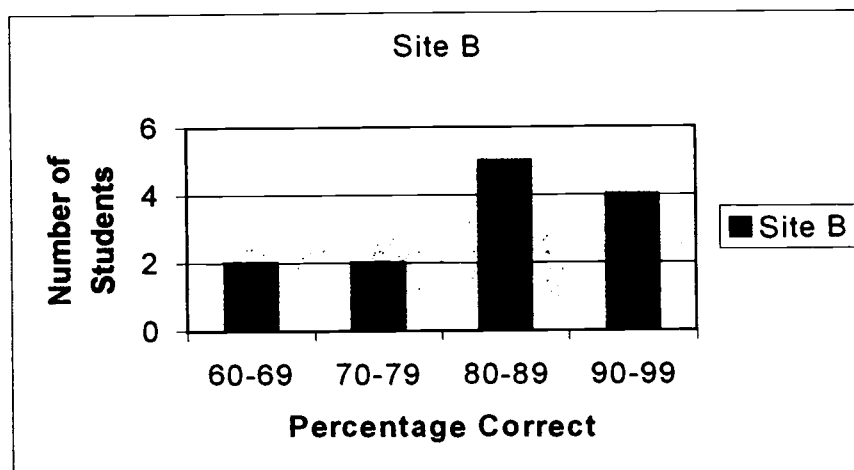


Figure 1. Response to parent survey question 2. How often does your child visit the public library?

Parents were asked to respond to a question regarding how frequently their child visited the public library (often, seldom, rarely, never). Results indicated that most children at Sites A and C seldom or rarely visited the library, however, all of the students at Site B visited the library often.

The student survey at Site A revealed that all students said they enjoyed reading. Their favorite books were about animals, both fiction and non-fiction. Sports stories were also popular. Fewer than 40% of the students could identify a favorite author, although every student named a favorite book. At the time of the survey 31% of the students had met the goal of reading 25 books during the school year. About 70% of the children read to younger brothers and sisters. All students said they would recommend a good book to a friend.

All Site B students stated on their student survey that they enjoyed reading, preferring mysteries, sports stories, scary stories and comic books. Forty-six percent of the students reported that they had a favorite author, naming R.L. Stein and Charles

Dickens among their favorites. However, 62% named a favorite book. Fifty four percent of the students had already met the goal of reading 25 books during the school year. All of the students reported that they read to younger siblings and would recommend a good book to a friend.

All students surveyed at Site C stated that they enjoyed reading. Eighty percent of the students indicated that they read to younger children outside of school. Mysteries were chosen most often as the type of book students wanted to read. Books on sports, biographies and comics were also selected. Sixty percent of the students had a favorite author, while 80% had chosen a favorite book. Eighty percent of the students said they would recommend a book to a friend, one student said no and another was undecided. At the time of the survey 3 of the 10 students had achieved the goal of reading 25 books during the school year.

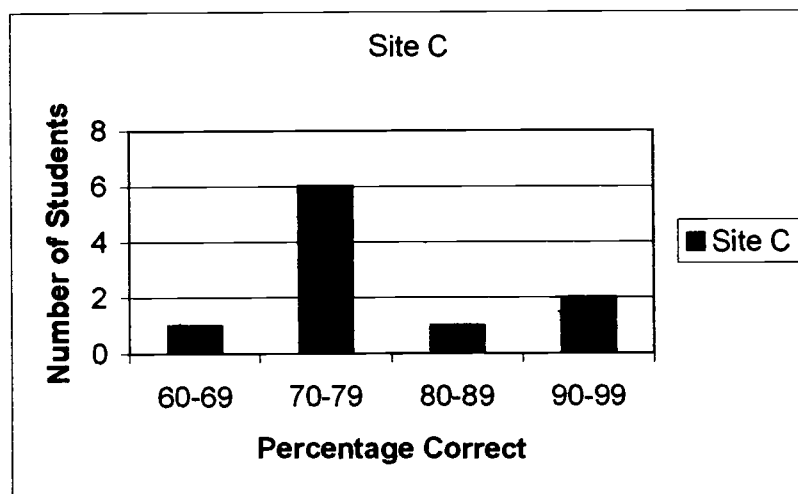


Figure 2. Response to student survey question: Do you have a library card?

Students were surveyed regarding ownership of a library card. Twenty-one percent of the students at Site A owned a library card while 79% did not. The students at

Site B indicated that 85% of the students owned a library card and 15% did not. Site C students' response showed that 70% had library cards and 30% did not.

In addition to the parent and student surveys, the students in Sites A, B and C were administered a pretest to assess vocabulary knowledge. A teacher made primary vocabulary assessment test (Appendix A) was administered to students in Site A. An intermediate teacher made vocabulary assessment (Appendix B) was administered to students in Site B. Due to their special needs, the students in Site C were administered both the primary and intermediate vocabulary assessments.

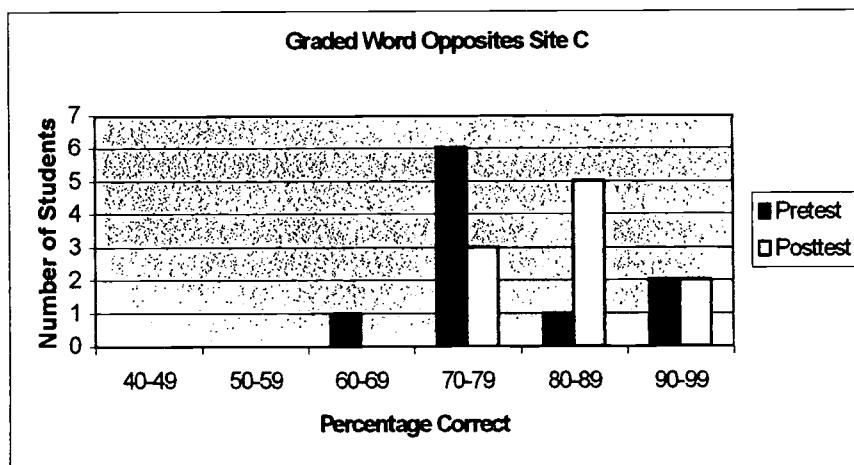


Figure 3. Results of student performance on the teacher made primary assessment test.

Figure 3 shows two students at Site A scored less than a 40% on the primary vocabulary assessment test and two students scored between 50-59 %. Five students scored between 60-69% and five students scored between 70-79%. The results of Site C indicate that 4 students scored between 70-79%. Two students scored between 80-89% and 4 students scored above 90%.

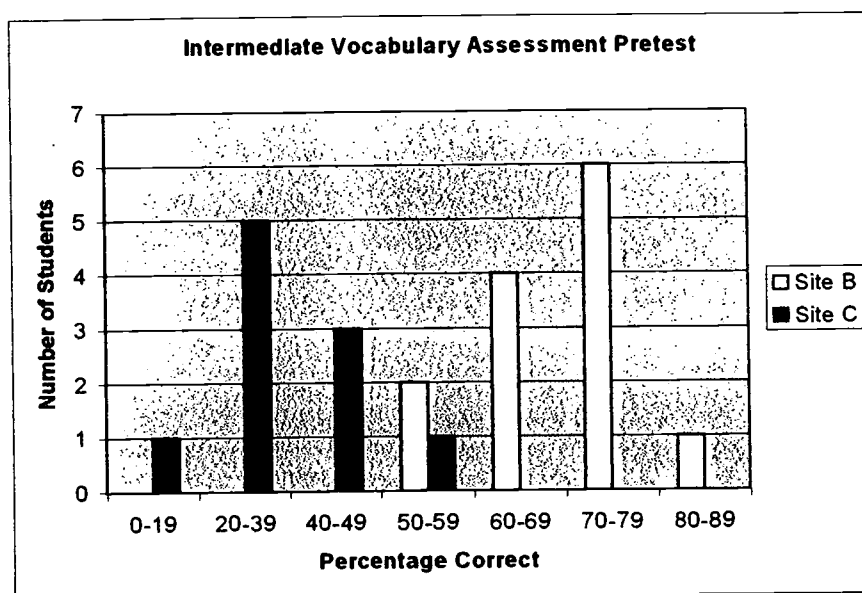


Figure 4. Results of student performance on the teacher made intermediate assessment test.

Figure 4 indicated that all students at Site B scored above the 50th percentile. Two students scored between 50-59%, 4 students scored between 60-69%, 6 students scored between 70-79% and 1 student scored between 80-89%. One student at Site C scored below the 20th percentile. Five students scored between 20-39%, 3 scored between 40-49% and one student scored between 50-59%.

The Graded Word Opposites test was administered to students in Sites A, B and C. The test was dictated by the classroom teacher.

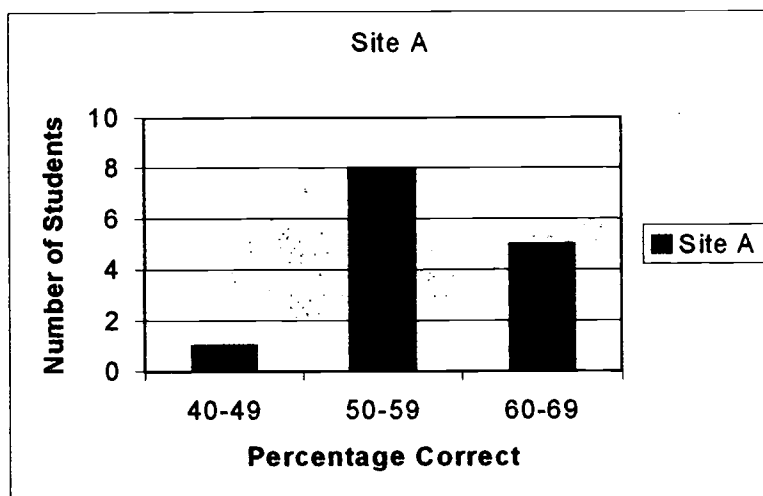


Figure 5. Results of student performance on the Graded Word Opposites Test at Site A.

Figure 5 shows that one student at Site A scored between 40-49%. Eight students scored between 50-59% and five students scored between 60-69%.

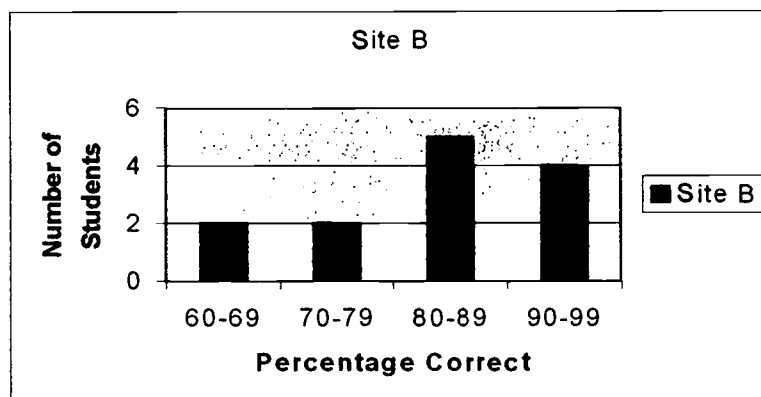


Figure 6. Results of students' performance on the Graded Word Opposites Test at Site B.

At Site B two students scored between 60-69%, two students between 70-79%, five students between 80-89% and four between 90-99%.

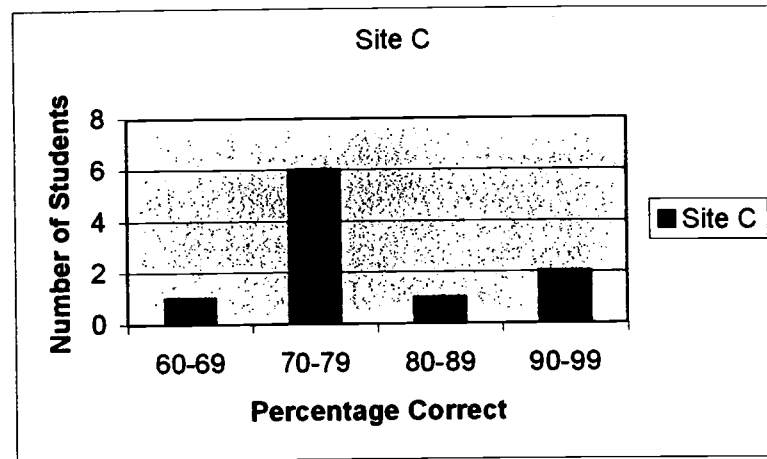


Figure 7. Results of student performance on the Graded Word Opposites test at Site C.

Figure 7 shows that one student at Site C scored between 60-69% on the Graded Word Opposites Test. Six students scored between 70-79%, one student scored between 80-89% and two students scored above 90%.

Probable Causes

Having established that a lack of vocabulary development existed within the three sites of this study, a review of the research presented several probable causes.

Research has indicated that low income is a contributing factor in the delay of a child's vocabulary development. The National Assessment of Education Progress has data revealing, "longstanding and unacceptably large differences in reading performance related to student poverty levels" (Adler, 2001). Lack of access and exposure to reading materials is more prevalent in low-economic neighborhoods. Cunningham and Allington (1999) stated that about 50% fewer books are available to students in low-income areas as opposed to schools located in wealthy school districts. Data has shown that in addition to reading vocabulary, expressive and receptive vocabulary is also affected. "Many a low-income child entering kindergarten has heard only half the words and can understand

only half the meanings and language conventions of high-income children” (Hirsch, 2001). Although some low-income children can read fluently, they still show large deficits in vocabulary and comprehension (Hirsch).

Research has shown that the less advantaged child is likely to be disinterested and lack motivation in learning. Hirsch stated:

The less advantaged child, by contrast, suffers a double (or triple) loss. The exposition is puzzling from the start, because the child doesn’t know enough of the words. He therefore fails to gain knowledge from the exposition, and also fails to learn new word meanings from the context. And to intensify that double loss, the child loses even that which he hath – his interest, self-confidence and motivation to learn (2001, para. 15).

As the student gets older the severity of the problem increases. Older students, who have not had success with reading, therefore dislike reading.

Moats said, “...they cannot read, so they do not like to read; reading is labored and unsatisfying, so they have little reading experience; and because they have not read much, they are not familiar with the vocabulary, sentence structure, text-organization, and concepts of academic “book” language” (2001, para. 5).

The use of standard English is another factor affecting successful vocabulary

development. According to Morrow:

For children whose primary language is not English, studies have demonstrated that a solid foundation in a first language supports academic achievement in a second language. In this respect, ESL children are more likely to read and write English when they already have a firm foundation in the vocabulary and concepts of their primary language (1999, para. 17).

Hadaway, Vardell and Young further supported this theory in their research with the additional observation that "...at times students do not bring a well developed oral language background in the native language to school" (2001, para. 6). Students coming from homes where English is not the primary language may be further challenged. As a result, not learning standard English skills is an obstacle to their ability to read, write, speak, listen and think (Demoulin, Loye & Swan, 1999).

Prior knowledge must also be considered as a determining factor in the success or failure of a student's vocabulary development. Not being familiar with the meanings of words "...causes difficulty in children's comprehension of texts, limits their ability to make a connection with the existing background knowledge, and inhibits their capacity to make coherent inferences" (Rupley, 1998). Research has indicated that for learning to occur the learner must integrate new information with what they already know (Rumelhart, 1980 as found in Christen, 1991).

Clearly, there is a need to improve vocabulary development. Engaging students in activities based on a balanced literacy model will enhance and activate prior knowledge. Increasing the ability to understand the concept of word meaning will motivate students to read, write, think, listen and speak more fluently.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

After considering some of the possible causes for vocabulary deficiencies, research offered a number of possible solutions.

Direct student participation has been identified as one of these solutions. As stated by Carl Smith, “It is generally accepted that students learn vocabulary more effectively when they are directly involved in constructing meaning rather than in memorizing definitions or synonyms” (Smith, 1997, para. 4). Smith identified graphic organizers, personal experiences, semantic mapping and analogies as techniques that require interaction by the student to develop not only a clearer understanding of specific vocabulary words but also to recognize the relationships among meanings of words (Smith, para. 4).

To develop feelings of belonging, students should not be grouped or labeled. Choosing worthwhile activities has an impact on student success. Careful selection of activities should provide for each child’s optimal achievement (Ediger, 1999, para. 6). With this premise in mind, “students are not just memorizing definitions but are entering information and integrating word meanings with their existing knowledge to build conceptual representations of vocabulary in multiple contextual situations” (Winters, 2001, para. 20).

In addition to strategies for word identification and comprehension, teachers should demonstrate an enthusiasm and zeal for reading through oral reading of interesting books (Ivey, 1999, para. 11). Read-alouds are also cited as a possible solution to improving vocabulary development and are “probably the most highly recommended activity for encouraging language and literacy” (Adams, 1990 as found in Beck, 2001). In addition to the enjoyment and information derived from read-alouds, students use the context of the book to clarify meanings of words or phrases (Cunningham and Allington, 1999, p. 205). Ediger recommended procedures for successful read-alouds. He stated:

The book chosen should interest pupils and keep their attention. Voice inflection using proper stress, pitch and juncture should be in the offing when the teacher reads during story time. Words should be pronounced clearly and accurately. The teacher should have good audience contact with listeners (1999, para. 8).

Ediger further recommends that young children view the book’s illustrations while being read to, enabling the students to grasp facts, concepts and generalizations. Because learning is sequential, the knowledge acquired from read-alouds provides additional background information, which assists in understanding more complex ideas. An end result of the teacher reading orally to pupils may be a life long love for learning (1999, para. 8). Important knowledge about story structure, book language, and the world are fostered through listening to literature (Morrow, 1999, para. 12).

Another instructional intervention to be considered for vocabulary development is reading in the content areas. When readers lack prior knowledge in content areas, teaching vocabulary is a necessary pre-reading step (Christen & Murphy 1991 as found in Smith, 1997, para. 9). Sejnost and Thiese (2001) contend that

The main purpose of these activities is to provide teachers with an opportunity to learn what their students already know about a subject and then helps foster adequate prior knowledge so students are mentally ready for instruction (2001, p. 93).

Linking the ideas presented in a chapter to students' prior knowledge allows children to more easily learn new concepts (Vacca & Vacca, 1996 as found Sejnost & Thiese, 2001, p. 64). Students are more likely to remember word meanings when associating new terms with familiar information or concepts (Stahl, 1986, as found in Sejnost & Thiese, 2001, p. 64).

In addition to pre-reading strategies, techniques such as Partners Journaling and Vocabulary Studies enhance instruction in contextual analysis. These strategies require the student to use a series of steps to recognize unknown words, and to determine their meaning through the use of context clues. As a result of the use of these strategies students engage in metacognitive analysis, which can be applied to both recreational and academic reading (Truscott & Watts, 1996, para. 12).

To foster vocabulary and language growth Beimiller recommended a more teacher-directed and curriculum-directed approach in the content areas (Beimiller, 2001, para. 16). The application of these strategies correlate the research previously cited for direct participation with content area study.

Wilkinson recommended the use of cooperative learning to further facilitate vocabulary lessons (Wilkinson, 1994 as found in Smith, 1997). Cooperative learning provided students with the opportunity to "restate their thoughts in words that make sense to others" (Fogarty, 2002, p. 127). The learner was also able to gain content and

vocabulary knowledge, providing background information for reading. Subject matter became more meaningful as students engaged in cooperative discussion. A result of developing prior knowledge allowed students to understand increasingly complex vocabulary (Ediger, 1999, para. 11).

Another strategy for enhancing vocabulary development is transfer of learning; the ability to apply previously learned information to new situations (Gregory & Parry, 1998, p. 84). Calling upon students to use their collective experiences challenged the learner to “move from memorizing information to meaningful learning and begins the journey of connecting learning events rather than remembering bits and pieces” (Christen & Murphy, 1991, para 8).

Winters describes the application of transfer to vocabulary in the following way: Linking the new to the known, examining critical attributes of key concepts, and associating specific personal experience with new terminology have each proven to be valuable as means for assisting acquisition and retention of new vocabulary (2001, para. 9)

Vocabulary development is the most elemental stage in acquiring a knowledge base. By empowering students with language, their knowledge base continues to grow and expand (Fogarty, 2002, p. 214-215).

Many opportunities exist to develop and strengthen a learner’s vocabulary knowledge. Direct student participation, read-alouds, content area instruction, cooperative learning and transfer are a few. Utilizing these strategies fosters excitement and enthusiasm, which is the key to successful vocabulary instruction.

Project Objectives and Processes

The objective of this action plan is to determine the effects of balanced literacy on improving student vocabulary in the content areas. In order to accomplish this objective the following processes will be utilized:

1. Parents will be given a survey regarding student and parent reading habits.
2. Students will be given a survey regarding reading interests.
3. Students will be given a pre vocabulary assessment.
4. Weekly lessons will be planned to address specific content area vocabulary.
5. Activities will be introduced to students to enhance transfer of learning.
6. Students will be given a post vocabulary assessment to gauge growth.

Project Action Plan

After determining a deficiency in the area of vocabulary development, balanced literacy techniques will be implemented to provide opportunity for vocabulary growth.

January

Week 1 January 7-11, 2002

- Distribute student reading survey
- Distribute parent reading survey
- Send home parent consent forms
- Distribute student consent forms (over age 12)

Week 2 January 14-18, 2002

- Review concept of balanced literacy
- Review standards and elements established by America's Choice program
- Discuss action plan with students

Week 3 January 21-25, 2002

- Administer vocabulary assessments
- Administer Word Opposite Test

Week 4 January 28-February 1, 2002

- Introduce vocabulary strategy of contextual analysis (strategy #1)

Activities

- Synonyms with graphic organizer
- Guess the Covered Word

- Cloze stories
- Partner reading
- Semantic word map
- Homonyms

February

Week 1 February 4-8, 2002

- Continue implementing strategy #1
- Teach students to use a PMI for self-evaluation

Week 2 February 11-15, 2002

- Introduce vocabulary development through the content areas (strategy #2)
- Focus on curriculum area of social studies

Week 3 February 18-22, 2002

- Continue implementing strategy #2
- Focus on curriculum area of health/science

Week 4 February 25-March 1, 2002

- Continue implementing strategy #2
- Focus on curriculum area of math

Activities

- Compare and contrast graph organizer
- Cause and effect graphic organizer (T-Chart)
- Summary statements (3-5 sentences)
- Word sorting
- Star Words
- Multiple meanings
- Analogies
- Password game
- Vocabulary Quilt graphic organizer
- Definition riddles
- Hangman
- Word Wall
- Word grids
- Vocabulary Cartoons
- Concept Wheel

March

Week 1 March 4-8, 2002

- Introduce strategy to identify meaning using base words and affixes (strategy #3)

Week 2 March 11-15, 2002

- Continue implementing strategy #3

Week 3 March 18-22, 2002

- Introduce engaging writing strategy using descriptive vocabulary (strategy #4)

Week 4 March 25-29, 2002

- Introduce elements of Writers Workshop in content area of social studies (strategy #5)

Activities

- Peer editing
- Word origins
- How to End a Word
- Working and Reworking
- The Not Puzzle
- Unlocking a Mystery
- Many Words From a Few
- The Careless Helper
- The Tireless Inventor
- Base Words
- Busy Bases
- Prefix Power
- The Un Story
- Write a Super Sentence
- Write an advice column for a newspaper
- Write a want ad
- Write out a recipe for a new dish you create
- Making Words
- Author's Chair

April

Week 1 April 8-12, 2002

- Continue implementing strategy 5 in content area of science and health

Week 2 April 15-19

- Introduce strategies for response to literature (strategy #6)
- Continue implementing strategy 5 in content area of math

Week 3 April 22-26, 2002

Week 4 April 29-May 3, 2002

- Administer vocabulary assessments as posttests

Activities

- Read alouds

- Write letters to famous person
- Write newspaper article
- Write a sales ad
- Write a book recommendation
- Write a short tall tale
- Write similes
- Write metaphors
- Write alliterations
- Write career applications
- Write a new commercial for a product
- Write a sequel to a book
- Writing points of view
- Write a friendly letter
- Write a cartoon comic strip
- Show and Tell
- Journals
- Oral book reports
- Informal conversation
- Listening center
- Book discussion
- Interviews

May

Week 1 May 6-10, 2002

- Analyze data
- Chart growth
- Prepare portfolio

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the interventions, pre and posttests in word meaning and content area vocabulary will be administered. Artifacts of written expression, word meaning and content area rubrics will be collected to compare with prior performance.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this action plan was to increase student vocabulary through balanced literacy. After determining a deficiency in the area of vocabulary development, a variety of balanced literacy techniques were introduced to provide opportunity for vocabulary growth. The Action Plan was implemented over the course of 16 weeks, January through May 2002.

To assess reading interests and practices, parents and students at sites A, B and C, were surveyed at the onset of the Action Plan. Results of the survey were compiled and analyzed.

Two pretests were administered to establish a baseline of student vocabulary knowledge. A teacher-made vocabulary test was given at student ability levels. Site A students were given a primary vocabulary assessment, Site B students were given an intermediate vocabulary assessment, and Site C students were administered both the primary and intermediate tests. A word opposite assessment was administered to all students at each of the sites. The same tests were administered at the conclusion of the plan to determine student vocabulary growth.

Following the assessment of student vocabulary, workable strategies were introduced in the content areas to broaden their knowledge and extend their

comprehension of word meanings. Graphic organizers, cloze stories and analogies were among the activities utilized throughout the length of the action plan.

Additions to existing Word Walls at all three sites included vocabulary terms in the areas of Health and Science, Social Studies and Math to enrich their communication skills. Compare and contrast, cause and effect, and T-Chart graphic organizers were used prior to writing activities as tools for better reading, writing and thinking. These activities were used to engage students to incorporate descriptive vocabulary in their writing. In addition these visualization strategies strengthened test-taking skills in the content areas.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Three methods of assessment were administered as pre and posttests to measure vocabulary growth during the implementation of this action plan. Based on grade level the students were administered a primary or intermediate teacher made vocabulary test. In addition, all students at sites A, B, and C were given an informal diagnostic test, Graded Word Opposites. The following graphs represent the gains achieved in vocabulary at the targeted sites.

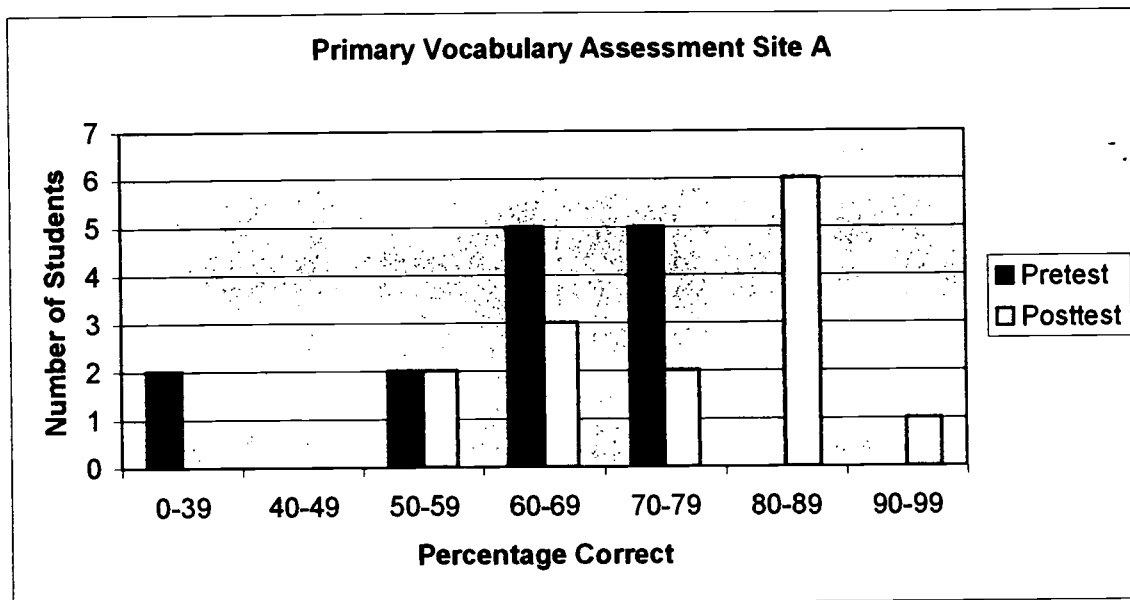


Figure 8. Results of student performance on the pretest and posttest of the teacher-made primary assessment test for Site A.

Figure 8 reveals that the students at Site A improved their performance on the primary assessment test. Two students scored below 40% on the pretest, while no students scored below 40% on the posttest. The pretest results indicate that all 14 students performed below 80% on the pretest. The posttest shows that students while seven students continued to score below 80%, seven students improved to score above 80%.

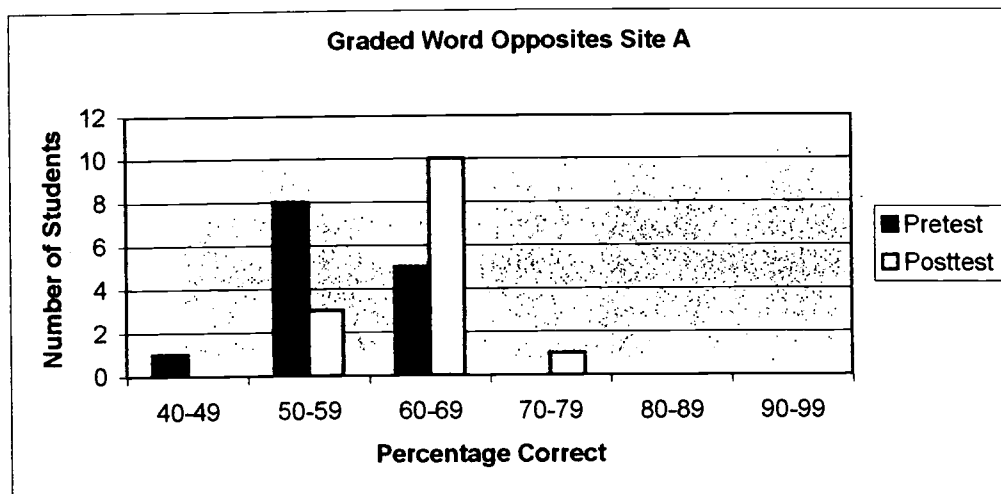


Figure 9. Results of student performance on the pre and posttest of the Graded Word Opposites test for Site A.

Results of the Graded Word Opposites pre and posttest at Site A indicated measurable vocabulary growth. The pretest showed one student scored between 40-49% correct compared with no student scoring below 50% correct on the posttest. Eight students scored between 50-59% correct on the pretest, while only three students scored in that range on the posttest. The greatest improvement on the posttest showed ten students scoring between 60-69% correct compared to five students scoring in that range on the pretest. One student scored between 70-79% correct on the posttest while the highest percentage correct on the pretest was between 60-69%

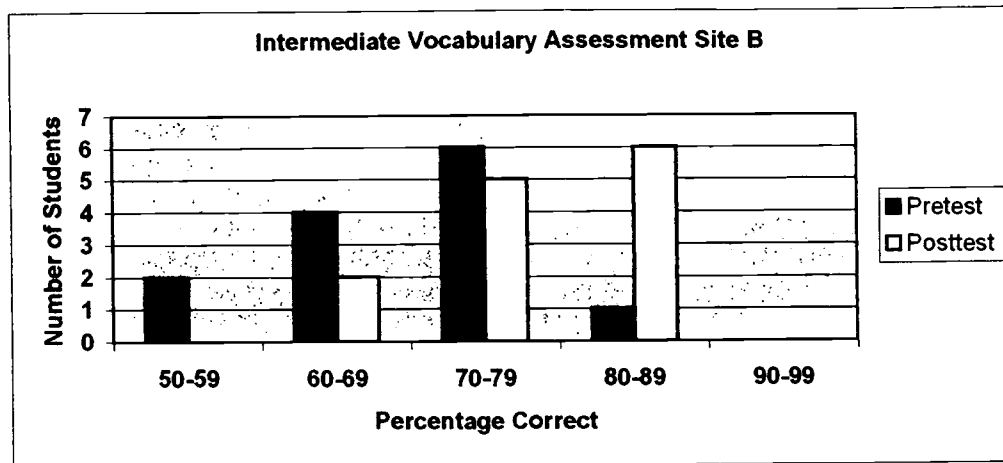


Figure 10. Results of student performance on the pre and posttest of the teacher-made intermediate assessment test for Site B.

The results of the intermediate vocabulary assessment indicate that on the pretest, only two students scored in the range between 50-59%, while none of the students scored in this range on the posttest. On the pretest four students scored between 60-69%, while only two students scored in that range on the posttest. Six students scored between 70-79% on the pretest while gains were seen with only five students scoring in this range on the posttest. One student scored between 80-89% on the pretest, however 6 students scored in this range on the posttest.

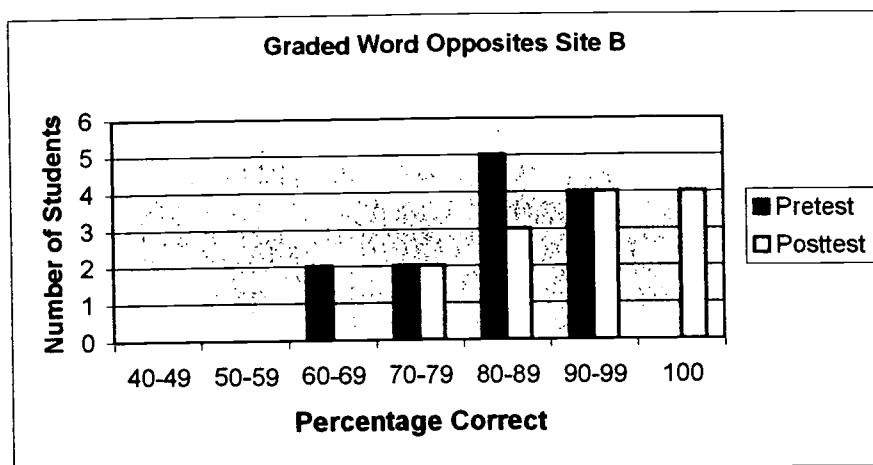


Figure 11. Results of student performance on the pre and posttest of Graded Word Opposites for Site B.

Performance results at site B on the Graded Word Opposites pre and posttest indicate significant growth in vocabulary. None of the students scored in the 40-49% range nor did the students score between 50-59%. However, two students scored in the 60-69% range on the pretest. None of the students scored in that range on the posttest. Two students scored in the 70-79% range on the pretest as well as the posttest. Five students scored in the 80-89% on the pretest and three scored in this range on the posttest. Four students scored between 90-99% on the pretest and four students scored in that range on the posttest. Four students received 100% on the posttest, indicating improvement since the pretest.

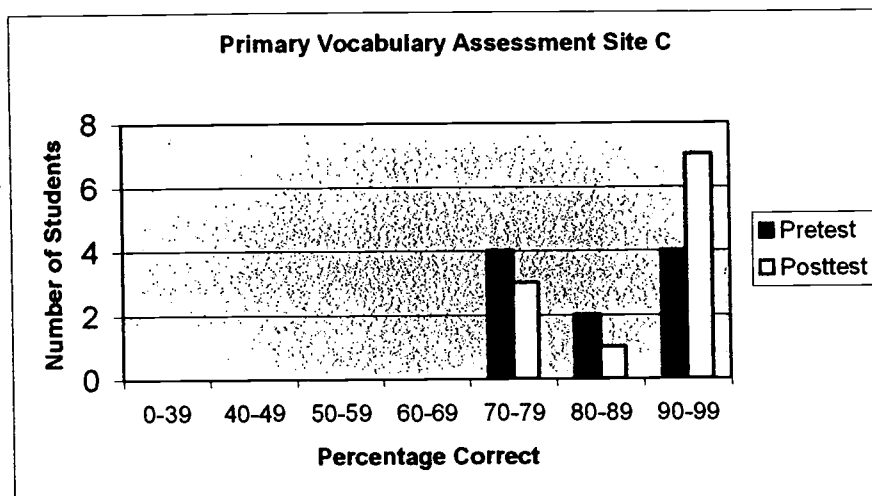


Figure 12. Results of student performance on pre and posttests for the students at Site C.

Results of the pre and posttests given to the students at Site C indicate an improvement of performance. Four students performed between 70-79% on the pretest while three students performed at this level on the posttest. Two students scored from 80-89% on the pretest and only one student scored at this level on the posttest. The most significant increase is found in the 90-99% scores. While only four students scored above 90% on the pretest, 7 students performed above 90% on the posttest.

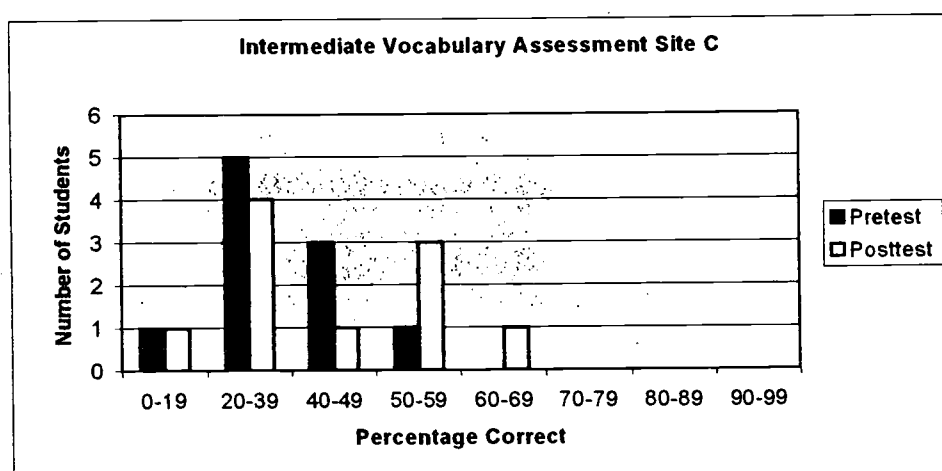


Figure 13. Results of the Pre and Post Tests for the Intermediate Vocabulary Assessment for Site C.

Results of the pre and posttests on the Intermediate Vocabulary Assessment for the students at Site C indicate that one student scored at the 0-19% on both the pre and posttest. On the pretest five students scored between 20-39%, while four students scored at this level on the posttest. One student scored between 40-49% on the pretest and three students scored at this level on the posttest. Between 50-59% there was one student that scored at this level on the pretest and three students on the posttest. While there were no students who scored above 60% on the pretest, one student scored between 60-69% on the posttest.

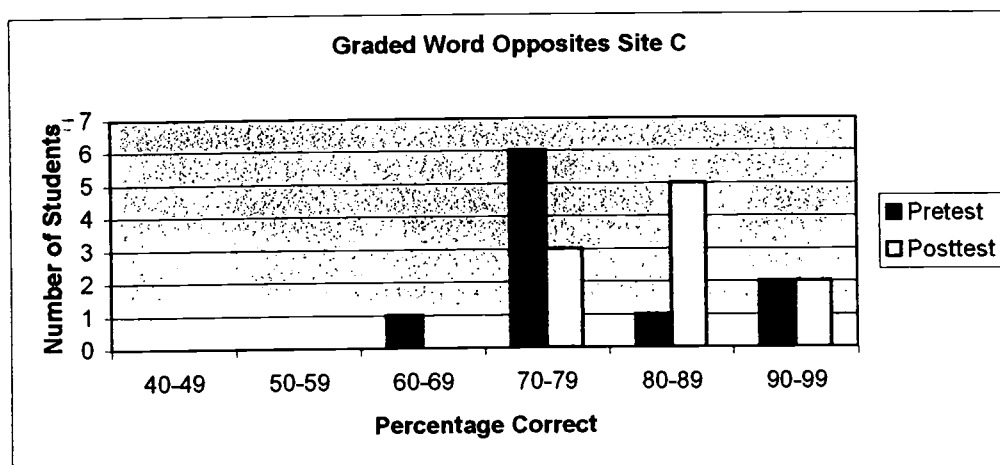


Figure 14. Results of the pre and posttests on the Graded Word Opposites for the students at Site C.

Figure 7 shows that one student at Site C performed between 60-69% on the Graded Word Opposites pretest, while no students performed at this level on the posttest. Six students scored between 70-79% on the pretest and three students on the posttest. Between 80-89% one student scored at this level on the pretest while five students scored at this level on the posttest. Two students scored between 90-99% on the both the pretest and the posttest.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the main focuses of our action plan was to introduce students to vocabulary in the content areas. We found that vocabulary knowledge was transferred more readily when word meaning was used in context rather than in isolation. Repeated exposure to vocabulary across the curriculum resulted in improved performance on both the vocabulary and Graded Word Opposite posttests. Students became skilled at associating specific content area vocabulary to other subjects.

In order to immerse students in a vocabulary rich in meaning words were not taught in isolation. Multi-faceted activities for this action plan were specifically chosen. Students were exposed to techniques that incorporated a variety of intelligences. Balanced literacy techniques were applied to engage students in a broader understanding of word analysis. A weekly plan was devised to give explicit attention to acquire networks of new concepts through vocabulary instruction. Activities and strategies used to guide students before, during and after instruction promoted growth in the acquisition of new vocabulary. Among the most successful activities applied during this action plan were cloze stories, Guess the Covered Word, Anticipation Guides, Graphic Organizers and elements of Writer's Workshop. All of these activities could be used across the content areas.

Following the action plan, growth was gauged on both an informal and teacher-made test. Posttests indicated that students at all three sites showed improved performance in word meaning and content area vocabulary.

The action plan resulted in other benefits for the students. Having increased vocabulary knowledge, the students developed a greater self-confidence, which is crucial

to successful learners. The instruction throughout the content areas developed in the action plan, enabled the students to become more effective communicators in speaking, reading and writing.

We recommend this type of intervention as a means to assist students to further their vocabulary knowledge and reach their full potential as life-long learners. Successful implementation of this program would require peer collaboration and on-going staff development training. Teachers and administrators must have the opportunity to analyze instruction, assessment and achievement. Furthermore, periodic evaluation of the program would contribute to student achievement.

The goal of our action plan was to provide students with a variety of techniques to use to enhance their vocabulary awareness. This plan benefited both teachers and students. We feel that we have been successful in this enterprise and will continue to implement the skills developed for our students and ourselves.

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Appendices

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5

Appendix A

Parent Survey About Reading

Dear Parents,

This survey was designed in an effort to connect home and school support. Please take a few minutes to answer questions about your child's reading habits at home. Your information can help me provide more appropriate instruction to your child and promote learning. I thank you for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Child's Name _____

1. **Is your child more likely to enjoy reading a book or watching TV?**
 reading a book watching TV
2. **How often does your child visit the public library?**
 often sometimes rarely never
3. **As an adult, what type of reading material do you prefer?**
 magazines books newspaper other (be specific)
4. **Does your child stay focused while reading by themselves?**
 yes no
5. **Do you and your child discuss the books they read?** yes no
6. **Did your child attend preschool?** yes no
7. **Has your child ever attended summer school?** yes no
8. **Can your child speak both English and Spanish?** yes no
9. **Was your child in Reading Recovery?** yes no
10. **Does your child receive any Special Services?** yes no
11. **Has your child ever been retained?** yes no

- 12. Do you think reading to your child is important? Explain.**

- 13. What kinds of activities do you and your child most often do together?**

- 14. What does your child like or dislike about reading?**

- 15. Where do you get the books your child reads?**

- 16. What type of books does your child enjoy reading?**

- 17. How do you encourage your child to read books?**

Any additional comments or suggestions:

Appendix B

Student Survey

Name: _____

1) Do you enjoy reading? _____

2) If so, circle the type you enjoy reading:

mystery biography sports auto-biography comics

3) Do you have a library card? _____

4) Outside of the regular school day, how often do you read a book, magazine or newspaper?

Circle one: Daily Weekly

5) Do you have a favorite author? _____

If so, what is his/her name? _____

6) Do you have a favorite book? _____

7) What is the title? _____

8) How many books have you read for the 25 Books Campaign?

9) Do you read to younger brothers or sisters? _____

10) If you read a good book, would you recommend it to a friend?

Appendix C

Test 15 GRADED WORD OPPOSITES

Description: In this test of word opposites the stimulus word is always given orally by the examiner. The student then selects a word from the multiple choice given that he considers opposite in meaning. The test consists of 8 words at each grade level beginning with primer and extending through grade eleven. (See pages 86-90.)

Appropriate for: students of at least primer level reading ability through eleventh grade. It is particularly useful for students with average or better intelligence but below average in comprehension of orally or silently read materials.

Ages: 5-16, or older students with reading disabilities.

Testing Time: 5 minutes.

Directions for Use:

Administer the test individually, or in small groups.

1. Give the student a copy of the test, pages 86-90, and ask him to read aloud (or underline, if used with a group) the word opposite in meaning to the word read to him.
2. Be sure to establish that the child knows the *meaning* of the word opposite.
3. Start at one grade level below the student's present grade and adjust the difficulty up or down.

Oral directions are as follows:

- "Read (or mark) the word opposite in meaning to the word I tell you."
- "In working through the example you will note that the answer is to be found in one of a multiple choice."
- "Each word list gets harder, but do the best you can."

Scoring the Test: An answer key for this test is provided below. In scoring the test:

1. Raw score is the total correctly identified plus 8 points for each list below any list TOTALLY correct.
2. Two errors on any one list establishes the grade level for understanding word opposites. This is considered the instructional level.

Remediation: In those instances in which the student gives the correct answer but marks the wrong word, the problem is one of learning to identify words and has nothing to do with understanding word opposites. For example, the examiner says *little* and the child says *big*, but marks *boy*.

In clear-cut cases where the student does not know most of the opposites, exercises can be devised or found to teach these concepts:

- o Is it a big ball? No, it is a little ball.
- * Is it a big hamburger? No, it is a little hamburger.
- o Is she rich? No, she is poor.
- o Is an elephant tiny? No, an elephant is large.
- o Are frogs pretty? No, frogs are ugly.
- o Are worms pretty? No, worms are ugly.

Grade

Level

Answer Key

Pr	likes, sit, up, big, in, went, happy, cannot
@ 2	boys, fast, woman, drop, his, day, found, good
3	first , right, light, quiet, open, front, round, hello
4	afraid, gentle, hard, silly, awake, west, less, stood
5	bold, least, mine, able, true, smoothly, forget, king
6	fake, entrance, inner, strong, soaked, awful, direct, finished
7	beautiful, expensive, frown, dull, difficult, advanced, generous, public cowardly,
8	immature, rested, stiff, graceful, industrious, oral, untidy strengthen, uncle,
9	criticize, illegal, failure, ascend, intellectual, original rejected, tense, boastful,
10	automatic, brunette, noverty, disperse, extravagant murky, insecure, raze, obese,
11	exterior, turbulent, maternal, vulgar nonflammable, pliable, vacuous, inarticulate, agile, shy, obvious, indulge

.....

Date of Test _____ Examiner _____
 Observations _____

Chronological Age _____ yr. .. MO.
 Grade Level _____
 Raw Score _____
 Average _____
 Above _____ Below _____

EXAMPLE: Examiner says: *walk*.
 (Help the student, but ONLY if necessary.)

Student silently marks or responds aloud:
 boy run see

HATES
 STAND
 DOWN
 LITTLE
 OUT
 CAME
 SAD
 CAN

likes
 see
 you
 boy
 in
 was
 happy
 no

jump
 was
 at
 big
 its
 went
 house
 car

look
 sit
 up
 bad
 is
 were
 have
 cannot

GIRLS
 SLOW
 MAN
 LIFT
 HERS
 NIGHT
 LOST
 BAD

bump
 fast
 pole
 drop
 foot
 day
 button
 candy

boys
 seesaw
 window
 step
 his
 dark
 found
 and

baby
 hop
 woman
 bear
 rain
 down
 please
 good

Test 15 (cont.)

lft
@
in
l.-
à
m

LAST
LEFT
DARK
NOISY
CLOSE
BACK
SQUARE
GOODBYE

fist
red
light
quiet
oven
from
rosy
hello

fast
right
low
stand
over
front
round
help

first
round
leave
silly
open
free
read
hold

l
l
l
i
i

FEARLESS
ROUGH
SOFT
SERIOUS
ASLEEP
EAST
MORE
SAT

after
gone
had
squeal
awake
with
less
said

over
grow
head
silly
away
West
lead
stood

afraid
gentle
hard
jeep
always
word
load
was

SHY
MOST
YOURS
UNABLE
FALSE
ROUGHLY
REMEMBER
QUEEN

bold
level
maybe
art
trial
smoothly
fierce
king

bad
least
me
able
throb
stride
ferry
kept

burn
ledge
mine
after
true
slope
forget
kite

Test 15 (cont.)

REAL
EXIT
OUTER
WEAK
DRIED
WONDERFUL
INDIRECT
INCOMPLETE

flat
scout
inner
folks
soaked
details
firm
fine

fake
ancient
flow
model
scoop
awful
queer
finished

tough
entrance
ramps
strong
hedge
awkward
direct
firm

UGLY
CHEAP
SMILE
BRIGHT
EASY
PRIMARY
STINGY
PRIVATE

nice
expand
frown
dump
difficult
vantage
giant
public

beautiful
expert
from
dull
needed
goal
generous
puncture

mean
expensive
freed
shine
swift
advanced
loose
please

HEROIC
MATURE
WEARY
FLEXIBLE
CLUMSY
LAZY
WRITTEN
NEAT

cowardly
immature
crowds
styled
brief
include
oral
unfair

catch
model
crash
stiff
scar
industrious
graphic
untidy

weary
mauve
rested
certain
graceful
indolent
sonic
unsure

nr --.1 is

(cont.)*ies*

WEAKEN	close	clarify	strengthen -
AUNT	uncle	cousin	relative
PRAISE	admire	criticize	choose
LEGAL	illegal	illspent	illusion
SUCCESS	failure	foil	furnish
DESCEND	derive	ascend	slanted
STUPID	wistful	intellectual	dull
COPY	original	origin	orange

ACCEPTED	rejected	refer	wrapped
RELAXED	joined	tense	fencing
MODEST	boastful	burnt	banter
MANUAL	autograph	automatic	automobile
BLOND	brunette	fair	fortune
WEALTH	rich	poverty	powerful
UNIFY	disperse	divert	divulge
MISERLY	extravagant	extra	stingy

CLEAR	morose	murky	mafia
CONFIDENT	scurvy	secure	insecure
BUILD	raze	razor	route
THIN	obdurate	obese	opal
INTERIOR	exterior	extreme	extol
CALM	turbine	turbulent	trudging
PATERNAL	prefer	morose	maternal
REFINED	vulture	valve	vulgar

Test is (cont.)

INFLAMMABLE	nonflammable	burnable	safety
OBSTINATE	placate	pliable	play
FULL	vacuous	replete	glutted
FLUENT	inarticulate	articulate	arty
CLUMSY	agate	agent	agile
INTREPID	bold	shy	brave
OBSCURER	obvious	obdurate	obnoxious
ABSTAIN	inhale	injure	indulge

Appendix D

Name _____

Date _____

Vocabulary Assessment

Primary

Directions: Choose the word that best completes each sentence. Fill in the blank.

1. An evergreen tree doesn't have leaves. It has _____.
 spines needles twigs
2. When you save money at a bank, your money is put into your _____.
 account equipment library
3. A window has the shape of a _____.
 circle rectangle triangle
4. Dinosaurs were a kind of _____.
 skeleton veterinarian reptile
5. A collection of things that you see in a museum is called an _____.
 exhibit mound restaurant
6. A tornado warning means bad _____.
 daylight post office weather

7. Famous people are very _____.
 important polite decay
8. A digital clock shows the time using _____.
 numerals scissors table of contents
9. On a clock, there is an hour hand and a _____ hand.
 face summer minute
10. The skin under your hair is called your _____.
 scalp publisher coyote
11. Leaves change color in the _____.
 spring autumn winter
12. When someone is talking you should not _____.
 interrupt repeat outline
13. A sailboat is pushed by the _____ of the wind.
 sails force string
14. The chimney is on _____ of the house.
 waterfall shower top
15. This summer is so hot, the _____ is 100 degrees.
 temperature star x-ray
16. The seeds of an evergreen tree are in the _____.
 trunk roots cones
17. The name of a book is the _____.
 copyright scalp title
18. A tool that cuts is _____.
 scissors stethoscope wheelbarrow

19. To give off light means to _____.
exercise glow millions
20. To keep safe means to _____.
protect warning chatters
21. The flowery parts of a plant are the _____.
seeds petals taproot
22. The people living near you are your _____.
catchers neighbors listeners
23. The person teaching a sport is the _____.
audience character coach
24. To practice means to _____.
habits rehearse interrupt

Appendix E

Name _____

Date _____

Vocabulary Assessment Intermediate

Part 1

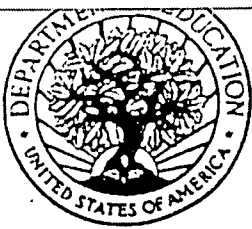
Directions: In each row draw a circle around the word that means the same as the first word.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. cautious: | frightened | careful | confused |
| 2. observe: | conceal | overlook | watch |
| 3. intrude: | interfere | worry | abolish |
| 4. subject: | value | theme | consistent |
| 5. yield: | bond | produce | devote |
| 6. whirl: | consume | organize | spin |
| 7. gnarled: | twisted | sleek | thin |
| 8. probe: | element | excessive | poke |
| 9. jubilation: | creative | increase | happy |
| 10. hypocritical: | limited | boost | phony |

Part 2

Directions: In each row draw a circle around the word that means the opposite of the first word.

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 11. betrayal: | trust | inform | double-cross |
| 12. formal: | original | earliest | casual |
| 13. fiction: | truth | exaggeration | imaginary |
| 14. dialogue: | conversation | realistic | silence |
| 15. comparison: | contrast | similar | describe |
| 16. tone: | attitude | mood | style |
| 17. shocked: | appalled | surprised | expected |
| 18. consequence: | fate | result | aware |
| 19. grimace: | smile | frown | disgust |
| 20. meek: | humble | modest | boastful |



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