

# 1. *Word-Conscious Classrooms*

**Summary:** The importance of vocabulary is common knowledge, yet there are some amazing opportunities to build strategic vocabulary instruction into the language teachers use in everyday interactions. In an article for *The Reading Teacher*, University of Florida professors Holly Lane and Stephanie Allen highlight classrooms that exemplify this vocabulary integration.

## **Practical Applications**

Lane and Allen demonstrate ways that teachers can gradually build up even the youngest students' vocabulary by modeling sophisticated vocabulary on a day to day basis. For instance, the "line leader" can become the "classroom movement coordinator." The weather outside can go from being "cold" to "rather brisk." Students asked to complement one another each morning can be taught to advance from simple words like "nice" and "happy" to "courteous" and "jovial." Increasing the sophistication of labels for familiar ideas continually scaffolds students' lexicons. Some important aspects of shifting to this sort of word-conscious classroom are:

- Be deliberate about the words you are planning to introduce. One of the teachers highlighted in the article "made lists of word that were related to classroom routines and to different areas of the curriculum. For each word ... she searched for more sophisticated substitutes and culled these ... to a list of words she believed to be manageable for her students."
- Start by using advanced synonyms for words and concepts that students already know. For entirely new words and concepts, begin with simple words before phasing in the sophisticated synonyms.
- Some words can be taught implicitly by replacing a simpler word in context (e.g. "Thank you, Angelo, for distributing the paper.") Other, more complicated words still need to be taught explicitly.
- Build up sophisticated vocabulary all day, from lining up to content instruction.

## **Conclusion and Citation**

As Lane and Allen note, students are capable of far more difficult vocabulary usage than teachers sometimes expect. Creating a word-rich classroom can make every day replete with vocabulary learning and excite students as they continually expand their lexicons. As the authors conclude, "being a word-conscious teacher is the best way to promote word consciousness among students."

Lane, H. & Allen, S. "The Vocabulary-Rich Classroom: Modeling Sophisticated Word use to Promote Word Consciousness and Vocabulary Growth." *The Reading Teacher*, 63.5 (2010), pp. 362-370. <http://tinyurl.com/yhvjxq> (subscription only).