


Improving Vocabulary Instruction Through Teacher Study Groups

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REL Southeast



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The Purpose of this Session


To share the results of three large professional development studies. Two of them involved 1st grade teachers and one 8th grade teachers. These studies addressed Teacher Study Groups as a vehicle to learn how to deliver effective vocabulary instruction. The strategies implemented in these studies are being shared with Mississippi teachers in the Laurel, Canton, and Columbus school districts.



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Teacher Study Groups: Session Design (75 Minutes)

1. Debrief: Previous Application of the Focus Research Concept
2. Discuss the Focus Research Concept
3. Compare Research with Practice
4. Plan Collaboratively
5. Assignment



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Teacher Study Groups: Publications

- Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Jayanthi, M., and Taylor, M. (in press). Conceptual Replications of the Teacher Study Group Approach to Professional Development in Vocabulary. *Elementary School Journal*.
 - Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Gersten, R., Taylor, M. J., Haymond, K., & Smolkowski, K. (2017). *The impact of teacher study groups in vocabulary on teaching practice, teacher knowledge, and student vocabulary knowledge: a large-scale replication study*. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 11:1, 83-108. DOI: 10.1080/19345747.2017.1327625.
 - Dimino, J. A., Taylor, M.J., and Gersten, R. (2011). Improving vocabulary instruction through Teacher Study Groups. *Better*. Retrieved from <http://education.jhu.edu/newhorizons/Better/articles/Fall2011.html>
- www.inresg.org



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Teacher Study Groups: Scope and Sequence

1. Categories of Natural Contexts
2. Selecting Words to Teach
3. Developing Student Friendly Definitions
4. Develop Examples, Non-examples and Concrete Representations



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Teacher Study Groups: Scope and Sequence

5. Developing Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning
6. Cumulative Review I
7. Using Context to Determine Word Meanings
8. Reviewing and Extending Word Learning
9. Cumulative Review II




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Focus Research Concept

Categories of Natural Context

1. Directive
2. General
3. Nondirective
4. Misdirective



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Categories of Natural Context

Directive

There is enough information to lead students to the correct meaning of the word or the word is explicitly defined/explained in the text.

General

The context provides readers with adequate information to give them a general idea of the word's meaning.



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Categories of Natural Context

Nondirective

The context does not assist the reader in determining the meaning of the word.

Misdirective

The context leads the reader toward the incorrect meaning of the word.



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Categories of Natural Context

Directive:

There is enough information to lead students to the correct meaning of the word or the word is explicitly defined/explained in the text.

Example: After more than 200 years, the United States Constitution continues to work. Our Founding Fathers made sure that it could be changed to meet the needs of our country by allowing a system for adding amendments. **Amendments** are sections added to a law or a rule to change it. In more than 200 years, only 27 amendments, or additions, have been made to our Constitution.



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Categories of Natural Context

General:

The context provides readers with adequate information to give them a general idea of the word's meaning.

Example: The political candidate, filled with confidence and energy, came to the podium. He answered questions without saying anything controversial and seemed to be pleasing the crowd. The last question of the press conference included new information about the corruption of a former employee. His campaign manager's face tightened as he **winned** in reaction to the unscripted answer of his candidate.



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Categories of Natural Context

Nondirective:

The context does not assist the reader in determining the meaning of the word.

Example: Jamie was excited to be visiting his grandparents after so many years. He scanned the crowd waiting in the airport lounge until he recognized the worn brown bomber jacket, he remembered so well from his childhood walks in the woods. It was his grandfather's favorite memento from his flying days. As he raced to embrace him, Jamie noticed the woman standing by his side. Could this **frail** woman be his grandmother?



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Categories of Natural Context

Misdirective:

The context leads the reader toward the incorrect meaning of the word.

Example: The climb up the mountain took longer than John and Patrick expected. The cliffs were steeper than Pete remembered, and they had to walk an extra mile because the path was impassable at one point. It was Jake's first experience mountain climbing, and he was exhilarated at the end of the day.



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

1. Read each paragraph on the handout, **Activity 1**.
2. Determine the category of natural context for the *italicized* word in each paragraph.



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

1. There are many similarities and differences between mammals and birds. The bone structure of a bird's wing bears an uncanny resemblance to the bone structure of the human arm. The *hallux*, or big toe, of most mammals aligns with the other toes; in birds, the comparable digit usually turns backward.

Context Category: _____



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Context Category: Directive



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

2. When they visited the desert retreat, Judy and her mother enjoyed swimming, playing tennis, and having spa treatments in the cactus gardens. Because of the effects of the sere weather, they had moisturizing facials every day. Even so, they were happy to return to their beachfront home.

Context Category: _____



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

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Context Category: General



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

3. We were having our annual staff luncheon at the local Italian restaurant, Giuseppe's Trattoria. The food was excellent, and our large group was having a wonderful time. Gaetano, the owner, was equanimous when several of his relatives dropped in unexpectedly.

Context Category: _____



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

3. We were having our annual staff luncheon at the local Italian restaurant, Giuseppe's Trattoria. The food was excellent, and our large group was having a wonderful time. Gaetano, the owner, was equanimous when several of his relatives dropped in unexpectedly.

Context Category: Nondirective _____



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

4. Winners of the pre-trial race were preparing for the final contest. As Roberta watched her husband take his starting position, her heart began to beat violently under her sweatshirt. She knew he had a good chance to win this one, and if he lost, she would be elated.

Context Category: _____



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Activity 1: What is the category of natural context?

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Context Category: Misdirective



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Focus Research Concept

Selecting Words to Teach

When choosing words to teach, it is important to consider:

1. Text Factors
(Misdirective, Nondirective, Directive, General)
2. Importance of the Word
3. Student Factors
4. Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 Words



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Selecting Words to Teach

1. Category of Natural Context

- a. Text Factors: misdirective, nondirective, directive, general
- b. Explicitly teach words in the misdirective and nondirective context categories.



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Selecting Words to Teach

Importance of the Word

Ask yourself: Is the word critical (i.e., conceptually central) for understanding the selection.



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Selecting Words to Teach

Student Factors

1. Students' knowledge of and exposure to the word

Consider: Grade of the students

Ask yourself: Has the student had previous experience or exposure to this word?

2. Importance for future learning

Ask yourself: Is the word important for the students to know five years from now?



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Tiers

Tier 1 are the most basic words (e.g., *desk, run, house*).
Students rarely need to be taught these words.


Tier 2 are words that are of high frequency for mature language users found across a variety of subject areas (e.g., *adequate, enormous, vociferous, satisfactory*).

Tier 3 words are used infrequently and are often limited to a specific subject areas (e.g., *kurtosis, archipelago, pi*).




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Activity




Tier 1, 2 or 3?
extraordinary
diode



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Steps for Selecting Words to Teach


1. Choose a reading selection.
2. As you read the selection, jot down 10 words (without analyzing them) that you would want to consider teaching.
3. Select words that you think might be important for students to comprehend the text.
4. You may want to read the text more than once to generate this list of potential words.


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Steps for Selecting Words to Teach


5. Follow the steps 1-3 for each word you select to determine if it requires instruction for students to comprehend the text.
6. If, after completing these steps, you still do not have 10 words selected for instruction, choose 10 more words from the selection, and repeat the steps below.
7. Remember to enter each decision you make on the Word Analysis Table.


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Word Analysis Table

Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No



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Selecting Words to Teach

Step 1: Consider the text factors.

a. Does the word belong in the misdirective or nondirective category?

b. If yes, enter the category in the Category of Natural Context column on the Word Analysis Table and proceed to the next step. This word may be one your students will need to know to understand the text.

c. If the word is in the directive or general category, analyze the next word on your list.



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Selecting Words to Teach

Step 2: Consider the importance of the word.

a. Is the word critical (i.e., conceptually central) for understanding the selection?

b. If the word is conceptually central, enter yes in the conceptually central to Understanding the Text column on the Word Analysis Table and proceed to the next step.

c. If the word is not conceptually central for understanding the selection, analyze the next word on your list.



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Selecting Words to Teach

Step 3: Consider the student factors.

- Ask yourself if students have had sufficient previous experience with or exposure to the word. Enter *yes* or *no* in the Previous Experience & Exposure column on the Word Analysis Table.
- Ask yourself if the word will be important for students to know 5 years from now. Enter *yes* or *no* in the Important to Know 5 Years from Now column on the Word Analysis Table.



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Selecting Words to Teach

- If you decided that students have **not** had sufficient previous experience with or exposure to the word **and** it will be important for them to know 5 years from now, teach this word.

Repeat these Steps 1-3 for the remaining words you are considering.



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Word Analysis Table

Humans usually turn to robots when they need help getting to places that are hard to reach, like the moon or Mars. Scientists have built a robot to explore colonies of penguins. A team of scientists has designed a **robot** that looks like a fuzzy baby penguin. Because it is **disguised**, the machine can get up close to real birds in their surroundings without disturbing them.


Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Robot	Nondirective	Yes	Yes	No	No



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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach


Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised					



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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach


Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised	nondirective				




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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach


Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised	nondirective	Yes			




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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach					
Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised	nondirective	Yes	No		
					

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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach					
Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised	nondirective	Yes	No	Yes	
					

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Activity 2: Selecting Words to Teach					
Word	Category of Natural Context	Conceptually Central	Previous Experience or Exposure	Important to Know 5 Years from Now	Teach? Yes or No
Disguised	nondirective	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
					

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Teaching Conceptually Central Words

Provide students with:

1. a brief simple, student-friendly definition that relates to the content of the passage,
2. an example,
3. a non-example,
4. a visual representation of the word, and
5. engaging activities to solidify the word's meaning.



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Focus Research Concept

Developing Student Friendly Definitions



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Traditional Dictionary Definitions

1. The definition alone tells little about how a word is actually used.
2. The definitions do not effectively convey new concepts.
3. Denotation vs. Connotation
 - Denotation is the formal definition in the dictionary.
 - Connotation refers to the associations people make with a word or how it is typically used.



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Denotation and Connotation

Target Word: Procrastinate

Denotation: To put off intentionally and habitually

Connotation: If you procrastinate, you keep things you should do until later, often because you do not want to do them.



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Student Friendly Definitions

Student friendly definitions contain two important elements.

1. Characterize the Word:
Student friendly definitions describe the word by focusing on specific aspects of its meaning rather than on a general description.

Characterize the word by asking yourself:


Why do we have this word particularly?
Why do we have such a word?



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Student Friendly Definitions

2. Explain the Meaning in Everyday Language:
The definition is crafted using words that are part of the students' vocabulary and convey the connotation of the word.



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Example Definition from a Published Program

Artist - a person who makes art

An **artist** is a person who draws or paints pictures or creates sculptures as a job or hobby.



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Friendly?

or



Unfriendly?

Reluctant - unwilling; with hesitation



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Friendly

Reluctant - If you are **reluctant** to do something, you do not want to do it and hesitate before doing it or do it slowly and without enthusiasm.



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Student Friendly Definitions Online

Collins Cobuild

<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English Online

<http://www.ldoceonline.com>

Merriam Webster Learners Dictionary

<http://www.learnersdictionary.com>



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Focus Research Concept

Developing Examples, Nonexamples, and Concrete Representations of Words



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Examples Within and Beyond the Context

Examples **within** the context of the selection help clarify and pinpoint the word's meaning.

Examples **beyond** the context of the selection help students formulate a deeper understanding of the word that is logical and unambiguous.

They also help students who may be inclined to limit the word's connotation to the circumstances the teacher described when introducing the word.



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Nonexamples

Nonexamples or contrasting examples help further pinpoint the meaning of the word by providing instances where the definition does not apply.

Contrasting examples help to solidify meanings and prevent misconceptions by explicitly telling students the attributes that are not part of the word's connotation.



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Concrete Representations

Concrete representations of words include pictures, diagrams, gestures, facial expressions, demonstrations, objects, etc.

When students are given concrete representations of words, their brains are able to make connections between language, which is abstract, and something tangible.



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Example Lesson Target Word: Protest

Protest movements throughout history, specifically in the 1960s, have affected American culture and politics. The colonists of this country used protests that led to forming an independent country. Social protests have shaped our history and continue to shape American politics and culture.



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Student Friendly Definition

Protest-If you protest against something or about something, you say or show publicly that you object to it.



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Example within the Context of the Selection

Some Americans took part in **protests** because they were against the war in Vietnam.



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Examples beyond the Context of the Selection

The citizens **protested** against a nuclear power plant that was going to be built in their city because the citizens are afraid that, if the plant malfunctions, the radiation will harm them.

The members of the Occupy Movement **protested** because they objected to the economic inequality in the U.S. and around the world

The child began to **protest** when he was told that his cell phone was being taken away until his grades improved. He protested because he would not be able to text his friends.



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Nonexamples

Campaigning for a candidate you support to win the election.

Having a conversation about a controversial topic.

Canvassing your neighborhood to build support for passing a ballot measure or a law.



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Concrete Representations

Anti-War Protest



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Concrete Representations


Occupy Movement



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Focus Research Concept

Developing Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning



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Levels of Processing Vocabulary for Multiple Meaningful Exposures

Associational Level


Students connect a definition to a word.

Examples: matching exercises, crossword puzzles

Comprehension Level

Students use definitional information to complete activities such as to classifying words into categories or to complete graphic organizers.

Examples: Semantic map, semantic feature analysis, Frayer Model, Concept Diagram, Venn Diagram




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Levels of Processing Vocabulary for Multiple Meaningful Exposures

Generative Level

Students produce novel responses to the word.

Examples: responding to questions, making choices, creating examples



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Idea Completion

Given a scenario, students provide a rationale to demonstrate their understanding of a word's meaning.

The small child was **forbidden** to play with the matches because....

Variation:

Would you want a **frail** person on your football team? Why? Why not?



(Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

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Questions, Reasons, & Examples

Students interact with target words by responding to questions and giving examples.

Why is it good to **contemplate** the possible consequences for your behavior?



(Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

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Relating Words

Students justify their responses to questions about target words.

Using Two Words

Would you **dread** something **appetizing**? Why? Why not?



(Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

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Describing/Explaining

Place these phrases on the word line **Little Endurance** to a **Great Deal of Endurance**. Explain your placement.

How much endurance does it take to.....

1. **participate** in a decathlon?
2. undergo an **appendectomy**?
3. tolerate a child who is having a **tantrum**?
4. listen to an **engaging** speaker for over an hour?

Little Endurance.....Great Deal of Endurance



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Word Associations

Requires students to associate known words with newly learned words and provides cumulative review.

Words: **murmur, benevolent, fragrant, vociferous**

1. Which word goes with flowers? Why?
2. Which word goes with whisper? Why?
3. Which word goes with helping? Why?
4. Which word goes with loud? Why?



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Multiple Meanings

Students apply different meanings to the same word.

1. What does the word **crescent** mean to:
a baker? an astronomer? a mapmaker?
2. What does the word **scent** mean to
a chef? a bloodhound?




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Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning
Target Word: Protest

Describe a **protest** you participated in or heard about.

Jeremy decided to take part in the **protest** because...

Joan decided not to take part in the **protest** because....



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Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning
Target Word: Protest

If any of the following would make people **protest**, say, "protest."
Be ready to explain your answer.

A proposed increase in sales tax

Providing meals for the homeless

Building a new animal shelter




(Adapted from Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

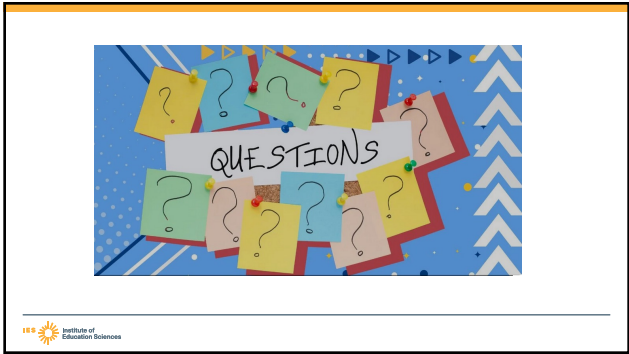
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Vocabulary Lesson Plan Form

Target Word
Student Friendly Definition
Examples Within the Context of the Selection
Examples Beyond the Context of the Selection
Non-Examples
Concrete Representations
Activities to Solidify a Word's Meaning



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