



Make Academic Word Learning Transparent

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Notes from the Authors

While the power of teacher modeling has been documented, many struggle with how to incorporate this approach into their daily practice. Modeling takes instruction to the next level through an invitation to witness the teacher's thought processes. It requires moving beyond the more common second-person instruction ("Next, you will...") and shifting to the first person ("Next, I...").

Students at the secondary level face a daunting volume of vocabulary in each of their content areas, and they quickly learn that merely memorizing definitions is not adequate. However, they may also lack a multifaceted word-solving approach that helps them when they encounter an unknown word. Effective word solving involves looking both inside and outside of the word. Inside approaches include the structural analysis of examining word parts like roots, bases, and affixes. Outside the word approaches include contextual analysis and making connections to prior knowledge. Finally, a learner may roam even further outside the word—using resources in the book (glossary, text features) and beyond the book (dictionaries, online resources, even asking a friend).

In this video, three content-area teachers (history, English, and science) provide their rationale for why modeling academic word learning is important in their discipline. Take a look inside each teacher's classroom as he or she models different approaches to figuring out unfamiliar words. These lessons have been edited to spotlight when

the modeling occurs. These think-alouds occur easily throughout their lessons and are woven throughout other instructional phases, including collaborative and independent learning. Watch how they spotlight both inside and outside word solving.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What can teacher modeling contribute to your students' learning?
2. Describe word-solving approaches you can model for your students.
3. What do you believe is necessary in order for students to begin to take on what is being modeled for them?