

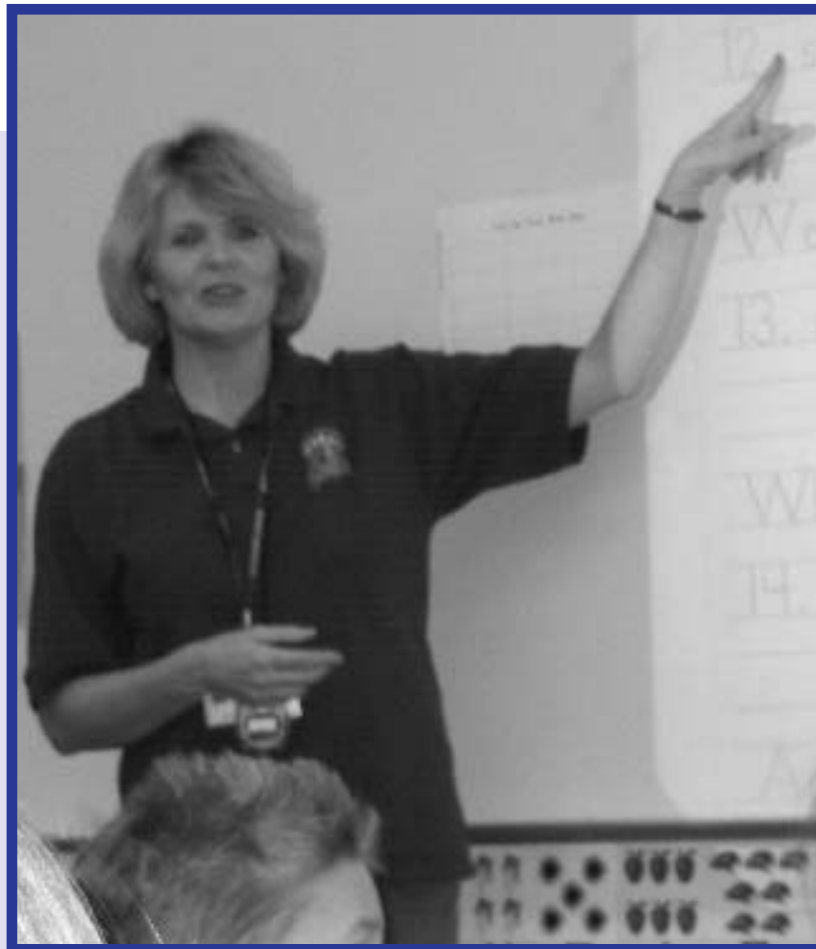
# Powerful Instruction Proven Tools for Student Success

Increasing students' reading vocabulary has always been an important part of reading instruction. The National Reading Panel (2000) reaffirmed this in their publication of the five basic skill areas of reading. This article describes the explicit instructional methods used to teach new vocabulary at Rocky Mountain School in Alpine District.

The resource team at Rocky Mountain Elementary has found that students respond well to explicit instruction as they learn and improve reading skills. At Rocky Mountain, explicit instruction developed by the Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI) is used to teach the full range of reading and language arts skills, including new vocabulary. The ECRI method for teaching new vocabulary optimizes the explicit sequential instructional procedures required by the *Reading First* Initiative.

Instruction begins by using informal reading inventories to match each student to appropriate reading materials. The Rocky Mountain team has the best success using an older basal series, such as *Silver Burdette Ginn* (1989), that carefully controls the introduction of new vocabulary and reinforces the vocabulary in subsequent stories. This repetition of new words in other stories promotes the generalization that helps students be successful readers in the general classroom and other settings.

When the story to be read is chosen, the teacher selects vocabulary words that are new to the students. These words become the mastery test for that story. Each word on the mastery test is taught, and mastery is demonstrated when each student reads one word per second with 100% accuracy and orally spells each word with 100% accuracy. Preteaching new vocabulary ensures that students will read the story with few errors.



The typical routine for each new vocabulary word involves teaching the word according to its structure, then completing a word formation exercise and a word discrimination task. Understanding the structure of each word is essential to this process because words in the English language simply do not fit into a single sensible category. Students learn to read new words by phonics if the words have one or two syllables and have phonetically regular sounds and spellings. Five other word structures are also used, depending on the word. Word Structure (WS) 1 is used when a word part is added to a base word, such as *preview*. WS 2 is used when words are combined to make a compound word. WS 3 applies when a base word is changed and a word part is added, as in *babies*. WS 4 is used for combining



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# for New Vocabulary:



Finally, word discrimination is taught by prompting students to read the new word and a similar word. The students say which letters and sounds are the same and different in the two words. The task ends when students orally spell and read each word.

Once the teacher and the students are familiar with the routines, the entire process for teaching a new word takes between two and four minutes, and the students have gained a deep understanding of the spelling and meaning of the word, its formation, and how it differs from a similar word. When internalized, these strategies become the decoding methods that students use to analyze new words as they become successful independent readers.

words to make a contraction, and WS 5 is used when the word has three or more syllables and doesn't match one of the other word structures.

For example, if the new word is *played*, the teacher makes sure the students know the base word *play* and that they can read the suffix *ed*. Then *played* is taught using WS 1 because it adds a word part to a base word. Displaying a word card or an overhead transparency with visual prompts (see Figure 1), the teacher prompts students to say how the word changes when the word part is added to the base word. The students read each word part, spell each word part, and then read and spell the new word. The teacher uses the word in sentences to teach the meaning of the word. All responding is by the group in unison.

Next, word formation is taught by pointing to an incompletely written word. The teacher prompts students to locate the missing phoneme and say the sound that is missing and the letters that spell the missing sound. Students then spell and read the new word orally before writing it while spelling and reading aloud. The teacher checks vocabulary comprehension by prompting the students to use the word in sentences and then reading the word in a prepared sentence. By this point, the students have seen and heard the word and have responded numerous times by saying, spelling, reading, writing, and using the new word in sentences.

Figure 1. Visual prompt for teaching played.

played    play--    played  
ed                    play  
play

The boys played together in the sandbox.

The students at Rocky Mountain are excited and gratified by learning how the words in their language work, and then applying the strategies they have learned to independent reading. Seeing the students constantly engaged and consistently successful makes reading instruction an exciting endeavor. ■

*Editor's note: How does your district/school reading program align with research-based, Reading First strategies and mandates? This article is another installment in an ongoing series on best practices for teaching reading. All issues of The Utah Special Educator will address each of the five essential reading components, one per issue, and highlight schools, programs and teachers that successfully apply these best practice criteria. A compilation of current and future articles in this reading series can be found at: [www.updc.org/specialeducator/index.html](http://www.updc.org/specialeducator/index.html).*