

Checklist for Word Learning: The Classroom Approach

The teacher shows enthusiasm for words and word learning, as evidenced by

- Daily read-alouds.
- Word-of-the-day activities.
- Teacher's love of words and word play (according to students).
- Teacher's understanding of the differences and connections between spelling, phonics, and vocabulary.

The classroom shows physical signs of word awareness, including

- Word charts or word walls (showing student input).
- Books on words, word play, specialized dictionaries, traditional dictionaries (where students can easily access them).
- Labels in classroom.
- Word games.
- Puzzle books and software.
- Student-made word books, alphabet books, and dictionaries.

Students show enthusiasm for words and word learning by

- Keeping personal dictionaries or word logs.
- Using dictionaries on appropriate level.
- Knowing strategies for dealing with unknown words.
- Spending part of each day reading on appropriate level.
- Being able to name a favorite word book, puzzle activity, or word game.

Vocabulary instruction includes

- Rich instruction on specific content-area vocabulary words, including definitions and context, student personalization, and practice.
- Teaching and practicing independent strategies (word parts, context, etymology, word references).
- Building word consciousness (awareness of how words work and motivation through word play and other motivation activities).
- Rich language use in speech and writing, talk about words and concepts, and word choice in writing.
- Use of mapping, webbing, and other graphics to show word relationships in many modalities.
- Multiple exposures and chances to see, hear, write, and use new words.
- Wide reading with post-reading discussion of new words.
- Developing students' responsibility for self-selection and self-study.
- Varied assessments for depth and breadth of learning.

This checklist accompanies the online-only article "A Word for the Words" by Camille Blachowicz and Peter Fisher, *Educational Leadership*, 68(6).