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**Using Text Talk to Enhance Comprehension and Vocabulary
Through Interactive Read-Alouds**

Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) has two main purposes:

1. Enhance comprehension through interspersed open questions that ask children to consider the ideas in the story, talk about them, and make connections among them as the story moves along.
2. Enhance vocabulary development.

In Text Talk, direct instruction in vocabulary occurs after the story has been read, discussed, and wrapped-up; *however, if a word is needed for comprehension, the teacher should stop and briefly explain the word during reading.*

Text Talk Lesson for *Wolf!* (Bloom, 1999)

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Potential Tier 2 words in the text:

wandered	splendid
peered (teach in context w/picture)	admire
complained	confidence
*concentrate	serious
*emergency(ies)	satisfied
*ignore, ignored	improved
*impressed (2x)	
educated (4x) (Teach in context of discussion of why Wolf goes to school)	

Tier 2 words selected for direct vocabulary instruction:

The following words were selected because they are high utility words that children will encounter in other texts, other content areas, and in situations outside of school in conversations and other interactions.

concentrate, emergency, ignore, impressed

Step 1: Doing the read aloud of the text with a focus on comprehension.

Briefly introduce the book: “Listen closely to this story about Wolf. As you listen, think about the problem that Wolf has in the story and how he solves this problem.”

Read aloud page one. Ask the children, “What do we know about the Wolf so far?” Show the picture.

Read the next page. After reading the page, show the picture and talk about “peered” through the context of the text and the picture. Continue reading the next page. Ask: “What did the cow, pig, and duck do when Wolf leapt at them?” “Why did they react this way?”

Read the next page and show the picture of the pig pushing the wolf away. “Why did the pig want wolf to leave?” “Why isn’t pig afraid of wolf in this story?” Discuss the word “educated” as it appears 3 more times in the text and is an important concept in the book.

Read the next page and show the picture of Wolf attending school. “What does Wolf do so he can go back to the farm with the pig, duck, and cow?” “Why does Wolf want to be *educated*?” “What is something people can do if they are *educated*?”

Read the next page. Model Wolf’s slow, choppy, non-fluent reading. “Do the other animals let Wolf join them now?” “Why not?” “What is the problem with Wolf’s reading?”

Read the next page and show the picture of Wolf at the library. Continue reading the next page. Model the way Wolf reads too fast and slurs all of the words in the text together. “Did Wolf get to join the other animals this time?” “What is the problem with Wolf’s reading now?”

Read the next two pages and show the pictures. “What is different about Wolf’s reading now?” “Why did the other animals want him to keep reading to them?”

Read the last two pages of the story. “How does Wolf feel now?” “What does the author tell us that makes you think that?” “How do the pig, duck, and cow feel about Wolf now?” “How do you know?” “Let’s review: What was Wolf’s problem in this story? How did Wolf solve his problem?”

Step 2: Direct Vocabulary Instruction of the Tier 2 Words

Target word: *emergencies* (*emergency*)

1. Use the target word as it was contextualized in the story.
“In the story it says that Wolf was tired and hungry, his feet ached, and he had only a little money that he kept for *emergencies*.”
2. Explain the meaning of the word in student-friendly terms.
“*Emergencies* describe things that happen very quickly when we aren’t expecting them to happen. In the story, Wolf kept a little bit of money with him just in case he had an *emergency* and needed some money for food or he needed to use a pay phone to call someone to help him quickly. Sometimes *emergencies* are very serious things like accidents.”
3. Ask the children to repeat the word so they can create a phonological representation of the word. “Say the word with me: *emergencies*.”
4. Provide additional examples of the word in contexts other than the one used in the story.
“If someone suddenly gets very, very sick, they may have to go to the *emergency* room at the hospital. Or, if there is a building that catches on fire that would be called an *emergency*. If there was a really serious *emergency* like an accident or a fire someone might need to call 911 to get a policeman or fireman to come and help them. When Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans, it created *emergencies* for many, many people because it destroyed their homes and businesses.”
5. Provide opportunities for the children to interact with the word or to provide their own examples of using the word.
“Tell about something you think would be an *emergency*. Try to use the word *emergency* when you tell about it. You could start by saying, ‘If _____ happened that would be an *emergency*.’
If children provide an example of the very same way the word was used in the book, ask them again to use the word in a different way than the author did.

6. Finally, have the children repeat the word to reinforce its phonological representation. “What’s the word we’ve been talking about?” ‘*emergency*’

Target word: *concentrate*

In the story, the cow complained about the awful noise that Wolf made. She said, “I can’t *concentrate* on my book.”

If you *concentrate* on something, you give it all your attention so you can really think carefully about what you are doing. When someone is at work, it’s important to *concentrate* on getting their job done.

Let’s say the word aloud: *concentrate*.

Your mother might *concentrate* when she is trying to figure out how to make a new recipe for dinner. Someone might *concentrate* if they are trying to put something together and they have to figure out exactly how the parts go together. I have to *concentrate* really hard when I am studying to take a test in my college class so I can remember the things I am learning.

If any of the things I say would make someone concentrate, say concentrate. If not, don’t say anything.

- Eating a cookie
- Listening to a book on tape
- Playing a game of checkers with your brother
- Washing your hands
- Looking for your lost dog
- Taking a nap

What’s the word we are learning? “*concentrate*”

Target word: *ignore/ignored*

In the story when the cow complained that she couldn’t concentrate on her book because Wolf was making noise, the duck said, “Just *ignore* it.” The book says that the wolf did not like to be *ignored*.

If you *ignore* someone or something it means you pay absolutely no attention to them. You act as if they are not even there. The other day I went to a meeting and the people there tried to get me to eat a big piece of cake, but I just *ignored* the cake because I am trying not to eat too many sweet things.

Let’s all say our word together: *ignore*.

Now I want you to think of time when you *ignored* someone or something. Turn to your partner and tell them who or what you *ignored*. Make sure you use the word *ignore* or *ignored* when you share your idea with your partner.

What is our new word? “*ignore*”

Target word: *impressed*

In the book when Wolf read really slow and choppy the pig, the duck, and the cow were not very *impressed* with the way Wolf read. After Wolf went to the library and read lots and lots of books, he said, “They’ll be *impressed* with my reading now.”

If you are *impressed* with someone or something it means you feel really great about them or about something they did. When I went to New York City I was very *impressed* with all the big, tall buildings. I had never seen buildings that tall before. When you came in the classroom so quietly this morning and got right to work, I was *impressed* by your excellent behavior. The first time I tried to park a car, my driving teacher was not very *impressed*.

If any of the things I say would make you feel *impressed*, say “I’m *impressed!*” If not, don’t say anything.

- You see a messy room.
- Your best friend wins a million dollars.
- You get 100% on your spelling test.
- Your cat is asleep.
- When you get home from school, your house has turned into a giant cupcake.
- Your class reads every single book in the school library in one day.

Let’s say our new word: “*impressed.*”

Combine the words by having the children make a choice between two of the words:

- If your brother fell down and broke his arm, would that be an *emergency* or would you just *ignore* it? Why?
- If the principal won the American Idol contest on TV, would you be *impressed* or would you need to *concentrate*? Why or why not?
- If you found an amazingly beautiful butterfly on the playground, would that be an *emergency* or would you be *impressed*?
- If you had to learn something new that is hard to do, would you *ignore* it or would you try and *concentrate* on it? Why?

Maintain all four words by asking the children to give examples or explanations:

- If there was an *emergency* at the gas station, what might have happened?
- If your friend kept teasing you at recess, what could you do to *ignore* him?
- Explain a time when you had to *concentrate* on something.
- Describe something or someone that has *impressed* you.

Maintain by helping children add to their networks of related words:

- When you are *concentrating* on something, what do you do?
- If you were really *impressed* with something or someone, how could you show it?
- How would you act if you were trying to *ignore* someone or something?
- When I was in a car accident, it was an *emergency*. Besides an accident, what else could be an *emergency*?

Assess:

Let’s think about all four of our new words again: *emergency*, *concentrate*, *ignore*, *impressed*.

- Which of these would be an *emergency* – a house that is being built or a house that is on fire?
- When would you need to *concentrate* the most- when you are reading a book or when you are eating lunch?

- When would you *ignore* something-when you didn't care about it or when you really wanted to know about it?
- Which of these might *impress* you-your favorite football team wins the championship or your favorite football team loses every game?

Increasing the Effectiveness of Teacher Read Alouds through Text Talk

- Distinction between *constructing meaning of ideas in a text* and simply *retrieving information from the text*.
- Understanding the difficulty of the task young children face in gaining meaning from decontextualized language.
- Designing questions that encourage children to talk about and connect ideas and developing follow-up questions that scaffold, building meaning from these ideas.
- Helping students to meaningfully incorporate their background knowledge and reduce the kind of surface association of knowledge that brings forth a hodgepodge of personal anecdotes and predictions.
- Awareness of how pictures can draw attention away from processing the linguistic content in a text, and thus attention to the timing of the use of pictures.
- Taking advantage of the sophisticated words found in trade books by using them as a source of explicit vocabulary activities.