

Provincial Outreach  
Program for the Early Years

## Diving into Oral Language, Vocabulary and Comprehension

February 14, 2025 8:30am - 2:30pm

Presenter:  
Dr. Jennifer Kelly

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### Today's learning objectives

- We are learning to...
  - Understand the role of oral language in comprehension
  - Make our vocabulary instruction intentional
  - Recognize the importance of knowledge and its impact on comprehension

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### Not either/or...

AND

&

and

AND

Standardized tests	↔	Authentic literature
Research	↔	Classroom practice
The art of teaching	↔	The science of teaching
Individual student needs	↔	Whole class efficiency
Direct instruction	↔	Discovery Learning
Practice in isolation	↔	Practice in context
Mastery of skills	↔	Joy of learning
Structure	↔	Choice
Integrity	↔	Fit

Shifting the Balance - Burkins & Yates, 2021  
Image Credit: by Tiffy Facebook Page

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**De-mystifying the Science of Reading**

The Science of Reading Is **NOT**:

- An ideology or philosophy
- A fad, trend new idea or pendulum swing
- A political agenda
- A one-size-fits-all approach
- A program of instruction
- A single, specific component of instruction such as phonics

Science of Reading Defining Goals | www.poey.ca | @POPEYC | POPEY

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**De-mystifying the Science of Reading**

The Science of Reading **Is**:

- scientifically-based research
- last five decades across the world
- thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages
- informs how proficient reading and writing develop
- helps us understand why some have difficulty
- informs how to most effectively assess and teach
- improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties

Science of Reading Defining Goals | www.poey.ca | @POPEYC | POPEY

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**How Children Read**

**D X LC = RC**

↑                      ↑                      ↑

Decoding                      Linguistic Comprehension                      Reading Comprehension

Reading Rockets: Models of Reading | www.poey.ca | @POPEYC | POPEY

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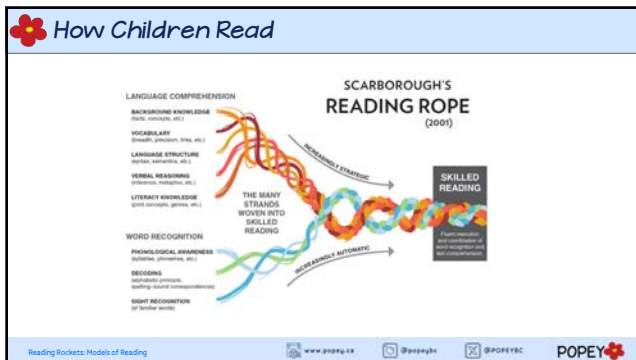
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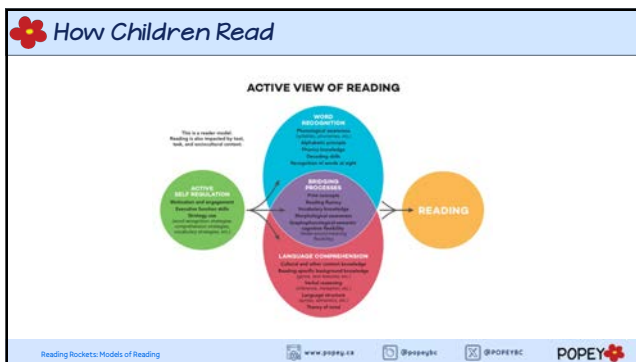
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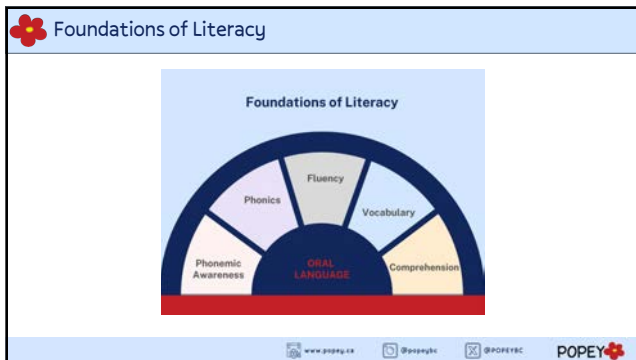
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**Laying the Language Track for the Word Reading Train**

Reading Comprehension

WORD READING

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

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**The Role of Oral Language and Comprehension**

Comprehension begins with oral language and the capacity to understand spoken language (listening comprehension)

- through conversation
- through hearing and sharing personal stories
- through interactions with rich text

→

then children can access these for themselves by reading increasingly complex texts

- expose children to new ideas
- new vocabulary
- new concepts

*(A red star is placed between the two columns of text.)*

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**The Role of Oral Language and Comprehension**

**Keep in Mind**

Listening comprehension develops through:

- Conversation, sharing stories, and interactions with rich texts

**Ideas for Instruction**

- Leverage conversations throughout the day
- Ask quality questions
- Provide wait time
- Repeat and expand
- Use interesting words
- Read aloud
- Use text sets to build content knowledge

*(A small book cover titled 'SHIFTING THE BALANCE' is shown in the bottom left.)*

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### Dialogic Conversation

Dialogic Conversation to Build Oral Language

- Engage**
  - Verbal interaction around a text or general conversation
  - May involve asking child's opinion, to name or recall something from a text, or to make a connection
- Repeat**
  - Repeat, embedding the child's response in a natural way
  - Repeat only the correct part of a student's response or integrate a correction into this step
- Expand**
  - As you repeat, say a little more
  - Expand the language to include a new word, phrase or idea

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### Re-thinking Reading Comprehension

- Reading comprehension is complex and is **not a single "skill" or set of strategies**
- Instead, we can think of it as an **outcome**

Reading Comprehension is a combination of:

- > **The Reader**
  - Each reader brings their own knowledge and interests
- > **The Text**
  - Texts vary in genre, topic and difficulty
- > **The Activity**
  - The activity varies depending on the purpose for reading

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### Re-thinking Reading Comprehension

"There is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the fact that you can't read the words" (Archer, 2001)

Reading comprehension differs from language comprehension in that it **relies on print**

- o A reader needs to be able to read a text accurately and fluently to comprehend the text

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**Re-thinking Reading Comprehension**


Word recognition + language comprehension

+

monitoring + questioning + summarizing  
(focus on text content)

+

inferring + knowledge of text structure  
(construct a representation of meaning)



7 Mighty Moves - Kennedy, 2023 | www.poey.ca | @poeybc | @POPEYBC | POPEY

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**Re-thinking Reading Comprehension**

We know that reading comprehension is a complex process and many factors contribute to it, but...

*Vocabulary & Background Knowledge*

ESPECIALLY CRITICAL



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**Why Teach Vocabulary?**

- A rich vocabulary supports learning about the world, new ideas, and enjoying the beauty of language
- A rich vocabulary enhances what an individual wants to say and write
- Vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency
  - tightly related to reading comprehension: primary, intermediate, high school and adults

**READ WRITE SPEAK LISTEN LEARN**

Bringing Words to Life - Beck, McKeown, Kucan | www.poey.ca | @poeybc | @POPEYBC | POPEY

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**Why Teach Vocabulary?**

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**Why Teach Vocabulary?**

"Even if we spend lots of instructional time teaching decoding and strategic reading, students will continue to struggle to comprehend text unless we also support their vocabulary development."

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021 www.popeco.ca @popeco POPEY

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**What it means to really know a word...**

- I can share an informal explanation
- I can use a synonym or antonym
- I can give categorical information
- I can recognize nuances between similar words
- I can recognize word parts (morphological understanding)
- I can connect to personal experience
- I can recognize multiple meanings – bark/bark

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021 www.popeco.ca @popeco POPEY

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 **How do we learn new words?**

When we engage in conversation

- What can this look like in the classroom?
  - Regularly and intentionally using sophisticated language throughout the day for students of all ages
  - The more interesting words we use around students the more words they will pick up and use themselves

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021 [www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca) @popeybc @POPEYBC POPEY 

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 **How do we learn new words?**

When we are read to and we read a lot ourselves

- What can this look like in the classroom?
  - Read aloud in a fantastic way to explicitly teach new vocabulary
    - select texts with intention – relate to content area
    - read first for enjoyment, then re-read across days
    - Plan ahead for student friendly definitions
  - Independent reading time, small groups, partner reads

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021 [www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca) @popeybc @POPEYBC POPEY 

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 **Active Processing looks and sounds like...**

Children are more likely to learn when they can actively engage with a word and its meaning, rather than passively receiving information from the teacher

- Discussing images related to a new word
- Discussing and exploring objects i.e. a thermometer
- Using movement – demonstrating migration by walking from one side of the room to the other
- Thinking of real life examples – a time when you felt exuberant
- Discussing multiple meanings of a word – season (your food), season (winter, spring)
- Thinking about/noticing meaningful parts of words (morphology) – tricycle, triangle, triped
- Using new vocabulary in writing

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 **Read Aloud**



The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds

www.pokey.ca @pokeyc @POPEYC POPEY

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 **Why Teach Vocabulary?**



\*The goal of vocabulary instruction is not to learn words for their own sake. The goal is for students to apply knowledge about words and their meanings to better understand what they're reading and to expand the possibilities for expressing their own ideas.\*

Shifting the Balance 3-5 Burkens, Cunningham & Yates

www.pokey.ca @pokeyc @POPEYC POPEY

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 **How do we learn new words?**

When we learn new things!

What can this look like in the classroom?

We can plan to support vocabulary development during content area learning:

- First, we want to identify the content we want to learn
- Next, curate informational text sets
- Then, make an ambitious list of words to teach
- Consider how and when you will teach the words
- Finally, plan for ways students will be actively engaged in word learning

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021

www.pokey.ca @pokeyc @POPEYC POPEY

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**Vocabulary and Content Learning**

Vocabulary Planning Chart for a Unit Lesson

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021. www.poey.ca @poeybc @POPEYBC POPEY

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**Vocabulary and Knowledge**

"In order to create opportunities for young children to learn new words, we need to build their knowledge of the world and make sure that they are learning new things."

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021. www.poey.ca @poeybc @POPEYBC POPEY

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**Vocabulary and Knowledge**

- What vocabulary words would you expect to read in this book about Bears?

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**Into the classroom...**

To inspire  
**CONTENT AREA  
READING**

Build Background  
Knowledge  
&  
Vocabulary

**ReadWorks Article-A-Day™**  
Build background knowledge and increase skills to succeed. Your students love it.

Read an article that can be used in any subject.	Share the article to build background knowledge.	Use the article to build background knowledge in your subject.	Remember to read! Share the article with students and discuss it.
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At your school, 10 minutes each day for the month. Students will gain the most by reading 4 or more articles each day. Article-A-Day will work each week and during the summer for 18 or more weeks in the school year. Article-A-Day can be used regularly, once or twice a week.

Plan an entire year with our **K-8 Scope & Sequence** <https://www.readworks.org/scope-and-sequence/>

**Step 1: Set the purpose for the routine**

- Write an where future class knowledge. Do not add our knowledge to reading these articles. We will add research our credibility, expand our reading pleasure, and enjoy reading each day.

**Step 2: Students read or listen to an article**

- If students cannot read independently, they can listen to the audio, or you can read the article about.

**Step 3: The "Bank of Knowledge"**

- Students write or type in a Bank of Knowledge that they learned from the article and would like to remember in their Bank of Knowledge.
- If students cannot write yet, they can draw their response.

**Step 4: Share Knowledge!**

- Ask the students to share with the class what they learned from reading.
- Create a Class Bank of Knowledge where you record the information. You can do this in Assignments & Progress or on your paper.

ReadWorks Article-A-Day  
www.readworks.org @readworks POPEY

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**Text Sets...**

Text sets are built around a particular topic or theme and represent a range of text complexity

- Multiple entry points
- Expand vocabulary around key topic
- Share knowledge among many different sources of information
- Multiple sources to look for answers to questions
- Students understand that there are multiple angles to consider
- Conversation creates a community of curious learners

*Students engage in co-construction of new knowledge about a topic.*

Shifting the Balance - Barbara E. Yates, A Teacher's Guide to Development Across the Curriculum  
www.readworks.org @readworks POPEY

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**Into the classroom...**

Text Sets  
to  
Build Background  
Knowledge  
&  
Vocabulary

ReadWorks Article-A-Day  
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**Read Aloud**

The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds

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**Into the classroom...**

**High Leverage Instructional Routines to Support Word Noticing and Curiosity**

Word Collection Notebooks – individual or class

For children to learn many words we need to empower them to:

- Become aware of and interested in new words
- Develop word awareness
- Notice when they encounter new words

Shiftng the Balance 3-5 Burke, Cunningham & Yates  
Inspired from The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds

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**Into the classroom...**

To inspire WORD STUDY

wordtorque

Engage with the page

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**Word Inquiry**

Orthography

Ortho graph

Aligning to be correct or straight Write/draw

Branch of knowledge concerned with the correct way to write.

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**Word Inquiry**

What is the purpose of spelling?

- \* memorized words, sounds on paper?

How to recognize speech.

How to wreck a nice beach.

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**Word Families**

Groups of words linked by structure & meaning

mindset  
child minder  
mindful  
mindfully  
mindfulness  
minding  
minds  
absentminded  
remind  
reminding  
reminders  
reminded

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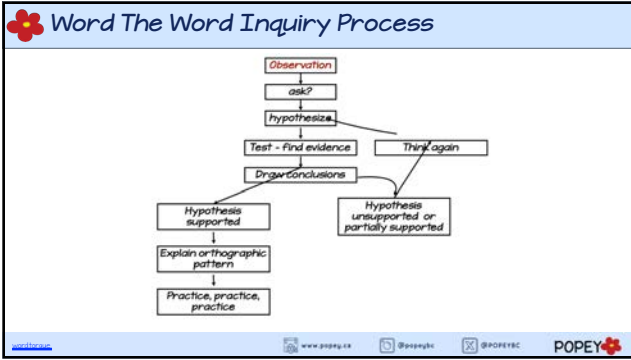
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### Into the classroom...

1. Build in opportunities for children to develop oral language from birth by creating language-rich environments that build knowledge and motivate children to want to learn to read.
2. Grow vocabulary through exposure to informational read-alouds.
3. Have discussions that promote intentional student dialogue.
4. Read aloud books that have more complex ideas and vocabulary than what students can read on their own.
5. Teach word reading and spelling so students can build content knowledge through reading.

Looking to Research for Literacy Success - Duke et al. www.popey.ca @POPEYC POPEY

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### Into the classroom...

6. Apply strategies for making sense of text that increase cognitive engagement.
7. Build on students' interests and curiosity to maximize cognitive engagement.
8. Plan teaching content from the curriculum as it is already coherently sequenced.
9. Introduce students to a variety of genres to widen their knowledge of places, times, and topics.
10. Use Science and Social Studies instruction to help build literacy skills.

Looking to Research for Literacy Success - Duke et al. www.popey.ca @POPEYC POPEY

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**Explicit Vocabulary Word Study - Whole Class Activity...**

Two routines to focus on:

- Notice Parts**
  - word solvers notice features of words – including visual patterns in how words are constructed
  - recognizing common features & familiar patterns helps kids notice & use larger parts of words
  - makes word solving **faster & easier**
- Map Words**
  - word kids need to know the **meaning** of words they're learning to be effective & efficient readers & writers
  - kids **read & write**
    - *concept words, synonyms, antonyms, words with multiple meanings, & compound words*

Workbooks Don't Grow Dendrites - Marci Tate | www.poey.ca | @POPEYC | POPEY

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**Into the classroom...**

High Leverage Instructional Routines to Support Independent Word Solving (and spelling)

Explicit Morphology Instruction

- Teaching one new affix or root per week adds to their word solving toolkit

**MORPHOLOGY**  
The study of the structures of words that contribute to meaning

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**Into the classroom...**

"The more information children have about how words and language work, the more powerful they will feel as strategic word-solvers"

Some word solving strategies include:

- Context Clues
- Word Parts

A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright | www.poey.ca | @POPEYC | POPEY

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**Into the classroom...**

High Leverage Instructional Routines to Support Independent Word Solving

**LET'S PRACTISE BUILDING WORD SUMS**

Build word sums using the <pack> matrix:

**SYNTHETIC WORD SUMS**

pack = a + ck

A **BASE** is an element which carries the **MAIN MEANING** of a word.  
 A **PREFIX** is an element placed **BEFORE** a base or stem.  
 A **SUFFIX** is an element placed **AFTER** a base or stem.

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**Vocabulary take away...**

"The more words he knew the more clearly he could share with the world what he was thinking, feeling and dreaming"

Image from The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds

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**Resources**

- [The Six Rs File](#)
- [The Daily Word](#)
- [Vocabulary with the Kids](#)
- [Word Work: A Year of Words](#)
- [Vocabulary Building Activities](#)
- [Word Search](#)
- [Word Wall](#)
- [Word of the Day](#)
- [Word of the Week](#)
- [Word of the Month](#)
- [Word of the Year](#)

- A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day Wright, 2021
- Bringing Words to Life - Beck, McKeown, Kucan
- Reach All Readers - Geiger, 2024
- Strive For Five Conversations - Zucker & Bell, 2024
- Shifting the Balance K-2 Burkins & Yates, 2021
- Shifting the Balance 3-5 Burkins, Cunningham & Yates, 2024
- 7 Mighty Moves - Kennedy, 2023
- Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites - Tate, 2016
- Looking to Research For Literacy Success - Duke et al, 2023

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