VOCABULARY CONCEPTS

Construct Progression

DOMAIN: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

CLAIM: Students can acquire and integrate vocabulary, concepts, and the structure of language in increasingly complex ways.

Domain: Language Development and Communication
Construct: Vocabulary Concepts

Background Information

The purpose of this progression is to assess children's conceptual understanding and use of vocabulary, specifically the knowledge that words represent concepts, are related to one another, and can be used to understand other words and communicate meaning clearly. The progression aims to assess children's knowledge of words that are school-related (i.e., words learned during instruction or through school interactions) and not words that children come to school already knowing). The skills in this progression can be demonstrated via spoken or written language or through other means such as drawing.

It is important for teachers to assess vocabulary from a young age because vocabulary is critical to reading comprehension and success in school. Vocabulary skills are also typically reflected in state K – 3 standards. For example:
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases
- Explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings
- Use affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word
- Distinguish shades of meaning among words

Rationale

Research in the field of vocabulary development informs us that a child's knowledge of words' meanings impacts their reading comprehension and future academic success (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin 1990). Vocabulary development is particularly critical among English Language Learners as "English language learners (ELLs) who experience slow vocabulary development are less able to comprehend text at grade level than their English-only peers […] and are at risk of being diagnosed as learning disabled (Christ & Wang 2010). Additionally, we recognize that focusing on the improvement of vocabulary development advances educational equity because "a well-developed vocabulary correlates with greater reading comprehension and general academic success" (2010).

The development of this construct emphasizes the use of "vocabulary needed in school" and asserts that "given enough time and purposeful instruction," word learning can occur for "all students across academic domains." The claim also highlights the importance of the conceptual understanding behind the learning of vocabulary rather than the acquisition of specific words. We chose to use the term "school-related" vocabulary versus strictly "academic" vocabulary in order to include words that are necessary for school but might not be related to a specific discipline. Additionally, the claim is clear about this progression emphasizing words that are taught and not words that children come to school already knowing. Our hope is that by focusing on school-related vocabulary, the disparity between language exposure outside of the school environment is minimized.

Domain: Language Development and Communication
Construct: Vocabulary Concepts

Vocabulary			
Understanding	**Skills**	**Performance Descriptors**	**Examples**
Children understand that a word carries meaning within specific contexts.	A. Connects a word to its related concept	Child identifies the name label for a concept (e.g., an object, symbol, idea, action, event, emotion) or indicates the object when a name label is provided.	*Raley drops his <u>fork</u> on the ground and says, "I dropped my <u>fork</u>."* *Ten minutes before lunch time, Anoki asks, "Is it lunch time yet? I am <u>hungry</u>."* *When asked to get the <u>stapler</u>, Jessica goes to the writing area and picks up the <u>stapler</u>.*
	B. Uses school-related words appropriately in <u>one or more contexts</u>	Child uses a school-related word within one or more contexts.	*During a social studies activity about maps, Hassan draws a <u>map</u> of his bedroom and labels it "<u>Map</u> of Hassan's room."* *When learning about the solar system in science, Elena says, "The <u>sun</u> is part of the <u>solar system</u>."* *During a lesson on sea species, Miguel says, "Liones marinos are my favorite ocean mammal."* Note: While this skill involves using a word in one or more contexts, we've only included one context in our examples because of the difficulty of observing word usage in multiple contexts in one day.
Children understand that they can use many words that are closely related in meaning to describe the same concept.	C. Uses <u>multiple words</u> that are <u>closely related in meaning</u> to describe a <u>single</u> school-related concept	Child uses multiple words that are closely related in meaning to describe a single school-related concept.	*When learning about the arctic, Kendra describes it as <u>cold</u>, <u>snowy</u>, <u>icy</u>, and <u>frozen</u>.* *Malik learns about the way things feel (consistency) in the science center while making gak. The teacher says, "The gak is <u>sticky</u>, isn't it? "Malik says, "Yes, it's <u>gummy</u> and <u>gooey</u>."* *Tam draws a picture of a dog and shows it to the teacher. The teacher says, "Tell me about your picture." Tam says, "It's a <u>dog</u>. This is my new <u>Dalmatian</u> <u>puppy</u>."*

Domain: Language Development and Communication
Construct: Vocabulary Concepts

Vocabulary			
Understanding	**Skills**	**Performance Descriptors**	**Examples**
Children understand that the same school-related word has multiple meanings depending on the context.	D. Determines the appropriate meanings of <u>multiple-meaning words</u> by using context	Child uses context to determine the meaning of a word that has more than one meaning.	*When the teacher says, "We are going to talk about things that <u>sink</u> and things that float," Mikayla walks over to a tub of water in the science center that has corks, feathers, pennies, etc. next to it rather than to the classroom <u>sink</u>.*
	E. Uses <u>at least two meanings of multiple-meaning words</u>	Child uses at least two meanings of a multiple-meaning word.	*When reading a book about animals, Alejandro says, "Dogs <u>bark</u> and cats meow." Later, when on a nature walk, Alejandro says, "The <u>bark</u> on this tree is really rough."* *While playing in the writing center, Sosha says, "I'm writing a <u>letter</u> to my mom." The teacher asks, "What is another way to use the word 'letter'?" Sosha replies, "My name starts with the <u>letter</u> 'S'."* *During a discussion about the Post Office, Pilar says, "You have to put a <u>stamp</u> on a letter to mail it." Teacher reminds Pilar about multiple-meaning words and asks her to say a sentence that uses a different meaning of the word <u>stamp</u>. Pilar says, "I use rubber <u>stamps</u> in art to make pictures!"*
Children understand the meaning of a school-related word is related to other words with similar meanings, roots, or affixes regardless of	F. Determines the meanings of <u>unfamiliar words</u> by using known words and knowledge of word structure (e.g., roots, affixes, compound words)	Child uses known words and knowledge of word structure (e.g., roots, affixes, compound words) to develop a reasonable definition of an unfamiliar word.	*During a unit on weather, Derik sees the word <u>snowmobile</u> on a picture card. When the teacher asks what a <u>snowmobile</u> is, Derik says, "<u>Snow</u> is cold white rain in the winter and a <u>mobile</u> is like my car, so I think it's a car for driving in the snow!"* *When playing in the dramatic play area, the teacher asks Sangeeta, "Why don't you <u>undo</u> the doll's hair?" Looking puzzled, Sangeeta asks, "What does <u>undo</u> mean?" Teacher reminds Sangeeta that she can use*

Domain: Language Development and Communication
Construct: Vocabulary Concepts

Vocabulary			
Understanding	**Skills**	**Performance Descriptors**	**Examples**
context.			*the meanings of the parts of the word to figure out what the word means. Sangeeta replies, "Do means to fix her hair and her hair is braided. Does undo mean to take the braid out?"* *After Juan writes his/her name on the board in very small letters, teacher asks him to rewrite his name so everyone can read it. Juan then asks the teacher, "Re means to do again. Do you want me to write my name again?*
Children understand that words and phrases can have a literal and non-literal meaning.	G. Recognizes both literal meanings and non-literal meanings (e.g., language that is nuanced, more precise or descriptive, has shades of meaning) of words and phrases	Child recognizes the literal and nonliteral meanings of a word or phrase.	*A child fans herself and says, "I'm melting." Latoya replies, "Me too. It's so hot today!"* *Renee acts out the words said and whispered and then identifies whispered as the more precise word.*
	H. Uses non-literal meanings of words and phrases (e.g., language that is nuanced, more precise or descriptive, has shades of meaning)	Child uses the non-literal meaning of a word and phrase.	*When Xochitl asks to use the bathroom, the teacher says, "Yes, but you have to be quiet. They are taking a test in the next room." Xochitl responds, "Okay, I will be as quiet as a mouse."* *When provided with a story, Becca edits the story as by replacing the word big with the word gigantic and replacing the word laugh with the word giggle.*

Domain: Language Development and Communication
Construct: Vocabulary Concepts

RESOURCES

August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C. and Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 20*, 50–57. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5826.2005.00120.x

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Bloom, P. & Markson, L. (1998). Capacities underlying word learning. Trends in Cognitive Science. 2(2): 67–73.

Chall, J., Jacobs, V., & Baldwin, L. (1990). *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Christ, T., & Wang, X.C. (2010.) Bridging the vocabulary gap: What research tells us about vocabulary instruction in early childhood. *Young Children, 65*(4), 84–91.

K − 3 North Carolina Think Tank. (2013). *Assessment for learning and development in K − 3: A report by the K − 3 North Carolina think tank.* Raleigh, NC: Author.

Lorraine, S. (2008). Vocabulary development: Super duper handouts number 149. Greenville, SC: Super Duper Publications.

United States. (2015). *Head Start early learning outcomes framework: Ages birth to five*.