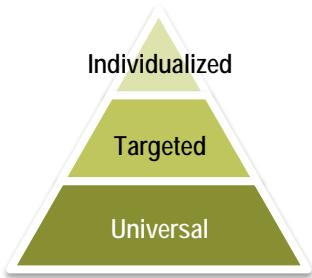


# Academic Language



## Vocabulary Development

Academic Language is an essential part of expanding vocabulary from informal student language (also referred to as Tier 1) to general academic words and phrases used frequently across subjects/disciplines (Tier 2) and to the precise language particular to a subject/discipline (Tier 3). Academic language includes vocabulary and phrases, is used in textbooks, essays, assignments, presentations, and assessments at all levels, and increases in frequency and complexity throughout the grades.



A teacher's understanding of their students' learning needs helps determine when to provide universal, targeted, or individualized instructional strategies. For some students, universal instructional strategies may be enough to meet their learning needs. For others, more targeted instructional strategies are the starting point for implementing the curriculum. The strategy described is a guideline that teachers can use depending on the learning context.

### Why use this strategy in an inclusive learning environment

- Helps students understand the difference between social and academic language, and identify key vocabulary words, phrases, and concepts.
- Supports students' ability to develop context-specific language in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all subject areas and grade levels.
- Builds foundational knowledge and is critical for successful processing of academic tasks and for accessing curricular content.

### How this strategy could be used in an inclusive learning environment

1. Identify essential general and content-specific academic language using the curriculum as a starting point.
2. Model how to incorporate academic language before students begin an assignment (e.g., when and how to use specific vocabulary when writing a math problem, how a topic sentence leads into a paragraph and is followed by supporting ideas, writing a business letter vs. a personal note).
3. Provide sentence frames and visuals to help students explain and describe their ideas, and encourage students to use the word in authentic contexts.



- Have students keep an ongoing personalized list of academic vocabulary words to refer to, including key words used in assessments.
- Model academic language frequently in order to increase students' exposure to new vocabulary and intentionally provide students with diverse genres of texts.

## Example

Real-life example from current Grade 4 science curriculum (Wheels & Levers):



## Sentence frames

1. In my opinion _____ is _____ because _____.
2. I prefer _____ over _____ because _____.
3. I agree that _____ but _____.
4. In conclusion, I believe _____ since _____.

## Academic language word list

1. However
2. Fortunately/unfortunately
3. Throughout
4. In addition

## Tips for individualized supports

- Scaffold oral academic language scripts for students by personalizing sentence starters such as *"The topic of my presentation is \_\_\_\_\_. First I will speak about \_\_\_\_\_. I will then explain \_\_\_\_\_. Are there any questions?"*
- Individualize writing frames and have students keep a personal word book in an accessible format to use across subjects/disciplines.
- Model how to move from social language to academic language by paraphrasing texts from informal and conversational style to formal academic language (e.g., from "It worked" to "Our experiment was successful"). Discuss audience, purpose and context changes with students during the think-aloud.



- Teach word-learning strategies, such as using context clues, structural analysis, and use of a student's personal word book, to support independent use of new vocabulary.
- Use guided reading groups to generate lists of words prior to having students work with a partner or small group to sort words or phrases using visual organizers.
- Use word prediction or speech recognition or other digital tools to select images and express ideas.

