Vocabulary Development

PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What is Vocabulary Development?

Vocabulary development is the process of learning new words and their meanings. The more words children know, the easier it is for them to understand what they read. Learning new words is more than memorizing a definiton. Students learn how they are used, and how they relate to other words.

Why is Vocabulary Important?

The more words a student knows, the easier it is for them to understand what they read and hear. A strong word bank helps students follow stories, join conversations, and succeed in school.

Vocabulary is key to reading comprehension.

How Can I Help My Child Improve Their "Word Bank?"

- **Read with your child every day.** Reading aloud introduces children to rich language.
- **Pause for new or interesting words.** When a word pops up that your child might not know, stop and ask: What do you think that word means in this story?
- **Offer a child-friendly definition.** Keep it simple: Enormous means really, really big.
- **Give a real-life example.** Remember that giant watermelon we bought? That was enormous!
- **Encourage your child to create their own connection.** What's something enormous you saw today?
- **Use the word again and again.** Children often need to hear a word 10+ times before it sticks. Keep using the word in natural conversation over the next days and weeks.
- **Explore the word's parts.** Ask your child to repeat it, clap the syllables, and count the sounds. Is it a long word? What does it start with?
- **Play with meaning.** Ask yes/no questions: Does enormous mean tiny? Invite your child to share synonyms, opposites, categories, and different meanings.
- **Speak with rich vocabulary.** Use descriptive words in everyday conversation—gigantic instead of big, sprint instead of run. This helps grow your child's word bank and understanding of the world.

When your child uses a new word accurately on their own it is evidence they are increasing their vocabulary!