

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 1 from the WWC practice guide *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*. Full reference is on the last page.

CONTENT: **Reading**  
GRADE LEVEL(S): **K-3**  
LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: **Minimal**

## Recommendation

Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge.

Academic language skills include three skills: (1) use of inferential language (communicating about ideas across contexts); (2) use of narrative language (clearly describing a series of events); and (3) understanding a range of academic vocabulary and grammatical structures. These skills help students better comprehend academic texts both across subjects and within individual subjects. Unlike social language skills that develop naturally in communication with family and friends, academic language skills more often need to be taught.

## How to carry out the recommendation

1. Engage students in conversations that support the use and comprehension of inferential language.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Ask open-ended questions about texts, including making predictions, making hypotheses, and comparing and contrasting.
- Ask questions before, during, and after reading.
- Model how to answer questions.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** K-2.I.1, K-2.RL.MC.5, K-2.RI.MC.5, K-2.C.MC.1, K-2.C.MC.2

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**TEACHER:** INST.MS.1, INST.MS.2, INST.PIC.5, INST.PIC.6, INST.Q.1, INST.Q.2, INST.Q.3, INST.Q.4, INST.Q.5, INST.Q.6, INST.Q.7, INST.Q.8, INST.TH.1, INST.TH.2, INST.PS.1, PLAN.SW.1, PLAN.SW.3, ENVI.EX.1, ENVI.EX.2, ENVI.EX.3

Multiple strategies can be used during conversations about the texts students are reading to support the development of students' inferential language. These include asking students to make predictions, engage in problem-solving, make hypotheses, and compare and contrast concepts. Teachers can use open-ended questions to encourage students to reflect on how the texts apply to their lives and their world.

These questions can be asked before, during, or after read-aloud activities to encourage higher-level thinking. Teachers should model how to answer such questions by providing their own complete and well-reasoned answers. Teachers can also use follow-up questions such as “Why do you think that?” to prompt students to provide additional detail to their own answers.

## 2. Explicitly engage students in developing narrative language skills.

### Instructional strategies from the examples

- Model complex grammatical structures.
- Teach elements of narrative language.
- Scaffold student responses.

### South Carolina standards alignment

**ELA:** K-2.RL.MC.7, K-2.RL.MC.6, K-2.RL.MC.8, K-2.EL.LCS.12, K-2.RL.MCS.11, K-2.C.MC.1

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.1, INST.MS.2, INST.PIC.5, INST.PIC.6, INST.Q.1, INST.Q.2, INST.Q.3, INST.Q.4, INST.Q.5, INST.Q.6, INST.Q.7, INST.Q.8, INST.TH.1, INST.TH.2, INST.PS.1, PLAN.SW.1, PLAN.SW.3, ENVI.EX.1, ENVI.EX.2, ENVI.EX.3

Narrative language is the ability to understand or create a fictional or real interpretation of an experience. Skills needed for narrative language include logically organizing information and using grammatical structures to connect the information. Teachers should teach students about complex grammatical structures and elements of narrative language, such as compound sentences, subordinate clauses, adverbial clauses, prepositional phrases, connectives, noun phrases, verb phrases, and pronoun references. These can be taught during whole-class or small-group lessons. Teachers can model grammatical structures, prompt students to use these structures (e.g.,

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while summarizing a story or predicting what will happen next), and scaffold student responses.

Teachers should also provide instruction on components of story grammar, including characters, setting, and plot. Students can engage with these components when summarizing stories. Teachers can prompt students to include all of the components of story grammar in their own summaries of stories.

### 3. Teach academic vocabulary in the context of other reading activities.

#### **Instructional strategies from the examples**

- Develop a common set of academic vocabulary.
- Use activities that ask students to use or talk about academic vocabulary.
- Review new words regularly and expose students to the words in new contexts.

#### **South Carolina standards alignment**

**ELA:** K-2.RL.LCS.9, K-2.RL.LCS.10, K-2RL.LCS.11, K-2.RL.LCS.12, K-2.RI.LCS.9, K-2.RI.LCS.10

**TEACHER:** INST.MS.1, INST.PIC.2, INST.PIC.5, INST.PIC.6, INST.PIC.7, INST.AM.1, INST.Q.1, INST.Q.2, INST.Q.3, INST.Q.4, INST.Q.5, INST.Q.6, INST.Q.7, INST.Q.8, INST.TH.1, INST.TH.2, INST.PS.1, PLAN.SW.1, PLAN.SW.3

Academic vocabulary are words commonly used in written text across subject areas, such as assignment instructions. Academic vocabulary can also include grammatical rules that are less common in speech. Ideally, schools or grade-level teams develop a common set of academic vocabulary that will appear frequently throughout the school year and across subjects. Teachers could explicitly teach students a few words each week from this common set of academic vocabulary. Instruction should provide clear definitions and meaningful example sentences that include the word. Teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of the words by constructing activities that allow students to use or talk about the words they have learned. Teachers should also review the new words regularly and provide opportunities for students to encounter the words in different contexts throughout the year.

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## Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Student academic language skills can vary across a spectrum of ability, and some students may not be ready to engage in this level of skill-development activities.</i>	Differentiate instruction to support the language development of each student. For example, small-group reading instruction will allow teachers to better meet each student's needs.
<i>It is hard to find adequate time to devote to language instruction.</i>	Integrate language instruction into already-planned content areas. For example, use science or social studies texts to foster rich inferential discussion. Language instruction can also be integrated into already-scheduled read-aloud time.

*Reference: Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., . . . Wissel, S. (2016). Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade (NCEE 2016-4008). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/21>*