On Your Way with Dr. Christina Williams

Mini session 5/5 How to Provide Multiple Exposures to the Words You've Featured

INTRO

Whether you're a teacher who's on your way to school to work with kids and you're leaning into the science of reading movement, or you're on your way to tutor some great kids who are struggling with learning to read and spell well, or you're a parent who'd like to learn to better equip and inspire your children from home, the *On Your Way* podcast is for you.

I'm Dr. Christina Williams, and I'm your host.

During the main episode about vocabulary, I shared that there'd be **mini** episodes, following, where I'd share how students received vocabulary instruction in our classroom—so you can try them in your teaching situations. I've already shared mini episode #1:

~~1 how to highlight words featured in the authentic materials you share during your read aloud time, so words are introduced in context, and you provide student-friendly definitions~~

Today I'm going to share

~~**2 how you can encourage the use of more sophisticated vocabulary while your students are writing**~~

~~3 how to promote comparisons of words (make connections between words to aid in recall)~~

~~4~~ ~~how to address roots and affixes with your students (that won't put them to sleep) and address words' grammar structures~~
~~5~~ how to provide multiple exposures to the words you've featured/intentionally noticed

When I was teaching second grade, one of my students said, "Dr. Williams, last year we sang this song, and I want our class to sign it too." Boy, am I glad I listened to him! That song was such a powerful tool to end our days together.

It's sung to the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down" and it goes:

What did you learn in school today? School today. School today.

What did you learn in school today? Tell us, _Easton_. (You name a person in the group.)

My promise to my students was that every single day they came into our classroom they would learn something they didn't already know. Singing that song at the end of the day reminded kids of what, exactly, they *did* learn. It could be that *cred means believe*. It could be that *o-o can say /ew/ or /oo/.* It could be that *Our neighbors to the north of the United States are Canadians* or students could even say something like, "*Nick is a great reading partner.*" Anything goes here! When we sang that song, I had real hope that when my students got home and were asked, "What'd you learn in school today?" instead of mumbling "Nuthin'," my students would have a great response ready.

I also sent home a newsletter *at least* once a month. In that newsletter, I shared what our focuses were for each subject area, and I often challenged parents to ask their children to perform a task so they could see what their kids been learning. Sometimes I said, "Ask your child to sing the short vowel song I taught them." Sometimes it was, "Ask your child to draw a compass rose with the cardinal directions." Sometimes it was "Ask your child to teach you the nines trick for multiplication." This review is quite powerful, because everyone's impressed! Kids are inspired to learn and grow when it's acknowledged.

In the classroom, we did a lot of high fiving. If a word was really tricky for someone to spell, I'd use a thin washable marker to write that word on my hand and my student's hand. Throughout the morning, every time we had a moment, I'd say, "What word is on your hand and how do you spell it?" Then, when the student read the word, hid it from himself, and stretched out the sounds to spell it correctly, we'd high five! It's a positive and oddly impactful way to help kids remember things. Is one math fact stumping one of your students? Make it a high five challenge (that gets written on each of your hands and is celebrated when it's remembered). Parents, if your child

can’t recall your telephone number? Make it a high five task. If there’s something all students are struggling with, invite academic partners to use the high five review with one another. You simply say, “Scholars, give your partners a high five when they share what’s on their hands.”

I mentioned earlier having a “Words I Want to Learn” page for students to use each week. From the vocabulary words we’ve collected from our read alouds, I’d challenge students to choose words they want to **learn and use** from our Word Bank and then I’d provide opportunities to deliberately practice some of them using them in writing tasks or in conversations with their academic partners.

In the main vocabulary episode, I mentioned having your students make vocabulary busts, using Crayola Dry Clay so kids can literally **and** figuratively “stick words in their heads.” We really just want our kids to have multiple exposures to the words you’re featuring, otherwise what you’re sharing is likely to go in one ear and out the other.

As your kids learn new words, you can invite them to choose a word or two from your word bank that they feel they can use in their conversations and/or in their writing and then create a **word map** for that word. They can make a circle that’s big enough to hold the word they selected in the centers of their blank copy papers. Then they’ll add lines to separate their papers with one vertical line in the center and one horizontal line in the center—so it’s divided into quadrants. In one section the students write the word definition, in another they’ll add a sketched image, another can be for adding synonyms and antonyms, and the final box can be for a telltale sentence using the word. In other words, from that sentence, other students should be able to infer the meaning of the word. Then, you can have five students a day share their words with the class. Kids enjoy getting creative with this by using events from the school day to create their sentences.

Here's the thing: Learning requires multiple exposures to the content and lots of examples and maybe even non-examples for clarification.

It will be important for you to offer persistent, joy-filled engagements with language-focused work that elevates your students’ understanding and appreciation of words.

Of course, **high reading volume** and **language volume** complements all you’re doing to grow your students, so never skimp on having kids reading and **talking** about reading in your classroom.

Soon I will share how my students’ independent reading time looked in my second-grade classroom. Yes, I taught, explicitly, phonics in a thoughtful progression, and I’ll share LOTS about my Foundations for Literacy phonics curriculum in upcoming episodes,

but I believe that the way I hosted independent reading time was an important piece of that instruction.

My final year working in one of the largest school districts in Ohio, my principal put every struggling reader in my class, confident that I could get them to grade level expectations by the year's end. I had students with IEPs, Reading Improvement Plans, 504s, students who'd been diagnosed with dyslexia—you get the idea. I did ask to also have some academically strong students as well. At the beginning of the year, eighteen of the students I was serving were struggling in some way. The others were considered "at or above grade level expectations." By the year's end, 100% of my students made benchmark on nationally normed assessments. (We used the NWEA's MAP assessment.)

How'd I do that? I did what I'm sharing on this podcast.

Mostly, I credit my phonics instruction (using the Foundations for Literacy curriculum—which I'll share a lot about here, soon), paired with my students' independent reading time—that was not a free-for-all "just look like you're reading" time, the powerful Read Aloud time I shared about earlier, and the purposeful Writing time where I used the Dynamic Dictionary as I engaged kids around meaningful writing projects designed with purpose.