

Preface

At the 2005 National Reading Conference in Miami, Florida, where the research on primary word usage that informs this book was presented, one of the discussants, Michael Pressley, a distinguished professor from Michigan State University and the leading expert in the field of comprehension and literacy, stated that comprehension and vocabulary were underdeveloped areas. During the symposium discussion, there was a lot of emphasis placed on teaching students, especially primary grade students, words—many words. This book attempts to respond to this needs-based discussion. The vocabulary research that inspired this book was conducted by Dr. Edward B. Fry and me. Dr. Fry is professor emeritus of education at Rutgers University and is known for his *Fry List of High-Frequency Words* and the *Fry Readability Formula*. His spirit and wisdom guided our collaborative research effort that produced the word lists for this book.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

I have organized this book into three main parts, based on the way reading and writing are currently taught in primary grade classrooms, and motivated by the No Child Left Behind, Reading First, and Early Reading First initiatives.

Part I focuses on using oral language to develop vocabulary. The word lists in this section are integrated with word learning experiences that occur during oral language. Research-based literacy strategies in this part focus on engaging students in conversation and dialogic strategies with children's literature.

Part II features word lists that focus on developing vocabulary through storybook read-alouds. These lists are integrated with children's literature and include research-based activities specifically designed to develop vocabulary during read-aloud experiences.

Part III is about the development of vocabulary through writing. Writing provides opportunities for students to use familiar words and learn new words, and it promotes reading comprehension and reading success.

Within each of the three parts, you will find the chapters. Each chapter begins with an overview of the thematic topic and the type of vocabulary words that can be found within the chapter. A wide range of strategies and several word lists that connect to the topic and that are designed to enhance the overall

word learning process make up the remainder of each chapter. The lists include the words from the Israel and Fry (2005) research on primary grade students' word usage in their writing. These words are presented in **bold** type for easy identification. Additional words are included to elaborate on the topic, build vocabulary, and make connections with words in meaningful contexts through children's literature selections. Each chapter also offers literacy integrations for reading and writing in the classroom, writing prompts to integrate with journal activities, children's literature read-aloud suggestions, think-aloud suggestions to enhance vocabulary, or suggestions for parent involvement or home-school connections.

The chapter themes are as follows:

Part I: Vocabulary Voices I Hear

Chapter 1: Words that build school success

Chapter 2: Words that enhance the alphabetic principle

Chapter 3: Phonics and teamwork

Part II: Read-to-Me Words

Chapter 4: Words that provide extensions in new genres

Chapter 5: Words that build nonfiction vocabulary

Chapter 6: Words that highlight cultural celebrations

Part III: How I Use Words I Can Read

Chapter 7: Words that define a writer's craft

How the Lists Were Designed

We compiled the word lists from original writing samples from students in Grades K–3. We asked teachers to submit original writing samples: the teacher had not edited the writings, and the teacher had not asked the student to revise the writings. We counted the words in each sample, and organized them based on frequency of use. As of this writing, there is no substantive volume prepared specifically for primary grade teachers that is devoted to guiding teachers to develop their students' vocabulary in an organized manner. In addition to filling a gap in the field of vocabulary reading and writing instruction, this book serves a second purpose: to document the most recent research-based writing words, organized around practical themes on topics specifically chosen for students in PreK to Grade 3.

I recommend that the reader approach this book by first reviewing the table of contents to understand how the material is organized. Next, I suggest paging through the book and sampling various themes of interest. Since I like highlighting text that is important to me, I suggest the reader then return to the table of contents to highlight themes of particular interest. Finally, I suggest the reader share lists from this book with students and their parents, and challenge them to choose a few word lists they would like to learn at home or in school.

WHO WILL FIND THIS BOOK USEFUL?

The main audience for this book is teachers of students in kindergarten through Grade 2, although educators at all grade levels may find it useful. Following is a summary of how literacy educators can use this book:

- Individual classroom teachers who want to develop increased levels of vocabulary acquisition throughout the school year can use this work as a source of vocabulary words, activities, and writing ideas developed around classroom and school themes such as community.
- Teachers who work with English language learners will find the themes useful. Themes lists start with vocabulary related to the natural environment, and then move on to oral environments, trade books, and then higher-quality literature, which leads to vocabulary gains.
- Grade-level groups of teachers can use this book as a tool for planning effective literacy instruction based on recommendations on vocabulary development from the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000).
- Literacy coaches and reading specialists can use this book to develop vocabulary instruction with primary grade teachers.
- Reading specialists who work with intermediate-level readers might benefit from words based on authentic writing samples.
- Intermediate-grade teachers who want to bridge the gaps in vocabulary might find it useful.
- Librarians who design theme-based library activities using children's literature to increase vocabulary and reading might benefit.
- Districts attempting to build a common vocabulary and consistency in vocabulary instruction while curriculum is aligned with goals and state standards can use this book.
- Professors of early childhood, elementary, or literacy education can use this book as a primary text in word study programs or as a supplementary text to demonstrate research-based word learning strategies with students.
- Study groups or professional development in-service programs can use the table of contents as a guide to focus on specific areas that need to be developed within the school literacy framework.
- Parents and caregivers who want to fuel vocabulary development in the home environment will value the recommendations of children's literature and the suggested word learning strategies.

HOW THIS BOOK WILL BENEFIT EDUCATORS AND THEIR STUDENTS

- This book will allow teachers to introduce a variety of words with ideas for using them in writing and language to their students.
- This book will allow teachers to move easily into a writing prompt, oral language development, and other dialogue for increasing and understanding the use of words.

- This book presents teachers with a guide to follow when integrating vocabulary words in speaking and writing.
- Each chapter of this book builds on the themes and word lists from the previous chapter to allow for continuous growth of learning for students.
- Beginning teachers can easily implement ideas, yet the book offers more experienced teachers with new and innovative methods.
- Each chapter offers literature connections and extensions, activities, think-alouds, and additional resources to support the teacher in the classroom.
- Technology links are provided for teachers to enhance their repertoire of vocabulary ideas.

The overarching benefit of this book and these word lists and strategies is to improve preschool and primary grade students' vocabulary so that their reading and writing skills will improve.