

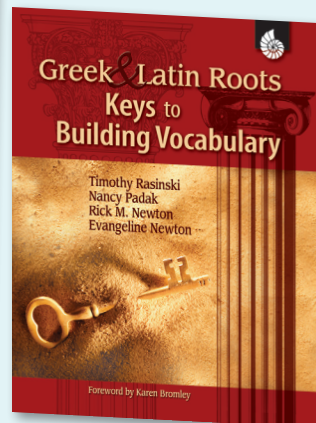
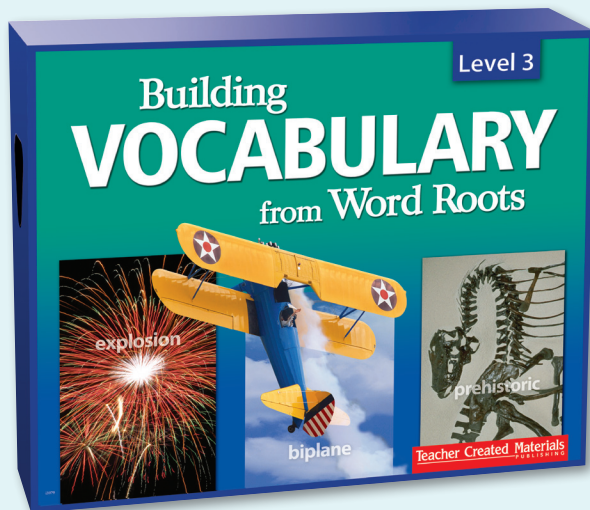
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The Latin-Greek Connection *Building Vocabulary through* *Morphological Study*

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The Latin-Greek Connection Building Vocabulary through Morphological Study

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The Latin-Greek Vocabulary Connection:
Building Elementary Students' Vocabulary through Morphological Study

It goes without question that vocabulary, a reader's knowledge of the meaning of words and concepts, is central to success in reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Studies and reviews of research over the past three decades have shown that the size and depth of elementary students' vocabulary is associated with proficiency in reading comprehension and that instruction to increase readers' vocabulary results in higher levels of reading comprehension (e.g., Baumann, Carr-Edwards, Font, Tereshinski, Kame'enui, & Olejnik, 2002; Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1922; Kame'enui, Carnine, & Freschi, 1982; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

Yet, despite the promise of vocabulary instruction to improve elementary students' reading, consensus about instructional approaches is lacking. Although Stahl and Fairbanks suggest that, "... some methods of vocabulary instruction may be more effective than others" (p. 73), the National Reading Panel (2000) notes that, "While much is known about the importance of vocabulary to success in reading, there is little research on best methods" (p. 17). Moreover, the reality of the classroom is that teachers are generally not familiar and not comfortable with anything more than dictionary definitions and the use of sentence context to teach vocabulary (Berne & Blachowicz, 2009; Blachowicz, 1987; Bloodgood & Pacifici, 2004). Based on their findings, Bloodgood and Pacifici suggest that teachers need to be introduced to new approaches to word study in order to build their "... knowledge base and implementation strategies." (p. 253). This paper attempts to address this situation by making the case for a very productive, efficient, and engaging approach to vocabulary and the study of words.

Focus on Meaningful Word Patterns

One vocabulary instruction method that has not traditionally been associated with the elementary grades is a morphological approach – more specifically, an approach that taps into the fact that a significant number of words, particularly academic words, in English are derived from Latin and Greek. Why Latin and Greek? Modern English vocabulary (as well as Spanish, French, Italian, and the other Romance languages) is thoroughly grounded in Latin and Greek. To grasp the importance and impact of Latin and Greek in English consider the following facts (Author, 2008):

- Most of the academic words in English (e.g., math and science words) are derived from Latin and Greek.
- Most of the more challenging multisyllabic words in English are derived from Latin and Greek.
- A single Latin or Greek root or affix (word pattern) can be found in and aid in the understanding (as well as decoding and encoding) of 20 or more English words.
- Since Spanish is also a Latin-based language, Latin (and Greek) can be used as a bridge to help Spanish speaking students use knowledge of their native language to learn English.

Clearly, the study of Latin and Greek linguistic patterns offers an approach to take vocabulary to a deeper and more expansive level. Anyone who has ever taken Latin in high school soon realizes how the English lexicon has been influenced by Latin. Knowledge of Latin and Greek roots increases our ability to understand English words. Knowing that *trace*, *tract*,

track means to pull, draw or drag can help students understand words such as *track*, *tractor*, *traction*, *retract*, *detract*, *abstract*, *contract*, *contraction*, *intractable*, *protractor*, *trace*, *retrace*, and many more.

However, the exploration of Latin and Greek need not be limited to the secondary grades as it has in the past. Indeed, we feel that elementary students, beginning in the primary grades, can benefit from a guided study of Latin and Greek roots. In fact, research has demonstrated that many roots and affixes, including those of Latin and Greek origin, can readily be learned in the primary grades (Biemiller, 2005; Mountain, 2005; Porter-Collier, 2010).

Other studies have demonstrated the promise of teaching Latin and Greek roots in the intermediate grades (Baumann et al., 2002; Carlisle, 2000; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). In their studies Baumann and colleagues note that students were able to use their knowledge of “morphemic elements.... To infer meanings of untaught words” (p. 170) and Carlisle concludes that “the morphology measures together contributed to reading comprehension. The relationships were particularly strong for the fifth graders but it is noteworthy that they were significant for third graders who are presumably still learning basic strategies for recognizing polysyllabic words in print” (p. 183). Kieffer and Lesaux conclude that “Students’ understanding of morphology was a better predictor of reading comprehension than their vocabulary level” (p. 138). They also found that morphology was as important for ELL students in contributing to comprehension as it was for native English speakers.

A Latin-Greek based approach to vocabulary instruction appears to be a useful way to provide instruction that meets diverse students’ needs. English language learners, for example, have been identified as the largest growing population in American schools (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Because so many of these children speak first languages semantically embedded in the Latin

lexicon (e.g., Spanish), enhancing this linguistic connection can accelerate students' vocabulary growth (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Similarly, research in content area vocabulary has demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching Greek and Latin word roots, especially for struggling readers (Harmon, Hedrick & Wood, 2005).

Moreover, as students move through the grade levels, they face an “increased load of new words, new concepts, and multiple meanings” in school texts of increasing difficulty (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000, p. 511). Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimate that in grade 5, students meet 10,000 new words in their reading alone and that school texts used in grades 3-9 contain approximately 88,500 distinct word families. A majority of the new words encountered in these texts will be of Greek and Latin origin. A teacher in the Mountain (2005) study summed up the potential of a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary with the following quote: “Morphemic analysis may be one way to narrow the gap between the vocabulary ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’” (p. 744).

Recently, Blachowicz et al. (2006) have called for a “comprehensive, integrated, schoolwide” approach to vocabulary instruction. They propose that vocabulary become a “core consideration” across grade levels and subjects, and that it be based on a “common philosophy and shared practices” (p. 527). Salient components of such a program focus on fostering “word consciousness,” the “intentional teaching of selected words,” and teaching “generative elements of words and word-learning strategies to build independence” (p. 527). Blachowicz and her colleagues (2006) also emphasize the critical need for students to make “semantic connections among words,” connections that are apparent to students and that they can verbalize. They further note that research that focuses on teaching structural analysis or morphology has found this approach helpful for learning new words.

We agree and feel that a Latin-Greek emphasis should be part of the core elementary vocabulary program. The intentional selection and instruction of Latin-Greek roots and affixes can provide students with opportunities to maximize their word learning, and that the semantic nature of Latin-Greek roots provides a natural connection between English words that we expect students to learn.

The study of Latin and Greek roots and affixes needs to be an integral part of a comprehensive vocabulary program from the primary grades through high school. The next quantum leap in vocabulary growth, we believe, will come when the systematic study of Latin-Greek derivations is embedded into vocabulary programs for the elementary, middle, and secondary grades. Given the Latin-Greek imperative, in the next sections we offer suggestions for working with primary-level children, explore productive derivations that should be taught at the elementary level, and provide some instructional methods for teaching those derivations.

What Roots to Teach?

There has never been a scientifically-based identification of rimes appropriate for teaching students at various grade levels, or an identification of the order in which the rimes should be taught. Teachers and curriculum developers rely on professional knowledge to make those determinations. Similarly, there exists no scientifically-based identification of Latin-Greek word roots worth teaching or order of presentation. Until such an identification is made, expert opinion must be relied upon.

The Table presents what we believe, based on our own expertise and experience, are the most useful and appropriate roots worth teaching in the elementary grades (Author, 2008). We developed these lists from reviews of language arts and content area materials; identification of roots that appear most frequently in English; and identification of roots that have the greatest

utility for primary, intermediate, and middle grades. The roots have also been validated by a group of practicing teachers who have used them instructionally with their students. These lists of roots are meant neither to be mandatory nor exhaustive. We provide them simply as a starting point for discussing and developing an English vocabulary curriculum based on Latin-Greek word roots. Author (2007) provide more detailed and comprehensive listing of roots by grade level.

[insert Table about here]

Helping Primary Students Learn about Roots

All primary-level reading instruction includes attention to phonics or word decoding. Children learn to “look inside” of words for familiar letters, word families, etc. Teachers can use this foundation as a platform to help students learn about word roots—prefixes, suffixes, and base words. That is, teachers can help children learn to “look inside” of words for familiar meanings in addition to familiar sounds.

Attention to compound words offers an easy way to help children make the sound-to-meaning shift. Teachers should start with familiar, two-syllable compound words such as *bedroom*, *birthday*, or *football*. Students can learn to look for two words within each compound word. The teacher can underscore that the two words in each compound contribute to meaning, with the base meaning ordinarily found in the second word: What do we call a *room* where a *bed* is? What do we call a *ball* that you can kick with your *foot*? After children develop facility with familiar two-word compounds, the teacher can introduce three-syllable compound words, such as *storybook* or *fingernail*, and invite children to look for meaning within these longer words.

Common prefixes, such as *un-*, can provide the next step in helping children move from sound to meaning. Again, teachers want to select words that are familiar: *unwrap*, *unhappy*, *unzip*, or *unbend* and eventually shift to more challenging words: *unlike*, *unchanged*, *unanswered*. Questions like these can help children look for letter combinations that, although not words by themselves, still carry meaning: If “un-” means “not,” what does “unhappy” mean? If “un-” means “not,” what does “unchanged” mean? Easy suffixes (e.g., *-er*, *-est* [more, most/ very]; *-ful*, *-less* [full of, without]) can be introduced next, in a similar manner.

These procedures build awareness that units within words can contain meaning as well as sound, an awareness that allows students to add a “semantic unit” approach to their vocabulary repertoires. They learn how to “get inside” words and look for units that carry meaning. They learn to look for roots and to think about how the different parts of a word (beginning, middle, end – or – prefix, base, suffix) all work together to generate meaning.

Teaching Latin and Greek Word Roots

Given the limited amount of time available for vocabulary instruction, teachers might focus on one to two roots per week through 10-15 minute- sessions three to five times per week. In the following section we present a sampling of three instructional approaches for teaching Latin-Greek roots. The first activity is a superb way to introduce a root, the second is an excellent reinforcement activity, and the third is a creative extension activity. A more comprehensive and detailed presentation of instructional methods can be found in *Greek and Latin Roots: Keys to Building Vocabulary* (Author, 2008).

Divide and Conquer

Divide and Conquer is an instructional approach for helping students recognize the structure, sound, and meaning of prefixes, bases, and suffixes. It is an excellent activity for

introducing students to particular roots and then guiding them in exploring the essential meaning of the roots.

Start with a list of approximately ten words that have the same prefix (e.g., for the prefix *re-*: replay, rewind, reboot, recycle, redo, review, remind, recall, restate, resell). Read the words orally with students. Have students choose one or two words from the list, identify the two basic units to each word, and speculate about what each means. As students offer explanations, reinforce the critical meaning of the prefix. Help students understand that meaning of the full word is obtained through the relationship of the base word with the prefix.

On a display board or chart, as well as on individual student sheets, have students list each complete word, divide each into component parts (prefix and root), and then provide a personal definition for each word. An example is provided below:

Replay	re	+	play	to play again
Reboot	re	+	boot	to start a computer again
Review	re	+	view	to look at once more

Word Spokes and Word Charts

Word Spokes is a superb way to reinforce the root(s) or affixes introduced in Divide and Conquer. The activity requires a visual display (both for the classroom and for individual students) that is a center circle with spokes or rays coming from the center circle (much like sun rays or spokes coming from the hub of a bicycle wheel).

Begin the lesson by reviewing the roots or affixes that are the topic for the week, focusing on their essential meaning. Remind students, for example, that “re-” used as a prefix means “again” or “back.” Then, working alone, in small groups, or as a whole class have

students brainstorm words that contain the “re-” prefix and list them at the end of the spokes on the word spoke chart or paper. In addition to words used in the Divide and Conquer lesson encourage students to think (or search) for other words, such as “revisit,” “reenergize,” or “relocate.” Once the Word Spokes chart is developed, guide students in a discussion of the meanings of the words.

You can think of the classroom Word Spokes chart as a specialized word wall. Throughout the week make frequent references to the words on the chart, encourage students to add new words they may find to the chart, and encourage students to use the words in their own written and oral language.

You can also create simple word charts organized around particular roots and affixes. At the top of the chart print the root or affix to be featured. Beneath it, ask students to brainstorm and then list all the words that are associated with that root or affix. For example, on Earth Day you might want to do a word chart about “terr-” (earth or land), with students brainstorming words such as *terrain*, *terrace*, *terrarium*, *Mediterranean*, *extraterrestrial*, *subterranean*, *terrier*, or *Terre Haute*. Then throughout the week, you can make pointed references to the words and encourage your students to do the same in their oral and written language.

Be the Bard

Although most people recognize William Shakespeare as a great writer of plays and poetry, few people realize that he was one of the great wordsmiths of history. It has been estimated that Shakespeare invented approximate 8% or 1 of every 12 unique words that he used. Many of the words that he invented were simply compounds made of already existing base words and/or affixes. Words such as “skim milk,” “lackluster,” “premeditated,” and “noiseless” are but a few examples of the words created by William Shakespeare.

When it comes to exploring and learning about the English language, Shakespeare is pretty good fellow to emulate. And if Shakespeare could create new words by combining existing roots and affixes, so can students. We call this Be the Bard; it is a great way to give students permission to be active and creative in exploring words by using already learned roots and affixes. To Be the Bard, students simply take already learned roots and affixes and combine or attach them to existing words to create new words. Student-invented words are put on display, and the inventor is asked to explain the meaning of his or her creation. Here are some words students invented: automand (an order that one gives to himself or herself), terrameter (a device for measuring land), and contradict (to lead a group against another group).

Although these created words are fanciful, students take genuine delight in using meaningful roots and affixes to create even more meaning. Moreover, when students are actively engaged in making meaning in this way, they are much more likely to grasp and hold the essential meanings of the roots than when they learn in the more traditional manner of passive memorization.

Passage Reading

Words are often learned through contextual reading in which the context surrounding a target word provides an explanation, clarification, and/or exemplars of and for the target word. We have found that is not difficult for teachers to develop short passages or poems containing a targeted word root with explanatory context that provides students with opportunities to solidify their understanding of the root as well as improve their overall reading fluency. Here's a poem we wrote for the "port" root:

Port-o-Poem

Transport Export Import Too
Port means to move things

Live from me to you!

A porter carries your luggage
A reporter carries the news
Something portable can be moved around
Do you know how an airport might be used?

Although not the most poetic piece ever written, like all fun poetry children want to read this repeatedly. The repetition certainly develops reading fluency; it also helps students cement in their minds the connection between the port- root, its essential meaning, and English words derived from it.

Teacher Perceptions and Student Achievement

As we noted earlier, a growing body of academic research is beginning to demonstrate the power and potential of a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary instruction. But just how do teachers feel about such an approach after a year of implementation? What good is it to have a powerful instructional program if teachers do not believe it will work? Author (2010) provides some insight into this concern through surveys of ten elementary teachers who had spent the previous year implementing a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary instruction and had been given regular professional development, instructional modeling, and ongoing support for their efforts.

The teachers unanimously believed that focusing on Latin and Greek roots affected their word study instruction. Teachers noted that the study of Latin and Greek altered their own personal attitudes toward word study and approach to learning words. One teacher commented, “Right from our very first meeting, I was shocked and amazed at how much more words made sense just by using a few prefixes” (p. 14). Another noted, “... although I have always been an avid reader and feel that I have a strong vocabulary, I have never thought about what specific

word parts mean. So I learned how to divide and conquer words just as my students did” (p. 15). A third teacher indicated that, “I now look more in-depth at words. I find it interesting and have a better understanding of how to teach words” (p. 15).

Did the focus on word roots make a difference with students? Over half the teachers indicated that their students’ general reading comprehension and their understanding of content related reading material improved as a direct result of their instructional focus on word roots.

Third-grade teacher Iisha M. Porter-Collier (2010) implemented a ten week vocabulary unit of study that focused on students learning Latin-Greek roots and affixes in an urban school using the methods described above. She found that the percentage of students meeting the school district standard for vocabulary improved from 19% to 47%. Students reported enjoying the instruction, particularly its game-like nature. They believed that learning certain word roots and affixes empowered them to learn many new words.

Although these studies are small in scale and done within the confines of actual elementary classrooms, they demonstrate, from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives, the potential that in informed and systematic approach to Latin and Greek word roots can have for improving students’ vocabulary and literacy skills.

Conclusion

We hope that your appetite for making the study of Latin and Greek roots an integral part of your word study program has been whetted. Whether you are a Reading/Language Arts teacher, a teacher of English language learners, or a teacher who specializes in an academic area other than the English Language Arts, there is a place in your curriculum for the systematic study of Latin and Greek roots. Think of the enormous advantage we can give students when they learn that 1 root can help them unlock the meaning to 5, 10, 20 or more English words!

Moreover, it is likely that a fair number of those words are the academic words so essential to students' learning in the various content areas. The systematic, ongoing, and consistent integration of Latin and Greek roots into vocabulary instruction offers awesome potential for enhancing students' academic growth. As a field, we must work to make this happen.

Veni, Vidi, Vici!

For Peer Review

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For Peer Review

TABLE**Elementary Level Latin and Greek Roots and Affixes***(N.B.: Order of roots is not sequential.)***Prefixes**

a-, ab-, abs-	away, from
ad-	to, toward, add to
co-, com-, con-, col-	with, together
de-	own, off of
di-, dif-, dis-	apart, in different directions, not
ex-	out
in-, im-, il-	in, on, into (<i>directional</i>)
in-, im-, il-	not (<i>negative</i>)
pre-	before
pro-,	forward, ahead
re-	back, again
sub-	under, below
tra-, tran-, trans-	across, change
un-	not (<i>“negative”</i>)

Parallel Latin and Greek Prefixes

<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	
contra-, contro-, counter-	anti-	against
circu-, circum-	peri-	around
multi-	poly	many
super-, sur-	hyper	over
sub-	hypo-	under, below

Bases

audi-, audit-	hear, listen
cred-, credit-	believe
cur-, curs-, cours-	run, go
dict-	say, tell, speak
duc-, duct-	lead
fac-, fic-, fact-, fect-	do, make
graph-, gram-	write, draw
mis-, mit-	to send
mov-, mot-, mobil-	move
pon-, pos-, posit-	put, place
port-	carry
scrib-, script	write
terr-	earth
vid-, vis-	see

Numerical Bases (*appear at beginning of words*)

Uni-	one
bi-	two
tri-	three

Parallel Latin and Greek Bases

<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	
aqua -	hydro-	water
ped-	pod-	foot, feet
terr-	geo-	earth

Suffixes

-able, ible	can, able to be done
-arium, -orium	place for, container for
-er,	more
-est	most
-ful	full of
-ify	to make
-less	without
-or, -er	one who does
-ose, -ous-, -eous, -ious	full of

The Latin-Greek Vocabulary Connection:
Building Elementary Students' Vocabulary through Morphological Study

Timothy Rasinski
Nancy Padak
Joanna Newton
Evangeline Newton

Abstract

In this article the authors make a case for teaching vocabulary in the elementary grades through a focus on the morphological structure of words, in particular English words that are derived through Latin and Greek roots and affixes. The authors present a set of engaging instructional ideas for the use of Latin and Greek derivations to teach vocabulary and provide classroom-based examples of how a morphological-based vocabulary program can be implemented and its impact on students and teachers.

It goes without question that vocabulary, a reader's knowledge of the meaning of words and concepts, is central to success in reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Studies and reviews of research over the past three decades have shown that the size and depth of elementary students' vocabulary is associated with proficiency in reading comprehension and that instruction to increase readers' vocabulary results in higher levels of reading comprehension (e.g., Baumann, Carr-Edwards, Font, Tereshinski, Kame'enui, & Olejnik, 2002; Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1922; Kame'enui, Carnine, & Freschi, 1982; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

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Focus on Meaningful Word Patterns

For young children, the development of morphological awareness is an integral component of word learning. Biemiller and Slonim (2001) have determined that children acquire

about 600 root word meanings per year from infancy to the end of elementary school. In a comprehensive review of 16 studies analyzing the effect of instruction in morphological awareness on literacy achievement, Carlisle (2010) observes that “Children learn morphemes as they learn language” (pg. 465). Certainly, the playful exploration of meaningful word parts appears to be developmentally appropriate for elementary students..

Yet one vocabulary instruction method that has not traditionally been associated with the elementary grades is a morphological approach – more specifically, an approach that taps into the fact that a significant number of words, particularly academic words, in English are derived from Latin and Greek. Why Latin and Greek? Modern English vocabulary (as well as Spanish, French, Italian, and the other Romance languages) is thoroughly grounded in Latin and Greek. To grasp the importance and impact of Latin and Greek in English consider the following facts (Rasinski, Padak, Newton, & Newton, 2008):

- Most of the academic words in English (e.g., math and science words) are derived from Latin and Greek.
- Most of the more challenging multisyllabic words in English are derived from Latin and Greek.
- A single Latin or Greek root or affix (word pattern) can be found in and aid in the understanding (as well as decoding and encoding) of 20 or more English words.
- Since Spanish is also a Latin-based language, Latin (and Greek) can be used as a bridge to help Spanish speaking students use knowledge of their native language to learn English.

Clearly, the study of Latin and Greek linguistic patterns offers an approach to take vocabulary to a deeper and more expansive level. Students of Latin in high school or college often recognize how the English lexicon has been influenced by Latin. Knowledge of Latin and Greek roots increases our ability to understand English words. Knowing that *trace, tract, track* means to pull, draw or drag can help students understand words such as *track, tractor, traction, retract, detract, abstract, contract, contraction, intractable, protractor, trace, retrace*, and many more.

However, the exploration of Latin and Greek need not be limited to the secondary grades as it has in the past. We feel that students in the elementary grades can benefit from guided awareness of and instruction in Latin and Greek roots. In fact, research has demonstrated that many roots and affixes, including those of Latin and Greek origin, can readily be learned in the primary grades (Biemiller, 2005; Mountain, 2005; Porter-Collier, 2010).

Other studies have demonstrated the promise of teaching Latin and Greek roots in the intermediate grades (Baumann et al., 2002; Carlisle, 2000; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). In their studies Baumann and colleagues note that students were able to use their knowledge of “morphemic elements.... To infer meanings of untaught words” (p. 170) and Carlisle concludes that “the morphology measures together contributed to reading comprehension. The relationships were particularly strong for the fifth graders but it is noteworthy that they were significant for third graders who are presumably still learning basic strategies for recognizing polysyllabic words in print” (p. 183). Kieffer and Lesaux conclude that “Students’ understanding of morphology was a better predictor of reading comprehension than their vocabulary level” (p. 138). They also found that morphology was as important for ELL students in contributing to comprehension as it was for native English speakers.

A Latin-Greek based approach to vocabulary instruction appears to be a useful way to provide instruction that meets diverse students' needs. English language learners, for example, have been identified as the largest growing population in American schools (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Because so many of these children speak first languages semantically embedded in the Latin lexicon (e.g., Spanish), enhancing this linguistic connection can accelerate students' vocabulary growth (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle & Watts-Taffe, 2006). Similarly, research in content area vocabulary has demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching Greek and Latin word roots, especially for struggling readers (Harmon, Hedrick & Wood, 2005).

Moreover, as students move through the grade levels, they face an "increased load of new words, new concepts, and multiple meanings" in school texts of increasing difficulty (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000, p. 511). Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimate that in grade 5, students meet 10,000 new words in their reading alone and that school texts used in grades 3-9 contain approximately 88,500 distinct word families. A majority of the new words encountered in these texts will be of Greek and Latin origin. A teacher in the Mountain (2005) study summed up the potential of a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary with the following quote: "Morphemic analysis may be one way to narrow the gap between the vocabulary 'haves' and the 'have nots'" (p. 744).

Recently, Blachowicz et al. (2006) have called for a "comprehensive, integrated, schoolwide" approach to vocabulary instruction. They propose that vocabulary become a "core consideration" across grade levels and subjects, and that it be based on a "common philosophy and shared practices" (p. 527). Salient components of such a program focus on fostering "word consciousness," the "intentional teaching of selected words," and teaching "generative elements of words and word-learning strategies to build independence" (p. 527). Blachowicz and her

colleagues (2006) also emphasize the critical need for students to make “semantic connections among words,” connections that are apparent to students and that they can verbalize. They further note that research that focuses on teaching structural analysis or morphology has found this approach helpful for learning new words.

Based on this research, we feel that a Latin-Greek emphasis should be an integral part of the core elementary vocabulary program. The intentional selection and instruction of Latin-Greek roots and affixes can provide students with opportunities to maximize their word learning, and that the semantic nature of Latin-Greek roots provides a natural connection between English words that we expect students to learn. Blachowicz, Fisher, and Watts-Taffe (2011) note that research has demonstrated that the teaching of individual words (including morphemes) can be part of effective vocabulary instruction.

The study of Latin and Greek roots and affixes needs to be an integral part of a comprehensive vocabulary program from the elementary grades through high school. The next quantum leap in vocabulary growth, we believe, will come when the systematic study of Latin-Greek derivations is embedded into vocabulary programs for the elementary, middle, and secondary grades. Given the Latin-Greek imperative, in the next sections we offer suggestions for working with elementary children, explore productive derivations that should be taught at the elementary level, and provide some instructional methods for teaching those derivations.

What Roots to Teach?

There has never been a scientifically-based identification of rimes appropriate for teaching students at various grade levels, or an identification of the order in which the rimes should be taught. Teachers and curriculum developers rely on professional knowledge to make those determinations. Similarly, there exists no scientifically-based identification of Latin-Greek

word roots worth teaching or order of presentation. Until such an identification is made, expert opinion must be relied upon.

The Table presents what we believe, based on our own expertise and experience, are the most useful and appropriate roots worth teaching in the elementary grades (Padak, Newton, Rasinski, & Newton, 2008). We developed these lists from reviews of language arts and content area materials; identification of roots that appear most frequently in English; and identification of roots that have the greatest utility for primary, intermediate, and middle grades. The roots have also been validated by a group of practicing teachers who have used them instructionally with their students. These lists of roots are meant neither to be mandatory nor exhaustive. We provide them simply as a starting point for discussing and developing an English vocabulary curriculum based on Latin-Greek word roots. Rasinski, Padak, Newton, and Newton (2007) provide more detailed and comprehensive listing of roots by grade level.

[insert Table about here]

Helping Elementary Students Learn about Roots

All primary-level reading instruction includes attention to phonics or word decoding. Children learn to “look inside” of words for familiar letters, word families, and other letter patterns. Teachers can use this foundation as a platform to help students in grades 1 and 2 learn about word roots—prefixes, suffixes, and base words. That is, teachers can help children learn to “look inside” of words for familiar meanings in addition to familiar sounds.

Attention to compound words offers an easy way to help children make the sound-to-meaning shift. Teachers should start with familiar, two-syllable compound words such as *bedroom*, *birthday*, or *football*. Students can learn to look for two words within each compound word (Newton, Padak, & Rasinski, 2007). The teacher can underscore that the two words in each

compound contribute to meaning, with the base meaning ordinarily found in the second word: What do we call a *room* where a *bed* is? What do we call a *ball* that you can kick with your *foot*? After children develop facility with familiar two-word compounds, the teacher can introduce three-syllable compound words, such as *storybook* or *fingernail*, and invite children to look for meaning within these longer words.

Common prefixes, such as *un-*, can provide the next step in helping children move from sound to meaning. Again, teachers want to select words that are familiar: *unwrap*, *unhappy*, *unzip*, or *unbend* and eventually shift to more challenging words: *unchanged*, *unanswered*, *unprepared*. Questions like these can help children look for letter combinations that, although not words by themselves, still carry meaning: If “un-” means “not,” what does “unhappy” mean? If “un-” means “not,” what does “unchanged” mean? Easy suffixes (e.g., *-er*, *-est* [more, most/ very]; *-ful*, *-less* [full of, without]) can be introduced next, in a similar manner.

These procedures build awareness that units within words can contain meaning as well as sound, an awareness that allows students to add a “semantic unit” approach to their vocabulary repertoires. They learn how to “get inside” words and look for units that carry meaning. They learn to look for roots and to think about how the different parts of a word (beginning, middle, end – or – prefix, base, suffix) all work together to generate meaning.

Teaching Latin and Greek Word Roots

Given the limited amount of time available for vocabulary instruction, teachers might focus on one to two roots per week through 10 minute- sessions three to five times per week (less than one hour per week total). Those one or two roots per week, however, may yield understanding of 40 or more English words. In the following section we present a sampling of four rather simple instructional approaches for exploring Latin-Greek roots. The first activity is

a superb way to introduce a root, the second is an excellent reinforcement activity, and the third and fourth are creative extension activities. A more comprehensive and detailed presentation of instructional methods can be found in *Greek and Latin Roots: Keys to Building Vocabulary* (Rasinski et al., 2008).

Divide and Conquer (Grades 1-5)

Divide and Conquer is an instructional approach for helping students recognize the structure, sound, and meaning of prefixes, bases, and suffixes. It is an excellent activity for introducing students to particular roots and then guiding them in exploring the essential meaning of the roots.

Start with a list of approximately ten words that have the same prefix (e.g., for the prefix *re-*: replay, rewind, reboot, recycle, redo, review, remind, recall, restate, resell). Read the words orally with students. Have students choose one or two words from the list, identify the two basic units to each word, and speculate about what each means. As students offer explanations, reinforce the critical meaning of the prefix. Help students understand that meaning of the full word is obtained through the relationship of the base word with the prefix.

On a display board or chart, as well as on individual student sheets, have students list each complete word, divide each into component parts (prefix and root), and then provide a personal definition for each word. An example is provided below:

Replay	re	+	play	to play again
Reboot	re	+	boot	to start a computer again
Review	re	+	view	to look at once more

Word Spokes and Word Charts (Grades 1-5)

Word Spokes is a superb way to reinforce the root(s) or affixes introduced in Divide and Conquer for students. The activity requires a visual display (both for the classroom and for individual students) that is a center circle with spokes or rays coming from the center circle (much like sun rays or spokes coming from the hub of a bicycle wheel).

Begin the lesson by reviewing the roots or affixes that are the topic for the week, focusing on their essential meaning. Remind students, for example, that “re-” used as a prefix means “again” or “back.” Then, working alone, in small groups, or as a whole class have students brainstorm words that contain the “re-” prefix and list them at the end of the spokes on the word spoke chart or paper. In addition to words used in the Divide and Conquer lesson encourage students to think (or search) for other words, such as “revisit,” “reenergize,” or “relocate.” Once the Word Spokes chart is developed, guide students in a discussion of the meanings of the words.

You can think of the classroom Word Spokes chart as a specialized word wall. Throughout the week make frequent references to the words on the chart, encourage students to add new words they may find to the chart, and encourage students to use the words in their own written and oral language.

You can also create simple word charts organized around particular roots and affixes. At the top of the chart print the root or affix to be featured. Beneath it, ask students to brainstorm and then list all the words that are associated with that root or affix. For example, on Earth Day you might want to do a word chart about “terr-” (earth or land), with students brainstorming words such as *terrain*, *terrace*, *terrarium*, *Mediterranean*, *extraterrestrial*, *subterranean*, *terrier*, or *Terre Haute*. Then throughout the week, you can make pointed references to the words and encourage your students to do the same in their oral and written language.

Be the Bard (Grades 3-5)

Although most people recognize William Shakespeare as a great writer of plays and poetry, few people realize that he was one of the great wordsmiths of history. It has been estimated that Shakespeare invented approximate 8% or 1 of every 12 unique words that he used. Many of the words that he invented were simply compounds made of already existing base words and/or affixes. Words such as “skim milk,” “lackluster,” “premeditated,” and “noiseless” are but a few examples of the words created by William Shakespeare.

When it comes to exploring and learning about the English language, Shakespeare is pretty good fellow to emulate. And if Shakespeare could create new words by combining existing roots and affixes, so can students. We call this Be the Bard; it is a great way to give students permission to be active and creative in exploring words by using already learned roots and affixes. To Be the Bard, students simply take already learned roots and affixes and combine or attach them to existing words to create new words. Student-invented words are put on display, and the inventor is asked to explain the meaning of his or her creation. Here are some words students invented: automand (an order that one gives to himself or herself), terrameter (a device for measuring land), and contradict (to lead a group against another group).

Although these created words are fanciful, students take genuine delight in using meaningful roots and affixes to create even more meaning. Moreover, when students are actively engaged in making meaning in this way, they are much more likely to grasp and hold the essential meanings of the roots than when they learn in the more traditional manner of passive memorization.

Passage Reading (Grades 3-5)

Words are often learned through contextual reading in which the context surrounding a target word provides an explanation, clarification, and/or exemplars of and for the target word. We have found that is not difficult for teachers to develop short passages or poems containing a targeted word root with explanatory context that provides students with opportunities to solidify their understanding of the root as well as improve their overall reading fluency. Here's a poem we wrote for the "port" root:

Port-o-Poem

Transport Export Import Too
Port means to move things
Like from me to you!

A porter carries your luggage
A reporter carries the news
Something portable can be moved around
Do you know how an airport might be used?

Although not the most poetic piece ever written, like all fun poetry children want to read this repeatedly. The repeated reading of the verse develops reading fluency; it also helps students cement in their minds the connection between the port- root, its essential meaning, and English words derived from it.

Teacher Perceptions and Student Achievement

As we noted earlier, a growing body of academic research is beginning to demonstrate the power and potential of a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary instruction. But just how do teachers feel about such an approach after a year of implementation? What good is it to have a powerful instructional program if teachers do not believe it will work? Third-grade teacher Joanna Newton (2010) provides some insight into this concern through surveys of ten elementary teachers who had spent the previous year implementing a Latin-Greek approach to vocabulary

instruction and had been given regular professional development, instructional modeling, and ongoing support for their efforts.

The teachers unanimously believed that focusing on Latin and Greek roots affected their word study instruction. Teachers noted that the study of Latin and Greek altered their own personal attitudes toward word study and approach to learning words. They saw the value and potential of implementing a roots approach in their elementary classrooms. One teacher commented, “Right from our very first meeting, I was shocked and amazed at how much more words made sense just by using a few prefixes” (p. 14). Another noted, “... although I have always been an avid reader and feel that I have a strong vocabulary, I have never thought about what specific word parts mean. So I learned how to divide and conquer words just as my students did” (p. 15). A third teacher indicated that, “I now look more in-depth at words. I find it interesting and have a better understanding of how to teach words” (p. 15).

Did the focus on word roots make a difference with students? Over half the teachers indicated that their students’ general reading comprehension and their understanding of content related reading material improved as a direct result of their instructional focus on word roots.

Third-grade teacher Iisha M. Porter-Collier (2010) implemented a ten week vocabulary unit of study that focused on students learning Latin-Greek roots and affixes in an urban school using the methods described above. She found that the percentage of students meeting the school district standard for vocabulary improved from 19% to 47%. Students reported enjoying the instruction, particularly its game-like nature. They believed that learning certain word roots and affixes empowered them to learn many new words.

Although these studies are small in scale and done within the confines of actual elementary classrooms, they demonstrate, from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives, the

potential that an informed and systematic approach to Latin and Greek word roots can have for improving students' vocabulary and literacy skills.

Conclusion

We recognize that the study of Latin and Greek roots is only one part of a complete vocabulary program. A strong vocabulary program will also include the study of novel words found in guided and independent reading, teacher read alouds, and content area instruction. We also recognize that not all primary grade children may be fully ready to study Latin and Greek roots. Still, we feel that the quick, engaging, and game-like nature of the activities we propose will help to develop an awareness of these important word patterns that will act as a foundation for future learning.

We hope that your appetite for making the study of Latin and Greek roots an integral part of your word study program has been whetted. Whether you are a Reading/Language Arts teacher, a teacher of English language learners, or a teacher who specializes in an academic area other than the English Language Arts, there is a place in your curriculum for the systematic study of Latin and Greek roots. Think of the enormous advantage we can give students when they learn that 1 root can help them unlock the meaning to 5, 10, 20 or more English words! Moreover, it is likely that a fair number of those words are the academic words so essential to students' learning in the various content areas. The systematic, ongoing, and consistent integration of Latin and Greek roots into vocabulary instruction offers awesome potential for enhancing students' academic growth. As a field, we must work to make this happen so that we may also say as Ceasar once did on returning to Rome after a great victory:
Veni, Vidi, Vici!

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TABLE

Elementary Level Latin and Greek Roots and Affixes

(N.B.: Order of roots is not sequential.)

Prefixes

a-, ab-, abs-	away, from
ad-	to, toward, add to
co-, com-, con-, col-	with, together
de-	own, off of
di-, dif-, dis-	apart, in different directions, not
ex-	out
in-, im-, il-	in, on, into (<i>directional</i>)
in-, im-, il-	not (<i>negative</i>)
pre-	before
pro-,	orward, ahead
re-	back, again
sub-	under, below
tra-, tran-, trans-	across, change
un-	not (" <i>negative</i> ")

Parallel Latin and Greek Prefixes

<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	
contra-, contro-, counter-	anti-	against
circu-, circum-	peri-	around
multi-	poly	many
super-, sur-	hyper	over
sub-	hypo-	under, below

Bases

audi-, audit-	hear, listen
---------------	--------------

cred-, credit-	believe
cur-, curs-, cours-	run, go
dict-	say, tell, speak
duc-, duct-	lead
fac-, fic-, fact-, fect-	do, make
graph-, gram-	write, draw
mis-, mit-	to send
mov-, mot-, mobil-	move
pon-, pos-, posit-	put, place
port-	carry
scrib-, script	write
terr-	earth
vid-, vis-	see

Numerical Bases (appear at beginning of words)

Uni-	one
bi-	two
tri-	three

Parallel Latin and Greek Bases

<i>Latin</i>	<i>Greek</i>	
aqua -	hydro-	water
ped-	pod-	foot, feet
terr-	geo-	earth

Suffixes

-able, ible	can, able to be done
-arium, -orium	place for, container for
-er,	more
-est	most
-ful	full of
-ify	to make
-less	without
-or, -er	one who does
-ose, -ous-, -eous, -ious	full of

Questions for Reflection

1. Do you feel students in the elementary grades are developmentally ready to study meaningful roots from Latin and Greek as part of their vocabulary instruction? Why or why not?
2. Have you attempted in the past to draw your students' attention to the meaningful patterns embedded in words? How have they responded?
3. How do you think your students would respond to the activities described in this article?
4. Look over the list of roots and affixes in the Table. Given the grade level at which you teach, what roots and affixes do you think would be most appropriate to present to your students?

Take Action

Divide and Conquer/Word Spokes

Day 1

1. Create a list of English words that contain a particular Latin or Greek root or affix (e.g. tricycle, triangle, triathlon, tripod, triplane)
2. List the words on a display board or chart (as well as on students' individual sheets for students).
3. Guide students in dividing the target affix or root from the rest of the word and using the essential meaning of the root or affix to determine the meaning of the word

Tricycle	tri + cycle	a bike with three wheels
Triangle	tri + angle	a shape with 3 angles (corners) and 3 sides
Triathlon	tri + athalon	a sport made up of 3 separate events
Tripod	tri + pod	a structure with 3 feet and 3 legs
Triplane	tri + plane	an airplane with 3 wings

As you and your students engage in dividing the words, draw students' attention to how the use of tri has changed the meaning of the words in very consistent ways.

4. Explore other words that contain the affix or root and attempt to determine how the affix or root has influenced the meaning of each word.

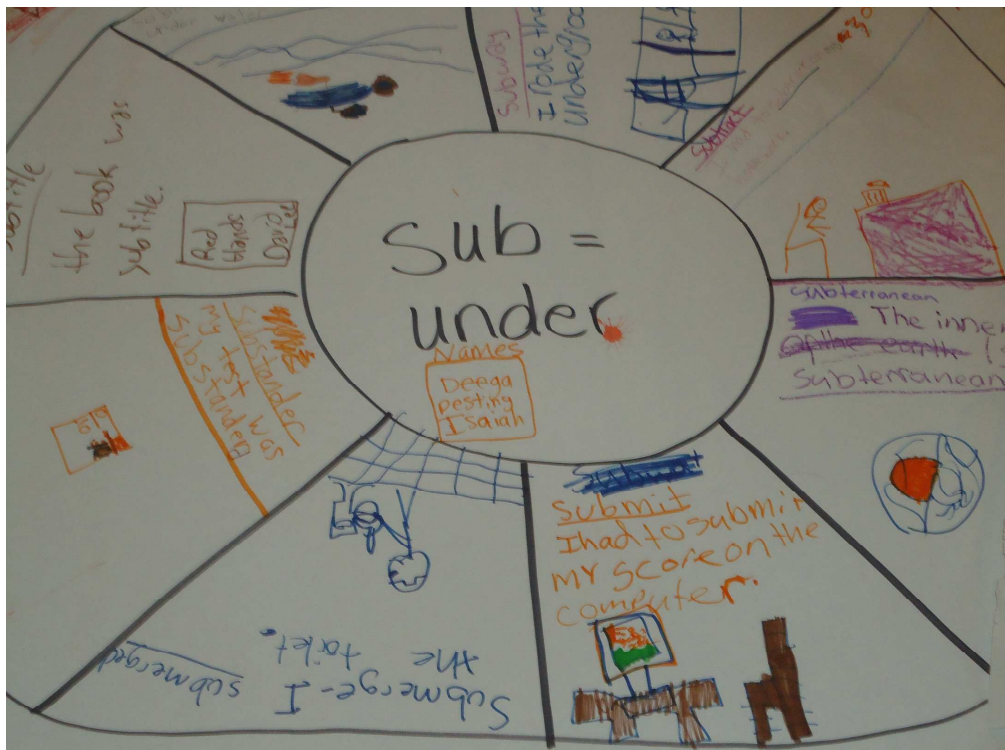
triple, triplet, triceratops, triannual, trifocal, trifold

Day 2

5. On the following day of instruction create a word spoke word wall by entering the affix Tri and the number 3 on the center of a chart or display board. Circle the affix and number.
6. On spokes coming from the center circle enter a word containing tri as well as brief definition or description of each word.

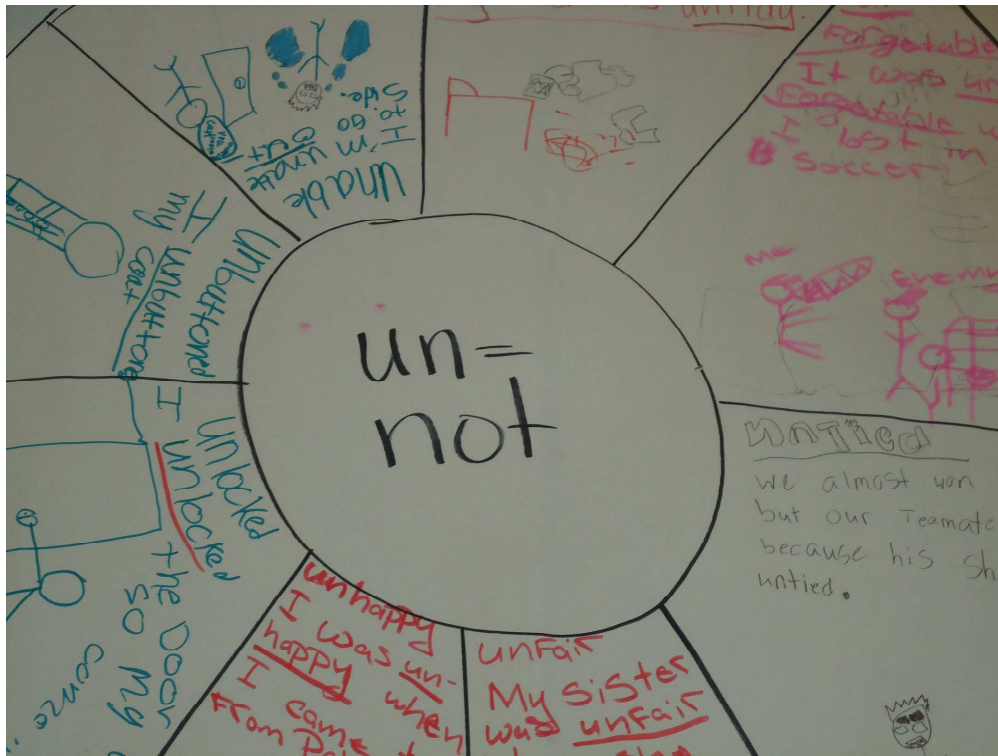
7. Put the word spoke word wall on display in the classroom. Encourage students (including yourself) to begin to purposefully use the words on the word spoke in their own oral and written language throughout the next several days.

For Peer Review



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Review

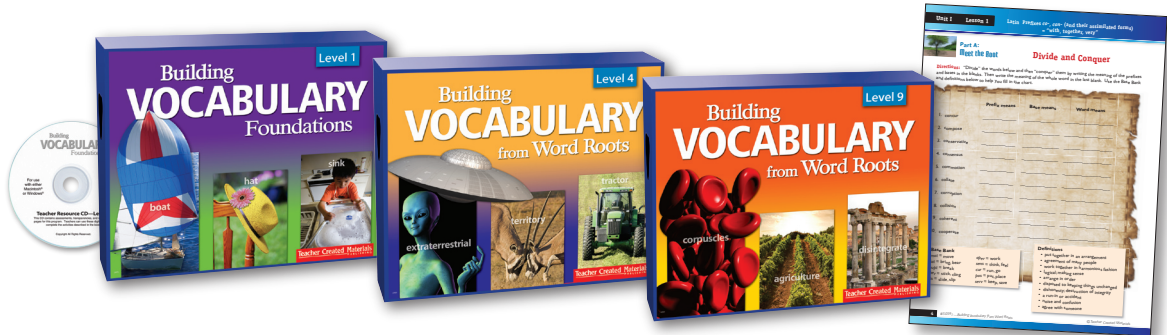


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- **Nancy Padak, Ed.D.**, Kent State University, is the Principal Investigator for the Ohio Literacy Resource Center and directs the Reading and Writing Center at Kent State.
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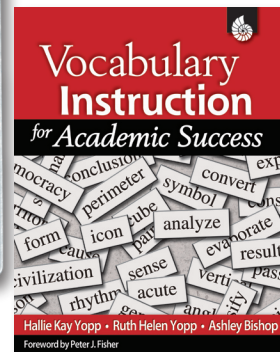
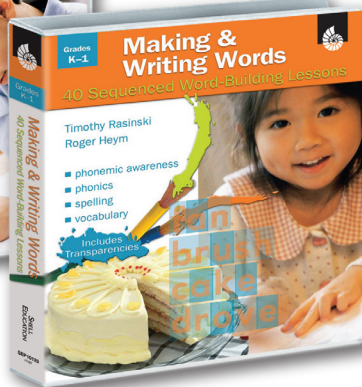
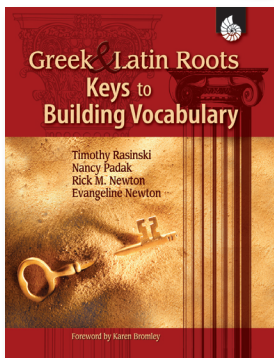
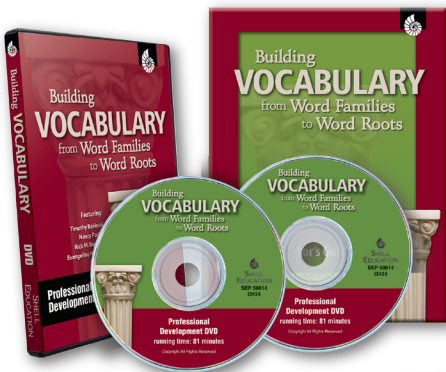
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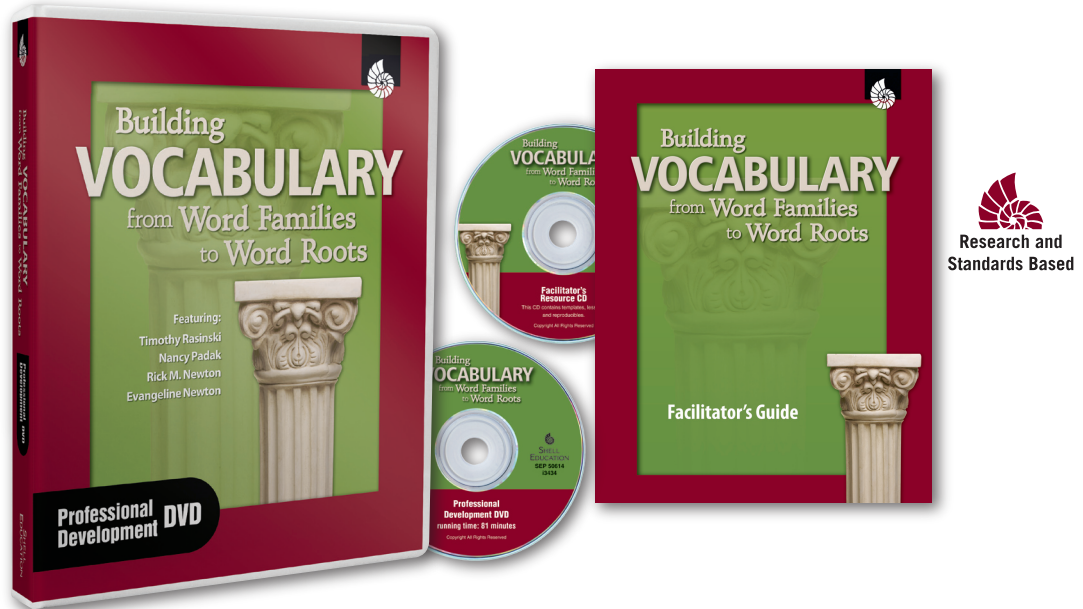
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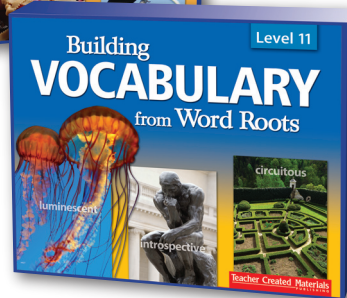
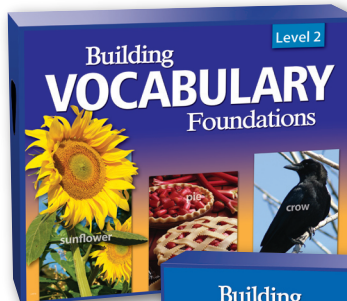
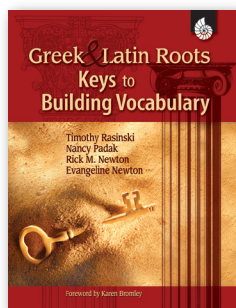
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