



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council
for Special Education

‘Talk Time’: A vocabulary teaching approach for tier 2 words

Classroom and whole-school strategies for primary schools





**An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
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National Council
for Special Education

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This booklet was developed by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), working in collaboration with educator colleagues, to support teachers and schools interested in implementing 'Talk Time' (NCCA 2019) in their classrooms. The content of the booklet is based on research evidence and therapists' professional experience working in schools.

This resource includes information, strategies and sample templates to assist teachers to use 'Talk Time' (Quigley 2019; NCCA 2019) to support students to develop their vocabulary and enhance their communication and participation in school.

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The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) acknowledges the variation in language used to describe educational needs and disability. For some individuals, person first language, for example, "person or individual with disability" is the preferred term. For others, their preference is identity first language (IFL), for example "autistic". The term 'neurodivergent' is emerging as a preferred term to acknowledge individuals in all their diversity. To embed an inclusive approach within documents, the NCSE use all three terms interchangeably.

As of 2025, and to the best of our knowledge, this document uses language and encourages practice that is reflective of current research and evidence. We recognise that language, phrasing and terminology considered best practice at this time may evolve and future iterations of NCSE therapy resources will continue to endeavour to include the most current language and terminology available.

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Aim of this Resource

This resource was compiled by Speech and Language Therapists in the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to support the implementation of the 'Talk Time' approach to vocabulary teaching in line with the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA 2019). Content is based on vocabulary research, Primary Language Curriculum resources and therapists' clinical experience of working with teachers and pupils in primary schools. A reference list compiling the resources referred to within this booklet has been included at the end of this resource. This resource is not exhaustive in nature, as such teachers and school communities are encouraged to use their professional judgement on how best to fit the suggested ideas and resources into their school planning and routines.



Digital versions of many of the vocabulary materials highlighted in this resource are available on the NCSE website: www.ncse.ie

A Padet of relevant resources is available by scanning the QR code here:



Ár mbuíochoas – Our thanks

The NCSE Speech and Language Therapy team wishes to express our gratitude to the schools, teachers, children and others in education who have supported the development of this resource. A special thank you is extended to St Joseph's Boys National School, Clondalkin, Dublin, for their kind contribution to the videos in this resource. Their contribution has been invaluable to the ongoing promotion and enrichment of language development across Irish schools, in this case in the area of vocabulary learning using 'Talk Time'.



Section 1: Introduction

1.1 What is 'Talk Time'?

'Talk Time', henceforth written as Talk Time, is a vocabulary teaching approach targeting tier 2 words described in the Primary Language Curriculum Support Materials by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in their Curriculum Online materials (2019). Talk Time seeks to establish direct and specific teaching of tier 2 words by the class teacher, usually in a whole-class lesson format.

The overarching goal in Talk Time is to support students to reach their highest potential for oral language competency, specifically in the area of vocabulary learning, as a core aspect of their engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) Stages 1 and 2 (NCCA 2019). Learning outcomes for Talk Time connected to the PLC are stated as including:

Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:

- Oral language acquisition and use of oral vocabulary
- Reading vocabulary
- Writing vocabulary

(NCCA 2019).



1.2 Why is Vocabulary Knowledge Important?

Vocabulary knowledge is central to a student's cognitive development (Cunningham et al. 1997) and is closely linked to reading comprehension and word-level reading skills (Nation & Snowling, 2004). Classrooms have the potential to support and develop vocabulary in a supportive and inclusive environment through regular and rich oral and written practices. Such teaching practices may include class discussions and conversations, oral language games, written language activities, and both independent and shared book reading.

Vocabulary and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Vocabulary learning is one of the most significant problems experienced by students with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), (Bishop, 1997; Gathercole, 1993; Sim, 1998). Students with SLCN may not be as skilled as their typically developing peers at 'picking up' or learning new word meanings in an incidental way. A number of factors may contribute to this including:

- **Difficulty with word-learning** affecting the rate and quality of vocabulary acquisition.
- **Difficulties with reading comprehension** and/or decoding which may further restrict opportunities for word learning in written texts (Wilson, Nash and Earl 2010).
- **Reduced opportunities to hear, use or read** a variety and range of vocabulary.

1.3 Direct Teaching of Vocabulary

Reliance on incidental word learning is not enough for many students. Direct and explicit teaching of words that are not text or subject specific can support and develop contextual understanding of words, word learning skills and text comprehension skills (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013). This can be especially important for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Effective vocabulary instruction includes:

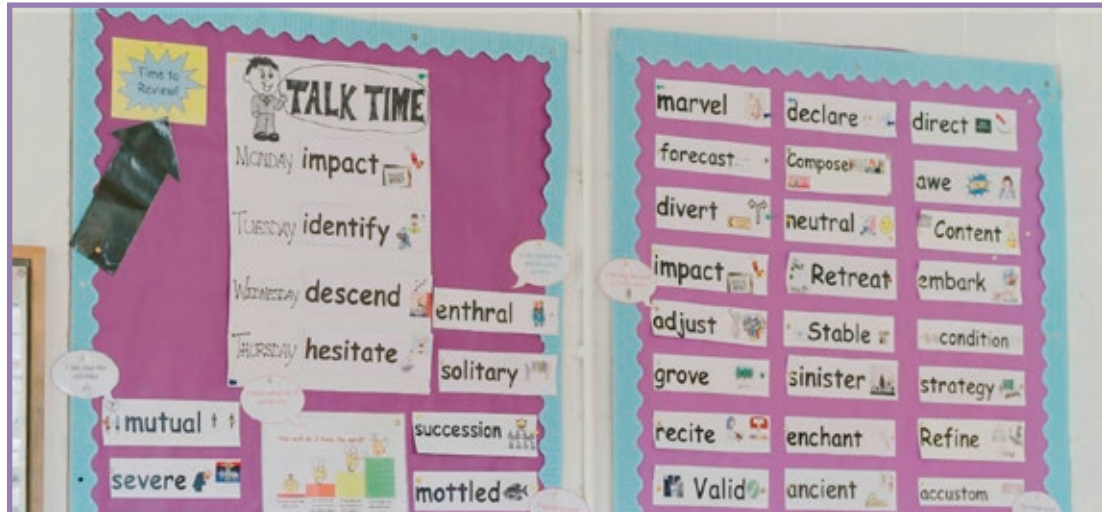
1. Context and clear definitions of new words
2. Teaching the in-depth, and often multiple meaning of words
3. Frequent repetitions and exposure to new words

Talk Time is an approach to teaching vocabulary in the classroom that encompasses all three elements of effective vocabulary instruction alongside two key ideas – quantity and quality

Class 'Word Wall' Displays



A Talk Time 'Word Wall' of tier 2 words from 6th class



Quantity

- Teach fewer words robustly instead of several words in an ad-hoc way. Select one word per daily Talk Time lesson (aim for 4 words per week).
- Provide many opportunities to hear and use new words across curricular subjects.
- Create as many opportunities as possible to use the target words and emphasise these words in different contexts throughout the week.
- Repeat and review the new words taught regularly. Use different and engaging methodologies at the end of the week to review the target words.

Quality

- Select Tier 2 words to teach from curricular topics or shared books. Tier 2 words are high-frequency words that appear across contexts.
- Generate examples and non-examples to illustrate the word.
- Brainstorm synonyms and antonyms for the new word.
- Support pupils to generate their own definitions of the word, instead of only using dictionary definitions.
- Discuss differences between the new word and related words.
- Use visual organisers and templates to support rich instruction.
- Encourage students to practice making sentences using the word(s).
- Play games that target repetition and review of the words.
- Expand use of the word to new contexts, lessons and times of the school day.

Source: NCCA Support material

Section 2: Effective Vocabulary Teaching

2.1 The STAR Approach

It can be helpful to follow the STAR approach to teach vocabulary during Talk Time. STAR means:

- S:** Select – choosing the right fit of tier 2 words to teach
- T:** Teach – introducing and teaching these new words
- A:** Activate – practicing using the new word lots of times
- R:** Review – repeat practice and review of the new tier 2 words every week

The STAR approach to teaching vocabulary is quick and easy to deliver with minimal planning. It can be applied to both topic-related vocabulary and vocabulary that is encountered in shared texts (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2015; as cited in Parsons & Branagan, 2022).

Figure 1: Vocabulary Teaching using the STAR approach



2.2 Selecting Vocabulary–What words should be taught?

Tiered vocabulary is an organisational framework that helps to identify the **most meaningful** and **useful words** to choose to provide robust vocabulary instruction in the classroom (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013). The tiered vocabulary framework can be helpful when selecting which words are most important to teach in a particular class.

In this Talk Time resource book Table 1, 'Word categories in tiers: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3', highlights the framework for tiered vocabulary and was developed based on Beck et al., 2002; 2013 (Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 words), Parsons & Branagan, 2013; 2022 (Word Aware 1: Anchor and Step on words), Stahl & Nagy, 2005 (Goldilocks words) and the experience of SLTs in the NCSE working in Irish Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Table 1: Word categories in tiers: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013).

 Tier 3	Tier 3 words are context/subject specific vocabulary. It is anticipated that students will be unfamiliar with Tier 3 words. They are low-frequency, specialised words that appear in specific subjects or content areas. Teach these words as the need arises for comprehension in specific content areas, for example, 'stethoscope', 'oval', 'nativity', 'genes', 'aorta'.
 Tier 2	Some of the most effective words to teach are 'Tier 2' Words Tier2/Goldilocks words are a 'just right fit' for in-depth vocabulary instruction. They are: - High-frequency words that appear across contexts. - More common in writing than in everyday speech. - Highly useful words, even beyond the immediate topic being taught. - learned primarily through reading and direct, specific instruction - key to building a strong academic vocabulary, for example: 'priority', 'elegant', 'resemble', 'suggest', 'masterpiece', 'expand'.
 Tier 1	Tier 1 words are 'too easy' for in-depth vocabulary instruction. They are basic everyday words. These words are typically found in conversation and do not require direct instruction at a whole class level. It is important to note that Tier 1 words in one Junior Infants class could be different from Tier 1 words used within another Junior Infants class. Tier 1 words are part of most students' vocabulary. However, some students with speech language and communication needs may need these words to be taught in a direct manner. Examples of tier 1 words include, 'table', 'paper', 'think', 'need', 'because'.

The above classification of tiered vocabulary was developed based on Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002 (Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 words), Parsons & Branagan 2014 (Word Aware: Anchor, Goldilocks and Step on words) and NCSE SLT experience working in Irish Schools.

Teaching Tier 2 words can help students understand more specialised, tier 3 words, which arise in other subjects. For example, when discussing volcanoes in a lesson, students in 4th class might come across the word 'formation' (Tier 3) and to support their understanding of this word we could discuss and teach the word 'form' (Tier 2) to build on the concept of 'to make' (Tier 1).



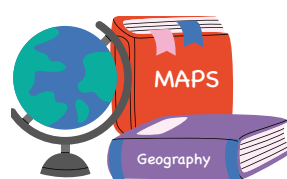
Where to find tier 2 words?

Sources of Tier 2 words should be **timely and specific** to the learning objectives or topic content under discussion, or due to be discussed soon, as a pre-teaching opportunity. This offers much flexibility and autonomy to teachers from where to choose or source the most beneficial tier 2 words for their students.

Places from which to source tier 2 words may include the following examples:



Child-led play



Curricular materials
or theme



Stories and novels



Words from classroom
discussions

Checking the tier 2 words you have selected are a 'good fit' for your class:

Teachers have reported that the following areas are most useful in ensuring the tier 2 words they have chosen are appropriate for their class:

- Guides and checklists
- Discussion and collaboration with colleagues
- Repeated practice at selecting tier 2 words
- In older classes, discussion about Tier 2 words, asking the class their opinion, for example, "Do you think this is a useful Talk Time word?"; "Where else could we use or hear this word?"; "Would this word be a good fit in our Word Wall of tier 2 words?"

How can I check if I have selected tier 2 words and make a list of tier 2 words?

Consider the areas and questions in Figure 2 to help you to accurately select tier 2 words that will be the most effective words for your class to learn. Print out 'Figure 2' and keep this on your desk or in your diary to check the fit of the tier 2 word you have chosen.

A Padet containing these and other resources is also available by scanning the QR code here:



TIER 2 WORD SELECTION CHECKLIST

FREQUENCY & IMPORTANCE
Would you hear this word frequently, or at least more than once, during the school day?

USEFULNESS
How useful is this word to know? Would you come across the word in spoken and written text?

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
Would the new word build precision and sophistication of understanding of a concept?

OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE
Can the word be used in a number of different contexts?

If your word meets at least 3 out of 4 areas: Frequency & Importance; Usefulness; Building Knowledge; Opportunities to Practice - you have selected a Tier 2 word

Figure 2: Tier 2 Word Selection Checklist

2.3 Teaching Vocabulary

There are a number of steps to rich vocabulary teaching. The following sections a) and b) are provided as a structure to guide teaching steps.

- a) Assess the students' understanding of the target word, including using self-assessment.
- b) Discuss the meaning of the target word and create a student friendly definition. Support this process with:
 - Visual supports
 - Multisensory approaches.

a) Assess understanding of the target word

Assess students' understanding of the target word and encourage self-reflection. For example, a 'traffic light' visual with hand actions can be used to determine the students' current understanding of the word:



In this example, the class teacher uses student self-rating with their thumbs to indicate how well they know the word at pre-assessment time:



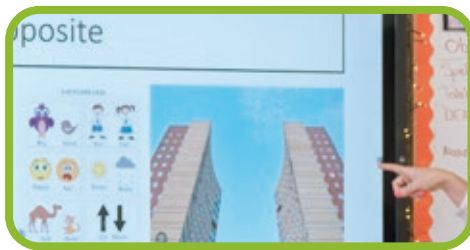
**Example of Introduction
and teacher pre-assessment
whole class.**

For students who indicate they 'know the word well', you may wish to provide them with the opportunity to tell the class about the word. Support and encouragement will be helpful if their definitions are not quite accurate.

b) Discuss the meaning of the word using a picture or visual, and create a student-friendly definition

Begin by providing:

1. A picture or visual to represent the word, and
 2. A student-friendly definition for the word.
- Every tier 2 word needs a **picture representation**. On introducing the target tier 2 word, use of a picture representation is an essential step to support students' understanding of the word.



Picture representation (visuals) of the target word.



Teacher use of visuals to assist students to grasp the meaning of the target word.

- A **student-friendly definition** is written by the teacher and is not constrained by space limitations, as a dictionary definition is.

There are two guidelines for writing a definition:

- Give an example of the word's typical use.
- Explain its meaning using simple, everyday language.

For example:

Word Visual: 	'Generous' Dictionary definition: 'Showing a willingness to give more of something, in particular money, than is strictly necessary or expected'.
Typical use / student friendly	Describes a person who is giving to others with their time, money or other resources or things they may have.
Everyday language / student friendly	Describes a person who is giving to others with their time, their money or other resources, or things they may have, for example, you could say, "It was generous of the busy football team to spend their time on Saturday visiting the local club".

Additional activities that may be used to support the teaching of word definitions and help students understand words more deeply include:

- Teaching synonyms and antonyms.
- Teaching the words' multiple meanings: homonyms.
- Generating examples and non-examples.
- Discussing the similarities and differences between the new words and known words.



The 'Word Wheel' diagram on the screen is a central blue circle labeled 'New Word Opposite'. It is connected to six surrounding boxes: 'Rhymes with', 'Number of syllables', 'What does the word mean?', 'Say in a sentence', 'Picture', and 'Starts with'. The 'Picture' box contains a drawing of two baskets of apples, one labeled 'apple' and the other 'opposite'.

Example of Word Wheel.

Here a 'Word Wheel' is used to support understanding of the target word in a variety of ways, including, word definition, picture as a visual representation, first sound, rhymes with, syllables, and sentence practice. (Context: 2nd class, tier 2 word: 'opposite'; source: Mathematics).



Good to know:

Multiple Meaning Words: Homonyms

During the discussion of the word's meaning, it may be possible to use this opportunity to discuss where a word has more than one meaning, for example:



Visuals and resource templates to support teaching of the new word:

- Visual organisers are tools intended for use during teaching and discussion of word meanings, rather than as an independent activity. You may like to create and use visual organisers in pairs, in small groups or with the whole class. See the online resources on the Padlet for blank templates and examples of visual organisers.

A Padlet containing downloadable resources is available by scanning the QR code:



Visual organiser examples:

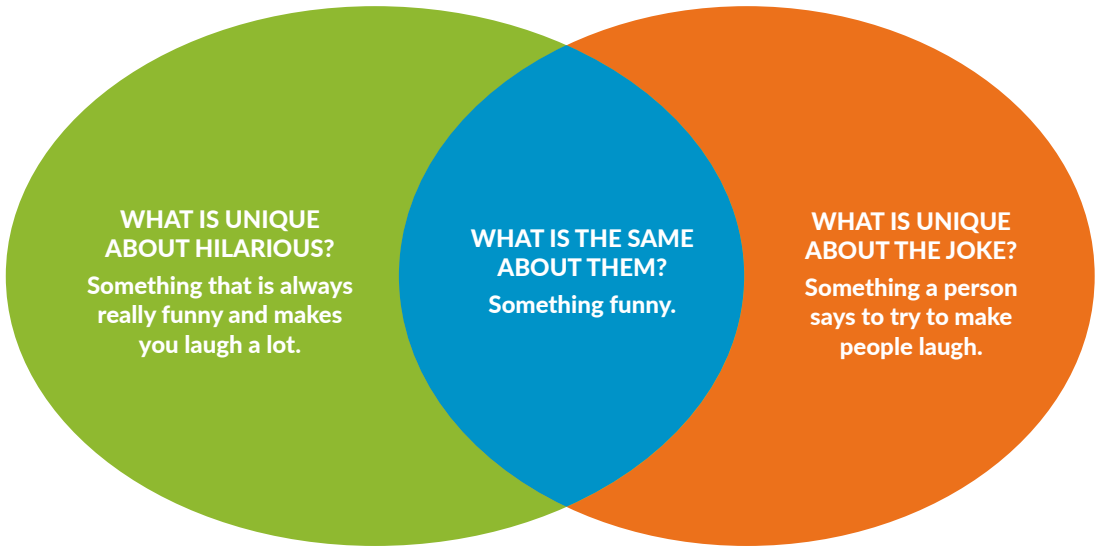
(1) Semantic Map



(2) 4 Square (Adapted from 'The Frayer Model': Frayer, et al. 1969)



(3) **Venn Diagram (as cited in Parsons and Branagan 2022)**



(4) **Word lines**

Example 1

Arrange the words in terms of least funny story to most funny story.



Word		
A hilarious	↑	Story
A funny		Story
An amusing		Story
A good		Story

- **Multisensory teaching of words**

Including multisensory elements in both oral discussion and when creating visual organisers supports the rich understanding of words. See detailed description below:

Symbol

Use a picture, photograph, drawing or symbol to represent the word. The class can use 'Google images' to pick the image that best represents the word.



Sound

Clap the syllables or say the word to a peer.



Meaning

Use a combination of sensory experiences and simple vocabulary to define the word. Relate the word to what they know and/or tell a story.



Action

Use gestures or Lámh signs to help the students understand the word.



Song or Rap

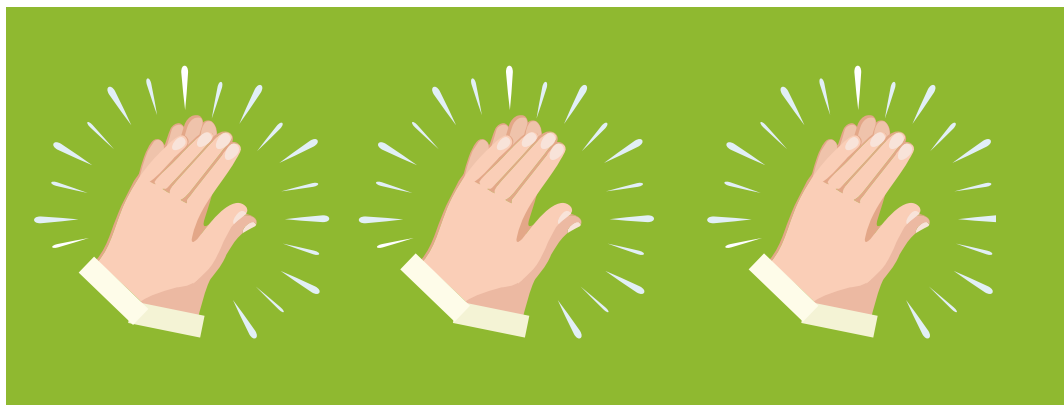
Use a song, rap or rhyme and include the Talk Time word to help students to remember the new word in a fun and memorable way.



Example of Word Rap (Source: Word Aware, YouTube, 2016) and adding to the Word Wall.

Phonological awareness development

Can be supported through activities such as clapping out the beats in the word e.g. "How many beats?" Students clap the beats that is, syllables, of the target word. The teacher models and uses visual supports as required.



In this example
the teacher claps
out the beats in
the word.

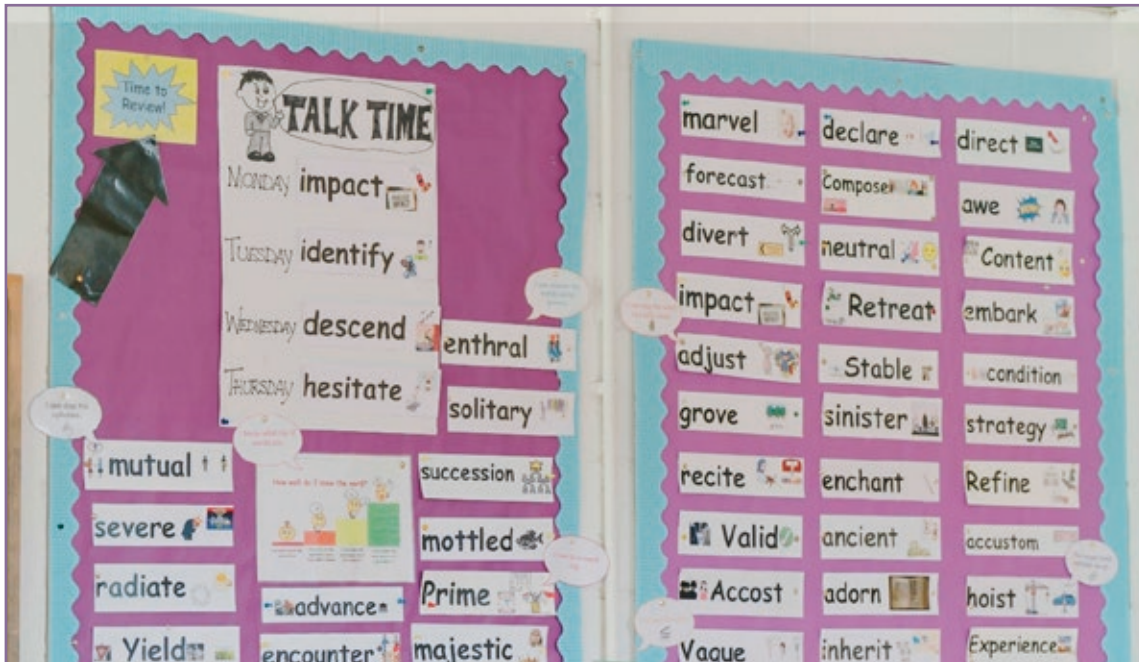


2.4 Activate or Practice Words

a) Use word displays with visuals of words

It is important to activate or develop students' understanding of the words in a multi-sensory way. This section outlines suggested activities that can support this.

Examples of word walls:



Example of a Tier 2 'Word Wall' in a 6th class classroom



Example of a class word wall.

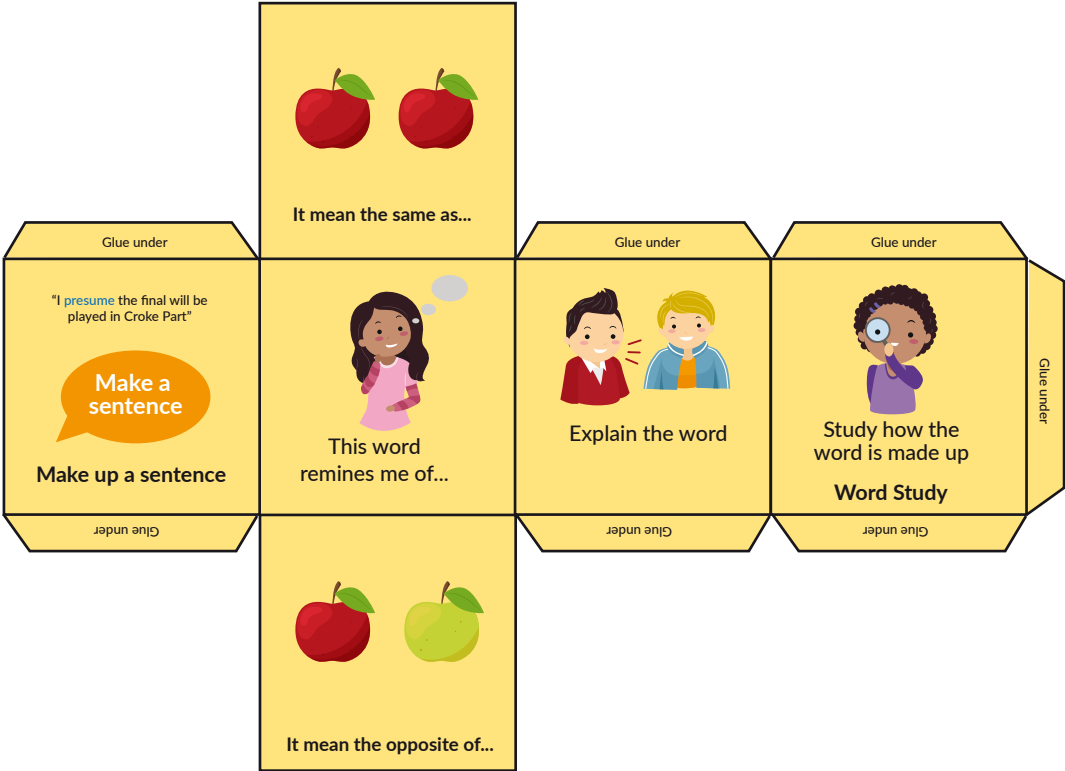
Example of a Tier 2 'Word Wall' in a 4th class classroom

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b) Play games to reinforce words in a fun way

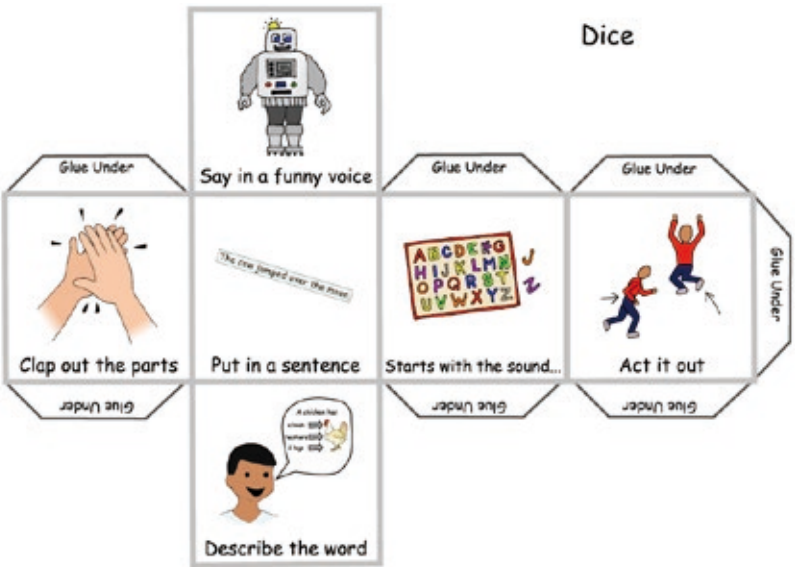
Students often enjoy dice games where they throw the dice and use the Talk Time work depending on the prompt they land on. This can be completed in pairs, small groups or at whole class level.

Example of a dice for 5th class



Example of a dice for a 1st class classroom

Take a look at the Word dice in classroom practice here:



c) Silly voices games:

- Some students may enjoy saying new vocabulary in different voices. Students say the word of the day using different voices, e.g. using a quiet voice, loud voice, robot voice, alien voice, monster voice. The whole class can begin by following the teacher's instructions e.g. "say ravenous in a quiet mouse voice". Try this group by group in the classroom. Students wait for teacher's signal before they say the word of the day in the specific voice e.g. "Blue group – robot voice", students: "rav-en-ous".

Examples of different voices



In this example the teacher uses a funny voices activity.

d) Display 'Talk Time'

Display Talk Time in the classroom by building a 'Tree of Words'. The students and teacher add leaves and/or apples to the tree. Write the words on the leaves/apples and add pictures. The leaves/apples can be added to a large display of the tree branches that can be displayed in a prominent location in the classroom.



Example of a Tier 2 'Tree of Words' in a 3rd class classroom



e) Expand the word to new contexts or situations for use

After the meaning of the word is presented and discussed, a rich and informative context for the word, which may be one sentence or a more detailed discussion, can be given. This can include other contexts in which the word could be found.

The purpose of these activities is to build **depth of vocabulary knowledge**:

- Students could **generate sentences** using the target word.
- Students could be given a **sentence stem** which includes the target word, and students complete the stem in a meaningful way. For example,
- **"He saw the injured cat and..."**
- Students could generate an entire **story** based around target word.
- Students could complete **personal experience discussion** based on the target word. During a personal experience discussion, students are asked questions which include the target word, such as 'Have you ever known someone who was benevolent?' 'Describe a time when you were benevolent.' These questions may be extended beyond personal experience by asking questions that require prediction, such as, 'describe a time that you might act benevolently?'

During these activities, teachers are encouraged to:

- Reinforce words in a variety of contexts, e.g. use P.E. lessons to consolidate target verbs.
- Encourage students to find things out for themselves by encouraging them to look things up, for example, using their word book, dictionary, computer etc.
- Teach students about making links around words and encourage the use of strategies to access words.
- Encourage students to guess what the word means from context and praise their attempts to do so.
- Support students to generate sentences which reflect the meaning of the target word e.g. if climate is the target word, a sentence like 'I like the climate' doesn't tell us anything about what the word means, whereas a sentence like 'the climate in Portugal is hot' reflects that climate is related to weather.



2.5 Review Words that have been Taught

There are many different approaches and ideas to practicing and reviewing vocabulary in the classroom. We have collated a number of suggestions with reference to the resources from which they were developed.

Repetition and regular review of vocabulary teaching is important and a fundamental feature of approaches such as Talk Time.

Use a Word Bag to collect new words

Place objects that represent words which have been taught into the word bag e.g. the word 'hollow' could be represented by a shell; the word 'gobble' could be represented by a spoon or a toy ice cream. Students choose an object and match it to a word that they have learned. Students are encouraged to use the target word and name the object in a sentence,

e.g. "I found a hollow shell at the beach".

(Source: 'Word Aware 1', Parsons and Branagan, 2022).



Use a Word Pot/Box/'Go Fish' to collect new words

Add the target words which have been taught into a Word Pot/Box/. The student or teacher can pull out a word that has been taught and give a definition. Teachers can give a definition and ask if it's true or false, ask questions about the words, or encourage the student to tell a partner what they know about the word.

(Source: 'Word Aware 1', Parsons and Branagan, 2022).



Teach a new word to teddy

Introduce a teddy or a puppet to younger students and tell them that the teddy needs help to learn the word. Ask them to tell teddy what they know about the word. Once the students have made their contributions, teddy then summarises it back to them, providing a definition.

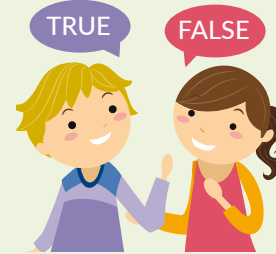


"I heard our new word"

Teachers should listen out for students using the target words which have been taught. Highlight this when a student says it. "I heard Cian saying that he was ravenous for his lunch. That was an apt time to use the Talk Time word ravenous Cian".

True or False?

Make up obvious true or false questions. For example, if the target word is precious, ask the students – 'True or False, do you put precious things in the bin?'



Fly swat the word

Write a few target words on the board/add them to the whiteboard. Divide the class into two teams. Have one student from each team come to the board with the flyswatter. Read a definition of a target word. Students should try to locate the word on the board and hit it with their flyswatter.

Alternatively, students may like to provide definitions to a classmate for them to swat the word and take turns in this role each day. This example can be seen here:



Play charades

Using the target Talk Time words, students guess the specific word from a classmate's actions, as illustrated here:

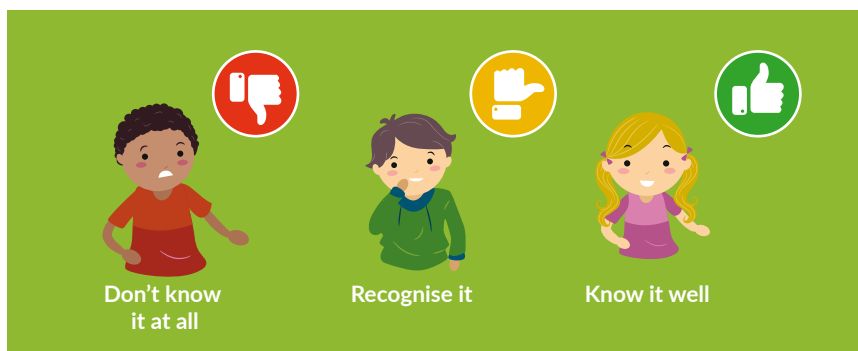


Play pictionary

Using the target words.



Following the 'Review', remember to repeat student self-assessment to review words using self-assessment measures, such as:



2.6 Working with Parents

Parents are vital collaborators in students' learning and can be included to support the consolidation of vocabulary targeted in Talk Time.

Communication with parents about Talk Time could involve:

- Sending home a *parent letter in hard copy or in electronic format with information on Talk Time, why it is important and what parents can do to support their children at home. See sample letter available in the online resources here.*



Adding the 'Our Word Today' to **students' journals** each day and encourage students to discuss the new word with a family member at home. See sample homework sheets on the online Padlet resources.

Day	Our Word Today	Topic to talk about
Monday	Gather	Squirrels gathering acorns; Gathering money for charity; Gathering leaves. Qs: I wonder... what does 'gather' mean? How would you gather? What types of things can you gather?



Section 3: Using 'Talk Time' at a Whole School Level



3.1 Rationale



3.2 Practical Considerations



3.3 Planning for Talk Time



3.1 Rationale



Why consider Talk Time at a whole school level?

Fun and enjoyment are core features of Talk Time which has the potential to impact word learning in school at a whole-school level across the **entire school community**.

In using Talk Time, word learning is seen as a vital part of every lesson and **words are brought to life** within each classroom. As such, every teacher and student take **pride and ownership** in growing their vocabulary knowledge.

Consistency in vocabulary learning strategies through the continued use of:

- visual supports,
- resources,
- games, songs, raps

This similarity and familiarity means teachers and students understand what is expected during word learning routines.

Consistency can bring additional benefits to students who may have underlying language or learning differences, have intermittent access to school, or are learning English.

What does Talk Time at a whole school level involve?



There is **flexibility and autonomy** for each school in their choice of methods in using whole school approaches to Talk Time. This will depend on an individual schools' self-identified **literacy and oral language goals**, tailored and devised based on their needs. It will also depend on the **capacity** within a school to manage aspects of organisation, coordination, support and encouragement to establish and sustain Talk Time strategies across the school.



This **video** demonstrates St Joseph's Boys National School and their approach to planning and implementing vocabulary building at a whole school level using Talk Time:



'Talk Time': A vocabulary teaching approach for tier 2 words
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Feedback from schools using whole school Talk Time has indicated

- Increases in teacher and student confidence in the awareness and use of steps for helpful word learning strategies
- Growth in consistent use of 'Talk Time' strategies and lessons in individual classrooms over time
- Progress in whole school literacy target achievements in the connected area of oral language
- Whole school approaches require time and resourcing to establish and maintain, however, with continued practice this has become routine and requires less organisation as it is embedded in school life.

Figure 1 below illustrates feedback gained from school use of Talk Time at whole school level to date.

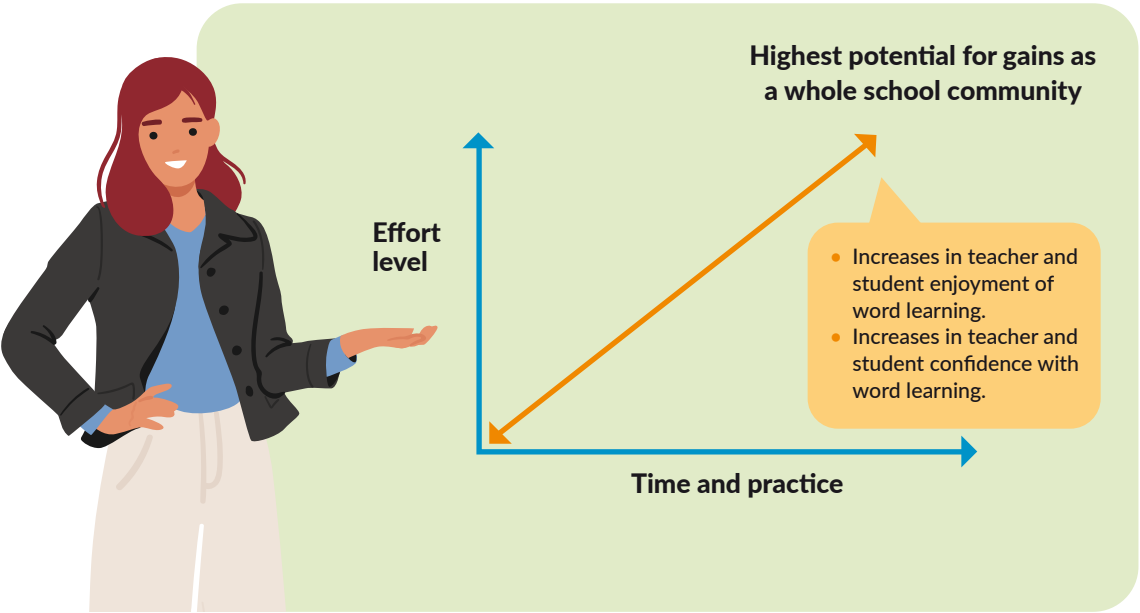


Figure 1. Potential impact level for the whole school community in using Talk Time

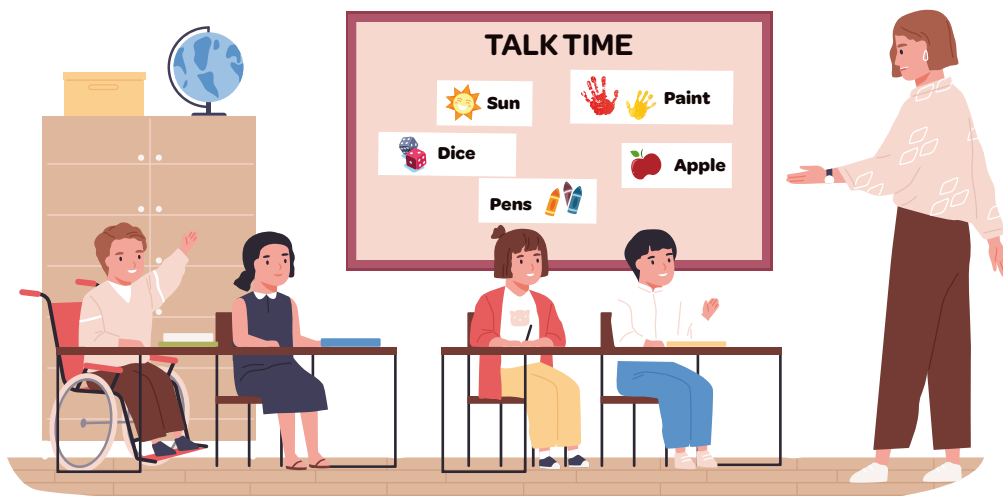


3.2 Practical Considerations



Taking a whole school approach to Talk Time means as many teachers and students as possible, are learning tier 2 vocabulary using Talk Time lessons on a consistent basis. In order to achieve this, teachers are using a **similar structure** to their teaching of tier 2 words in lessons from Monday to Friday.

It also involves **word learning being brought to life** within a school, for example, a whole school 'Word Wall' or 'Word Tree' in the school hall and having 'Word Wizard' student prizes. Schools can also use technology effectively to support word learning, for example, the school intercom, home-school connecting online platforms such as the school website, school social media pages and using technology in the classroom for games and activities.



Taking a whole school approach to Talk Time means as many teachers and students as possible, are learning tier 2 vocabulary using Talk Time lessons on a consistent basis.



The following section provides suggested steps and ideas to establish and sustain whole school approaches to Talk Time.

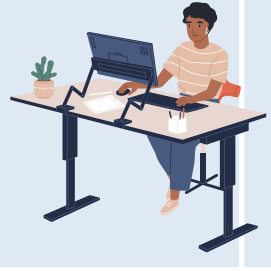
A whole school approach: what does this mean for your school?

Key strategies for consideration are provided in Table 1 to support schools with ideas on how to incorporate some, or all, of the concepts highlighted in order to begin to embed Talk Time at whole school level. Further practical steps and examples connected to these areas are described in further detail in Table 2.

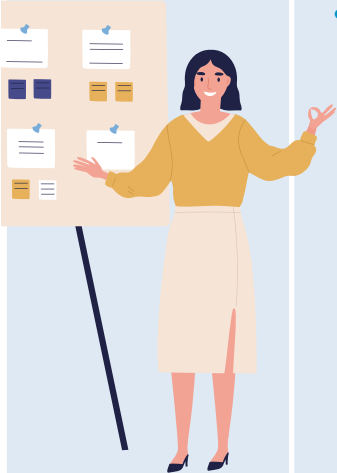


Key strategies in talk time at whole-school level
Similarities in Talk Time word learning routines and lessons across all classrooms, across the entire (whole) school.
Visibility of Talk Time around the school, in classrooms, and, on online platforms e.g. school website, electronic portals connecting parents and guardians.
People: Supportive school leadership, a coordinating teacher(s) and student(s), and, as many teachers and students as possible involved.
Student voice incorporated into the approach. Importantly, many of the Talk Time suggestions can be entirely, or in part, student-led or devised by students.
Parents/guardians are informed and involved as much as possible.
Connected to planning: Schools may wish to include Talk Time as an action that meets the vocabulary targets within their whole school 'self-evaluation', school improvement, literacy, oral language, DEIS or other planning areas.
Time is needed to commit to Talk Time approaches for an extended period to work through the initial establishment to embedding phases. Depending on school-specific factors such as resourcing and personnel schools have required between 2 terms to a full school year to see Talk Time approaches becoming embedded in to teaching.

Table 1. Key strategies in a whole school approach to Talk Time

	KEY STRATEGIES	PRACTICAL IDEAS
	• Similarities in Talk Time word learning routines and lessons across all classrooms, across the entire (whole) school.	• Each teacher has a sample Power Point of a 'Talk Time' lesson to review. • Each new tier 2 word is accompanied by a visual of this word.
	• Visibility of Talk Time around the school, in classrooms, and, on online platforms e.g. school website, electronic portals for parents.	• A 'Word Wall' is in every class for tier 2, Talk Time, words. • An up-to-date, whole-school 'Word Tree' or 'Falla Focail', is displayed in the school entrance corridor or hall.
	• People: Supportive school leadership, a coordinating teacher(s) and student(s), and, as many teachers and students as possible involved.	• A teacher(s) has responsibility for Talk Time at a whole-school level e.g. coordinating whole school approaches, sharing resources. • Progress and updates for Talk Time are discussed at staff meetings as a rolling agenda item.
	• Student voice incorporated into the approach.	• Students are supported to manage the 'Word Tree' in the hall and in their classrooms. • Students are actively involved by teaching words to other classes, in-person, or, over the intercom. • Students have the opportunity to give feedback on their ideas of ways to use and continue to improve 'Talk Time' for example, voting on what they like least and best, opportunities to improve on how they learn and review tier 2 words in school.

'Talk Time': A vocabulary teaching approach for tier 2 words
Classroom and whole-school strategies for primary schools

	KEY STRATEGIES	PRACTICAL IDEAS
	• Parents/guardians are informed and involved as much as possible.	• Parents are provided with information on Talk Time, for example, a parent information sheet has been sent home or made available on e-platforms. • Students are encouraged to talk to their parents/guardians about new Talk Time words written in their homework journal under 'Our New Word Today' or 'Word of the Day'. • Ideas for word games are shown to parents/guardians through video links and sample ideas sent home with students. • Talk Time word games time: Parents/guardians are invited into the classroom for 20 minutes of Talk Time at the start or end of the school day. While sitting with their own child, parents/guardians and students have fun and practice word games they can then try out at home.
	• Connected to planning: Schools may wish to include 'Talk Time' as an action that meets the vocabulary targets within their whole school 'Self-evaluation', school improvement, Literacy, Oral language, DEIS or other planning areas.	• The school leadership team has added Talk Time to the wider school plan for literacy. • Progress and updates for Talk Time are discussed regularly at staff meetings as an agenda item, especially in the first school term or early on in the roll-out of Talk Time.

	KEY STRATEGIES	PRACTICAL IDEAS
	• Time: Depending on school-specific factors such as resourcing and personnel, schools have required between 2 terms, to a full school year to see Talk Time approaches become embedded in to teaching.	• Staff are introduced to the concept of Talk Time and shown how to implement the STAR approach effectively. • Talk Time is added to the agenda of staff meetings to share ideas, updates and resources they have found useful. • There is a specific time set aside for teachers to discuss Talk Time progress in their class groups or within a similar level, for example, all 3rd class teachers, junior and senior infant teachers, or, 5th-6th class teachers discuss and plan for Talk Time together.

Table 2. Talk Time planning and resourcing at whole school level

It is important to be aware that using a whole school approach does not involve:

- X Every teacher teaching the same words in each class from Monday to Friday e.g. the same tier 2 words are being taught in 1st class and 5th class.
- X Having perfect resources or games before you start to try Talk Time lessons.
- X Long lessons; Talk Time can be completed in 10 and 20 minutes.
- X Teaching words unconnected to the curricular theme or topics.
- X Using writing or pencils/pens. Talk Time is an oral language approach, therefore lessons and activities are spoken and do not require writing or pencils and pens.
- X Teaching tier 3, specialised words, for example, 'photosynthesis', 'shudder', 'capsule'.



3.3 Planning for Talk Time



Schools considering Talk Time at whole-school level are encouraged to adopt a plan that covers several school terms at the outset, and then moving on to embed the approach. This time will allow schools to establish the resources, routines and lessons into teachers' daily practice. Suggested steps in planning, establishing and embedding 'Talk Time' are outlined in Figure 2.

'Talk Time': A vocabulary teaching approach for tier 2 words
 Classroom and whole-school strategies for primary schools

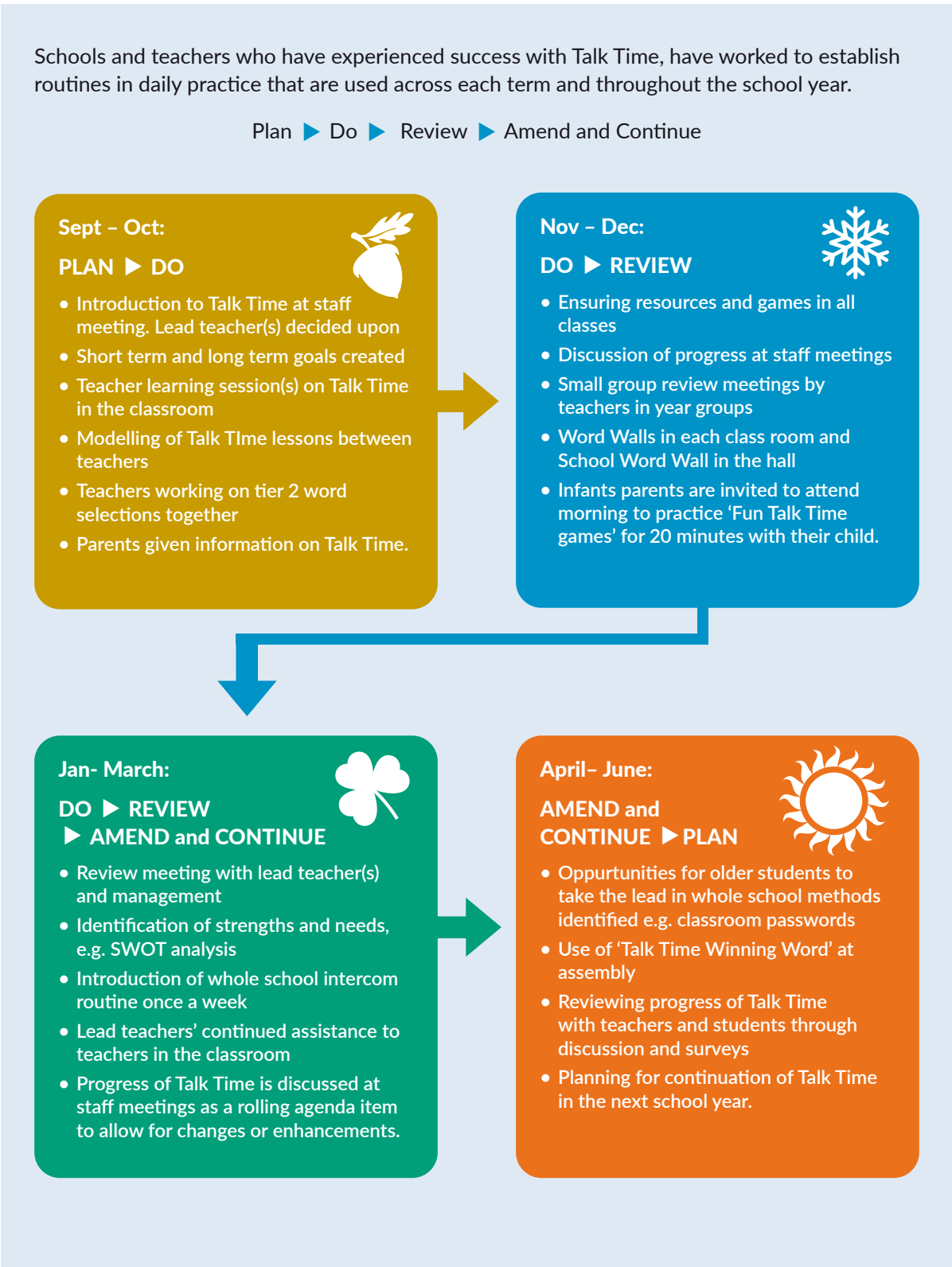
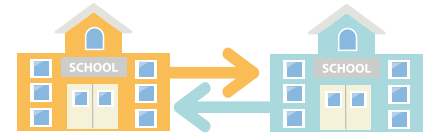


Figure 2. A sample plan using the 'Plan – Do – Review and Amend and Continue' cycle for Talk Time at a whole-school level.

Suggestions from one school to another:

Feedback from students and teachers has been collected to support other schools to implement Talk Time. These areas have been grouped in to 'Snap Wins', these are short and easy to implement areas in Talk Time, and 'Long Wins', these are areas that need longer-term planning and more resourcing to effectively implement.



Snap/easy wins:

- Sticking the daily Talk Time word on the front of the classroom door so everyone in the school knows your Talk Time word that day.
- Younger classrooms using their Talk Time word as a classroom 'password' when entering and exiting the room. Use the 'password of the day' poster (see online resources).
- Using labels in the classroom which include both picture and written words.
- Involving parents/guardians by sending home a letter/online note explaining Talk Time.
- Writing the Talk Time words in homework journals for students to explain to someone at home.
- Teachers selecting a 'word wizard' or 'word whizz' of the week in each class for the pupil who used their Talk Time words the most when speaking. These pupils could be congratulated in class on a Friday, or, by the principal at a weekly whole school assembly.
- Use bulletin boards to showcase 'Word Walls' or 'Word Trees' of the words being learned in your classroom. This may work well if you have several words related to the same topic/story/curriculum subject.



Long wins:

- Use of the school intercom system to share the 'Word of the Week' with the whole school.
- Electronic 'Word Pots' or lists of the words that have been taught in Talk Time can be passed on from teacher to teacher and move with each class from year to year. This means that by the time a class group reaches 6th class the pupils will have a record of their words in their 'pot' from infant classes to 1st to 2nd, 3rd, etc. This will make word pot games interesting as pupils can look back on words learned a few years ago and the progress they have made.
- Ensure that classroom libraries include a variety of genres and text types from which to source words and connect current Talk Time words.
- Host a coffee morning and discussion with parents about Talk Time in your school.
- Holding Talk Time 'Winning Words' at assembly each month/term. Each class nominates their favourite Talk Time word along with 3 reasons to argue their case for their word of choice. A prize is given to the most interesting reasoning for the Talk Time 'Winning Word' each term/month depending on when assembly occurs. Principals may begin with choosing the winning word, with students then taking over, for example, the class of the most recent winning word is in charge of choosing the next winning word from other classes. Electronic platforms such as emails between classes may support this approach.



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