

Module 8.1

What Do We Do About the Language Standards?

Pages 243–259

Estimated Time: 1 Hour, 35 Minutes



Prior to Meeting

- Have participants read pages 243 to 259, ending at the section titled “What Do We Do About Vocabulary?”
- Remind participants of their assignment from Chapter 7, Module 2.
- Remind participants of the discussion about Daniel in Chapter 1.
- Ask participants to focus on a student similar to Daniel. This student might exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:
 - A history of having been taught grammar and mechanical rules without gaining mastery of them
 - Difficulty communicating clearly and writing coherently

Materials You Need for This Module

- PowerPoint slides for Chapter 8, Module 1
- Copies of the Standards for Motivation and Engagement
- Copies of the Anchor Standards for Language
- Copies of **Handouts 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3**
- Chart paper
- Markers (three colors per participant or group, if possible)
- Access to the Internet, if available

Segment One: Introduction (Approximately 10 Minutes)

1. Project the first two slides to introduce this module.
2. Project **PowerPoint Slide 3**. Explain that while there is not a specific element of the description of college- and career-ready students devoted to language, the language standards are a major part of the standards and therefore merit extra attention.

3. Have participants turn and talk to a partner:
 - How close are your students to having a “command of standard English?” How have you traditionally approached this area of teaching in your own classroom and instruction?

Segment Two: Thinking About Grammar Instruction (Approximately 25 Minutes)

1. Have participants read **Handout 8.1**, Excerpt From *Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well*. Project **PowerPoint Slide 4** as participants read.
2. Have each participant write down one example of a separated, simulated, and integrated activity for focusing on a language rule from his or her own teaching or experience. After writing, have participants turn and share with their group.
3. Ask for volunteers to share responses with the whole group.
4. Invite participants to share the obstacles and challenges they’ve faced in teaching grammar and vocabulary instruction in the past (you may wish to make a list of these remarks as they are shared).
5. Project **PowerPoint Slide 5** and share the quote from *Common Core CPR*. Explain that the purpose of the following segments are to connect the Standards for Motivation and Engagement from *Common Core CPR* to grammar and vocabulary instruction; specifically to address and overcome the obstacles and challenges that they previously listed. Return to the research-based finding from Handout 8.1 that suggests that successful schools use a variety of approaches to grammar instruction.

Segment Three: Creating an Implicit Grammar Lesson (Approximately 30 Minutes)

1. Have participants read the segment “How to Teach an Implicit Grammar Lesson on Gerunds” on page 250. Follow the reading with these discussion questions:
 - What are the goals of an implicit grammar lesson? How do these goals differ from the worksheet-style practice of grammar rules?
 - Is there anything about this lesson that you would teach differently? How would you change the lesson and why? Do you think the lesson would be equally effective with all students and, if not, how could it be used more effectively with some classes?
2. Designate participants into groups of 4 to 6. Project **PowerPoint Slide 6** and have each group choose one of the grammatical rules mentioned in the standards for Grades 7 to 10:
 - Use of active and passive voice
 - Use of compound sentences
 - Use of a comma to separate coordinate adjectives
 - Use of a semicolon to connect independent clauses
 - Use of a colon to introduce a list
3. Give each participant **Handout 8.2**, Elements of an Implicit Grammar Lesson. Using the handout, have each group prepare a 20-minute lesson based on one rule from the list above. Invite participants to be creative in their approaches, but remind them of the goals they identified earlier.
4. Have each group combine with another group and present their lesson (groups do not need to teach the lesson, just talk through it). Allow a short question and answer period at the end of each presentation.

5. As a whole group, discuss the following questions:
 - What did you learn from another group's presentation?
 - What other areas of grammar might benefit from this type of approach? Do you see areas where you might use similar lessons in your own classroom?
 - How did these lessons reflect aspects of the *separated*, *simulated*, and *integrated* instruction recommended in Handout 8.1?
 - Did the lessons help overcome any of the obstacles listed by participants in Segment Two?
6. Review Anchor Standard for Language 3 found on page 248. Then discuss:
 - What does this anchor standard require of students that cannot be met through traditional, rote instruction of grammar rules? How do our sample lessons help us meet this anchor standard? Do we need to do more to meet this standard?

Segment Four: Tying Grammar to Writing (Approximately 20 Minutes)

1. Give each participant a copy of **Handout 8.3**, A Sample of Daniel's Writing. Note that this sample comes from Chapter 1 when Daniel is first introduced. Have a volunteer read the sample aloud while the rest of the group follows along silently.
2. Observe that in Chapter 8, Mrs. Fromm chooses to respond to Daniel's writing with only three suggestions for revision, and that only one of these suggestions is mechanical. Have participants decide which area of grammar they feel needs the most focus from Daniel. Then have participants turn and share their thoughts.
3. Ask for volunteers to share with the whole group. State that there is no right answer to this task. Follow up with these questions:
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks of limiting your feedback to student writing?
 - What strengths does Daniel demonstrate as a writer?
 - What nongrammatical areas of writing does Daniel need to improve?
4. Have a volunteer read aloud the quotation on **PowerPoint Slide 7**. Follow the reading with these discussion questions:
 - Would explicit grammar instruction on particular rules have improved Daniel's writing dramatically? Why or why not?
 - Would practices such as sentence combining have improved Daniel's writing? Why or why not?

Segment Five: Engaging Students in Grammar in the Classroom (Approximately 5 Minutes)

1. Project **PowerPoint Slide 8**.
2. Tell participants that their assignment before the next session is to teach one implicit grammar lesson using mentor texts and student writing. Ask the teachers to document this lesson in some way and to be prepared to share the results at the next session.

Segment Six: Respond in Your Learning Log (Approximately 5 Minutes)

1. Project **PowerPoint Slide 9** and read aloud Mrs. Fromm's comments from page 254.
2. Ask participants to respond to this slide in their learning logs.

Handout 8.1 **Excerpt From *Teaching Middle and High School Students to Read and Write Well***

Teachers in the more effective programs use a variety of different teaching approaches based on student need. For example, if students need to learn a particular skill, item, or rule, the teacher might choose a *separated* activity to highlight it. Students would study the information as an independent lesson, exercise, or drill without considering its larger meaning or use (e.g., they might be asked to copy definitions of literary terms into their notebooks and to memorize them).

To give students practice, teachers prepare or find *simulated* activities that ask students to apply concepts and rules within a targeted unit of reading, writing, or oral language. Students are expected to read or write short units of text with the primary purpose of practicing the skill or concept. Often students are asked to find examples of that skill in use in their literature and writing books, as well as in out-of-school activities. (For example, a teacher might ask students to identify examples of literary devices within a particular selection, or to write their own examples of these devices.)

To help students bring together their skills and knowledge within the context of a purposeful activity, teachers use *integrated* activities. These require students to use their skills or knowledge to complete a task or project that has meaning for them. (For example, in discussing a work or works of literature, students might be asked to consider how a writer's use of literary devices affects a reader's response to the piece.)

Teachers with higher performing students use all three of these approaches—In more typically performing schools, teachers often rely on one strategy, missing opportunities to strengthen instruction and to integrate it across lessons and throughout the year.

Source: Langer, J., Close, E., Angelis, J., & Preller, P. (2000). *Teaching middle school and high school students to read and write well: Six features of effective instruction*. Albany: The National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA), University at Albany, State University of New York, p. 4.

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Handout 8.2 **Elements of an Implicit Grammar Lesson**

An implicit grammar lesson—one that goes beyond mere rote memorization of language rules—might include all or some of the following elements:

- brief, explicit descriptions of particular rules of language
- student- or class-generated anchor charts describing rules of language
- discussion of why the rules matter and when it does or does not apply (including a discussion of why people might get the rules wrong)
- examples of a rule used correctly in mentor texts
- examples of a rule used correctly in personal choice reading
- student writing in which a rule is applied
- revision of previous student writing to use or correct the rule in context
- discussion of how the rule connects to style, tone, or voice in writing
- oral as well as written examples
- step by step breakdowns for more complicated rules
- interaction between students
- opportunities to self-correct and explain thinking process

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Handout 8.3 **A Sample of Daniel's Writing**

In my opinion, *Maus* and *Night* are so far the best books that I have read. I'm glad I chose *Maus* and *Night* because they gave me a different view on life and I learned how things have changed over time. Both Vladek in *Maus* and Eliezer in *Night* helped me to fight through tough situations and to not give up. Vladek and Eliezer have similar situations. They both survived in the Holocaust and both lived to tell the story about how they survived and what they had to do to get through it. The two characters taught me the meaning of hard work and fighting through tough situations. Although the two taught me how to overcome hard times, I still sometimes have to go through situations the same way that I used to go through them. The lesson they taught me really helped in a long run because I now know what to do in these situations. In *Maus* Eliezer and his little brother came out from the war alive and the rest of his family was gone. He had a responsibility's such as: watch over his little brother and protect him. In my opinion, Eliezer and Vladek are good role models. They are role models for people who must fight to protect their families. They have to work hard to keep food on the table, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their head. Though they have similar story lines, they have one thing that is different between the two. In *Night*, Eliezer's family dies and he and his brother were the only ones to survive while in *Maus*, Vladek family survives except for his wife. Family matters. Eliezer and Vladek have that inspired me to go out and do the same for my family. I'm not impressed with them just surviving, but it plays a big part because it teaches me how to not give up and to think about family when it gets tough down the road.

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