



At five, how far are UK children brought up in the most disadvantaged families behind those brought up in the most well-off families in their vocabulary?

# SCHOOLS INADVERTENTLY COMPOUND THE PROBLEM

- Teachers serving economically disadvantaged areas explain words less often and are less likely to explain sophisticated words than teachers in economically advantaged areas (Neuman and Wright, 2014)
- Disadvantaged children often placed in fixed 'low-ability' groups with lack of good language models

# **WE CAN RAISE ATTAINMENT BY DEVELOPING SPOKEN LANGUAGE**

- EEF study (Jay et al., 2017) found a significant uplift to attainment in English, maths and science after teachers introduced dialogic techniques in their primary classrooms
- EEF Toolkit estimates that spoken language interventions add on average six months to children's academic progress, and seven months for those eligible for FSM

# WHAT ARE THE LANGUAGE ISSUES FOR MANY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN?

1. Conversations
2. Confidence
3. Academic language
4. Vocabulary

# 1. CONVERSATIONS

*“You are the only second chance for some children to have a rich language experience. If these children are not getting it at school, they are not getting it.”*

Neil Mercer

# CONVERSATIONS LIGHT UP BRAINS

Researchers counted the number of back-and-forth conversations in the homes of 4–6-year-olds.

For every extra 11 conversational ‘turns’ at home, there was a one-point increase in the child’s score on language tests.

<https://hechingerreport.org/why-talking-and-listening-to-your-child-could-be-key-to-brain-development>



And... in the laboratory, the more conversations, the more the part of the brain involved in language processing lit up when stories were read to the child.

# STRIVE FOR FIVE

1. Adult: Why do animals hibernate?
2. Child: They want to get away in winter.
3. Adult: Why do you think they want to get away during the winter?
4. Child: They don't have any food.
5. Adult: Yes, some animals hibernate because food is hard to find during the winter. So, they eat a lot when food is available and go into a long deep sleep.



# LESS LIKE TENNIS, MORE LIKE BASKETBALL



# BOUNCING

*‘Thank you for making that point, Jo. Andrew, what are your thoughts on what Jo just said?’*

Adults can extend this to *‘Can you **build on** what Jo just said/**summarise** what she said/**compare** her ideas with Andrew’s/**decide** whether you need to **ask** Jo for more detail/**give** reasons for **agreeing or disagreeing.**’*

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# 2. CONFIDENCE

Edutopia. (20 September 2016). *Oracy in the Classroom: Strategies for Effective Talk* [Video file, 00:00-5:42] ©2016 George Lucas Educational Foundation. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ADAY9AQm54>





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# ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

- EAL theory:
  - BICS - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (around two years to develop)
  - CALP - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (may take five to seven years to develop)
- Our role is to help **all** children develop this kind of language

# CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

- De-contextualised talk - talk beyond the here and now
- Vocabulary is less conversational ('conceal' and 'obtain' rather than 'hide' and 'get')
- Complex structures: passive voice might be used instead of the active voice... ('The questionnaire was administered ...' rather than, 'We administered the questionnaire ...'), verbs or adjectives are often translated into nouns ('The army's overwhelming desire to expand further,' rather than, 'The army wanted to make Japan bigger no matter what.')



# PROMPT, ECHO BACK, MODEL

Could you use 'moreover' to link those two ideas?

Child: 'They do their things in different ways.'

Adult: 'Yes, they have different customs.'

Adult: 'Tell me about the characteristics of London – what it is like?'

Child: 'It's got lots of people.'

Adult: 'Yes, one of its characteristics is that it's densely populated.'

# SCAFFOLD:

## Tower Hamlets Learning and Achievement team *A Progression in Language Structures*

### YEAR 1

- They are the same because.....
- They are different because.....  
is..... and..... is.....

### YEAR 6

- In some ways.....and.....are alike.  
For instance, they both.....
- Another feature they have in common is  
that.....
- However, they also differ in that.... For  
example..... whereas.....
- The similarities/differences seem more  
important than the  
similarities/differences because.....

# PARKSIDE PRIMARY



- Each teacher has a pack of the frames for their year group as laminated speech bubbles
- On working walls and desks
- Helps up-level writing; children's progress is in top 25% for the country

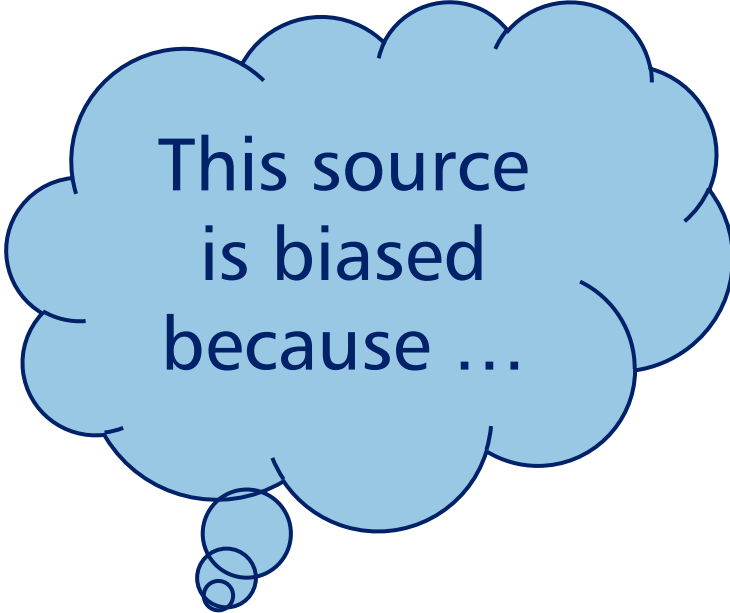
# USING TALK FRAMES

*“If a class was doing a piece of writing comparing a book with a film, for instance, we would have the talk structures of comparison out on desks and up on the wall as the basis for their talk. First, the children would discuss it in groups, then engage in further talk-based activities to develop their ideas and practise the language until eventually they were ready to write the piece. For every lesson, the type of talk is chosen and identified in the planning, so it’s embedded in our planning as well.”*

# SCHOOL 21 SUBJECT SENTENCE STEMS

A light blue thought bubble with a dark blue outline and two smaller circles at the bottom.

This artefact  
shows that ...

A light blue thought bubble with a dark blue outline and two smaller circles at the bottom.

This source  
is biased  
because ...

A light blue thought bubble with a dark blue outline and two smaller circles at the bottom.

This source  
illustrates that ...

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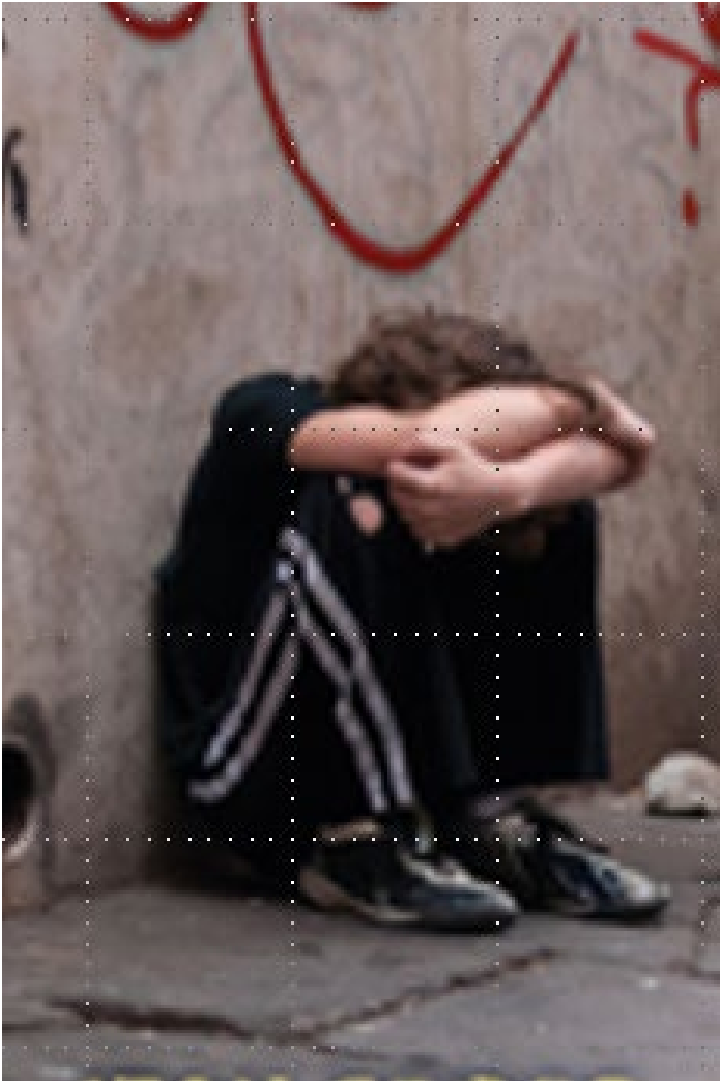
1. Conversations
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# TAKE TWO CHILDREN

Jason



Alicia





## **ALICIA**

- Wide vocabulary and language use at age five
- Learns to read early and easily
- Reads a lot
- Vocabulary expands
- Ever more able to read well

## **JASON**

- Vocabulary and language gap at age five
- Struggles with reading
- Reads less
- Vocabulary doesn't expand
- Ever less able to read well

# THE MATTHEW EFFECT - THE RICH GET RICHER, THE POOR GET POORER

*“For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”*

So.... READ ALOUDS

# FREQUENT WHOLE-CLASS VOCABULARY TEACHING BUILDING THE FOOTBALL NET



Meaning



Sounds



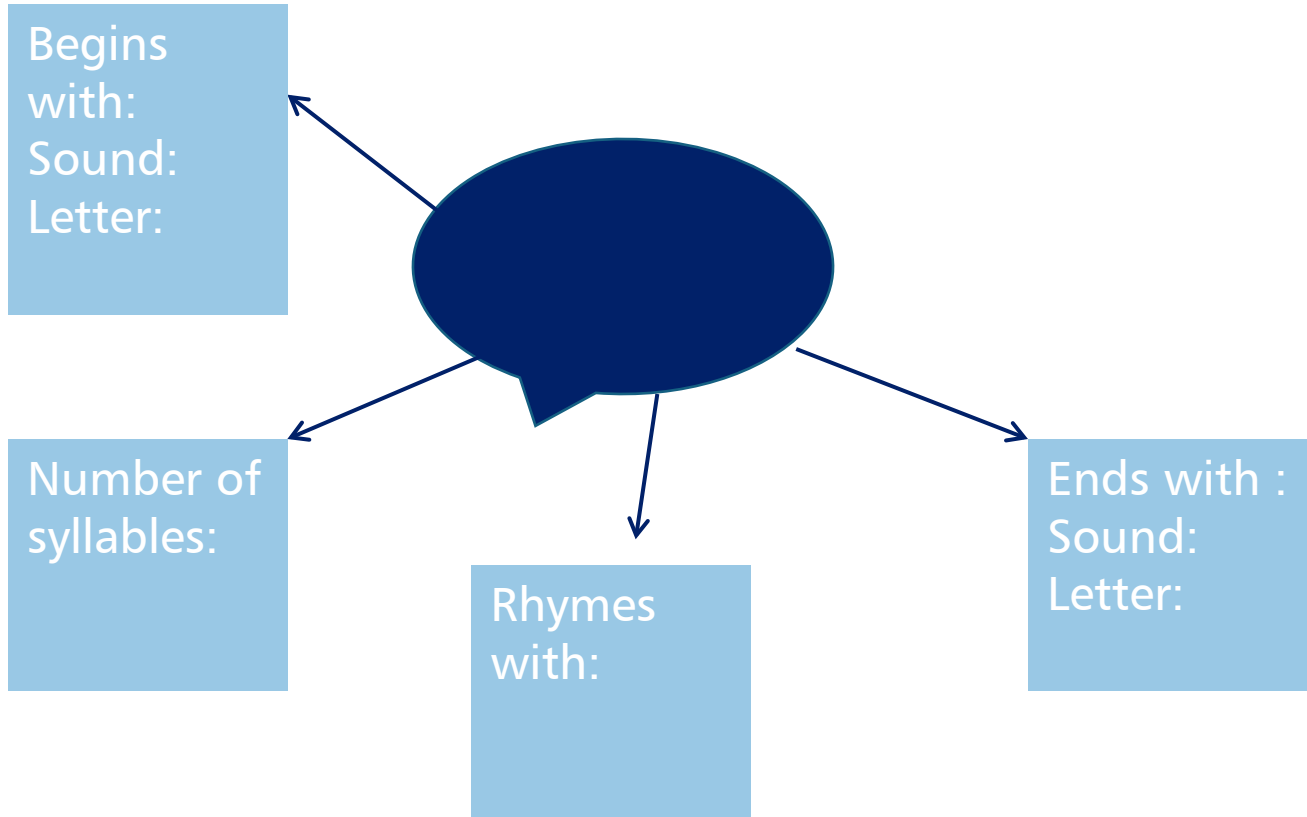
Grammar



Movement  
or drawing



Associations

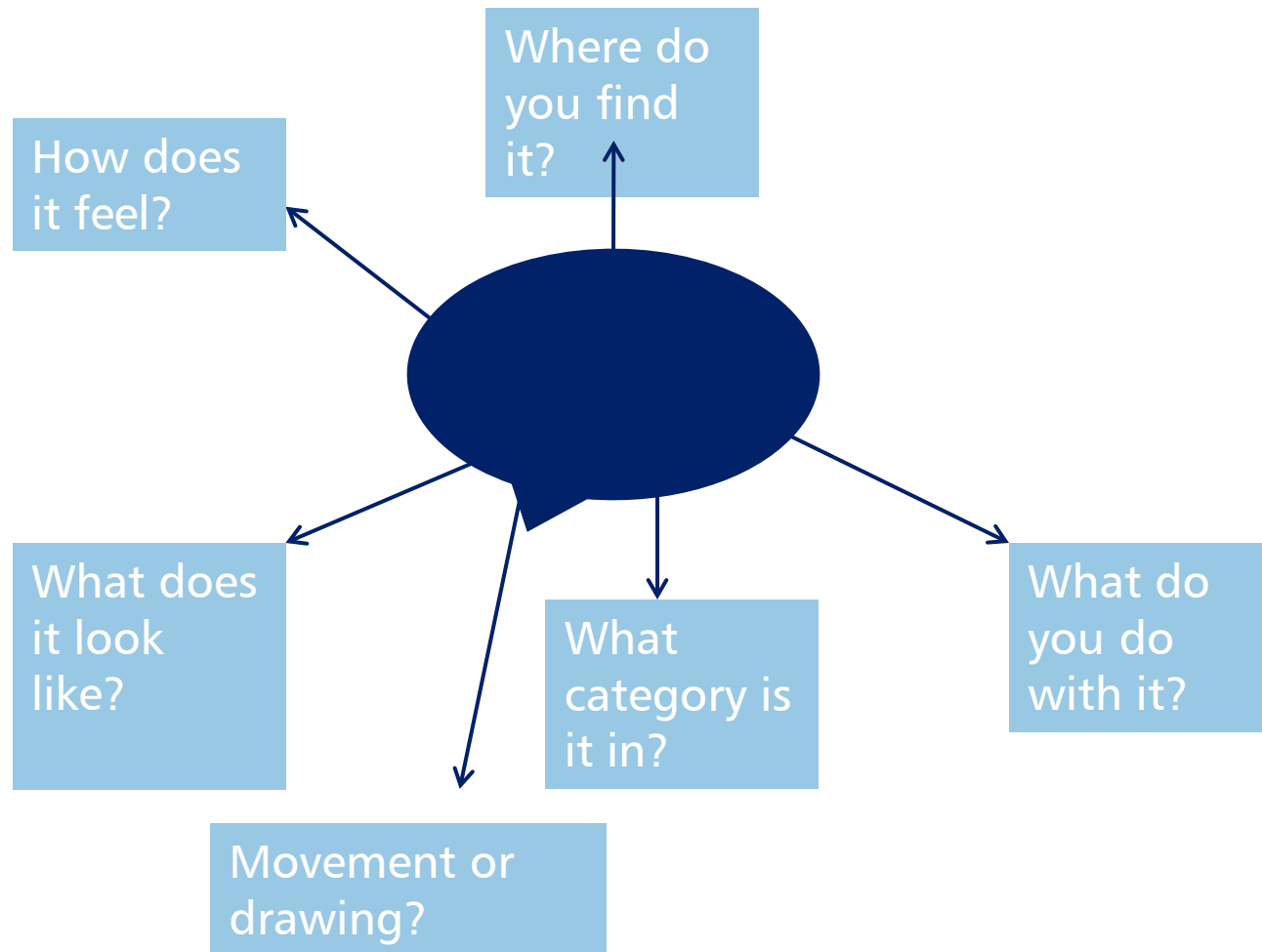


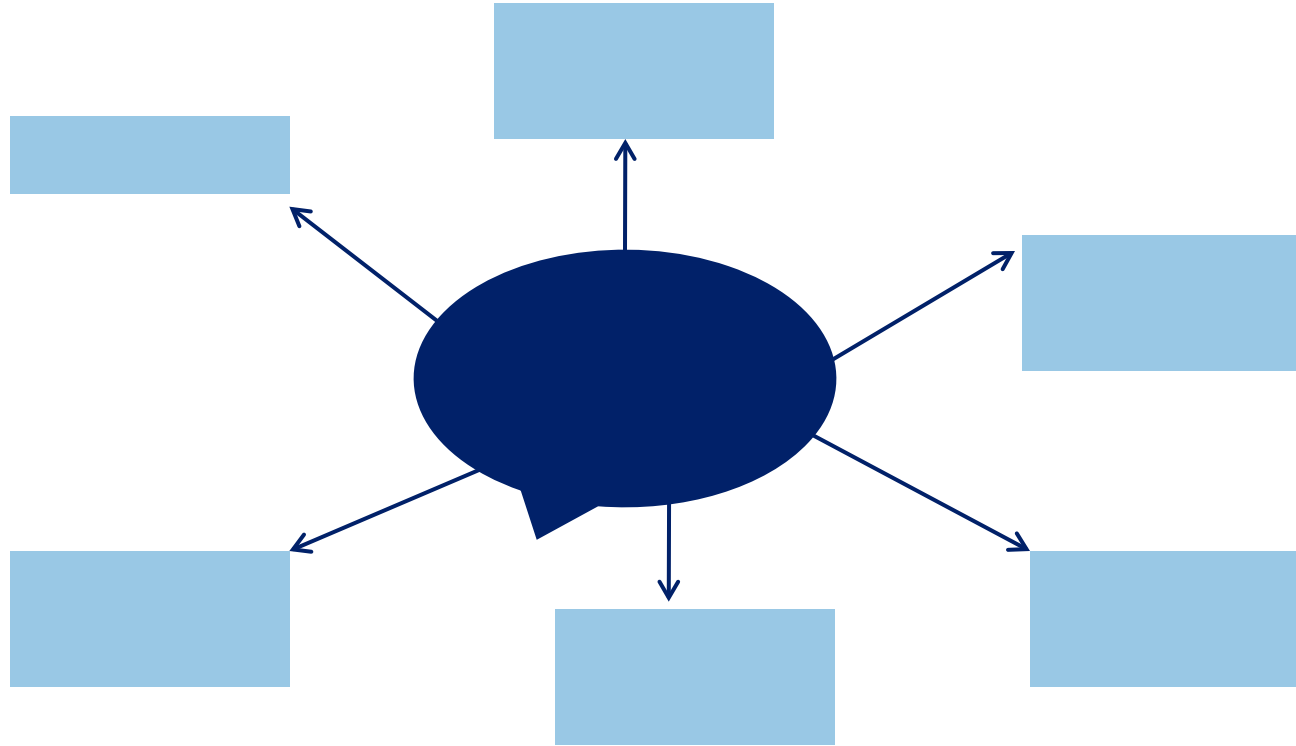
# STRUCTURE OF WORD

Prefix, root, suffix,  
Morphemes

*Unbreakable*

Three morphemes: un- (a morpheme that means "not"), -break (the root), and -able (a morpheme that means "can be done").

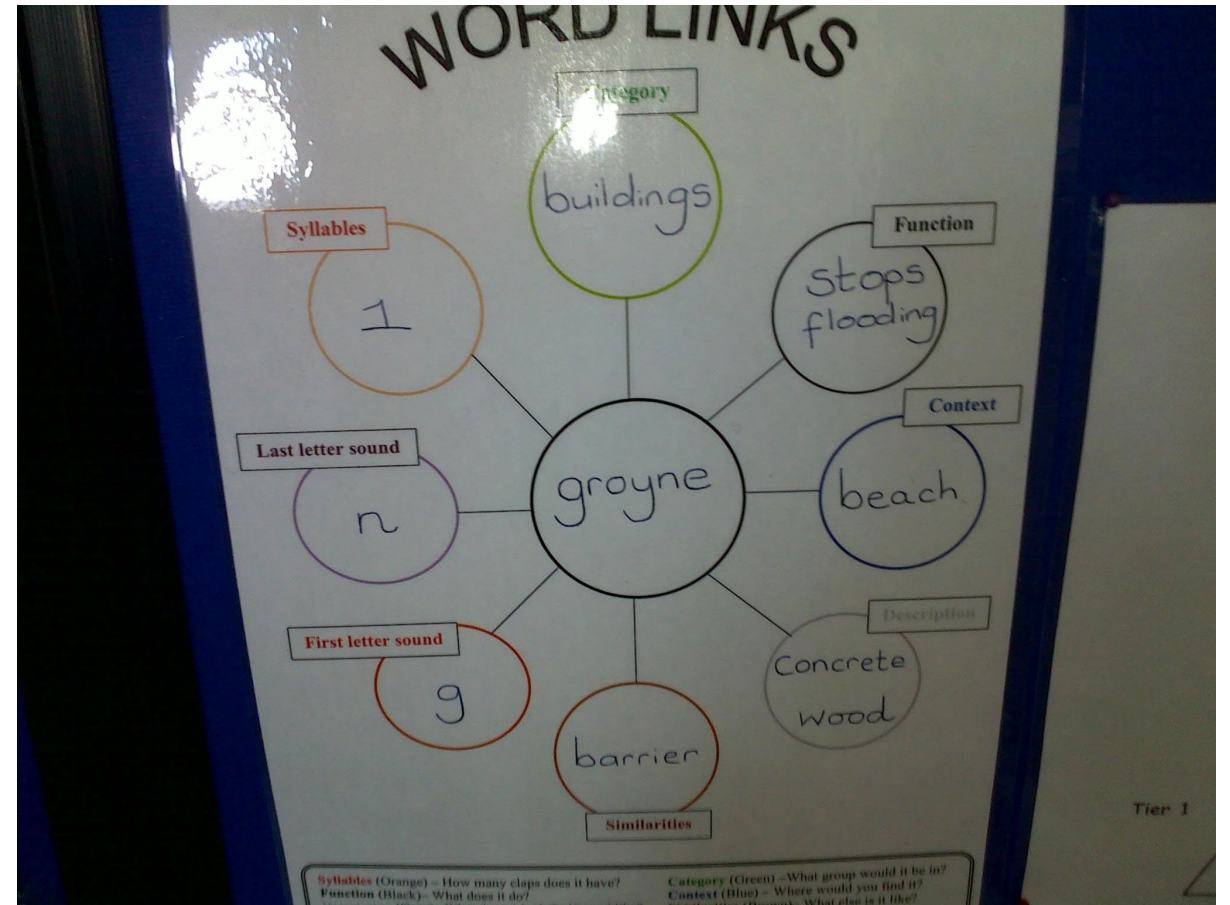




Put it in a sentence

# SECONDARY - A SHARED GRAPHIC ORGANISER

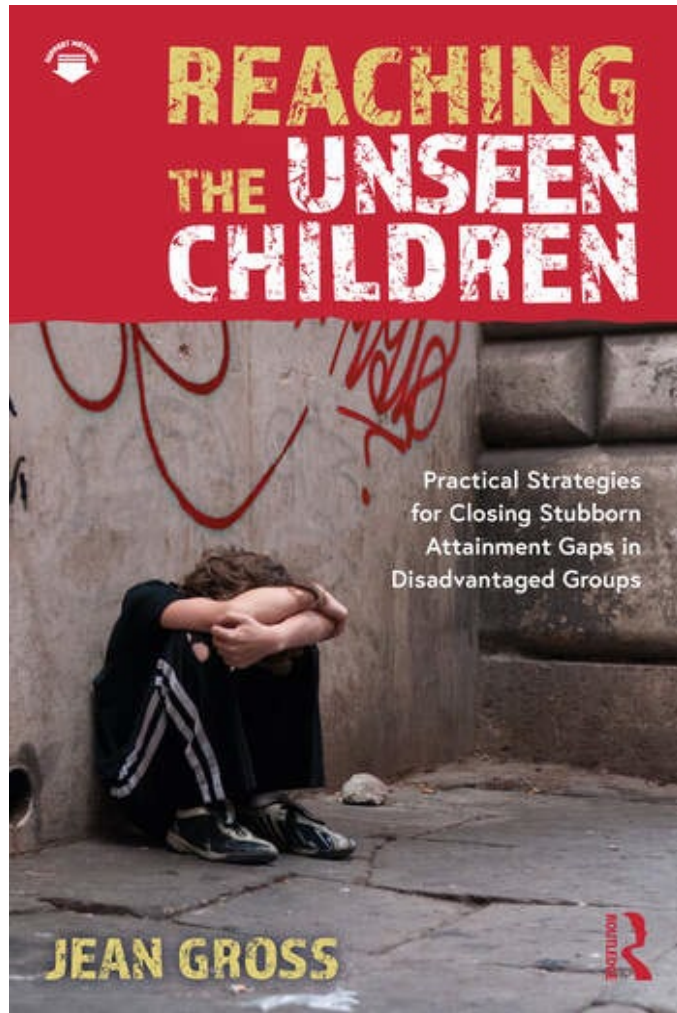
- Category
- Function
- Context
- Description
- Similarities
- First letter sound
- Last letter sound
- Syllables





# CLOSING THE WORD GAP FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

1. More **conversations**
2. Oracy approaches that build **confidence**
3. Model, prompt, scaffold **academic language**
4. Teach **vocabulary** systematically and read aloud to children of all ages



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