



Six Steps to Effective Vocabulary Instruction

This information is based on a book by Robert Marzano, Building Background Knowledge.

Six Steps

1. Teacher provides description, explanation or example of new term
2. Students restate the explanation in their own words
3. Students create a non-linguistic representation of the term
4. Students are periodically give activities that help them add to their knowledge of vocabulary terms
5. Students are periodically asked to discuss the terms with one another
6. Students are periodically give opportunities to play with the terms

Detailed Explanation

Step 1

Vocabulary Word- conservation

Teacher would say the word correctly for the students. The students would then practice saying the word until they pronounce it correctly.

The teacher would then explain the meaning of the word in their own terms.

"Conservation means to save something or to use sparingly.

Conservation means to be careful not to waste a resource like water.

I am careful how I use water at my house because I have to pay for the water and I don't want my bill to be too high."



Step 2

Students would now create a definition of the word in their own words.

Suggested ways to increase accountability:

1. Students keep their words in a notebook or journal and the teacher walks the room to see what definitions students write. This allows the teacher to correct misunderstandings and share out loud really good examples.
2. Students share with a shoulder partner the definition they created
3. Students share definitions in small group and students give each other feedback

Step 3

Allow students the opportunity to draw what the word means to them.

Drawings should never be judged but the teacher can ask for clarification about what different parts of the drawing means to the student.

Suggested ways to increase accountability:

1. Students could keep their drawings in their notebook or journal allowing the teacher to monitor as the students work. This allows the teacher to correct misunderstandings and share out loud good examples.
2. Students share with a shoulder partner the drawing they created and explain it.
3. Students share and explain their drawings with the class.

A time limit needs to be given to the drawing as some students can draw for a long period of time.

Step 4

Give the students time to add to their knowledge about the new word.

1. Find the word in newspaper articles and highlight how it is used.
2. Listen for the word in news broadcasts and write down how it was used.
3. Listen for the word to be used in everyday conversation and write it down.



Step 5

Students should be required to speak using academic language especially when answering classroom questions or engaged in class discussions. Provide discussion time that enables the students to use their newly acquired vocabulary in realistic situations.

Step 6

Allow students the opportunity to "play" with the words.

1. Students can break words apart to find the root word
2. Find the origin of the word and its history
3. Add prefixes or endings to the word to make new words