



PCT Melissa Martone's Instructional Tip of the Week:

Academic Vocabulary

Often, when I am reading a text with my class, whether it is a short story, novel, or a poem, it is rife with vocabulary words and I don't know which ones to focus on. One practice I regularly use is to provide a word box for students and/or defining words in the margins of the text. While these are good practices for in the moment reading, it does not develop the students' use and understanding of the vocabulary words. So I'm starting to shift my thinking to focus on academic vocabulary and high-frequency words.

Academic vocabulary is defined as vocabulary that appears frequently across content areas but are rarely found in conversation. These are the words that students need to know and understand in order to grasp subject area concepts. Academic vocabulary has been shown to be a critical element in reading comprehension and academic achievement. Vocabulary accounts for over half of the impact of all factors that influence reading comprehension (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

While this does not come naturally to me, I'm starting to be more intentional about using this kind of vocabulary. It's a work in progress for all of us, so here are some ways that we can begin to incorporate vocabulary instruction in our lessons:

- At the start of the lesson, introduce the key words and provide examples of the word in use outside of the context of the text. Then, provide students with an opportunity to generate their own examples in either written or visual form.
- Use the vocabulary words as part of your AIM and in your planned questions
- Encourage the students to use the words throughout the lesson when answering questions and in student-to-student discussion
- Have students incorporate the vocabulary into their written responses as an exit slip

Keep in mind these are just a few strategies to advance literacy in the classroom. If you need any assistance you can contact me at MMartone@schoolsny.gov or room 227. Have a great semester!

*... because at Edward R. Murrow High School, we **CARE** about our students!*