

Action-Packed Vocabulary Review Strategies

There are times during the year when the students -- and you -- could use a little lift. For content area teachers, one way to get kids excited about learning again is to revive your vocabulary strategies. Getting kids up and moving and interacting will increase their learning of key terms. Whenever possible, let them "play" with words in a game and/or small group activities. (Robert Marzano's vocabulary research proves that this is a key to teaching vocabulary.)

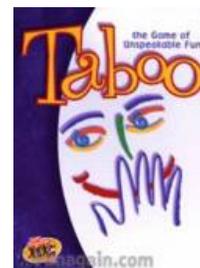
That said, here are a few of my favorites:



1. Play-doh: Creating a visual representation of a vocabulary word is essential to really understanding a word's meaning. Many teachers have students "draw" the word. However, to mix it up and tap into your bodily-kinesthetic learners, consider giving them each a little bit of Play-doh. Have them explain the vocabulary word's meaning by creating a 3-D representation. In addition to viewing their creations, listen to their rationalizations for what they made. Their understanding of the term comes out in that explanation.

2. Vo-BACK-ulary: Tape a vocab word on the back of each student. Have them move through the room, getting clues from peers in order to identify the term on each of their individual backs. Once they guessed their terms, they can sit down. It takes only minutes. And not only are the students up and moving, but they also are using what they know about the vocabulary words to give synonym clues, definitions, examples, etc. to their peers.

3. Taboo: Just like the game, students have to get their class/team to guess a relevant content-area term, without using the most common words associated with it.



Here is a sample list of vocabulary words, and the Taboo words associated with each:

genre: topic, category, theme, types

diameter: circle, across, radius, distance

magnify: larger, bigger, enlarge, blow up

multiple: multiply, many, times, several

grammar: vowels, words, parts of speech, language, proper

persuasive: persuade, encourage, manipulate, make, influence



4. Cubing: With students in small groups, give each team two game dice (two different colors of dice). On the board, list the six terms you want the students to review in one column. And in a second column, list the six different strategies you want them to apply to the word's meaning. For example, in a math class the two lists might look like this:

TERMS (blue die)

1. radius
2. diameter
3. circumference
4. perimeter
5. area

6. volume

STRATEGIES (red die)

1. Explain/Define the term.
2. Draw the term.
3. Give an example of the term.
4. Make the term with Play-Doh.
5. Act out the term.
6. Use the term in a sentence, making it the third word in the sentence.

Each person in the team takes a turn rolling both dice. The number he rolls on the blue die determines the vocabulary word he is to work with. The red die indicates what he is to do to that word. As the dice get passed from person to person, the students inevitably go through the list of terms multiple times, thinking about them through a variety of strategies. The teacher roams around the room listening for accurate information and is there to clarify understanding if necessary.