Teacher Information

Vocabutrix is our name for a Collaborative Semantic Feature Analysis Matrix (*Semantic Feature Analysis*). It is considered one of the most effective tools for internalizing new words and concepts. It uses the following best practices for authentic learning (use the links to learn more):

Interactive discussion - *Supporting Social Interaction in an Intelligent Collaborative Learning System*

Access to prior knowledge - *What they don't know can hurt them: The role of prior knowledge in learning*

Differentiation and personalization - *Differentiation in the classroom*

Using context clues – *Using Context Clues to Understand Word Meanings*

Metacognition - *The Role of Metacognition in Learning and Achievement*

A Vocabutrix encourages your students to talk and share ideas, and requires them to provide background in support of their own thinking.

The research is clear. Vocabulary knowledge correlates with academic and life success and spending more classroom time on word learning will improve your students' reading comprehension.

Watch for future blogs to support your focus on vocabulary.

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"The importance of direct vocabulary instruction cannot be overstated."

- Marzano (2014) http://www.marzanoresearch.com/vocabulary

VOCABUTRIX

Instructions for VOCABUTRIX

- **Partner Read:** Students partner read with someone at a similar reading level (15 min.)

- **Tagging words:** Each partnership needs a pad of skinny sticky notes which they use to mark the page and the line where they find words (while reading) that either one or both of them do not fully understand. If students can underline words directly in the text, then just the page needs to be marked. Students should not stop to write them down, as this breaks up the flow of reading.

- **Picking words:** Students review the words marked with sticky notes and select the ones for which they both have questions. They then both record their words, each onto his/her own chart (5 min.). Students may choose to set a goal to learn a certain number of new words each time (up to 10) before picking their words.

- **Looking up words/copying definitions:** Both partners look up definitions using a cell phone, tablet or computer. They do not use a dictionary (see #2 below). They must agree on the best definition based on the context of the word and both of them write down the chosen definition, each on her/his own chart (30 min.).

- **Completing the Vocabutrix**: The following day, students put a ✓(yes) or X(no) or ✓X(sometimes) in each of the cells of the row associated with each word. These responses are subjective and based on their personal experience and understanding of the word. Emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer (5 min.)

- **Sharing and Justifying:** Students compare their marked choices with their reading partner, one word at a time (or another student working on the same word). Whether they match or not, each must explain what background knowledge or personal understanding led them to their choice. Justifying a response by sharing the background behind a viewpoint is a powerful learning and thinking tool. Challenging students to complete this process within a time limit, can keep things moving (see #5 below).

Tips for VOCABUTRIX

1. Modeling and practicing each of the 5 components above is essential to running a classroom full of students completing their VOCABUTRIX's. You will be thrilled with the results once they are independent users of the process. Students who finish early may make word clouds or webs for a classroom word wall. More on this at a later date.

2. DO NOT HAVE STUDENTS USE A DICTIONARY TO LOOK UP DEFINITIONS! Teaching your students dictionary skills is important but should not be required for this activity. What's important here is to get to an agreed upon definition quickly. If students are allowed to use phones, have them download a dictionary app. Once downloaded students can put the phone on "airplane" mode. A digital dictionary is of course also accessible from a tablet or computer. Once students are comfortable quickly looking up words digitally, they often make it a habit, and what a great habit to encourage!

3. Have students leave their sticky notes in place so they can review the context of the word later on. They should not take time to write the word down during the partner reading activity. Counting the number of sticky notes (or marked words) upon completion of a writing piece, is useful information for both students and teachers. If students are marking more than 20% of the words, the reading piece may be too difficult, or you may need to pre-teach some of the key words of informational text.

4. Circulate while students defend their ✓ or X or ✓X choices and ask one partner what the other partner provided as background for their choice on any particular matrix square. Give each team member a participation point at the bottom of their charts when they successfully paraphrase their partners explanation. Be sure to circulate to every partnership within the time frame provided to provide the opportunity for participation points to all teams.

5. On occasion, challenge students to discuss all their words within a time limit. Set a timer that students can see (place on overhead projector) and allow only 10 minutes or less to finish sharing the entire chart. (That's about 30 seconds per explanation if everyone has 10 words.) Students give themselves a participation point on each of their charts for each completed defense of a ✓ or X or ✓X mark. At the end of the time the team tallies up all their points. This should be done when everyone has the same number of words to justify on their chart. Before start, provide a one minute (or more) silent time while they think about and prepare what background information to share for each mark on the chart. This metacognitive practice is key to transference of understanding.

VOCABUTRIX

1. Partner Read
2. Tag the pages of unknown words with a sticky note
3. Pick 5 to 10 of the words you both want to learn and write them on this list (each on your own list).
4. Look up each word (both of you) on your phone, a tablet, or a computer and agree on the best definition
5. Copy your chosen definitions onto your chart on this page.
6. Add your marks in each row (YES = ✓ NO = X   Sometimes = ✓ X)
7. Defend the reason for your choice with your partner, one word at a time.

YES = ✓ NO = X Sometimes = ✓ X *Our chosen word*: definition	Bad Feeling	Good Feeling	Can be bought	Easy to see (visible)	Can be heard	Occurs today
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						
_____ :						

PARTICIPATION POINTS → [   ]   **NAME** _____