How teachers use the student materials

The Six-Step Process for Teaching Vocabulary

When every teacher throughout your program follows this method of direct vocabulary instruction using the pages from the student notebooks, your school has a powerful comprehensive approach:

1. The teacher provides a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
2. Students restate the explanation of the new term in their own words.
3. Students create a nonlinguistic representation of the term.
4. Students periodically do activities that help them add to their knowledge of vocabulary terms.
5. Periodically, students are asked to discuss the terms with one another.
6. Periodically, students are involved in games that allow them to play with the terms.

These materials help students keep a record of what they know about terms that are important in different subject areas. The terms have been chosen because they are used often and are critical to the understanding of the subject.

First, there is a place for students to write the term.

Next, students describe what the term means. Instead of just copying a definition from the dictionary, they are encouraged to describe the term as they might explain the meaning to a friend.

This space is where students draw what they understand about the term. Drawing pictures is a good way to show what they know, even if they aren’t very good at drawing.

This blank space is where students can add anything else that will help them understand the term. They might use the word in a sentence, write an antonym or synonym, or list other words that come to their minds when they think about this term.

Students use this grid to rate their level of understanding based on the following rubric:

1. I’m very unsure or confused about the term. I really don’t understand what it means yet.
2. I’m a little unsure or confused about what the term means, but I have a general idea.
3. I understand the term, and I’m not confused about any part of what it means.
4. I understand even more about the term than I was taught.

This space allows students to add another word to organize academic vocabulary according to a subtopic within a subject area.

Students will add to their definitions and correct earlier misunderstandings right on the page, as their understanding of the term deepens. So each page is a working document.