**A Six-Step Process**

**for Teaching New Terms**

**Step 1:** Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.

**Step 2:** Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.

**Step 3:** Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the term or phrase.

**Step 4:** Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their notebooks.

**Step 5:** Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another.

**Step 6:** Involve students periodically in games that allow them to plan with terms.

**[A Six-Step Process for Teaching Vocabulary](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/six_step_flash.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**

Research has shown that background knowledge of academic vocabulary is one of the strongest indicators of how well students learn subject area content when they come to school.

When students have had some prior experience with the term they are much more apt to understand vocabulary presented as part of school curriculum.

Students who have not had exposure to academic vocabulary are at a disadvantage when they encounter new terms. These students are at higher risk of falling behind as new vocabularies are introduced and unfortunately overtime the gap between these students grows even larger. But what if there was a way teachers could close the gap? ASCD’ s Building Academic Vocabulary Program provides teachers with a proven method for enhancing student’s abilities to read and understand subject matter content by building background knowledge.

Research has shown that one of the strongest actions that a teacher can take to ensure students have the vocabulary knowledge that they need is to teach specific terms in a consistently, effective way. Traditionally, schools approach vocabulary through rote memorization of word lists but rote memorization of definitions is ineffective. To truly learn and internalize vocabulary, students need to be actively engaged in learning new vocabulary terms. The Building Academic Vocabulary program does just that using a 6-Step process based on the latest research.

According to education researcher Robert Marzano, teaching academic terms using this 6-Step process is one of the strongest actions teachers can take to ensure students understand the content they encounter in school.

**Why is it important for students to play with words?**

**Robert J. Marzano:** One of the more interesting characteristics about effective vocabulary instruction, from my perspective, is that students should play with words. And at first it's not obvious why that's important, but it is for a number of reasons. First of all, when they play with words, they're being exposed to words multiple times, so the more we can loop through words, the better. But the other [reason] is that they're fun. And we've got a lot of games that we can be adapted to vocabulary instruction.

*Classroom scene*

**Adrian Leday:** They got excited. They wanted to get things right. I think that it was effective because of the fact that they were learning without actually using pencil and paper. It wasn't drill-and-kill and practice. They were enjoying themselves, and they were actively participating in the lesson.

**Marzano:** If they associate having a good time with a word, then actually the processing of that word is something they tend to gravitate to. Now, if we associate a positive emotional with something, we like that, and we're not even sure why. So I mean, you could even say, we might be getting that motivation here by having students play with words, using games that are easily adapted to vocabulary. And the benefits are going to be strong on a lot of fronts.

If they're playing with the words in the form of games that the teacher has constructed, and if we did that with selected words, over time, students would understand very complex concepts in very, very sophisticated ways, and they'd probably have some fun doing it.

—An excerpt from *Building Academic Background Knowledge*, an ASCD video-based professional development program.