

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is Academic Vocabulary?***

Academic vocabulary is the vocabulary **critical to understanding the concepts of the content taught in schools**. In identifying academic vocabulary for instruction, we understand that **not all terms are of equal importance**:

- Some terms are critically important.
- Some terms are useful but not critical.
- Some terms are interesting but not useful.

### ***What is the Six-Step Process for Teaching Academic Vocabulary?***

The process of teaching Academic Vocabulary includes six steps. The focus of steps 1-3 is on introducing new terms while steps 4-6 offer ways for students to review the terms and develop deeper insights.

1. Teacher provides a description, explanation, or example of the new term. [If working with ELL students the teacher should first provide the description in the native language and a visual representation of the word.]
2. Students restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words. [ELL students may write their definition in their native language.]
3. Students construct a picture, symbol, or graphic of the term. [This activity is critical for ELL students.]
4. Students periodically engage in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms.
5. Students periodically discuss the terms with one another.
6. Students periodically engage in word games that allow them to play with the terms.

### ***Will My Child Have Vocabulary Tests?***

Teachers will use a variety of methods to assess students' progress with learning academic vocabulary. Those methods may include observation, checklists, students' self-monitoring, quizzes, and tests, among other assessment practices developed by teams of teachers.

### ***How Does Academic Vocabulary Apply to English Language Learners (ELLS)?***

Marzano and Pickering (2005) emphasize the importance of teaching ELL academic vocabulary with a systematic approach. They suggest that vocabulary programs which emphasize high-frequency terms fail to provide the background knowledge needed for student success in the content areas. Students learn high-frequency words through wide reading of fiction and informational text. With academic vocabulary instruction, ELL students will be given descriptions and explanations in their native language, where possible. If that is not possible, the ELL students may be paired with a student who speaks their native language.