



Word^{WISE} & Content^{RICH}

GRADES 7-12

FIVE ESSENTIAL STEPS TO TEACHING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

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A Vocabulary Initiative for Middle & High Schools

Notes from the Authors

1

We all agree that vocabulary development is important, but how can busy secondary educators approach this in a systematic and meaningful way?

We invited two students to help us document the answer. After interviewing us, they drafted a script and collected audio and video from a variety of people and classrooms throughout our school. As you will see, they incorporated “teacher vocabulary” into their work and learned more about the schoolwide nature of vocabulary instruction.

In their video, a counselor, an English, a mathematics, and a science teacher explain why they think vocabulary is important. The student narrator provides an overview of a word-wise and content-rich approach:

1. *Make it intentional* by selecting vocabulary meaningful for content learning.
2. *Make it transparent* through teacher modeling.
3. *Make it useable* by offering collaborative learning experiences with peers.
4. *Make it personal* by giving students independent experiences to use academic language.
5. *Make it a priority* through schoolwide practices that build academic vocabulary.

Questions for Discussion

- How do you select vocabulary for instruction? How do you believe your colleagues make these decisions?
- What are the advantages of using a gradual release of responsibility (modeling, peer learning, and independent experiences) for vocabulary instruction?
- Could a schoolwide approach maximize the vocabulary expertise at your school?