



# Word<sup>WISE</sup> & Content<sup>RICH</sup>

GRADES 7-12

FIVE ESSENTIAL STEPS TO TEACHING ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

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## Make it a Priority: Creating a Schoolwide Focus on Learning Words

6

### *Notes from the Authors*

Sound vocabulary instruction at the classroom level is important, but a schoolwide commitment to vocabulary development maximizes the efforts of talented teachers. When a school creates a building-wide focus, it communicates its priorities to students, faculty, and the community.

In this video, you will see two effective schoolwide efforts: Words of the Week (WOW words) and Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Together, these approaches provide opportunities for students to expand their vocabulary at the word level and through wide reading.

WOW words, typically five per week, are clustered to highlight common roots or affixes. The purpose is to build students' background knowledge about word derivations, especially so that they can figure out the unfamiliar ones they encounter.

SSR is a daily occurrence. Students read materials of their choosing, often in the company of their teachers. This wide-reading approach builds general background knowledge, fosters motivation, and builds reading stamina.

Dan, a high school student, explains how a schoolwide priority on vocabulary happens at his school. You'll see how his teachers promote these activities in their classrooms.

## Questions for Discussion

- It's not enough to list the Words of the Week; they need to be taught. How do you believe the vocabulary cards reinforce and expand word learning?
- Why does game playing reinforce learning? How does motivation play a role in learning?
- What can students learn about adult reading habits through SSR?