



Why Prioritize Essential Vocabulary?

Because . . .

- **Vocabulary impacts success in every area.** In his [online article on increasing instructional focus on general academic vocabulary](#), CEA associate Erick Herrmann explains, “Students can then be directed to not only incorporate those words into their speech, but also into their writing. Teachers can set specific criteria for including academic vocabulary into writing by stating the number of words to be utilized (‘please include at least three of the words from our word wall’) or which specific words should be included in the writing piece.” The words used may also be words that are seemingly common, but may change meaning in academic contexts, such as *table* or *process*.
- **Vocabulary is essential to understanding classroom tasks (including writing tasks).** Timothy Shanahan, long-time proponent of improving literacy instruction as a way to improve learning, echoes our core belief that if students do not understand what they are expected to do because they do not understand the terms or vocabulary, they cannot be successful in either learning to write OR writing to learn ([Shanahan on Literacy](#)).
- **School is a word game!** [Dave Stuart, Jr.’s blog](#) continues to reinforce for us that we are doing the right thing when it comes to vocabulary, which has always played an essential role in our framework. “... do this if you want to empower young people and help cultivate in them stronger motivation: teach words! Those within your discipline, those outside of it; for fun, for seriousness, for the love of the game. And remind them: school is a word game.”
- **“Vocabulary is the best single indicator of [academic ability] and an accurate predictor of success at school.”** Language expert, W.B. Elley, has had this quote attributed to him and has been widely re-quoted in the movement toward increasing vocabulary instruction. In [Building Background Knowledge](#), Robert Marzano (a strong proponent for more deliberate vocabulary instruction), describes a six-step process for building academic vocabulary. It includes direct instruction, linguistic and nonlinguistic definitions, recording word learning in a notebook or journal, talking about words, and playing with words. The Collins Writing approach to vocabulary instruction and learning, specifically *Collins Vocabulary Cards*, is in complete sync with this six-step process and has been used successfully for decades.

Suggested Materials—We have a collection of materials at [collinsed.com](#) designated specifically for vocabulary development.

[Teacher Resources | Collins Education Associates](#) (free)
[Buy Products | Collins Education Associates](#) (for purchase)

A Few of Our Favorites:

[Collins Vocabulary Cards Desktop Guide](#)
Essential General Academic Vocabulary [K-2](#), [3-5](#), [6-12](#)
[Activities That Make Vocabulary Stick](#)