



THE GOVERNOR JOHN ENGLER  
**CENTER FOR  
 CHARTER  
 SCHOOLS**  
 CENTRAL MICHIGAN  
 UNIVERSITY

# VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION



## Definition

Academic vocabulary is generally used to refer to words in an academic context. These words are used in academic dialogues and texts and do not usually occur in a day-to-day conversation. Academic vocabulary words are used in classrooms, tests, examinations, thesis papers and so on.

## Strategies to Strengthen Vocabulary Instruction

### Structures to Tier Assignments

- » **Tier 1 Words** — Basic, familiar words commonly used in everyday language. They are considered conversational language.

**Examples include:** sad, baby, walk, bus, clock, red, rain, phone and dog. Most students come to school knowing these words as they are used frequently in households. **You DO NOT need to spend a lot of instructional time on these words; a quick review or a picture is sufficient.**

- » **Tier 2 Words** — Robust, high-frequency words that students encounter across content areas in school. Tier 2 words are typically referred to as “academic vocabulary” words.

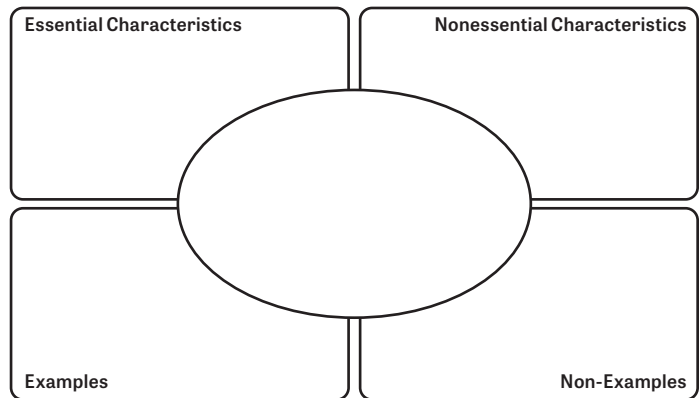
**Examples include:** rare, astute, valuable, bolt, harmony, blush, and amiable. Tier 2 words can have multiple meanings and are not typically used in casual conversation, but students will often encounter them in written texts. **Tier 2 words have an important impact on your students’ comprehensions skills, and this is where you should focus instruction.**

- » **Tier 3 Words** — Low-frequency words that are specific to content areas.

**Examples include:** igneous, osmosis, thesis, electrolyte, isosceles, and aorta. These words are not used in everyday conversations and typically only relate to a specific topic. **Tier 3 words need to be taught, but they will not make up the bulk of the words encountered in written text, and they do not have synonyms or antonyms.**

### Strategies to Try

- » **Fruyer Model**



- » **Marzano’s Six Steps to Teaching Vocabulary**

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

**Hyperbole: an extravagant statement or figure of speech not intended to be taken literally. E.g., “I’d give my right arm for a bite of that cake.”**

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

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

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

**Idea: Ask students to come up with examples from what they hear or see on TV, online, or from friends.**

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

**Ideas:**  
 Elbow Partners  
 Clock Partners  
 3 Musketeers  
 A/B Partners  
 Table Talk

**6** Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with the terms.

**Ideas:**  
 Pictionary  
 Pyramid  
 Jeopardy

## Resources

» [Edutopia.org](http://Edutopia.org)

» [Teachertube.com](http://Teachertube.com)

» [Teachingchannel.com](http://Teachingchannel.com)

» ***Building Academic Vocabulary*** by Debra J. Pickering and Robert J. Marzano

» [Flocabulary.com](http://Flocabulary.com)