

# READ fo Lead



**Title:** Building Academic Vocabulary

**Author:** Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering

**Rating:** ★★★★★

**Summary:** This text matches well with what CRISS purports. The need for specific vocabulary instruction is obvious. *Building Academic Vocabulary* provides a systematic way of presenting that instruction in grades K-12.

## Vocabulary word selection

For any school, the process begins with creating a list of vocabulary terms for each grade and subject level. The authors provide lists that contain 7,923 terms drawn from 11 subject areas. These terms were extracted from national standards documents. The authors recommend individual teachers, entire staffs, or district committees select a predetermined number of these terms for each grade level and across grade-level intervals.

## Six-step instruction

To provide the necessary vocabulary instruction, the authors have included a six-step process for teaching new terms along with a variety of activities and games. The six steps include:

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.
3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representation of the term.
4. Engage students in activities\* that help them add to their knowledge of the terms.
5. Ask students to discuss the terms with one another.
6. Involve students in games that allow them to play with the terms.

\* Among the activities described are several familiar to CRISS trainers: free association (Magnet Words), sentence stems (One-Sentence Summaries), Venn Diagrams, and matrix (similar to a Content Frame but with a “similarities and differences” column added to the right side). Many other strategies, not included in the CRISS training, are explained as well.

## Program management

The book also talks about managing this program. Students are to have notebooks, which contain all the words they will learn from the primary grades up through high school. They are expected to keep and reuse these notebooks each year of their schooling. (This seemed unrealistic to me as I can foresee students either losing them or having lists that would not be useable by the time they reached the upper grade levels.) The notebook also contains pages where students may write and draw their understanding of the terms. This is similar, in some ways, to our vocabulary word maps, but formatted differently.

## Time management

The authors discussed various ways for teachers to manage instructional time, leaving the final decision up to the teacher. In all cases, they emphasized the importance of setting aside time for students to engage in vocabulary instruction and to apply a variety of strategies to assure they will learn the terms selected each year.

This was a quick and easy read. The list of words provides an excellent resource from which to select terms deemed important for any specific grade or curriculum. I believe following the authors’ basic suggestions would facilitate a more cohesive and systematic program for vocabulary instruction.

Marzano, Robert J. and Debra J. Pickering, *Building Academic Vocabulary*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum, Alexandria, VA, 2005.

The National Staff Development Council included this journal reflection template in their April 2007 issue of *Teachers Teaching Teachers*. The reflection sheet is designed to assist teachers in getting the most from professional readings.

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Journal/research

## REFLECTION SHEET

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Source:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Volume/Issue:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Pages:** \_\_\_\_\_

BEFORE READING THE TEXT, WRITE TWO OR THREE PREVIEW QUESTIONS THAT YOU WANT TO ANSWER ABOUT THE TEXT.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

AFTER READING THE TEXT, COMPLETE EACH SECTION.

**What are the key ideas presented?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What are the answers to your three preview questions?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What was confusing?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What do you want to know more about?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What are the implications for teaching and learning? Write three to four sentences about what these ideas suggest for our teaching practice.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Coaches may coordinate teachers' reading of professional journals. This tool is a sample template for recording and sharing teachers' professional reading.**

*From Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches by Joellen Killian and Cindy Harrison, published by NSDC, 2006.*

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