Vocabulary Instructional Strategies

Why teach vocabulary?

Not only is vocabulary one of the most significant predictors of reading comprehension, but extensive research has documented the relationship between vocabulary enrichment and school achievement, particularly for English Language Learners and at-risk populations (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006).

Vocabulary in the Classroom

With so much importance placed on vocabulary, it is alarming to learn that one study found that as little as 2% of time is spent on vocabulary instruction in core academic classes (Kamil, 2004).

In addition to direct, explicit instruction (definitions and word usage), teachers should utilize varied, meaningful methods of vocabulary instruction in the classroom. Highly effective teachers train their students to use contextual information to decode word meaning and encourage them in to engage with words on a deeper level, such as using semantic analysis and categorization techniques (Flynt & Bronzo, 2008).

Once instruction has been delivered, teachers can use progress monitoring tools such as SKeVA to make data based decisions about future vocabulary instruction.
Vocabulary Boring? Try these!

Try some of these evidenced-based vocabulary instruction techniques:
- Incorporate a Word of the Day in your Do It Now
- Create a Word Wall of vocabulary words that students encounter as they read
- Have students keep word journals of interesting or unknown words as they read
- Use pre-reading strategies to introduce new words and make predictions about their meaning
- Utilize Graphic Organizers such as semantic maps
- Teach word parts, such as suffixes, prefixes, and roots
- Ask students to create their own crossword puzzles or hangman games using vocabulary
- Create a Word Sort of new vocabulary terms
- Provide synonyms and antonyms of vocabulary terms
- Play vocabulary Bingo
- Visualize words by drawing pictures or finding pictures of vocabulary terms online or in magazines