Working With Mainstreamed Students

VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNING CONTENT

The activities described in this Bulletin can be applied to literature, science, social studies/history and/or mathematics.

1. **Word Categories.** Periodically place content-specific words in categories to demonstrate their relationship to each other.

2. **Word Sorting.** Dictate words to be reviewed and ask students, individually or in groups, to place in appropriate categories.

3. **Missing Words.** Select a paragraph from the content text and delete selected words. Number the blanks and ask students, in groups, to write in the correct words.

4. **Word/Definition Matching.** In groups, have students match words from the textbook with their definitions on separate cards or pieces of paper.

5. **Two Step Recycling.** Make a set of cards/slips of paper with one/two sentences from the text with a designated word missing. In groups, have students find the missing word(s).

6. **Categories.** Ask the students to draw two or three columns on paper and give them a category from the lesson or unit. Then dictate a series of words that can fit into each of the categories.

7. **Customizing the Text.** From a passage you propose to use with your class, select a dozen or so words to work on. Write these down. Prepare a sheet of 30-40 different words (not only synonyms) from which students can choose alternatives to those in the text.
   a. Give the students the reading passage to look through.
   b. Slowly say the words you have chosen, while the students underline them in the passage.
   c. Give out the sheet of alternative words.
   d. Ask the students to select substitutes from the sheet for the words underlined.
   e. In pairs, the students discuss each other's choices.

8. **Erasing Words.** Write on the board about 10 words that are difficult to spell and give the class a minute to 'photograph' them. Point to one word, then...
9. **Recalling Words.** Write on the board between 15 and 20 words the students have recently learned. Give a minute for everyone to look at them, then erase or conceal them. Individually or in pairs or groups, the students try to recall as many as they can and write them down.

10. **Predicted Meanings.** Write down 8-10 unfamiliar words on the board from a text to be read. Have students take a sheet of paper and divide it into 2 columns. Students write words down on the left-hand column. Ask students to write down 3-4 words suggested by each word in the right-hand column. Ask students, in groups of 3-4, to compare what they have written. Refer students to the text.

11. **Writing Definitions.** Review a unit of your content or anything students have been studying. Select up to 20 words you want the students to remember. Choose 5 words each from different parts of speech or all 20 from the same part of speech. Divide the class into groups. Give each group 5 words each. Ask them to write definitions for each word but not to mention the word they are defining. These should be analytical definitions, not synonyms. Have groups exchange definitions and guess other groups' words.

12. **Making Groups.** Select a lexical category (e.g., "planets") for review and ask the students to call out the words they know related to the category. Have two students write the words on the board. Ask the students to think of ways to subgroup the words.

13. **Vocabulary Notebook.** Have students write down unfamiliar words from a content unit. Encourage them to write meanings, parts of speech, and the word in context.

14. **Ghost Definitions.** Underline 8-10 words and phrases in a text. At the bottom of the page, write definitions of these words in random order, together with definitions of 2-4 other words not in the text. Make a copy for each student in the class. Ask the students to match the definitions to the underlined words and then to find the words to suit the remaining definitions.

15. **A to Z Vocabulary.** Periodically assign each student a letter of the alphabet. Tell them to find two words that begin with their assigned letter related to the content being taught. They must then copy the sentences in which the words occur and write two original sentences in which the words occur, with the words in their correct context. Bring students together in groups of 4, selectively or at random. Have them exchange words and definitions and have each student use at least four of the words from their exchanges in a paragraph.

16. **Rivet.** Select 8-10 words from a lesson for review. Write numbers and draw lines on the board for each letter in a word. Fill in the letters to the first words one at a time, as the students watch. Encourage students to guess each word as soon as they think they know what it is.

17. **Memory Association.** Students try to name all the words they know in a category by taking turns saying a word from that set in a group. Anyone who can't think of a word immediately has to drop out.

18. **Spaghetti Technique.** Periodically collect word partnerships, separate and arrange them randomly in a circle. Have students draw lines connecting words that make strong collocations.

19. **Semantic Feature Analysis.** Design a grid with featured vocabulary according to content and word category on a vertical axis, and features and characteristics on a horizontal axis. Students check off words with similar features.