

Multiple Ways to Learn Science Vocabulary

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Narrator: Dana Calfee provides her science students with multiple ways of learning science vocabulary. She immerses her students in the foreign language of science and creates innovative exercises.

Dana Calfee: I teach vocabulary in a way, I have to address it in a couple of different ways in class. If you, if I focus, if you focus just on the vocabulary outside of the context of something relevant, then they, kids will learn the vocabulary words but not the concept, not the concept it's attached to. And so I talked to the kids about, you know, this is your foreign language for eighth grade, and you don't sit in a foreign language class and just write the definitions out and then take a test on it if, and expect to speak the language. So you have to use it and speak it. And so I use multiple strategies, but it's got to be very visual.

Today in class we had a, what I call a vocabulary walk, and so around the room I had set up the visual examples of, this is what this word, this is what this means. This is the visual thing. And that, for a lot of the kids, it made it so concrete because, well, evaporation, I mean, "I've been watching evaporation all my life. My mom makes spaghetti every Wednesday." You know, and so they, they begin to connect with something that's already internal, and it makes it a whole lot easier to use that big word that either, for whatever reason, they haven't grabbed onto before now. So we just, so I leave it set up so there's always a visual, you know, word walls with words that are attached to the visual, and then use interactive notebooks and reflective questions on how to draw comparisons and relationships between vocabulary words so that while we're getting the visual picture, we're going to that next level of figuring out, well, how can I use my, how can I use my words to talk about that in a manner that's grade level appropriate or that meets the standard?