**English Language Learners (ELLs) face the double challenge of learning academic content as well as the language in which it is presented. When language learning is thought of as a process of imparting words and structures or rules to students, separate from the process of teaching content knowledge, students are unprepared to work with the complex texts and the academic types of language that are required to engage in content area practices, such as solving word problems in Mathematics, or deconstructing an author’s reasoning and evidence in English Language Arts. ELLs need to be given frequent, extended opportunities to speak about content material and work through complex texts in English with small groups of classmates.

The Common Core State Standards  call for all students, including ELLs, to master an array of academic language practices that are critical to achievement in content areas: argument from evidence, analysis of complex texts, and developing and using models.

ELLs benefit from instructional approaches that treat language and content in an integrated way that is designed to help them build the language skills that they need to succeed in content classrooms**

**ELL Students and Academic Vocabulary**

**You have all heard about the difference between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Skills (CALP).**



****

**Our students are learning BICS all day long without much extra help from us. However, they can only learn CALP from direct instruction in the classroom.**

**Six step process for teaching Academic Vocabulary**

Marzano and Pickering (2005), emphasize the importance of teaching ELL academic vocabulary in a systematic approach. The process of teaching Academic Vocabulary includes six steps. The focus of steps 1-3 is on introducing new terms and steps 4-6 offer ways to review the terms providing students with a deeper insights. If you used this strategy for every new word, you would not have time to teach anything else. This technique is effective for KEY vocabulary terms that students will encounter in many different contexts or that are crucial concepts to the lesson or unit.

**Six step process for teaching Academic Vocabulary**

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

If working with ELL students the teacher should provide a visual representation of the word.

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

ELL students may write their definition in their native language.

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

# This activity is critical for ELL students. When students draw a picture for a word without a written definition, the student may forget how the drawing was supposed to represent the word, making it difficult to recall the meaning of the word at another time. Less proficient students may copy the teacher’s definition and/or picture. This is fine at first. One benefit to drawing a picture for a word is to be able to explain what the drawing means and how it represents the word. Even if a student copies the teacher’s picture, if s/he can explain how it represents the word, the student will gain a deeper understanding of the word and be more likely to remember its meaning.

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

This can be studying with flashcards, using the vocabulary to summarize, making a dictionary, completing graphic organizers, categorizing, comparing attributes, etc.

**5. Have students discuss the terms with one another periodically.**

 This is a great time to pair students with the same native language together so that they can help explain unfamiliar terms. Be sure to include at least one person who is fluent in English in each group that way, you can help bridge the gap between the native language and English.

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

 Using flashcards to play a matching game, solving analogies, completing a crossword puzzle, playing a “Jeopardy” style review game, modifying a game such as Pictionary, Charades, Scattergories, or $100,000 Pyramid to include target vocabulary are effective ways to review. These can also be made by a group of students to share with the class.