



Make it Useable: Building Academic Vocabulary Through Peer Talk

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Notes from the Authors

Most educators would agree that learning is social—it is predicated on the interaction between humans. Learners need the opportunity to try out new vocabulary within the context of work with their peers. Importantly, as students become more confident with using academic vocabulary verbally, they begin to incorporate it into their written work. The work of researchers like Roger Johnson and David Johnson has taught the field much about the conditions necessary for learning in the company of peers. In this video, teachers discuss these elements and use them in their classrooms. Watch as teachers in history, science, and English structure partner and group tasks to promote vocabulary and concept development.

Questions for Discussion

- What are the benefits of peer interaction opportunities? What are the challenges to creating these opportunities?
- As you watch the classroom video clips, speculate on the instruction that occurred before students worked together. What do they need to know and be able to do in order to work collaboratively?
- How do classroom management and collaborative learning influence one another?