



# Bobcat Learning Commons

September 21, 2012

**EMPOWER-EXPLORE-CONNECT-CREATE**

***IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY!***

Exciting things are happening at SFMS. Teachers are successfully flipping their classrooms. Ask Donna Ward about how flipping her 6<sup>th</sup> grade math class has impacted her students (that's a hint to share your success story with all of us, Donna!). Technology is making a difference to our students, but we can't forget the basics in educating our students. This newsletter has several resources that focus on academic vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary is, for the most part, pretty boring stuff, but if all teachers could somehow focus on one academic word each day and just work this into our teaching vocabulary for a single day, that would be seven exposures each day to words that are essential for student success. If each teacher got some of his or her students to use the word in context, that would be even more exposures to academic vocabulary. I will put together a daily "Word of the Day" and hopefully, we can improve our students' academic vocabulary.

Academic vocabulary is incredibly important for students' success in school. Jim Burke, an English teacher and author of many books on English education, has compiled a list of important [Academic Words](#) made up of nouns (What you read or create); verbs (What an assignment asks you to do); adjectives (specific details about what you must do); and adverbs (which provide important information about how to do an assignment). You can find a [detailed categorized list by Rick Smith here](#). For help with ideas on teaching and/or reinforcing vocabulary in different content areas, see [Tennessee Academic Vocabulary](#)

For some specific ideas on teaching mathematics vocabulary, see "[Building a Bridge to Academic Vocabulary in Mathematics](#)." While this resource was written for elementary students, the basic ideas for teaching vocabulary can be easily adjusted for middle school students. Some of my best teaching ideas have been adapted from elementary school strategies.

For ideas on how to incorporate technology into science and math classes, see [How to Teach with Technology: Science and Math](#). Don't teach science or math? You can still use these ideas for other content areas. The suggestions come from students and educators. Many

Teaching students becomes much easier when we can get students totally and completely engaged with our subject matter. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (say that fast three times—no wait just say it once, it's quite a mouthful!) has studied the phenomenon of "flow" and how it relates to happiness, creativity, and a sense of fulfillment. Check out this TEDtalk, [Flow: The Secret to Happiness](#). It is a bit slow to begin, but hang in there. It is worth watching.

Much has been written on Socratic Seminars. I loved holding these powerful discussions over the big picture of what we had studied. The students were pretty timid at first as we built the trust necessary to have this kind of activity, but once they were comfortable we had some very insightful discussions. As with everything in education, I did have to provide some form of assessment. If you are interested in this form of teaching (and it does work in every content area) check out [Socratic Practice/Ready for Work Class Participation Assessment Rubric](#). For more information on Socratic Seminar you might want to check out a few of these sites:

Now that Discovery Education is no longer a resource that we carry, you may want to check out these sites for videos: <http://theinnovativeeducator.blogspot.com/2010/02/100-video-sites-every-educator-should.html?spref=tw>

Our history as a nation is made up of many milestone documents. Check out [OurDocuments.gov](#) to get 100 of the most important documents that helped to shape our country. History/social studies classes are the most obvious users of this resource, but English classes could also use it as examples of authentic texts and comprehension exercises.

The pressure is on to integrate technology into our classrooms. While we may be limited in the number of Dell Netbooks and iPads we have, the library has twenty iTouches and fourteen Flip cameras available and waiting to be used. The iTouches are simple to use: find the camera app, switch from still camera to video, and click go. The Flip cameras are equally simple to use. For specific information on using the Flip camera and for some teachers' ideas on how to integrate this into your classroom, check out "[Video Cameras Offer a New Picture of Student Learning](#)" Watch the video—can you understand the British accents?

And what happens when you have students working in groups and it is time to grade their work? This can be quite a challenge to grade each student's work fairly. For groups that are working on problem-based learning assignments, you can get some advice on assessment at "[Practical PBL: The Ongoing Challenges of Assessment](#)." For help in creating an authentic project, see "[What Does It Take for a Project to be 'Authentic'](#)" which explains the different levels of authenticity in projects by providing criteria for each level. And for a wide variety of resources (tools and videos) for PBL, see the [Buck Institute for Education](#).

"A man with a scant vocabulary will almost certainly be a weak thinker. The richer and more copious one's vocabulary and the greater one's awareness of fine distinctions and subtle nuances of meaning, the more fertile and precise is likely to be one's thinking. Knowledge of things and knowledge of the words for them grow together. If you do not know the words, you can hardly know the thing."

— [Henry Hazlitt](#), [Thinking as a Science](#)

"Quotes About Vocabulary." *Quotes About Vocabulary*. GoodReads, 2012. Web. 21 Sept. 2012.

<<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/vocabulary>>.

**Seems like we owe it to our students to make them better thinkers by improving their vocabularies!**