Vocab-on-your-back: Meet students where they are

1. Each student wears a different vocab word (from a story or recent lesson) on their back, and doesn’t show what it says.
2. Students circulate around the room to read but not say each other’s words.
3. Once you have read the word, you must try and act it out for the student wearing the word to guess.
4. If the student wearing the word guesses the word, then the student who did the acting gets to take the word off the other student’s back and keep it as a point.
5. The student who has retrieved the most cards (through acting) will win.
6. (Start out with action words---get harder and use objects, characters, etc.)

Word Sorts

Two forms of Word Sorts (Vacca and Vacca, 1996)

Closed Word Sort (Teacher directed): The teacher provides the categories (and the specific features of each) to the students. The students then match the words with the features to create the word collections. The student sorts words based on categories provided by the teacher, usually shown by key words that head columns. The student is focused on recognition and production.

Open Word Sort (Student centered): The teacher provides only the list of words. Students work together to determine the common features and to describe the categories for collecting the word groups. This for reveals the students’ thinking and provides the teacher with insight for instruction and assessments.

Steps to a Word Sort:

1. List between 10 and 20 key content vocabulary words from a unit or reading selection on the white board, interactive whiteboard or on index cards.
2. Divide the class into small groups of 4 or 5 students. (Distribute the index cards if this method is used.)
3. For a Closed Word Sort, provide students with the categories into which they will sort the vocabulary words. For an Open Word Sort, instruct the student teams to suggest categories for organizing the words.
4. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the student teams to assign the words to the appropriate categories.

Class Discussion: facilitate a class discussion with each group presenting their word list for one of the categories. Require the students to defend their sorting of terms by asking about the common features of the categories and how each specific word meets these criteria.