

Good morning, it's January 14, 2013, and welcome to Panther News. I'm _____, _____th grade.

Since we are continuing our vocabulary study during 8th period, let's take a closer look at the importance of having a greater or wider vocabulary and personal ways we can use to expand our usage for greater understanding and communication.

First of all, what is vocabulary? What does this word mean? It's knowing the meaning of words so they can be used and understood. It is the set of words within a language that are familiar to that person. The word, familiar is important here, because if we are familiar with something, we are comfortable. And if we are comfortable, things are easier.

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Why is it important to have a greater or wider vocabulary? We would probably say here at school, it is important to help us pass the STAAR exams. This is very true, but let's take a look at the bigger picture.

Research scientist Johnson O'Connor once said that knowing the exact meanings of words goes with outstanding success in this country more often than any other single characteristic or thing. People judge us by the words we use. We need words to think, and to think we need words.

Knowing more words gives our minds more ways to think about things and more tools to plan and solve problems. Having a better vocabulary improves our ability to think.

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Our teachers are working with us during 8th period to improve our vocabulary, but what can we do to help ourselves? This is important. We need to take the initiative, or take action to expand our vocabulary so we can not only pass our STAAR exams, but also become better communicators for a productive and successful life in society.

Keep a dictionary and thesaurus nearby. It might be better to have a visual or picture dictionary. Get some vocabulary flash cards. Make vocabulary improvement a game. Do crossword puzzles. Read more books. And if someone uses a word that's not understood, stop the conversation ... don't be shy ... and ask for the meaning.

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We mentioned reading more books. This is probably one of the best things we can do. And we should have our dictionary as we read the book so we can look up words that we don't know.

When reading, it's easy to skip over an unfamiliar word without thought. When we do this, we pass up an opportunity to increase our vocabulary. Every time we learn a new word from a book, we should try to use it often so we can remember it.

We should talk to our friends about the new words we learn. This will help us share new words we have learned. Showing an interest in improving our vocabulary might encourage our friends to do the same, so we can teach each other.

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At the website, improvingvocabulary.org, they talk about elaboration. The use of elaboration is extremely important in vocabulary building. Elaboration is linking or relating a word to relevant or important information at the time of learning.

Let's say that we are reading the dictionary, and we come across the word, "ponderous". We read the definition, and it says, "Having great mass and weight and difficult to control". We may have learned a new word, but we are not very likely to remember it.

In order to remember the word properly, we need to link it to meaningful concepts such as examples, similar words, synonyms, and other concepts that we relate to and understand. For example, if we have recently moved, we might remember that the refrigerator was a "ponderous" burden ... heavy and difficult to control.

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When we learn a new word, we should try to read as many usage examples as possible. Search the Internet for examples of our new word in action. Say the examples out loud and think about them. Once we have used and thought about the examples we have read, try making up our own examples that apply to situations we have been in. Creating our own examples helps us remember even more.

Another important method of elaboration is studying words that are related to the word we are learning. When we learn a new word, we should study the word's synonyms and antonyms. Synonyms are other words that have the same meaning as the word we are learning. Antonyms are words that are opposites of the word we are learning.

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Some quick announcements:

Mr. Bonilla wants us to announce that another blood drive will be held Thursday. You must be at least 16 years old, and weigh at least 120 pounds to be able to donate blood.

There will be an "Honor Roll" assembly for grades 9 through 12, Friday, 8:00am.

We have a new and improved website for Tejano Center for Community Concerns and Raul Yzaguirre School for Success. Check it out at tejanocenter.org.

Mr. Brown wants us to announce that the Service Learning Club will be meeting in his room every Wednesday from 4:15 to 4:45 to discuss and develop different service projects that will support the community.

There is an organization in Houston called “Coalition for the Homeless”. They have a meaningful website, and the address is homelesshouston.org. Become an advocate! What is an advocate? It is someone who pleads or speaks for a cause. He or she takes action to make something happen. So, get involved to help get rid of and prevent homelessness.

Teachers please submit your students’ writing to Mr. Chambers so we can then contact those students for our broadcasts. We would like for them to have an opportunity to “go live” ... read their compositions ... on PANTHER NEWS ... a great experience!

Again, our e-mail address so you can send your comments and submissions to PANTHER NEWS for broadcast consideration:

panthernewsreport@panthernewsreport.com

Please make sure that you are following the uniform code in your student handbook. Wear your ID badge at all times while on campus. Respect each other as you pass by in the hallways. Stay to your right, and NO BULLYING, please! If you see trash in the hallways of our buildings and anywhere on our campus, pick it up, and throw it in a garbage can.

Texans football team, we are proud of you! Making it to the second round of the playoffs is a great accomplishment. Next year ... Super Bowl!

Lunch Menu

Today: BBQ Chicken or Nachos with Ground Beef, Wheat Roll, Pinto Beans, Corn on the Cob, Applesauce.

Tuesday: Lasagna with Ground Beef or Chicken Rings with Ketchup, Mixed Vegetables, Green beans, Sugar Cookie, Pineapple and Cherries.

Wednesday: Toasted Ham and Cheese Sandwich or Hot Dog with Ketchup and Mayo, Fresh Spinach and Dressing, Black Eyed Peas, Fresh Grapefruit.

That's all for now. We'll see you next Thursday.
Have a great day, and study hard! Your future depends
on it!