Professional Development Toolkit #3

**Strategy for Helping Students Assess Information and Remember Vocabulary: Taboo®**

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| **What is it?*** A technique for assessing what students think is important information
* An innovative way for students to describe a word’s definition
* A game played in teams
* A quick way to review important terms in a lesson
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| **Why is it used?*** To help students summarize and make connections
* To review information creatively
* To engage students in thinking conceptually
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| **What are teachers doing?*** Creating a set of Taboo® cards related to previous topics of study (later, guiding students to create their own). For fun, throw in some cards related to students’ interests such as favorite books, current events, sports, movies, etc. See back of this sheet for examples.
* Playing a demonstration game
* Dividing the class into teams
* Selecting a representative from each team to sit at a table or stand in front of the room, facing their classmates
* Giving each team representative half the stack of cards
* Timing students (1-2 minutes)
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| **What are students doing?*** Representatives flip over the top card and giving clues to classmates.
* Without gesturing, spelling, adding sounds, or using rhymes in the clues, the representative tries to get classmates to guess the vocabulary word. *If classmates guess one of the Taboo® words*, the representative can add it to the description.
* Team members can call out the answer at any time. If the team members guess the word correctly, their representative puts that card to the side, picks up a new card, and starts giving clues until the time is called. For each word guessed correctly, a point is earned.
* The opposing team’s representative is responsible for using a “buzzer” like a squeaky toy to indicate a rules infraction – like if a clue-giver accidentally uses a Taboo® word or uses a portion of the vocabulary term. The clue-giver then must forfeit the card, and the opposing team wins a point.
* If a clue-giver can’t successfully communicate a term to teammates, she can pass on the card, but the opposing team wins a point.
* Keep playing until both teams have had had the same number of opportunities to give clues or time runs out.
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*Adapted from* Wormeli, Rick. Summarization in Any Subject. Alexandria: ASCD, 2005.

**Extension Ideas:**

* Make the game more challenging by increasing the number of Taboo® words on each card.
* For a review game, ask students to make the game cards, based on a particular chapter, article, or other text. Students could do this in groups or as individuals.
* If assigning the task of making cards to groups, consider assigning specific sections.
* Before playing the game, make sure to assess student-made cards and make sure the Taboo® words make sense. If they don’t, ask students to refine their word lists.

**Sample Cards:**

**Three Taboo® Cards**

 ROMEO

 Juliet

 Capulet

 Montague

 death

 marriage

 **GERUND**

 **noun**

 **verb**

 **-ing**

 **grammar**

 **thing**

 **DECIMALS**

 **point**

 **place value**

 **base 10**

 **whole**

 **metric**