to use the words whenever possible. Children begin to notice the frequent occurrence of the words, and the fact that the words are being used in different places by different people in the school: word consciousness. In this way, words as esoteric as bucolic are learned as naturally as we learn more frequently-used synonyms like rural, rustic, countryside, and pastoral. If students ask about the word lists, as they almost always do, and whether they have to “look them up for a test or something,” they are told that these are the important words from the unit they are beginning—so important that the teacher(s) will try as hard as they can to use them often enough that the students will learn them without ever having to look them up. The fact that the adults in the building are making this cooperative effort sends a clear message to children: words are important, and we are committed to helping you learn them.

The Community of Language Approach builds word consciousness by implanting words into students’ experience. The next method does so by having students “find” one word a week, in their reading or listening inside and outside of school, to nominate for the weekly word list.

**Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS)**

The Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy, or VSS (Haggard, now Ruddell, 1982, 1986), is a fundamental way of opening students’ minds to the wealth of words they encounter in print and the oral language that surrounds them each day: raising word consciousness. As described by Ruddell and Shearer (2002), the method is implemented as follows.

Step 1 Students are asked to search their viewing, reading, and home environments for a word to nominate for the weekly class vocabulary list. The nomination process involves telling: a) where they found the word; b) what they think it means; and c) why they think it should be on the class list. The teacher also nominates a word each week, giving the same information.

Step 2 In discussing each word, definitions are refined, and dictionaries or other sources are consulted as needed.

Step 3 When the final list of words has been selected, students record the words and definitions in their vocabulary journals.

Step 4 The words are further studied through the week, using discussion, semantic mapping, semantic feature analysis, and other interactive activities.

Step 5 At the end of each week, students are tested on their ability to spell each word, explain its meaning, and use it in a sentence.

Step 6 Every three weeks, past word lists are reviewed, and students are tested on five randomly selected words from past weekly lists.