

# How's Your Vocabulary?

**S**chool nurses often feel “out of the loop” in school settings where teachers and administrators speak a “different language.” But just how familiar are we with educational language? Often school nurses verbalize their frustration with administrators who neither speak nor understand the language of nursing. And yet, are we also guilty of not speaking *their* language?

What do we know about such terms as *portfolio*, *outcomes-based education*, *service learning*, *whole language* and *experiential education*? And should we know these terms? You bet! If we are promoting school health services with student learning outcomes (e.g., how nursing interventions contributed to a student’s learning experience), but are not putting the message into educational terms, then there is a chance that both the words and the message are lost.

In order to relate more effectively our concerns and goals for our students, we must begin to close the existing communication gap by learning the language of education. We must begin to use educational terms if our goal is to communicate the vital link between health service delivery and academic success. A recently discovered glossary from *Education Week on the Web* should assist school nurses in these endeavors. Visit their Web site at [www.edweek.com](http://www.edweek.com) to improve your education jargon vocabulary! If you do not have access to the Internet, consider the local library (or bookstore) and select a book that will help you become familiar with educational terms that as school nurses we should be able to use in our discussions with other school staff.

Here are some definitions from the Web site:

*Portfolio* — A systematic and organized collection of a student’s work throughout a course or class year. It measures the student’s knowledge and skills and often includes some form of self-reflection by the student.

*Outcomes-based education* — An education theory that guides curriculum by setting goals for students to accomplish. Outcomes-based education focuses more on these goals, or outcomes, than on “inputs,” or subject units. This theory has drawn intense criticism from parent groups who fear that, by focusing on outcomes, schools are “inflicting” values on students.

*Service learning* — Programs that incorporate citizenship values into education by requiring students to perform community service. In some districts, community service is a requirement for graduation.

*Whole language* — A philosophy and instructional strategy that emphasizes reading for meaning and in context. Although teachers may give “phonics” lessons to individual students as needed, the emphasis is on teaching students to look at the wholeness of words and text.

*Experiential education* — Education that stresses hands-on experience, accomplished by field trips, internships, or activity-oriented projects, as opposed to classroom learning. 🏆

## RESOURCE

Education Week on the Web, American Education’s Online Newspaper of Record, <http://www.edweek.org>.