K-2 Vocabulary Strategies

Vocabulary Strategies

Alphabet Books – (Chen, L. & Mora-Flores, E, 2006) – Students create an alphabet book – each page has a letter on it with enough space for pictures. Students cut out pictures or words from a magazine or draw pictures themselves.

Character Trait Maps: - (Burns, 1999) – Words for labeling character traits are often missing in student's vocabularies. Even if the words are known, students are often unable to distinguish the subtle differences among connotations. Procedure: (a) after reading, have the class discuss the characters and in pairs have them try to visually verbalize the character traits, and (b) as a class, again, have the students compare their maps in order to select the words they think work best.

Click and Clunk – (Sadler, 2001) – Have students create two columns on a paper labeled "click" and "clunk." They read a passage and then list words they understand or don't understand in the two columns. Direct instruction or group discussion is used to clarify meanings of the words.

Find Someone Who - (Kagan, 1992) - This is an interactive strategy to help students practice new vocabulary. Procedure: (a) prepare a *Find Someone Who* ... form that looks similar to a bingo card, (b) in each space put a new vocabulary word, (c) give one form to each student and give the class about ten minutes to roam and get definitions (i.e. the name of the student and what he or she gives as the meaning of the word or concept), and (d) the student who gets most of the spaces filled without using anyone twice 'wins.' Translations into the mother tongue are acceptable.

Frayer Model - (Billmeyer & Barton, 1998) - This is a word categorization strategy which provides students with different ways to think about the meaning of word concepts and develop understanding of content area reading vocabulary. Students form hierarchical word relationships by listing essentials, examples, non-essentials, and non-examples of a particular word (i.e. knowing what a concept isn't can help define what it is). Procedure: (a) assign concepts to groups, (b) explain the attributes of the Frayer model, (c) complete one with the class, (d) have students work in pairs to complete their concepts, and (f) have students share and then display their boards so the concepts can be continuously during the unit of study. See the example on the following page.

DINOSAURS - PREHISTORIC REPTILES	
ESSENTIALS: prehistoric reptiles: backbone, lay eggs, straight legs, walk or run fast	NON-ESSENTIALS: cold blooded (some may have been warm blooded); eat meat (some eat plants): chew food, hunt in packs
EXAMPLES: brontosaurus, allosaurus, stegosaurus, diplodocus	NON-EXAMPLES: snakes, crocodiles, turtles, lizards

Knowledge Rating - (Stejnost & Thiese, 2001) - Procedure: (a) distribute a list of words appropriate to the topic, (b) ask students to respond individually to each category by placing an 'x' in the boxes, (c) have students share their responses in small groups, and (d) have a whole class discussion to foster prior knowledge about the topic. See example below.

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Knowledge Rating for Science						
Word	**Have Seen or Heard**	**Can Say**	**Can Define**	**Can Spell**	**Can Use in a Sentence**	**Don't Know at All**
Float	X					
Sink						X
Crumble	X	X		X		
Disappear	X	X	X	X	X	
Unchanged						X

Making Words – (Chen, L. & Mora-Flores, E., 2006) – Provide students with a picture or familiar scene from a story. Provide letter cards or magnet letters to students and have them try to put words together from stories they have heard. Scaffold as needed for varying levels of language proficiency or literacy development.

Missing Words - (Stephens & Brown, 2000) - Missing words - an adaptation of the cloze procedure - engages students in reading a selection with certain words deleted, and then predicting in writing the missing words. It helps students learn to draw upon prior knowledge, use meta-cognitive skills, think inferentially, and understand relationships. Procedure: (a) the teacher selects a passage that the students haven't read and deletes certain words - leaving the beginning and ending sentences intact- (the deleted words may be key vocabulary words, certain parts of speech, or based on a numerical pattern like every seventh word), (b) the teacher also models - using a different passage - how to skim a passage for an overview and how to read the material looking for clues, (c) the teacher uses a think-aloud to model the meta-cognitive process of rereading the passage - monitoring the word choices and their effect upon the meaning of the passage.

Open Word Sort - (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000) - A strategy for before, during or after reading text. Procedure: (a) Student pairs are given words written on individual strips of paper, (b) they collaborate to categorize the words by identifying and explaining relationships among them, (c) students then read and reorganize the words in a way that would be effective for teaching key information to others, and (d) following the reading they use the resorted words to explain the reading or answer questions.

Semantic Gradient Scales - (Blachowicz & Fisher, 1996) - This scale helps students to see how new words fit into a patterns *of* known words. Procedure: (a) establish a semantic gradient scale (see example), (b) have the students develop words that fit between the two poles. See example on next page.

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THE SEMANTIC GRADIENT SCALE		
Hottest	**Courageous**	**Big**
Coldest	**Cowardly**	**Small**

10 Most Important Words - (Stephens & Brown, 2000) - This is designed to help students become aware of the value of key concepts in developing content knowledge. It can be used as a 'pre' or 'post' unit activity. Procedure: (a) the teacher introduces a topic by helping students think about what they already know, (b) students are then asked to predict in pairs what they think the ten most important words of the unit will be, (c) then pairs share their lists with another pair - and they agree to a final list of ten, (d) the lists are continually referred to, revised and at the end of the unit the class reflects on which ten were the most important after all.

Tri-bond – (Chen, L. & Mira-Flores, E., 2006) – Create a set of word cards that contain three words on one side and the larger concept they fit within on the other side. Have students work in partners: one reads out the front of the card and the other has to try out the concept. Example:

(front)	(back)
Jupiter Mercury Mars	Planets

Visual Structures - (Barton, 2001) - This strategy is intended to replace the common one of selecting in advance words from students' reading in order to preview them with the class (one that Barton suggests doesn't work in spite of good intentions). He suggests making a clear connection between words and important concepts from the texts through the use of visual structures that show the relationships explicitly. Examples include word webs or semantic mapping, word weave or

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matrixes, or vocabulary thermometers. Once the visual structure is created, decide when to introduce it (i.e. before-during-after reading) and where to display it (i.e. so that it can be revisited during the unit). Later, have students re-categorize words into a new structure, to retell the story using the structure for help, create a role play using the vocabulary, as an organizer for responding in writing, or as a performance assessment where students have to recreate the structure from memory.

Vocab-marks - (Stephens & Brown, 2000) -A Vocab-mark is a bookmark made from laminated paper with spaces for students to list unfamiliar words as they encounter them in their reading. Procedure: (a) the teacher models finding unfamiliar words while reading and how to record them on a Vocab-mark and (b) students make their own and begin to list new words, the page number, and a brief definition (either through a dictionary or a friend). Some teachers structure the use of Vocab-marks by specifying what students must look for (e.g. three technical terms, two unfamiliar terms, etc).

Vocabulary Writing in Math – (Billmeyer, 2004) – Learning math is often equated to learning a new language due to the vocabulary-dense texts and conceptual context within which vocabulary is presented. One way to help students assimilate mathematical language is to have them create their own vocabulary journal as follows:

WORD	PICTURE	DEFINITION
yard	ft ft ft	A standard unit of measure made up of three feet. It is smaller than a meter.

Wats-It – (Chen. L. &Mira-Flores, E., 2006) – Have students create word cards that depict a visual representation of given words. They should write the word on one side and draw a visual on the other. Collect the cards and divide the students up into groups. Line them up into two lines facing each other. Stand at the end of the line, say 'go' and show the first two students in line the picture side of the card. The student who guesses the word first wins the card for her team. The game continues until the cards run out.

Word Boxes/Journals & Logs - (Fogarty, 2001) - These are based on the same principles but are for different age groups. For younger students, shoeboxes are used for individual word boxes. Students gather new words each day using 8 inch *x* 3 inch colored construction strips to record them. Students play the game "Go Fish" mixing their word cards with partners. When students know their words, they keep them (unknown words are discarded). Word strips are then used to create a story - some- of which are illustrated, bound and read to others. Over the months students will see their own progress. Vocabulary journals and logs serve the same purpose for older students as they use their growing list of words to better understand content specific material.

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Word Chains - (Stephens & Brown, 2000) - A word chain provides students with a structure to explore relationships among words, understand how they can be used, and remember their meanings. Procedure: (a) the teacher selects 5 to 7 new vocabulary words that are related to the same concept and models how to develop a word chain based on the connections, (b) the students - in pairs - are given a group of words, (c) the students develop a word chain and then share it with another pair (or the rest of the class), and (d) finally each student writes a short paragraph using the new words in a way that demonstrates their connection.

Word Cards Strategy - (Brisk & Harrington. 2000) - Procedure: Prepare strips of strong cardboard. Each day have each student give a word; write it on the card. Give the cards to the students to read alone or to trace the letters. Keep a file box in which to place the cards (first write the names of the children on the cards). Every day have the children find their own words, sit with a classmate, and read their words to each other. If they can't remember their words, sit and help them. Once students have 20 to 30 cards, use these follow-up activities:

. Taking a few and checking to see if they remember them
. Choosing one to elicit discussion of a topic by a group or the whole class
. Having the students write their word and draw a picture
. Having students put together a dictionary or create a game with the words

Word Walls - (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998) - Procedure: (a) be selective and *stingy* about what words go up there, limiting the words to those really common words that students need a lot in writing, (b) add words gradually - about five a week, (c) make them accessible where everyone can see them, write them in big letters, and use a variety of colors, (d) practice the words by chanting and writing them in different ways (i.e. magnetic letters, sand, portable word walls), (e) do a variety of review activities, (e) make sure that word-wall words are spelled correctly in any writing the students do. See examples in their books!

Zip Cloze - (Burns, 1999) - Procedure: Put a reading passage on an overhead and block out words with masking tape. Choosing selected vocabulary words seems more useful than deleting every seventh word (the usual doze). Students use all the strategies they know to guess the missing words. When the tape is guessed, the tape is *zipped* off and students can compare their choice with the author's.