

Word/Concept Maps

What?

Word/concept maps are graphic organizers to help students expand the meaning of words/concepts. Through word/concept mapping students are able to visualize the relationships of word/concept to a definition. In the process students identify key components of the definition, the class or category, properties or characteristics, and illustrations or examples.

Why?

We know that simply requiring students to look up definitions in the dictionary and writing a sentence with the word is not an effective manner of teaching vocabulary. Results of this practice indicate that **- sixty-three percent of the students' sentences were judged to be odd** (Miller and Gildea, 1985), and **-students frequently interpreted one or two words from a definition as the entire meaning** (Scott and Nagy, 1989). However, when students develop a map it helps them visualize relationships and develop elaborated definitions of the new words and concepts being introduced.

How?

1. Prior to introducing this activity select several new key vocabulary words that students need to understand and can be used for demonstrating the process.
2. Display the Concept Map and explain to students that in order to understand new vocabulary that they need to know what makes up a definition of a word. Explain that you will answer three questions regarding a word:

What is it?

What is it like?

What are some examples?

3. Model several examples with students using the pre-selected words. After modeling several examples, demonstrate how a definition can be developed from the map.
4. After practice students can develop their own books or use the map as a guide for taking notes.

You will find an example of concept map and a blank black line master for use in your classroom in this appendix. This material is taken from the following sources.

- Buehl, Doug. (1995). *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*. Schofield, WI: Wisconsin State Reading Association.
- Santa, Carol. (1996). *Project CRISS: Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Schwartz, R. and Rapheal, T. (1985). Concepts of definition: A key to improving students' vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 676-682.

References

- Miller, G. and Gildea, P. (1985). How to misread a dictionary. *AILA Bulletin*. Pisa, Italy: International Association for Applied Linguistics.
- Scott, J. and Nagey, W. (1989, December). *Fourth graders' knowledge of definitions and how they work*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, Austin, TX.

Prepared by M. Dunn.