

## FOUR SQUARE

**WHAT?** The **Four Square** is a learning activity to develop and increase a student's vocabulary knowledge by making a personal connection with words.

**WHEN?** This instructional activity is used **After** reading. Teachers introduce the concept of the **Four Square** in grade four in order to support the U-46 Literacy Roadmap. This instructional activity is appropriate for use for all text material. Teachers of mathematics, social studies, and science will find this a useful activity in teaching the vocabulary unique to their content.

**WHY?** Teachers use the **Four Square** learning activity for several important reasons:

- It assists students understanding of new concepts by having the student make a personal association with the word.
- It assists students in analyzing and thinking of attributes and non-attributes/ examples and non-examples of the concepts.
- It provides a graphic organizer/visual representation for students regarding the concepts they are learning.

### **HOW?**

1. Draw a square with four quadrants on the board, chart paper, or overhead. You want to give students individual copies of the square for them to keep in their vocabulary notebook. See the model, **FOUR SQUARE MODEL**.
2. Model the strategy using a strategy for the text students will read.
3. Place a key word in the square labeled "**WORD**". Then have students share their ideas about the meaning of the word. Tell students they will complete the information for all four squares. Students will have a better understanding of the word by completing the information required for all four squares.
4. Have the students read the text.
5. After reading the text have the students develop a short student friendly definition of the word. Write the definition in the square **WHAT IT MEANS**.
6. Have the students read the caption in the lower-right quadrant. Then have the students share descriptions of the word and how they might draw a visual representation/illustration/picture of the word.
7. After the discussion have the students draw a visual representation/illustration/picture of the word in the appropriate square.
8. For the upper-right square, have the students write a personal connection or clue to help them remember the word. Students will have different connections/clues with the word. After the students write their connections/clues, allow them to share and explain why they selected the connection/clue.
9. An alternate **Four Square Model** form is included in the appendix. In this model students write the key word, write a definition, synonym/antonym, a sentence and draw an illustration of the key word.

The **FOUR SQUARE** description is based on Johns, J., Lenski, S., and Berglund, R. (2003). *Comprehension and vocabulary strategies*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishers.

### **Resources**

Johns, J. and Berglund R. (2002). *Strategies for content area learning*, Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.  
Lenski, D., Wham, M., and Johns, J. (2003). *Reading and learning strategies: Middle grades through high school*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

