Semantic Maps for Word Learning

ABOUT THE STRATEGY

SEMANTIC MAPS is a word learning strategy that helps students learn unfamiliar words by graphically representing the concepts. Semantic maps provide a graphic structure of the knowledge to be used as the basis for organizing new ideas as they are understood. It assumes that there are multiple relations between a concept and the knowledge that is associated with the concept. The major purpose of the semantic map is to allow students to organize their prior knowledge into these formal relations and thus to provide themselves a basis for understanding what they are about to read and study. Research shows that it is effective with discussion and when it is used before reading a text. Word learning requires multiple exposures to the word within meaningful contexts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

– Select a word.
– Establish the purpose of the strategy.
– Prior to reading, provide students with a semantic map and use a think-aloud as you model the process of using the semantic map to illustrate the relations between the concept and the knowledge that is associated with the concept.
– Write the selected word that is the main focus of the map in the center of the map.
– Off the selected word, brainstorm ideas that help explain or clarify the main concept. These can be generated through collaborative discussions.
– Off the initial brainstorm, add supporting information – details, inferences, and generalization that supports or clarifies the ideas. These can be generated through collaborative discussions.
– After reading, revisit the semantic map and add/revise information.

MEASURING PROGRESS

– Teacher observation
– Conferencing
– Student work

RESEARCH

Olson, M. W. & Gee, T. C. (1991). Content reading instruction in the primary grades: Perceptions and Strategies. *Reading Teacher, 45*, 298-307.

Rosenbaum, C. (2001). A word map for middle school: A tool for effective vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 45*, 44-49

Winters, R. (2009). Interactive frames for vocabulary growth and word consciousness. *The Reading Teacher*, *62*(8), 685-690.

WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION

Semantic Map

Before reading a text, write the selected word that is the main focus of the map in the center of the map. Off the selected word, brainstorm ideas that help explain or clarify the main concept. Off the initial brainstorm, add supporting information – details, inferences, and generalization that supports or clarifies the ideas. After reading, revisit the semantic map and add/revise information.

Word