

## Section 2 - Literacy Strategies for Vocabulary Development

Notes:

*"If I were to do one thing to raise test scores, even on standardized tests, it would be to build vocabulary. In chemistry, for example, students would write 'Dilute the solution with three milliliters of water' rather than simply, 'Add more water.'"*



- Heide Hayes Jacobs, 1998

### Rationale

Vocabulary knowledge is a key predictor of how well a student understands a selection. Each content area has a unique vocabulary. In order for students to learn the subject matter, they must understand the vocabulary words that represent the concepts they are learning. Meaningful understanding of vocabulary words involves more than looking the word up in the dictionary. Limited definition often leads to misunderstanding. A seventh grade student was assigned to look up the words in the dictionary and then use each word in a sentence. So, the student looked up the word frugal in the dictionary and it said "to save." The student wrote, "I was drowning in the swimming pool and yelled, 'Frugal me, frugal me. My friend jumped in and frugaled me.'"

Using only the dictionary often results in unclear, vague understanding, or incorrect interpretation of the word. Students need to elaborate and connect the word to what they already know. They need opportunities to wrestle with the meaning of the words, to develop personal examples for the meaning, and to differentiate between similar words. Vocabulary strategies offer students that opportunity. Each strategy causes the student to think about the words they are learning in different ways. Selection of the appropriate strategy depends upon how you want the students to think about the words they are learning.

Vocabulary strategies included in this section.

	Page
• Act the Word . . . . .	26
• Concept Definition Mapping . . . . .	28
• Forecast . . . . .	33
• Frayer Model . . . . .	34
• Mind Sketching . . . . .	39
• Prevoke/Vocabogram . . . . .	40
• Semantic Feature Analysis . . . . .	42
• Stephens Vocabulary Elaboration . . . . .	46
• SAW - Student Action Words . . . . .	50
• Super Word Web . . . . .	54
• Vocabulary Concept Chain . . . . .	55
• Word Sorts . . . . .	57





## Act the Word

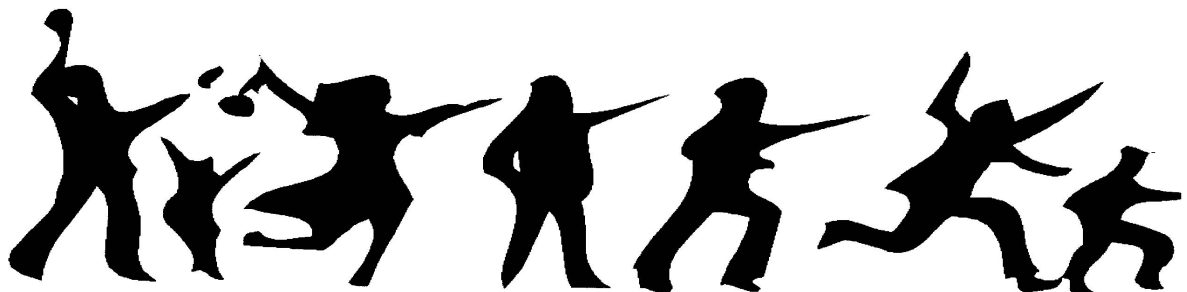
### How to Use the Strategy

- 1) Determine words to be studied
- 2) Assign students to cooperative groups of three or four.
- 3) Assign each student a role of actor, director, and coach.
  - Actors - act out the words
  - Director - distributes the words, decides the order for presentation, and directs the presentation
  - Coach - keeps the group on task, encourages each group member, and checks to see that each group member knows the words
- 4) The director distributes the words to the group members.
- 5) Members learn the meaning of each word with the coach's assistance as needed.
- 6) Group members brainstorm different ways to act out each word. They select the best action to teach the word to the class.
- 7) Group members teach their words to the class. The director instructs the rest of the class to act out the word, tell the meaning, and to pronounce it.
- 8) The teacher instructs the class to stand in a circle and calls out a word for the students to demonstrate the learned action, saying the meaning, and the word.
- 9) Older students learn from and enjoy acting out vocabulary words which describe historical events, chemical reactions, math theorems, or musical performances.
- 10) Instruct the students to explain their performances and how the demonstration increased their understanding of the word.

### Benefits of the Strategy

- Supports whole-brain learning
- Involves movement which increases the retention of more vocabulary words
- Develops communication skills among team members
- Increases accountability by having each student responsible for acting out the words
- Creates a positive learning environment because acting out words involves risk-taking
- Increases student motivation for learning vocabulary words
- Brings laughter to the classroom and humor is an essential ingredient for learning

**Reference:** Chapman, C. (1993). *If the shoe fits*. Palatine, IL: IRI/Skylight



## Mind-Sketching



### Why Use the Strategy

The Mind-Sketching (Juntune, 1983) strategy encourages the reader to picture the meaning of a vocabulary word. The brain thrives on pictures. We have all heard, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” When students sketch what a word means, they think analytically and use ideas from their background of experience. Most students dread vocabulary study because they find it boring. The Mind-Sketching strategy motivates students to want to learn new words, helps them develop accurate definitions, and enhances retention of words.

### How to Use the Strategy

- 1) Select the vocabulary words which promote understanding of the topic to be studied.
- 2) Depending on the number of words to be learned, students can be organized into small groups and assigned some of the words.
- 3) Students are assigned words and work individually to:
  - Write the word and look it up in the dictionary or a glossary.
  - Study the definition to gain a clear understanding of the meaning (some words might require students to seek further assistance).
  - Sketch what the word means.
  - Share the meaning of each sketched word with other students assigned the same word and revise the sketch if necessary.
- 4) Small Group Activity:
  - Share the word, the meaning, and the sketch.
  - Study the sketch and discuss what it means.
  - Look up the definition of the word and share it with other group members.
  - Revise the sketch to clarify or enhance the meaning.
  - Write a short descriptive phrase which defines the word.

### When to Use the Strategy

- Students who struggle with vocabulary development enjoy this strategy and find it very helpful. It allows visual elaboration and taps into a visual mode of learning.
- Words which look or sound similar but have different meanings are mentally clarified through sketching (i.e. cinnamon and synonym, knight and night).
- Difficult concepts can be made easier to understand, for example by sketching the process of photosynthesis.
- As students prepare for vocabulary sections of standardized tests, this strategy can be a beneficial aid to understanding and memory.

### Link to Assessment

If students can sketch the meaning of words and write a definition in their own words, they will communicate their understanding of the words. Frequent use of the vocabulary words in other content areas is a key to long-term retention.

