

Teaching Tips from WSRA Council Leaders: Vocabulary Development

In this new column, one of WSRA's local council's officers will provide tips on how they foster a specific literacy domain with their own students. For this issue, we have asked the officers from the **Racine-Kenosha Reading Council (RKRC)** to share their "go-to" methods for building their students' vocabulary.

Vocabulary Development Through a Graphic Organizer

Michelle Burch, the Legislative Liaison for RKRC, often uses the Frayer Model (Frayer, 1969), a graphic organizer, for word analysis and vocabulary building. This four-square model prompts students to think about and describe the meaning of a word or concept by . . .

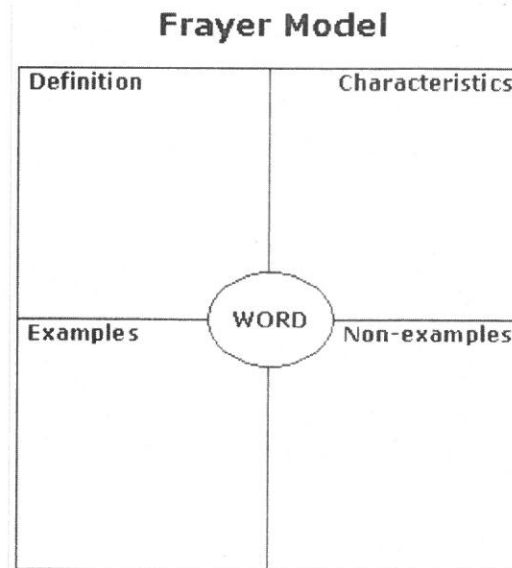
- defining the term,
- describing its essential characteristics,
- providing examples of the idea, and
- offering non-examples of the idea.

This strategy encourages students to understand the meanings of words within the larger context of a reading selection by requiring them, first, to analyze the items (definition and characteristics) and, second, to synthesize/apply this information by thinking of examples and non-examples.

Directions:

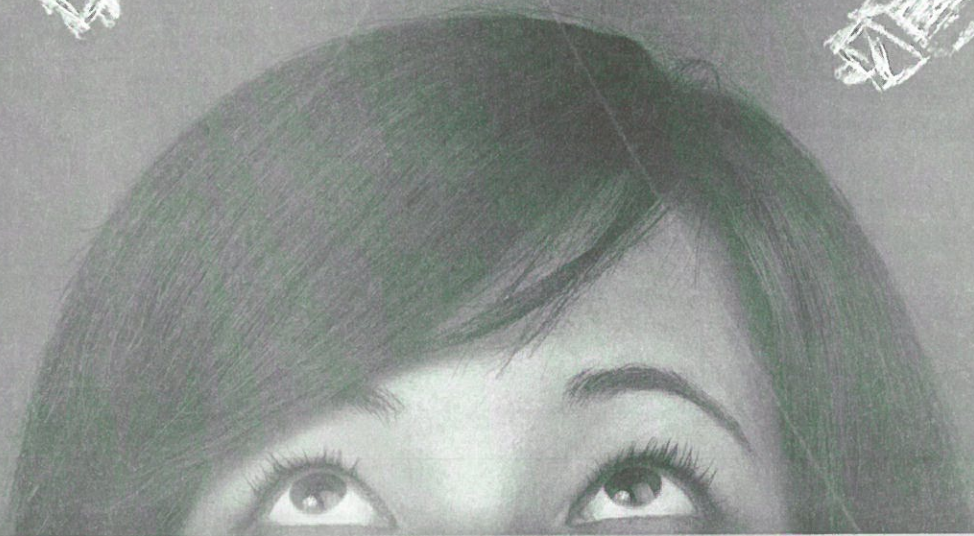
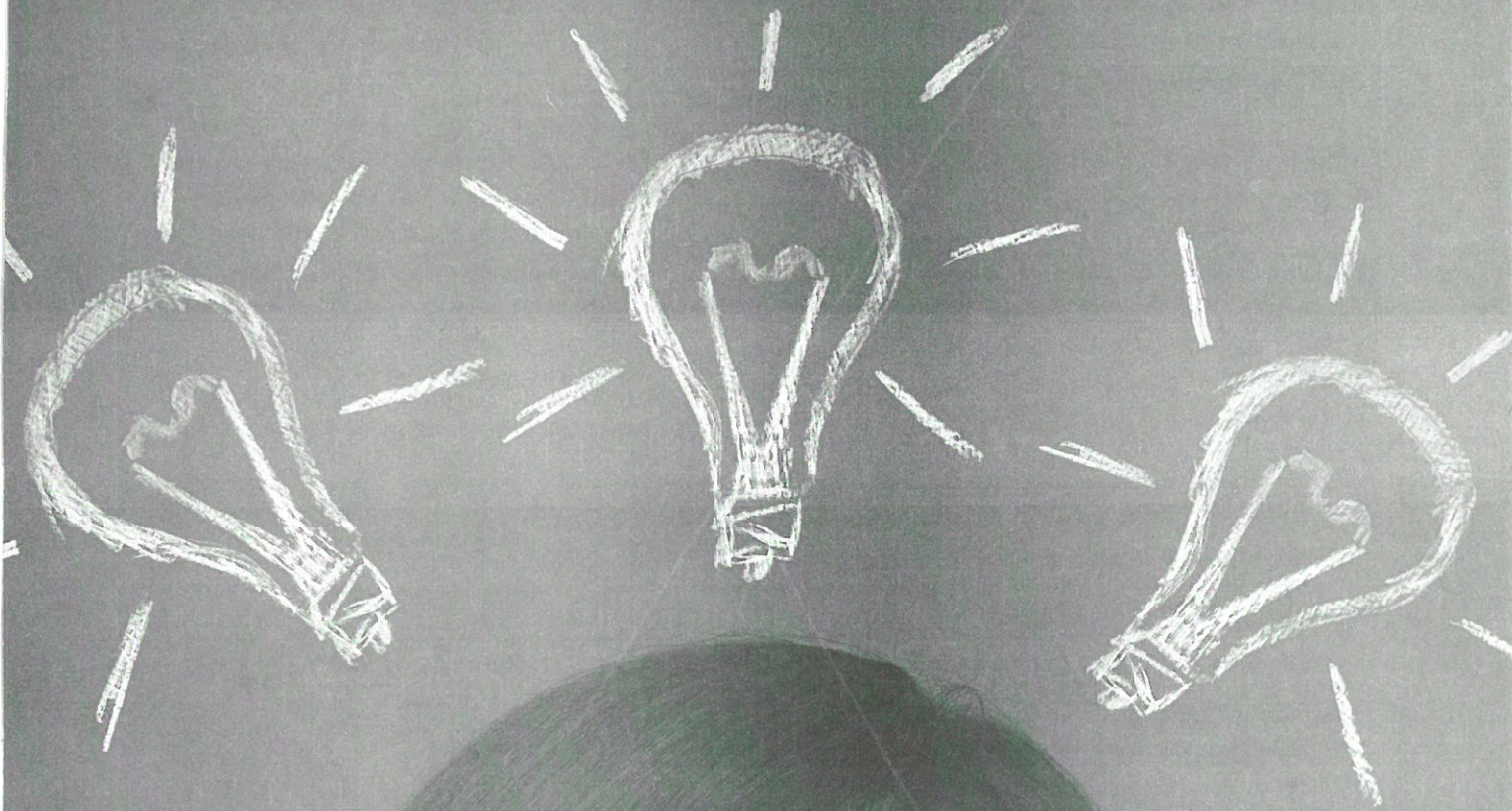
1. Explain the Frayer Model graphic organizer to the class. Use a common word to demonstrate the various components of the form. Model the type and quality of desired answers when giving this example.
2. Select a list of key concepts from a reading selection. Write this list on the chalkboard and review it with the class before students read the selection.

3. Divide the class into student pairs or small groups. Assign each pair/group one of the key concepts and have them read the selection carefully to define this concept. Have these groups complete the four-square organizer for their assigned concept. Use chart paper for each concept's Frayer Model.
4. Post each group's completed model on the front board and ask each to share their models with the class. Use these presentations to review the entire list of key concepts.



Frayer, D., Frederick, W. C., and Klausmeier, H. J. (1969). *A Schema for Testing the Level of Cognitive Mastery*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research

TEACHING TIPS






Homophones, Homographs, & Homonyms Vocabulary Lesson

Dr. Patricia Rieman, President of RKRC, encourages students to develop word knowledge by writing, drawing, reciting, and mnemonics. This activity focuses on providing students with strategies to remember the difference between homophones, homographs, and homonyms. It is fun, short, and fast-paced, and it turns into a competition because students work in small groups to generate their own examples of each term.

Directions:

1. Draw a large 3-column, 2-row table on the board and instruct students to do the same on their own papers.
2. Tell students you will be teaching them the difference between, and ways of remembering, homophones, homographs, and homonyms.
3. Label the first column 'homophones'. Explain to students that homophones are words that sound the same, but are spelled differently. To strengthen this understanding, draw an ear by the term and instruct students to do the same. Also have students underline "phone" within the term. Explain that they hear with the phone, and this will be the mnemonic. Provide (verbally & in writing) three examples, and then invite students to provide more examples. Write them on the board. If the examples are incorrect, stop and explain why they are incorrect. Stop after about four examples have been generated by students.
4. Label the second column 'homographs'. Explain to students that homographs are words that look the same, but are pronounced differently. To exemplify this concept, I post a few sentences containing homographs on the screen and have students take turns reading the sentences "cold"—without prereading them silently (see sample sentences below). To reinforce this understanding, draw an eye by the term and instruct students to do the same. Also have students underline "graph" within the term. Remind students that they look at graphs, and this will be the mnemonic. Provide (verbally & in writing) three examples, and then invite students to provide more examples. Write them on the board. If the examples are incorrect, stop and explain why they are incorrect. Stop after about four examples have been generated by students.
5. Label the third column 'homonyms'. Explain to students that homonyms are words that look the same and sound the same, but have more than one meaning. To strengthen this understanding, have students circle the second m in the term to remind them that the second m stands for meaning. Provide (verbally & in writing) three examples, and then invite students to provide more examples that you will write on the board. If the examples are incorrect, stop and explain why they are incorrect. Stop after about four examples have been generated by students.
6. Once the mini-lesson has been completed, erase the examples from the chart. Place students in small groups. Explain that this is a competition with prizes (bookmarks, pencils, etc.). Each group should choose a note-taker and a reporter. In this activity, each group will have three minutes to generate as many examples as they can of each term. They may use their notes. After three minutes, call on each group's reporters, to provide one example and under which term to write the example. When one reporter is speaking, the other groups should be crossing off the examples they are hearing that are also on their lists.

Homophone 	Homograph 	Homonym 
its, it's there, their, they're desert, dessert	read desert object	can scale book

Continue calling on each reporter in the same order until groups begin to run out of examples. The last group with a correct example wins.

Sample sentences containing homographs

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 3) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 4) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 5) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.

Developing Vocabulary to Build Word Choice for Writing

Samantha Bradshaw, the chair of Membership for RKRC, has found that her second graders tend to overuse common words, such as good/bad, in their writing. She has developed an activity that helps them to understand that different words have different “shades of meaning”.

Materials needed:

- Index cards with words written on them. Write each group of words in a different color to keep them separate.

Good, great, super, terrific, excellent, amazing

Bad, crummy, terrible, awful, horrible

Big, huge, gigantic, enormous

Little, tiny, miniature, small, petite

- Sample paragraph for editing purposes

Directions:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students if they would rather have a ‘good’ time in gym class or an ‘amazing’ time in gym class. Allow students to think about this and respond in their journals. After a few minutes, give the students the opportunity to turn and talk to their partner about their selections. Call on a few students to discuss their choices.
2. After the students explain their reasoning, explain that both words have similar meanings, but ‘amazing’ is a stronger word than ‘good’.

3. Write ‘good’ on the left side of the board and ‘amazing’ on the right side of the board. Next, ask four students go up to the board. Give each student one of the following word cards: ‘great’, ‘super’, ‘terrific’, ‘excellent’.
4. Ask students to arrange themselves in the order they think each of their words should fall between ‘good’ and ‘amazing’. Allow them to discuss this as they decide. Once students are in the order they feel they should be in, let the class suggest changes to the order. Now that they have come to a conclusion, explain that many adjectives and verbs have synonyms that fall in a range of meaning just like they’ve seen with the synonyms for ‘good’.
5. Divide the class into small groups and give each group a set of word cards: synonyms for ‘bad’, ‘big’, ‘little’, etc. Ask them to sort the words in a continuum like they watched their peers do with the words on the board. After all groups are ready, have them share their words across the board. Allow for some debate if classmates disagree (with older students, this would be a great time to discuss connotation and denotation).
6. To close the lesson, share the writing piece you prepared ahead of time. This piece should contain several of the overused words from the previous activity. Then show students an example of how you edited one of the words you just discussed. Give the students an opportunity to edit the rest of the paragraph with you. Students should then go back to their writing to see if there are any words they can revise in their own writing.

Vocabulary Experts

Lisa Burczyk, the secretary for RKRC, is an Educator Effectiveness Coach for her school district, so she has conducted presentations for her colleagues that focused on vocabulary instruction. One of the more popular vocabulary strategies she shared was based on a technique she found on the Teaching Channel (teachingchannel.org) developed by Jodi Macauley, called “Kick-me: Making Vocabulary Interactive.”

Materials Needed:

- Sticky notes
- Markers
- List of vocabulary words from a book or content-area text
- Worksheet for students to use for notes

Directions:

1. Distribute one sticky note to each student.
2. Post a list of vocabulary words from a book the class is currently reading, or a content-area textbook chapter.
3. Review the list of words with the whole class.
4. Direct students use a marker to write one of the vocabulary words from the list onto their sticky note.
5. Students stick the note on their back and walk around the room, finding 5 other words/phrases to learn from their peers.
6. When students meet with a peer, each must take a turn to discuss their word and what it means.
7. The peer listens to the word's meaning and writes it down (in his/her own words) on his/her worksheet.
8. After collecting five words, students meet back as a whole class to share out what they've learned, clarify confusing words, and discuss words that were not selected from the list.
9. To view an example of this activity, go to <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/making-vocabulary-lesson-interactive>

Sample Worksheet:

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Sentence

Alternate Version:

The teacher writes one vocabulary word per sticky note, so that each student has a different word on his/her back. The teacher posts each sticky note on the back of each student and their job is to read each other's words, provide clues to their peers about their words, and have the student determine which word is posted on his/her back based on the clues.

**Question, Prompt, and Cue
(Fisher & Frey, 2014)**

Nicolina DeVroy, the Vice President of RKRC, has found success in using this technique with middle school students, especially as a way to develop her students' word consciousness.

Materials Needed:

- List of vocabulary words posted on chart paper, on a smartboard screen, or the whiteboard
- Alternative materials: prepared word sorts on smartboard screen

Directions:

1. This strategy begins with the teacher selecting a vocabulary word from the list.
2. **Question:** The teacher asks a question about the word. The student responds.
3. **Prompt:** If the answer is correct, the teacher prompts the student to provide additional information. If answer is incorrect, the teacher checks for understanding using the student's background knowledge (scaffolding).
4. **Cue:** The teacher then poses a new question about the word. If the student provides incorrect information, the teacher uses cues, such as: pictures, books, photographs, diagrams.
5. If student provides correct definition, the teacher poses a new question; if not, teacher models the use of cues (think aloud) to develop a correct response.
6. This procedure can be completed in the form of a game such as Jeopardy™ or word sorts.

Learn More:

Fisher, D. and N. Frey (2014). *Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

