

## FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month

# Associate and Illustrate

May 2008

### Rationale:

Comprehension is closely tied to students' background knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, and decoding skills. The National Reading Panel report (2000) pointed to a high correlation between vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. According to the NRP (2000), explicit vocabulary instruction leads to gains in comprehension. Vocabulary is also learned indirectly in the context of storybook reading or in listening to others read. Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987) estimated that students learn roughly 1,000 of new words per year through reading.

The findings on vocabulary research have yielded several specific implications for teaching reading. First, vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important for vocabulary development. Direct instruction should actively engage the student with learning. Research has shown that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning. Students will benefit from mastering effective vocabulary strategies they can use to learn words independently.

The goal of vocabulary instruction is to a) develop students' ability to use complex language; b) build students' knowledge of words; c) help them connect new words to existing knowledge; d) facilitate the application of words in new contexts; and, e) promote the development of reading comprehension. The levels of word knowledge processing include: association (words are linked to definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and analogies), comprehension (knowledge of word associations used to categorize words, complete sentences, or generate multiple meanings for words), and generation (word comprehension is expanded by making us sentences using words, making connections between old and new information, and applying word meanings across contexts).

The NRP (2000) identified five main methods of teaching vocabulary: (1) *Explicit instruction* (Students are taught about words or other attributes of words to be learned.); (2) *Implicit instruction* (Students are exposed to words indirectly or given opportunities to do a great deal of reading.); (3) *Multimedia methods* (Vocabulary is taught via other media such as graphic representations, hypertext, etc.); (4) *Capacity methods* (Practice is emphasized to increase capacity through making reading automatic.); and, (5) *Association Methods* (Students are taught and encouraged to make connections between what they do know and unknown words they encounter.)

*Associate and illustrate* is a strategy that capitalizes on associations among words. It includes the following:

- Key vocabulary
- Synonyms
- Antonyms
- Analogies

*Associate and illustrate* can be used as part of a weekly vocabulary instruction in elementary through secondary grades and across the content areas. Although it can be used before reading, during reading, and after reading, it is advisable to use it after reading to ensure that students have gained some knowledge about the word or concept at hand. The copying and writing of definitions is a purposeless activity; it does not actively involve the reader in thinking about the type of word they encountered, drawing connections among words or word parts, and problem-solving with words. As a vocabulary strategy, it can help students problem-solve with words and identify key associations among words. If used over time with varied texts, students will learn how to make associations among words, will be actively involved in making those associations and also illustrating them, and they will be able to transfer this approach to other contexts.

## How to Use the Strategy:

As with any strategy, teachers are encouraged to first think about its purpose in their instruction and also about principles of effective vocabulary instruction.

Step 1: Select key words to be taught. Decide when you will be using the strategy (i.e., before-reading, during reading, or after reading).

Step 2: Establish purpose; for example, “Associate and illustrate is a method we can use to make associations between words and illustrate the meaning of the word or concept. This will help you to think more carefully about words; this method will help you to understand the meaning of words and remember them better.”


Step 3: Use the following example (or an example that reflects your respective content area or topic of study) to model to students how to use the strategy. Modeling of the strategy can be done with whole group instruction. Spend time explaining to students about your choice of word associations and illustration. The “illustrate” part of the strategy can be challenging as it requires much careful thinking about how to best illustrate the meaning of a word or concept. The sentence-writing part of the strategy will help students project their understanding of the word or concept in a complete sentence.

Step 4: Provide guided practice and feedback. Students can work in small groups or independently. Monitor understanding of strategy and also vocabulary acquisition. Provide adequate practice and scaffolded feedback as needed before moving on to independent practice.

Step 5: Use the strategy over time and in varied contexts to ensure mastery. Upon mastery, students can use the strategy in small groups (collaborative vocabulary development) or independently. Continue to monitor and informally assess students’ vocabulary development.

## Examples:

## Associate and Illustrate Blank Organizer

	
<b>Florida Online Reading Professional Development</b>	
Name: _____ Date: _____	
<b>1. Vocabulary Word</b>	<b>2. Definition</b>
<b>3. Synonym</b>	<b>4. Antonym</b>
<b>5. Illustration</b>	<b>6. Write a Sentence Using the Word</b>


## Associate and Illustrate Sample Organizer



## Florida Online Reading Professional Development

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>1. Vocabulary Word</b>  opulence	<b>2. Definition</b>  (n): wealth; great abundance; profusion; the state of being affluent; having a great supply of material goods and money.
<b>3. Synonym</b>  wealth, luxury, prosperity, affluence, lavishness	<b>4. Antonym</b>  Poverty, scarcity, impoverishment, deprivation, indigence
<b>5. Illustration</b>  	<b>6. Write a Sentence Using the Word</b>  Paris Hilton lives in opulence!

## Assessment:

Informally assess students' understanding of how to use the strategy and also how the strategy assisted students' vocabulary development. Carefully observe how students make word associations (or if they are having difficulty with making word associations). In addition, use the graphic template to assess how well students understood the meaning of the word or concept. Pay close attention to their illustrations; this will be a difficult part for some as it is not always easy to illustrate a word or concept. Students' illustrations will reveal much about their overall understanding of the word or concept. Use the graphic template as a vehicle for collaborative feedback (i.e., How well did other students understand this word looking at one's illustrations and associations?) and also as a means for students to explain their thinking about word associations and illustration(s).

## Resources:

Council for Learning Disabilities. *Secondary students with learning disabilities in reading: Vocabulary Development*. Available Online: [http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/info\\_briefs/cld/](http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/info_briefs/cld/)

Hendricks, V. *Sequential vocabulary: Lesson 1*. Available Online: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/ValerieHendricks6182002861>

Simmons, E. (2002). Visualizing vocabulary. *The Quarterly*, 24(3). Available Online: <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/403>

The University of Texas at Austin: Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts. *Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction for Secondary Students*. Available Online: [http://www.texasreading.org/downloads/secondary/guides/2003enhancVocab\\_present.pdf](http://www.texasreading.org/downloads/secondary/guides/2003enhancVocab_present.pdf)

## References:

Allen, J. (1999). Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 789-814). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Nagy, W., Herman, P., and Anderson, R. (1985). Learning words from context. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20(2), 233–253.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (National Institute of Health Pub. No. 00-4749). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

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