

Vocabulary Development

1. Concept Definition Mapping

What is it?

Concept Definition Mapping (Schwartz, 1988) is a strategy for teaching students the meaning of key concepts. Concept Definition Maps are graphic organizers that help students understand the essential attributes, qualities, or characteristics of a word's meaning. Students must describe what the concept is, as well as what it isn't, and cite examples of it. Looking up the concept's definition in the dictionary is not nearly as effective as this process, which gives students a more thorough understanding of what the concept means, includes, and implies. The mapping process also aids recall.

How to use it:

1. Using a flip chart or overhead transparency, display an example of a concept definition map.
2. Discuss the questions that a definition should answer:
 - What is it? What broader category or classification of things does it fit into?
 - What is it like? What are its essential characteristics? What qualities does it possess that make it different from other things in the same category?
 - What are some examples of it?
3. Model how to use the map by selecting a familiar vocabulary term from a previous unit and mapping its features.
4. Select another familiar vocabulary term, and have students volunteer information for a map. For instance, a science teacher might choose the concept *migration*. "What is it like?" responses might include "seasonal," "movement from one area to another," "animals looking for food and favorable climate to raise their young." Examples could include Canadian geese, whales, monarch butterflies, and elk.
5. Have students work in pairs to complete a map for a concept in their current unit of study. They may choose to use a dictionary or glossary, but encourage them to use their own experience and background knowledge as well.
6. After students complete their maps, instruct them to write a complete definition of the concept, using the information from their maps.
7. As a unit progresses, encourage students to refine their maps as they learn additional characteristics and examples of the concept.

Frayer Model

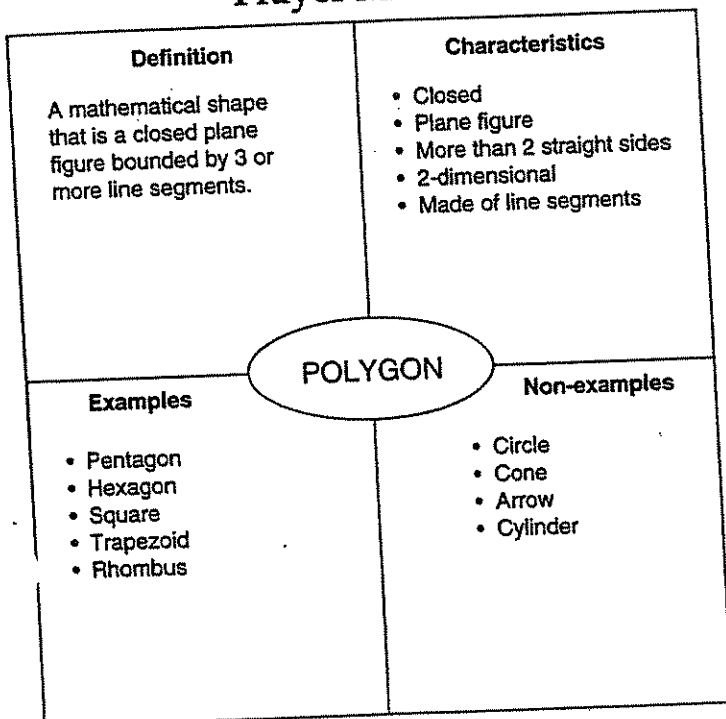
What is it?

The Frayer Model (Frayer, Frederick, & Klausmeier, 1969) is a word categorization activity. Frayer believes learners develop their understanding of concepts by studying them in a relational manner. Using the Frayer model, students analyze a word's essential and non-essential attributes and also refine their understanding by choosing examples and non-examples of the concept. In order to understand completely what a concept is, one must also know what it isn't. The "Four Square" version of the model works well with younger children.

How to use it:

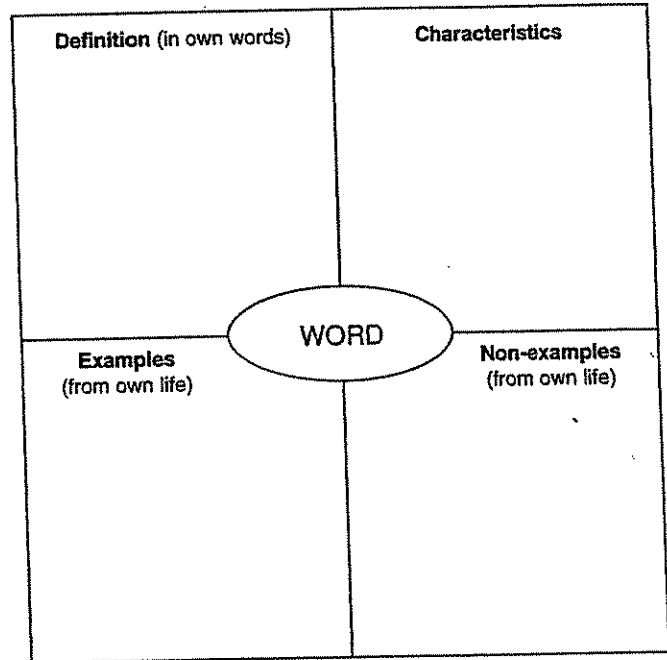
1. Assign the concept or word being studied.
2. Explain all of the attributes of the Frayer Model to be completed.
3. Using an easy word such as *polygon*, complete the model with the class.
4. Have students work in pairs and complete their model diagram using the assigned concept or word.
5. Once the diagram is complete, have students share their work with other students. If students develop the diagram on chart paper with colored markers, display the posters during the entire unit of study so that students can refer to the words being studied. Students can continue to add ideas to displayed models.

Frayer Model

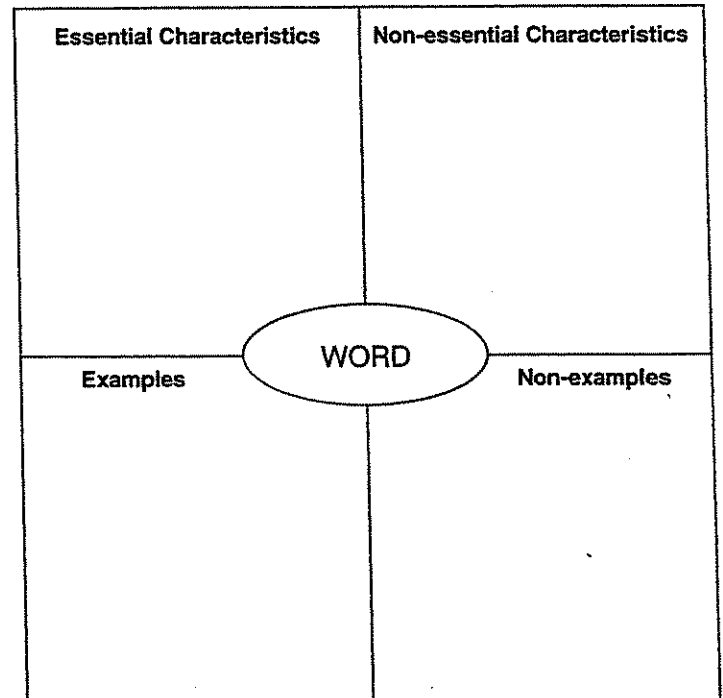


Frayer Model

1B



Frayer Model



8. Word Sorts

What is it?

Word sorts (Gillett & Temple, 1983) help students recognize the semantic relationships among key concepts. Students are asked to sort vocabulary terms into different categories. The strategy can be used in two different ways. In a "closed sort," the teacher provides the categories into which students are to assign the words. In an "open sort," students group words into categories and identify their own labels for each category. Word sorts help students develop a deeper understanding of key concepts, and also are an excellent method of teaching the complex reasoning skills of classification and deduction.

How to use it:

1. Students copy vocabulary terms onto 3"x 5" cards, one word per card.
2. Individually or in groups, students then sort the words into categories. With younger students or complex concepts, the teacher should provide students with the categories and have students complete a "closed sort."
3. As students become more proficient at classifying, teachers should ask them to complete "open sorts"; that is, students sort words into labeled categories of their own making. At this stage, students should be encouraged to find more than one way to classify the vocabulary terms. Classifying and then reclassifying helps students extend and refine their understanding of the concepts studied.

Weather Word Sort

Tools For Measuring Weather

Thermometer

Barometer

Wind gauge

Wind vane

Clouds

Cirrus

Cumulus

Stratus

Weather Disasters

Hurricanes

Tornadoes

Blizzards

Floods

4. Semantic Feature Analysis

1D

What is it?

Semantic Feature Analysis (Baldwin, Ford, & Readance, 1981; Johnson & Pearson, 1984) helps students discern a term's meaning by comparing its features to those of other terms that fall into the same category or class. When students have completed a semantic feature matrix, they have a visual reminder of how certain terms are alike or different. Students find that the matrix provides a good summary of concept features and helps in reviewing for exams.

How to use it:

1. Select a general category of study. With younger students, choose concrete concepts such as sports, food, farm animals, or board games. As students become adept at using this model, they can analyze more sophisticated or abstract categories such as geometric forms, literary movements, forms of government, economic cycles, or land forms.
2. Create a matrix: along the left side, list key vocabulary terms or concepts within the chosen category. These should be familiar to the students. Across the top of the matrix, supply features that these words might share.
3. Students then use an "X" to indicate if the feature applies to the vocabulary word. An alternative is marking a plus sign (+) if the feature applies or a minus sign (-) if it does not. If students mark the exact same pattern of pluses and minuses, or Xs, for more than one word, challenge them to identify a feature that will differentiate between these terms.
4. Students are encouraged to explain to other students the rationale behind their markings. Explaining their reasoning and listening to others' reasons enhances understanding of the concepts.
5. As the unit progresses and understanding of each term deepens, the teacher or students can add terms and features to the matrix. In each case, understanding deepens as students examine the terms' similarities and differences. Guide students in developing generalizations about how each concept is unique in relation to the other semantically-related vocabulary terms.

Anticipation Guide/Prediction Guide

What is it?

Anticipation/prediction guides (Herber, 1978) can be used to activate and assess students' prior knowledge, to focus reading, and to motivate reluctant readers by stimulating their interest in the topic. Because the guide revolves around the text's most important concepts, students are prepared to focus on and pay attention to this information while reading. Students are motivated to read closely in order to search for evidence that supports their answers and predictions. Consequently, these guides promote active reading and critical thinking. Anticipation guides are especially useful in identifying any misperceptions students have so that the teacher can correct these prior to reading.

How to use it:

1. Identify the major concepts that you want students to learn from reading.
2. Determine ways these concepts might support or challenge the students' beliefs.
3. Create four to six statements that support or challenge the students' beliefs and experiences about the topic under study. The statements can address important points, major concepts, controversial ideas, or misconceptions. Do not write simple, literal statements that can be easily answered.
4. Share the guide with students. Ask the students to react to each statement, formulate a response to it, and be prepared to defend their opinions. Students can work in groups if the subject matter is fairly complex, or you can ask students to fill in their answers on their own.
5. Discuss each statement with the class. Ask how many students agreed or disagreed with each statement. Ask one student from each side of the issue to explain his response.