

Interactive Word Wall



Purpose

An Interactive Word Wall is an organized collection of words (and sometimes phrases) displayed on a wall or other space in the classroom. An Interactive Word Wall in a classroom is a powerful instructional tool: it makes words visible and easily referenced and manipulated; supports the teaching of key words and subject-specific terminology; and encourages independence in reading and writing.

Materials

- Large index cards, strips of paper, or a tag board for writing and manipulating words
- Optional: an illustration, photograph, or object on or next to particular words, to support students' learning through the aid of visual cues

Procedure

The “interactive” part is critical; actively engaging with the words will support student learning. There are many ways to interact with Word Walls. Some interactions are quick and can occur on a daily basis. Other interactions can constitute an entire lesson. Suggested activities include the following:

1. Categorize and classify: Have students classify the terms.
2. Compare and contrast: Create categories to compare and contrast.
3. Concept map: Use the words to create a concept map.
4. Conceptual model: Use the words to construct a conceptual model that represents student thinking or scientific phenomena.
5. Create descriptions: Use the words to describe concepts.
6. Contextualize use: Challenge the students to use some or all of the words in a short-answer quiz.
7. Label diagrams: Use the words on the wall to label student diagrams and illustrations.

Variations

- Zoom In (Concept Map Approach): Pull cards from your Word Wall or write one word/phrase per card. Use a limited number of cards, perhaps ten to fifteen, or fewer for younger students. Also create cards with one-way and two-way arrows. Use the floor or magnets and a magnetic board to display the cards and group the students around the words. (Modification: Give each student his or her own set of word cards.) Ask a student or a pair of students to arrange two or three cards in a way that connects them or makes a model of the terms and to explain what they are doing as they place the words. Observers may ask questions once the connection or model is created. Repeat with another student or pair of students.

References

- Bear, D.R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, R. (2000). *Words their way: Word Study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Morris, D. (1981). Concept of word: A developmental phenomenon in the beginning reading and writing process. *Language Arts*, 58, 659-668.