



TOOLBOX OF IDEAS

WORD KNOWLEDGE CHART

A Vocabulary Strategy

Purpose: Vocabulary is one of five core components of reading instruction that are essential to successfully teach children how to read. Vocabulary knowledge is important because it encompasses all the words we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas and communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts. Knowing a word is not an all-or-nothing proposition: it is not the case that one either knows or does not know a word. Word knowledge is actually a complex concept. One complexity related to word knowledge is the extent of knowledge one may have about individual words, which can range from a little to a lot. This strategy is way for teachers to determine the level of knowledge and understanding that individual students and classes have of specific vocabulary words.

Procedure:

- Teacher selects the focus vocabulary words for a concept, unit, section of text, etc.
- Teacher creates a Word Knowledge Chart for those words
- Students individually determine their own level of understanding for each word in terms of more than one dimension
- Teacher must make sure students understand that there are no right and wrong answers and that it is important for students to give serious thought to their own level of understanding of each word
- Teacher determines level of understanding of the class by tallying responses for each word – students raise their hands for each column and teacher does a quick count. Constantly telling students that there are no right or wrong answers and that everyone’s “mental dictionary” is different should prevent students from refraining to raise their hands.
- Once tally is done, teacher facilitates class discussion of words by asking student volunteers to explain the meaning of each word. The use of clarifying questions will ensure an accurate explanation of each word.

Students need more than one exposure to new vocabulary, they also need to interact with the vocabulary in a variety of ways. There are any number of other vocabulary activities and games that would provide students with multiple exposures to new vocabulary.

No modifications are necessary for other content areas, the chart would be used as is.

WORD KNOWLEDGE CHART

Put a check under the category that best fits your level of knowledge for each word

WORD	I KNOW THE TERM WELL, CAN EXPLAIN ITS MEANING AND USE IT CORRECTLY	I AM FAMILIAR WITH THE TERM, CAN GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF IT, OR USE IT IN A SITUATION	I DO NOT KNOW THE TERM

Source: Beck, I.L., et al., (2002) *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Guilford Press: New York, NY