

Before & During Reading – Preview & Analyze

Interactive Word Walls & Word Sorts

- What?** A word wall is a posting of key words related to content to help students learn and focus on vocabulary.
A word sort requires students to cluster words together in meaningful ways to reinforce main ideas, concepts, and relationships.
- Why?** The word wall keeps vocabulary in full view for frequent reference in discussion and writing. Word sorting activities can provide interaction with the words in various contexts. Word walls and word sorts provide the multiple exposures and context support for vocabulary learning.
- How?** Teachers and/or students can select the key words for the word wall. Strips of paper can be used for recording words. Colored paper or markers are helpful for sorting.

Discussion of word selection is important. Talk about the reasons for posting particular words on the word wall. Review definitions and examples of word use as it fits in the context of discussion or writing activities.

Students can complete word sorts with the word wall. Model sorting methods to the class. Have students practice in pairs or small groups and encourage discussion about different sorting possibilities. Students should provide a rationale for their organization. Facilitate a whole class review of the students' word sorts.

Multiple word walls may be established. One may be set up as a permanent wall with terms that will be used throughout the year. Another wall may have topical or thematic words specific to a particular unit of study. Some of the topical words may be added to the permanent wall. It may be helpful to have a consistent organization to the permanent wall (e.g. alphabetical) as it will be extensive.

Itinerant teachers may want to use chart paper or portable bulletin boards as their "wall." (*Blachowicz, 1986*)