Scientific Research-Based Strategies:

Vocabulary Strategies
**Word Exploration**

Purpose: to explore what students know about a word by activating prior knowledge and making connections.

Students write spontaneously (free writing) for a few minutes about a word with little concern about grammar, spelling, and usage.

Prior to reading students discuss what they wrote. Comparing similarities and differences. During reading students note additional information about the concept. After reading students can rewrite, incorporating new, learned information about the word.

**Word Sorts**
*(Gillet and Kita, 1979)*

Purpose: To classify words into different categories according to shared features among the words

Gives students an opportunity to discuss and examine words related to the key concepts.

**Two types of word sorts:**

Open sort - prompts divergent and inductive thinking. No categories or criterion for grouping is known. Students must search for meanings and discover relationships among the words.

Closed sort - Students know in advance what the main categories are (the criterion that the words in a group share is stated). This reinforces and extends the ability to classify words. Students must justify their arrangement of words.

Before reading - serves as an activation strategy to help learners make predictions and connections among words

After reading - enables students to clarify and extend understanding of conceptual relationships

**Word Sort Activity: Open Sort**

Directions: Classify the words which follow into categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aorta</th>
<th>gastric juice</th>
<th>bronchi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>esophagus</td>
<td>diaphragm</td>
<td>salivary glands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulcer</td>
<td>lung</td>
<td>hypertension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atrium</td>
<td>ventricle</td>
<td>pneumonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Knowledge Ratings

**Purpose:** To create an awareness of known and unknown words.

Vocabulary is presented in a survey format and students analyze each word as: can define, have seen/heard, or don’t know.

Can discuss which words are most difficult, which are easy.

This strategy gives the students and the teacher an idea of which words need to be learned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Know it Well</th>
<th>Heard of It</th>
<th>Clueless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write in the definition.</td>
<td>Write in a guess.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Graphic Organizers (Semantic Word Maps, Webbing, Mapping)**

**Purpose:** Graphic organizers are used to visually depict relationships among concepts or words

1. Teacher or students decide on a key concept to be explored.
2. Students brainstorm and offer as many words or phrases as possible related to the concept.
3. A list of words and/or phrases is generated.
4. Before, during, or after reading, categorize words and place them in a graphic arrangement (tree diagram, bubble clusters, etc.). Indicate the main category or class and subordinate classes and/or characteristics or examples.
5. Share maps through discussion.
6. Write about the content of the maps (define, draw, compare/contrast, etc.).

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Shapes
  Square  Rectangle  Triangle
    ↑     ↑         ↑
  (define, draw)  (define, draw)  (define, draw)
```
Vocabulary Web Model

- Synonyms:
- Antonyms:
- Part of Speech:
- Stems:
- Origin:
- Word Families:
- Analysis:
- Word:
  - Definition:
  - Example:
  - Sentence:
Draw a picture of it
Use it meaningfully in a sentence
Definition in your own words
Synonyms

VOCABULARY WORD MAP
DRAW A PICTURE OR RELATE IT TO YOURSELF

USE IT IN A SENTENCE

VOCABULARY WORD

ANTONYM

DEFINITION OR SYNONYM

VOCABULARY WORD MAP
**Multiple Meaning Graphic.**

Use class discussion, a thesaurus, and/or a dictionary to find multiple meanings for a word. Write a word or phrase to describe the word’s meaning or draw a picture to represent the word’s meaning. Then write a sentence using the word with each of the meanings.

- **Synonyms**
  - Definition: An average amount or value
  - What’s the mean income of an astronaut?

- **Synonyms:** False, bad, evil, wicked
  - That wicked witch sure was mean!

- **Synonyms:** To intend, signify, or denote
  - The paragraph has no clear meaning.

- **Synonyms:** indicate, represent, stand for, connote, imply, suggest
Back Words
(developed by Dee Dee Jones, Karen Carr, and Candy Williams)

Write vocabulary words on sticky notes. Place a note on each student’s back without the student seeing the word. Everyone stands up and turns around at the same time. After everyone has a word, each student goes to the other students in the class and gets a clue about his word. Students do not guess their words until they are back in their seats. Then they write down all of their clues and make a guess. Then they share their clues and their guesses with the class. If someone has problems, the class orally provides more clues until the student can guess correctly.

Vocabulary Genie
(developed by Candy Williams)

Write one word clues for a vocabulary word on sticky notes. Place the notes under the desks before the students enter the room. Each student removes his note. The students discuss their clues in small groups. The group then tries to name the vocabulary word.

Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy

This strategy is very effective to use with cooperative learning groups.

1. Divide the class into nominating teams of two to five students. The team decides which word to select for emphasis in the text selection.
2. Present the word each team has selected to the entire class. The team spokesperson identifies the word and responds to the following:
   - Where is the word found in the text? Passage is read and context in which word is used is described.
   - What do the team members think the word means? Context clues and reference materials may be used.
   - Why does the team think the class should learn the word?
3. Prepare a writing activity using the vocabulary words selected by the class.

Five Word Prediction

Preview the lesson (expository text) and select 5 vocabulary words. List these in order and ask students to write a paragraph predicting the theme of the lesson using all of these words in the paragraph. Take up the paragraphs and redistribute after studying the lesson. Ask the students to use the same words and write a summary paragraph using the same vocabulary words.
**Quadrant Cards (Frager, 1991)**

**Purpose:** To use as a variation of the word card.

1. Divide a 4x6 card or a half sheet of paper into four parts.
2. List the word to be learned in the top left quadrant.
3. Write a synonym or definition in the top right quadrant.
4. Write associations for the word in the bottom left quadrant.
5. Write antonyms in the bottom right quadrant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperialism</th>
<th>A policy in which a country dominates a weaker country socially, politically, and economically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great powers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rivalries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independence
**Quadrant Card Variation**  
(developed by Anne McArthur)

The vocabulary quadrant can be used in a variety of ways when exploring words. Students can work in small groups, pairs, or individually; or the teacher can use large group discussion. Words or idioms are placed in the first quadrant. Students use prior knowledge, the thesaurus, or dictionaries to obtain a synonym or short meaning of the word. Students may work around the quadrant from synonyms or meaning to antonym to associations. However, students often form associations first and then shape a meaning from the association. The quadrant is also great to use when working with verbal analogies to help students find relationships.

This was an analogy I used in class where I incorporated the vocabulary quadrant to help students find a relationship among words. The students knew finite and infinite were opposites based on the prefix *in-*. However, they were having difficulty identifying an antonym for fragile (besides “infragile” which is not a word).

Fragile: ______________________ ::finite: infinite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word or Idiom</th>
<th>Synonyms or Short Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRAGILE</strong></td>
<td>Something that can be easily broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breakable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Things you have to be careful with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Associations**  
**Students started with associations they knew.**

Antiques  
Glass  
Packages  
Windows  
Someone’s heart  
Babies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antonyms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not able to break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unbreakable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word Walls

A word wall is a display of vocabulary/concept words. The words should be large enough for the print to be easily read from a distance. Always place the words on a specific wall area, so students will know to refer to this site for the current vocabulary. Although there are no set rules for organizing the words, if words are displayed alphabetically or thematically they will be easier for students to locate. When new terms are introduced, move the old words to a different location where they are still accessible. Have students periodically review the words on the wall. Encourage the use of the word wall as a reference for correct spelling. Advocate the application of new vocabulary in class discussions and assignments.

Content teachers are encouraged to have at least two word walls. One word wall should be reserved for vocabulary from the current unit or chapter being studied. The other word wall will display high utility words that students encounter as they read books, magazines, newspapers, etc. Words from the content word wall may be moved to this wall if the teacher feels the students need more practice with them.

Word Wall Activities:

**Synonyms**

Synonym for the word finish

Synonym for the word evil

Synonym for the word enemy

Synonym for the word danger

Synonym for the word cut

**Antonyms**

antonym for the word rough

antonym for the word productive

antonym for the word internal

antonym for the word fact

antonym for the word transparent
Definitions

to set free

to remember the good things about the past

shabby and run down

to give up something to another

the study of the human body

Contextual Sentences

When John was accused of a crime, he consulted an ________________.

The lights in the room were ________________.

Sally went to the physical therapist to ________________ her injured knee.

Inventing a new product requires patience and ________________.

_______________ is the period between childhood and adulthood.

Analogies

Right is to left as decode is to __________.

Meat is to carnivore as plants are to ________________.

Forest is to deer as lake is to ________________.

Up is to down as hostile is to ________________.

Weight is to scale as air pressure is to ________________.