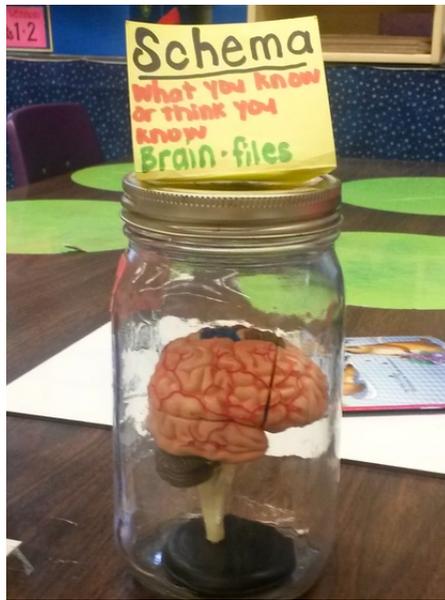
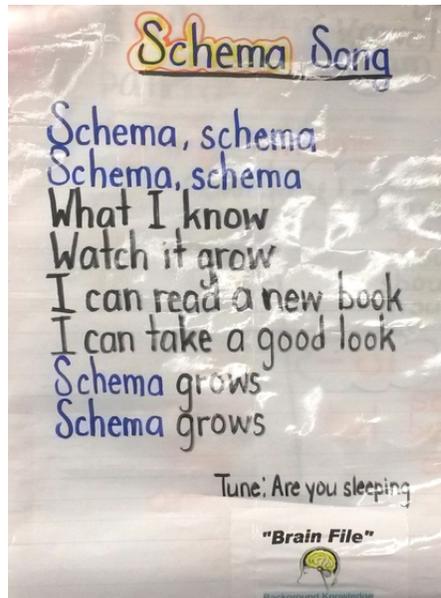


Literacy How-To: Building Schema



Photos taken in Jill Lennon's second grade at Andrew Ave. School, Naugatuck, CT.



Find this and other reading strategy songs at The Learning Pad.

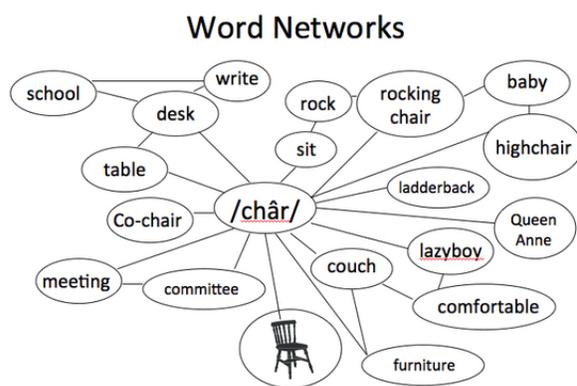
What is Schema Theory?

Schema theory explains how readers integrate new information into a network of prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from text. Readers make connections by synthesizing new information, deepening existing information, broadening their beliefs, and informing misconceptions. A basic premise of this theory is that written text carries little meaning by itself; rather a text provides directions as to how readers retrieve or construct meaning from their own background knowledge.

Activating and Using Background Knowledge

According to schema theory, people develop a large network of knowledge and information structures, or schemas, as they learn about the world around them. Each schema or "brain file"

is connected to many others, forming a neural network of understanding. As people gain more information through life experiences and knowledge (e.g., reading), their schemas evolve. For example, a very young child's schema for "chair" might contain only her or his understanding of a rocking chair as a place to snuggle with a beloved other. This basic "chair" schema will grow as the child gains more experiences with different chairs in a variety of settings. It may now connect to other schema — types of chairs; types of furniture; multiple meanings of "chair".



Literacy How, Inc., 2016

The more extensive the links, the more rapid and accurate is word retrieval.



Cognitive scientists have found that good readers instantly activate their schemas when they begin to read, and constantly make connections between their background knowledge and new learning from the text. In fact, research supports the importance of background or existing knowledge in a reader's ability to comprehend new material. Understanding narrative and expository text structures and building strong schemas will enhance students' text comprehension. This is crucial for [Dual Language Learners](#).



Word networks provide one way to increase vocabulary within and across content areas. These methods and activities are especially useful for teaching content words, and for building [vocabulary](#) for Dual Language Learners. Word networks can also be used to help students learn sets of words that share synonymous meanings (e.g., miniature, petite, and small) or shades of meaning (e.g., small, larger, gigantic). Try these simple [Word Network activities](#) to help build your students' schema!

Read More

- Chall, J.S. and Jacobs, V.A. (Spring 2003). [The classic study on poor children's fourth-grade slump](#). *American Educator* 27 (1) 14-15,44.
- Hirsch, E.D., Jr. (Spring 2003). [Reading comprehension requires knowledge—of words and the world](#). *American Educator* 27 (1), 10-22, 28-29, 44.



Our Mission is to EMPOWER TEACHERS to ensure that every child learns to read by third grade.

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