

Lesson Skill: Understanding and using roots to expand vocabulary

Strand Reading--vocabulary

SOL 6.4
7.4
8.4

Materials

- Construction paper
- Colored pencils
- Dictionaries and/or Internet access

Lesson

1. Review the fact that word roots indicate the base meaning of a word and that roots are found in many different words with similar meanings. Give students an example of a root (e.g., *logos*, meaning “reason, idea, word, speech, discourse”) that is the base of several words already in their active vocabularies. On the board, write the root and three words based on the root (e.g., *biology*, *trilogy*, *logic*). Explain how the root works with other word parts in each of the words to create meaning.
2. Have students work in pairs or groups to compare word roots with plant roots. For example, have them explain a way they are different (most plant roots are at the base of one plant, but one word root is at the base of many words) and how they are similar (the root is the source of the plant just as the root is the source of the word). Discuss students’ answers with the class, including ways to represent graphically the fact that word roots, like plant roots, are at the base of words. This organizer should include the root, its definition, the words for which it is the base, and the definitions of the words. Have the students select which graphic organizer option they feel best represents the way word roots contribute to meaning; then, use this graphic organizer on the board to show the relationship between your step-one root and each example word.
3. Give each group construction paper and colored pencils, and assign each group a different root. Have each group brainstorm as many words as they can that use that root, aiming for five to ten words, depending on the root.
4. Once students have brainstormed, allow them to use dictionaries or Web sites to find more words and verify that the words they brainstormed contain the root’s meaning as well as its letters.
5. Have each group use the graphic organizer selected by the class to create a poster showing the relationship between their assigned root and each word they found or brainstormed.

6. Have each group present their poster, giving the definitions of their root and several of their words, and explaining the relationship between the root's definition and each word's definition.