Making and Writing Words (MWW)

http://www.readingonline.org/articles/words/rasinski.html

As in Making Words, MWW begins with the identification of vowels and consonants to be used in the lesson. Students each write these letters at the top of their MWW sheets. In the empty boxes underneath, students will write words made from the letter set. Before they begin, the teacher reminds them that the word they write in any box may contain only letters listed at the top of the page, and that each letter may be used only once per word unless it appears more than once in the list at the top. Part 1 of the activity then starts with the teacher pronouncing or giving a clue to a word that the students write in the first box.

Here is how the activity might play out in the classroom:

The teacher instructs the students to write the following letters in the appropriate boxes on their individual MWW sheets: the vowels a, a, i, and o; and the consonants c, n, t, and v. She also asks them to write an apostrophe, placing it for convenience in the consonants box, and uses this time to review briefly the nature and role of apostrophes in making words. The sheets at this point would look something like this:

Making and Writing Words

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vowels    a,a,i,o | Consonants    c,n,t,v,' |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1     | 6     | 11   |
| 2     | 7     | 12   |
| 3     | 8     | 13  |
| 4     | 9     | 14 |
| 5     | 10   | 15 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| T-1  | T-2  | T-3  |

The teacher then either pronounces or gives clues to words, beginning with a few having only two or three letters and moving on to longer words:

* "In box number 1 write a two-letter word that means the opposite of out. [Students write the word in box 1.] Good. Now, words that contain in belong to a word family.
* In box 2 I'd like you to write a three-letter word that belongs to the in word family. Here's another clue: the word is a kind of metal. [Students write tin in box 2.]
* "Now, in boxes 3, 4, and 5 please write three words that belong to the an word family. Remember, all an words will rhyme and you can only use the letters listed in the consonant and vowel boxes."

This sheet would now be partially completed:

Making and Writing Words

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vowels    a,a,i,o | Consonants    c,n,t,v,' |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1    in | 6     | 11   |
| 2    tin | 7     | 12   |
| 3    can | 8     | 13  |
| 4    tan | 9     | 14 |
| 5    van | 10   | 15 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| T-1  | T-2  | T-3  |

The teacher continues with the class through other three-letter words such as not and cot for boxes 6 and 7 and oat for box 8.

Then it's on to longer words: "Great job, class. Now let's work on some longer words.

* In box 9 write the contraction for the word cannot. It's pronounced 'can't.' Remember to put the apostrophe in the correct place. Figure it out with a partner or look here at my sheet if you run into trouble with this one."The teacher works with the class through the remaining words she had planned –
* coin in box 10, ("The word that goes in box 10 describes a type of money that includes pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters"),
* vain in box 11, and
* vacant in box 12. Throughout this work the teacher either pronounces the words or provides clues to help students figure out the word

Thus, MWW promotes not only growth in spelling and decoding but also in vocabulary acquisition.

The final word is always the "challenge word." Students are told that it uses all the letters listed, and they are challenged to write the word in the final box. In our example, the final word is vacation, which students would write in box 13.

As in Making Words, after all the words have been written in part 1 of MWW, the teacher guides the students to apply what they learned to part 2, where they discover new words that follow or transfer some of the same patterns or principles used in part 1. In the boxes marked T1, T2, and T3 (the T stands for transfer), the teacher directs students to write words related to those in boxes 1 to 13. In the case of our example, the teacher might ask students to look over the words they have just written and then write such new words as coil in box T1, panda in T2, and nation in T3. Students give it a try, and then talk about the information they used from part 1 to figure out the transfer words in part 2. Of course, the teacher may wish to challenge students with other transfer words beyond the three for which boxes are provided on the MWW sheet.

Part 3 of Making and Writing Words involves students sorting the words they have just written. Using scissors, they cut out each box on the sheet to make individual word cards. Students will work with the cards over several days, so providing envelopes for storage is a good idea.

For word sorting, students organize their cards into categories provided by the teacher.

Here are some of the "word sorts" the teacher might pose for the 16 words in our example:

Sort 1: Words that belong to the an family and words that don't

Sort 2: Words that have one syllable, two syllables, and three or more syllables

Sort 3: Words that contain digraphs and words that don't

Sort 4: Words that contain blends and words that don't

Sort 5: Words that end in n and words that don't

Sort 6: Words that have words within them (e.g., ant in vacant).

Of course, not all the sorts have to be letter-sound related. Teachers can also have students sort words into semantic or meaning-bearing categories, such as

Sort 7: Words that describe things and words that don't

Sort 8: Words that describe how a person might feel and words that don't describe feelings

As students become adept at sorting words, teachers may wish to have them name the categories. Even young children display a surprising degree of creativity in leading this part of Making and Writing Words. For older students, the teacher can modify the activity by having them list the categories on a blank sheet of paper and write the words under the appropriate category, rather than creating cards for manual sorting.

With each new sort, students not only gain added exposure to the words but they also analyze the words from different perspectives. This gives them greater control over and knowledge about how the words are constructed and what they mean.