Identifying Key Words, Synonyms, and Key Phrases

Overview
Students need tools with which to search resources. Having students determine key words in their research questions and synonyms for those key words provides some of those tools. Additionally, students need to think of some key phrases that will also help them locate information. This lesson is designed to help students develop this research tool.

Student Objectives
Students will
- identify key words in their questions.
- generate synonyms for those key words which have synonyms.
- identify key phrases.
- complete the Key Word and Synonym Worksheet.

Instructional Plan

Materials:
- Research questions on sentence strips
- Key Word and Synonym Worksheet
- Electronic version of Key Word and Synonym Worksheet on computer
- Thesaurus
- Group Research Notebook
- Computer connected to LCD projector
- Student laptops with M. S. Office
- Each group has a research notebook with labeled sections (questioning, identifying & collecting, evaluating, sense-making, reflecting & refining, and using)

Preparation
- Students have been placed in research groups and have chosen their research questions.
- Students have copied their research questions onto paper from the sentence strips and placed them in the group research notebook under the section labeled "questions."

Instruction and Activities

1. Tell students that today they will begin identifying key words, synonyms, and key phrases in their research questions. They will use these key words, synonyms, and key phrases to begin searching resources for answers to their research questions. Tell students that a key word is the word or words that the question is about. They are the important words in the question.
2. Hold up one research question on a sentence strip and ask students to identify the key words in the question. Have the class discuss and come to consensus on the key words in the question.
3. Repeat the above procedure 2 to 3 times until you are sure that students understand key words.
4. Ask students to remind you what a synonym is? Elicit responses from students reinforcing correct answers.
5. Next, clearly define "synonym" for students as words that mean the same as another word but are spelled differently.
6. Have the class generate synonyms for simple words (i.e., big-large, hungry-famished, tiny-small, sleepy-tired, poisonous-venomous, pretty-beautiful).
7. Next take the key words identified in the research question above and have students think of synonyms for these key words.
8. Introduce the Key Word and Synonym Worksheet. Model for students where to locate the Key Word and Synonym Worksheet from their laptops.
   - Once the electronic document is open, type a sample research question at the top of the document.
   - Next show students how to highlight the key words in a different color.
     - Double click on a Key Word to select it.
     - From the Format Palette choose Borders and Shading. From the Color drop down menu select a
bright color like yellow.
• Now model for students how to copy the highlighted key words, one at a time from the research question and paste them in the key word column (far left) of the worksheet. One key word per cell.
• Finally show students how to type the synonyms students generated into the cell to the right of the key word (if synonyms exist for those key words).

9. Ask students to take their research question out of the group notebook.
10. Now ask students to turn their laptops on and launch M. S. Word. Repeat steps in #8 while students follow along.

11. Allow students about 10 mins. to generate their own synonyms for their key words.
12. Before moving on students should save the document. Model for students how to modify the name of the document and where to save it. Then ask students to close the lid of their laptop.

13. After you have everyone’s attention, explain to students sometimes it is difficult to identify synonyms for a key word. Tell students that some key words will not have synonyms (hurricanes, floods, tsunamis). Also tell students that some key words are really key phrases (i.e., sperm whale, national parks, California missions). It would not make sense to break up these phrases into individual words. These words are best left as key phrases.

14. Tell students sometimes it is difficult to think of synonyms for key words. Ask if anyone is stuck? Then tell students M.S. Word sometimes has a built-in tool, a thesaurus that can help them identify synonyms for their key words if they have run out of ideas.
15. Demonstrate for students how to use the thesaurus built into M.S. Word to help find synonyms for key words.
   Select a key word and copy and paste it into the cell to the right of the key word.
   • Double click to select the key word.
   • Choose Copy from the Edit menu at the top.
   • Click in the cell to the right of the key word.
   • Choose Paste from the Edit menu at the top.
   • Double click to select the key word you just pasted.
   • From the Tools menu at the top choose Thesaurus.
   • Scroll through the list of synonyms, select one by clicking on it, and then click on the insert button. The synonym selected will replace the highlighted word in the second column first row.

16. Now tell students that they are going to try and generate key phrases. These are phrases that use either the key words or synonyms, and usually resemble titles that capture the information they are looking for. For example, if you wanted to find information on explorers, you might generate some common phrases such as: "New World Explorers," "Explorers of the United States," "California Explorers."
17. Another way to come up with key phrases is to rework the research question into a statement. Try altering the statement in different ways to see what good key phrases the students can come up with.
18. Ask students to type key phrases in the next section of the worksheet under Key Phrases.
19. Have students print their worksheets so that you can correct spelling and check to see the appropriateness of their synonyms, and key phrases.
20. Finally students should store their completed Key Word and Synonym Worksheet in their group notebook behind the “Identifying and Collecting” tab.

Student Assessment/Reflections
Students should to be able to determine what questions to ask. Identifying key words helps students to acquire this skill. Asking, "What is the question about?" often helps students to determine what the key words are in a question. Sometimes the key words have synonyms and sometimes they do not. This is important for students to recognize.

Standards
American Association of School Librarians, Information Literacy Standard:
1. The student who is information literate accesses information efficiently and effectively.
3. The student who is information literate uses information accurately and creatively.

ISTE National Educational Technology Standards (NETS®) and Performance Indicators for Students
3. Research and Information Fluency

Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information. Students:
- a. plan strategies to guide inquiry.
- b. locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.
- c. evaluate and select information sources and digital tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks.
- d. process data and report results.

**NCTE/IRA Standards**

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).