

## Word Walls

To encourage students to use the new vocabulary they are learning, teachers often make use of Word Walls. Word Walls are typically chalkboards or bulletin boards with words listed on them. Itinerant teachers (teachers who don't have their own classrooms) can create Word Walls on oak tag or easel paper.

Some teachers group words on the Word Wall according to subject area. (For example, math words may be listed together: *pi*, *radius*, *diameter*, etc. Or, social studies words: *executive*, *judicial*, *legislative*, *Congress*, *senator*, *representative*, etc.) Other teachers group content area words together in a word web, usually referred to as a *concept dictionary*. A concept dictionary emphasizes the relationships among the new words being learned by grouping them according to characteristics (e.g., in science, *volcanoes*, *magma*, *lava*, *molten*, *igneous*, etc.).

Word Walls can easily become background decoration in the classroom, so some educators have been experimenting with featuring words in context, with definitions, and with explanation of word origin or slang usage. Following are some examples of how words could be featured within meaningful and interesting contexts:

*Examples of word origins and multiple contexts:*

### **O.K. (okay)**

Probably originated in England around 1840; believed to stand for **oil korrekt**. Some believe it may be attributed to Andrew Jackson from the native Choctaw word **(h)oke** (with silent *h*).

### **amicable**

Our relationship has always been an **amicable** (friendly) one—until we had this fight.

**amico** (Italian)

**amigo** (Spanish, Portugese)

**ami** (French)

**freund** (German)

### **revolutionary**

One of the most **revolutionary** events of **Revolutionary** times was Benjamin Franklin's establishment of a public school to teach practical crafts to the new nation's youth.

*Examples of words defined in context:*

His heart **palpitated** in his chest as he ran up and down the stairs, breathing heavily and sweating **profusely**.

His heart **palpitated (beat rapidly)** in his chest as he ran up and down the stairs, breathing heavily and sweating **profusely (tremendously)**.

His heart **palpitated, or beat quickly**, in his chest as he ran up and down the stairs, breathing heavily and sweating.