

January 16, 2008

**Subject Area:** Reading

**Instructional Method:** KWL Model

**Grade Levels:** K-12

**Description:**

The KWL model represents what students know about a given topic, what they want to know about the topic, and what they have learned about the topic. Jared and Jared (1997) stated that the KWL model was created to enhance reading comprehension in content areas. All three parts of the model focus on a different aspect of student's individual learning style. Jared and Jared explain that the KWL model is also used as an organizational tool because it allows student to identify known information about a given subject.

Sometimes children can feel inadequate about what they have learned through reading because they do not really understand it, according to Glazer (1998). This strategy can help students feel more comfortable with their comprehension of a subject because it goes through each step separately so that comprehension comes easier.

According to Szabo (2006) the KWL chart presents a before-during-after strategy for students in helping with comprehension strategies.

- Students can get started by brainstorming any prior knowledge they may have on the topic which then helps them develop a curiosity on the subject and gets them interested in learning more about it.
- This chart also helps them decide what they would like to learn about the subject which gives them the self motivation to read and make up their own questions.
- It helps with self-monitoring of comprehension because it allows them to identify what they understood.
- This chart also gives an opportunity for students to expand on their ideas and formulate new ones.

**References:**

1. Glazer, M. Susan. (1998). Using kwl folders. *Teaching Diverse Learners*, 29(4), 106-107.
2. Jared, J. Elizabeth, Jared, H. Alva (1997). Launching into improved comprehension. *The Technology Teacher*, 56(6), 24-31.
3. Szabo, Susan. (2006). Kwhhl: A student-driven evolution of the kwl. *American Secondary Education*, 34(3), 57-67.

**"How to" Teach:**

The KWL strategy is first taught to students by introducing and explaining the strategy to each of the student groups, or even to the group as a whole. The teacher starts off by making three columns on the chalkboard and indicating the three parts by putting a K in the first column, a W in the second column, and an L in the third column. The teacher then selects a topic and the students will describe what they already know about that topic and the teacher will place it in the K column. An example is: given the topic of outer space, the students are to describe orally to the teacher any background information that they may have. For instance, a student may say "the

planets revolve around the sun," and the teacher would then write it on the board in the K column. After this part is complete, the students are to come up with their own questions that they would like to know about this topic. The teacher will write these questions in the W column. An example of a question that a student may want to know is, "what is the biggest planet," and the teacher would write this question in the W column. For the third column, which is the L, the students are asked to read the text that the teacher assigns and research the questions that they had stated prior to reading and come up with the answers. The L column is for the students to state what they have learned by reading the text and coming up with the answers. For instance, in answering the question of which is the biggest planet, the students would say Jupiter.

The teacher would need to know how to model this process first before expecting the students to work by themselves. The teacher can demonstrate in front of the whole class the first time and then break the class up into groups of no more than 10 students. This way, each child is able to contribute to their group's discussion so they do not rely on others to answer. Each group, or even child, can be given a handout with the three columns of the KWL so they can write out their own answers on the sheet. This of course is done after the students are aware of how this teaching method works.

### **Implications:**

This practice activity may be used in the classroom to help students with and without disabilities and teachers as well. This strategy breaks up into three different parts to focus on a different aspect of the student's individual learning style. This can also help with categorization.

Some disadvantages of this method are that it does not encourage asking questions while reading and the fact that some of background information may not be correct. It also does not help with growing vocabulary, because if a student does not know what a word is, they may just skip it and go on. There is also no encouragement for addressing emotional experience while they read. This can be prevented by having the students talk about these instances or even finding the vocabulary words they do not know and writing them down so they can figure out the meanings.

### **Additional Links:**

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/kwl.pdf>

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/kwl.html>

<http://www.studygs.net/texred3.htm>

<http://www.kidbibs.com/learningtips/l21.htm>

[http://www.fieldtripearth.org/repository/678/kwl\\_text.pdf](http://www.fieldtripearth.org/repository/678/kwl_text.pdf)

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