



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

November 22, 2004

Volume 2 Number 12

Graphically Representing Information

Graphic representations of information depict relationships among concepts, so that students have a map of an upcoming passage or unit. Graphically representing ideas ties in closely to prior knowledge, forming a basis for integrating new information. Likewise, graphic depictions of text structure enable students to become familiar with the various types of text structures and the expectations implicit in each type of text (e.g., literary and expository).

Semantic Web

The semantic web visually graphs the structure of the text to define and show important relationships among major concepts to be presented. Webs can be constructed for paragraphs, sections of chapters, or entire chapters. Webs force students to pay attention to details, often requiring them to distinguish between important and less important ideas. They also allow students to focus on the central questions that have been posed for the lesson. There is no standard form that all webs follow.

1. Draw a circle for the center of the web. It should be larger than all the others to show that it is hub from which all the others emanate.
2. Write the main idea from the paragraph, page, or chapter in the center of the circle. This should be only one or two words.
3. List supporting information related to the main idea. Students should brainstorm ideas for several minutes, listing words related to the key word or phrase. These ideas should be written on the chalkboard for future reference.
4. Create the web by placing key words or phrases on new spokes until ideas are exhausted. Information that is directly

related to the main idea should be identified and listed in smaller circles at the end of spokes emanating from the center circle. Next, words or phrases that relate to the main ideas are identified from the brainstormed list. These words are written at the end of the spokes. Word spokes can also emanate from details to which they are related, positioning an idea two or more spokes away from the center of the web.

5. The class explores and discusses the web, adding, deleting, or modifying ideas as needed. Students compare their own prior knowledge to the structure of the web, become aware of new words, and relate new words and knowledge to those that are already known.

Webs can be used after reading to review the major ideas and their relationships presented in a lesson. The teacher provides the major topic and the students as a group fill in related details from the text during and after reading.

Students can generate their own individual webs, using a web that has been begun by the teacher. As they read, students are given the direction to complete the web by supplying the missing information. Not all webs need be identical.

