

KWL—PLUS

Description

KWL-Plus is a reading and thinking strategy which focuses on the student as a learner. It is a highly effective strategy that supports nonfiction inquiry and clarifies thinking. Research involves identifying what you know about a topic, wondering what more you would want to learn about it, and finding more information which leads to the formation of new ideas. It encourages the student to ask questions and think about ideas while doing research. The KWL-Plus helps students:

- Recall what is **known** (K);
- Determine what students **want** to learn (W);
- Identify what is **learned** (L); and
- Map text and summarize information (Plus).

Using a KWL chart is an excellent way to activate prior knowledge a student has in a given area. It allows students to recognize that they already have some knowledge of a subject upon which they can build. This becomes important when students begin to make connections between prior knowledge and newly acquired knowledge.

Mapping and summarization were added to the original KWL strategy through the “Plus” activity. This was done because writing and restructuring of text are powerful tools in helping students process information. The expanded strategy engages readers in constructing meaning from text and fosters student independence. Students become independent learners through instruction that gradually shifts the responsibility for initiating the strategy from the teacher to the student.

A KWL-Plus graphic organizer can be a powerful strategy for students to use as they begin their science project. Teachers should model the use of this graphic organizer and allow students to practice the strategy in pairs or in small groups until they can complete a task independently.

Procedure

- Distribute copies of Activity Sheet C to students, or create a class KWL organizer using chart paper. Choose a topic and guide the students in a brainstorming activity to generate ideas regarding what they already know about this topic. (**K**)
- Guide students through the process of categorizing information in the **K** column. This “chunking” allows them to anticipate areas of information they may find in their research. Model the categorization process by thinking aloud while identifying categories and combining and classifying information. Students can complete the “Categories of Information We Expect to Use” section on the activity sheet or on chart paper if the process is being modeled with the entire class.
- Questioning is an important part of being able to do in depth research on a given topic. Guide students in generating questions they would like answered about the given topic. Use probing questions to encourage students to think. This becomes the information for the **W** column. When practicing this strategy, students should be given text about the topic. They can read the text independently or in small groups. Text should be in manageable segments until the student becomes familiar with the technique. Reading text in segments allows students to become aware of what they are learning as well as what they have not comprehended.
- As students read and encounter new information, they can add questions to the **W** column. Thus, as students proceed through the material, they constantly think about what they read, monitor their learning, and perhaps generate additional questions to guide their reading. As they research, the student should note new information in the **L** column, which identifies what he/she has learned. This

helps students select important information from each paragraph and it provides a basis for future reference and review.

- Model how students should categorize information listed in the **L** column. Have students ask themselves what each statement describes. In doing so they often discover more categories that can be used for future reading.
- The next step could be for students to create a map/web with the information. Through listing and categorizing, the most difficult tasks of constructing a map are already completed. Instruct students to use the article title as the center (big idea) of their map. Categories developed with the KWL-Plus organizer become the map's major concepts, with explanatory details subsumed under each. Lines show the relationship of the main topic to the categories. All information categorized on the organizer acts as supporting data on the map.
- Guide students in writing a summary of their data. The most difficult part of summarizing has already been completed. Instruct students to use the map as an outline for their summary. The map's center becomes the title of the summary. Students number the categories on the map in the sequence they prefer. Each category forms the topic for a new paragraph. Finally, supporting details in each category are used to expand the paragraph or explain the main idea.
- Engage students, in small groups or whole class, in the use of Activity Sheet C. The topic chosen should reflect a key idea from the *New York State Intermediate Level Science Core Curriculum*.

ACTIVITY SHEET E

KWL-Plus Graphic Organizer

Topic: _____

K (What I Know)	W (What I Want to Know)	L (What I Learned)

Categories of information we expect to use: _____
