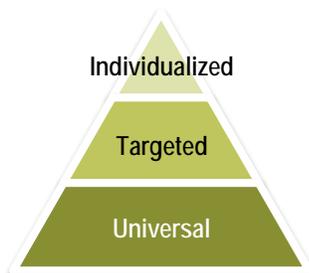


# Shades of Meaning



The Shades of Meaning strategy helps students understand the subtle differences between related words. Students identify a continuum of words related to a theme or idea. It expands students' vocabulary by teaching synonyms and reveals the hidden inferences behind words.



A teacher's understanding of their students' learning needs helps determine when to provide universal, targeted, or individualized instructional strategies. For some students, universal instructional strategies may be enough to meet their learning needs. For others, more targeted instructional strategies are the starting point for implementing the curriculum. The strategy described is a guideline that teachers can use depending on the learning context.

## Why use this strategy in an inclusive learning environment

- Provides opportunities to review and practice words that occur authentically as students learn about a topic.
- Develops student vocabulary and strengthens descriptive and persuasive writing skills.
- Helps students make accurate judgments about headlines and media.
- Builds comprehension skills by clarifying the authors' intentional use of vocabulary and character perspective.
- Encourages students to describe relationships between words and explore the nuances that are revealed by placing them along a continuum.

## How this strategy could be used in an inclusive learning environment

1. Select specific words related to the topic of study. Add other semantically similar words to form a set (e.g., fantastic: *good, wonderful, okay, awesome*) or work with students to create their own word set.
2. Do a 'think aloud' of the words based on their shades of meaning. Discuss the meaning of the selected words with students.
3. Students share the reasons for word placements and the subtle differences they noted among the words.



4. Collaboratively revise the continuum before students create their own examples.

## Examples

Topic	Possible Word Sets
Verb – said	replied, stated, answered, whispered
Units of measurement	cm, km, mm
Precipitation	rain, monsoon, shower, downpour
Size	large, miniscule, huge, tiny, average
Habitats	city, village, hamlet, metropolis, town

**Pippin the dog was wet.  
How wet was he?**

Pippin was **damp.**

Pippin was **wet.**

Pippin was **soaked.**

Pippin was **drenched.**

**Shanu was happy.  
How happy was Shanu?**

Shanu was **content.**

Shanu was **happy.**

Shanu was **thrilled.**

Shanu was **ecstatic!**

## Tips for individualized supports

- Use visuals in a variety of formats to support and pre-teach vocabulary.
- Use guided reading groups to prepare students to work with a partner or small group.
- Pair students with a peer to practice reading and organizing information.
- Have students draw or select images to express ideas.
- Provide text-to-speech, word prediction, or voice recognition tools.
- For students who are learning English, use personal dictionaries and thesauri in a student's first language to help build vocabulary and express ideas.

