# A to Z TAXONOMY STRATEGY

## STEP BY STEP

When introducing this strategy and when using it for at least the first 6-8 times, it is helpful to do a chart-sized taxonomy, and work the process with the entire class. Later on, students may be given individual A-Z graphic organizers for their own projects.

1. Create a blank A-Z taxonomy.

   This should meet the following criteria:

   Begin with a labeled BIG IDEA (ESSENTIAL QUESTION) as the top of the list.
   (i.e., What do I know about....?)

   - Large enough for all students to view from their seats
   - Print with a single color with adequate contrast to be easily read
   - Have adequate spacing to allow the addition of a second/third set of words as they are learned during the study (see below)
   - The format/size of the list should allow it to remain visible for repeated reference throughout the unit of study, as students will use it whenever they compose

   (Note: Many classrooms have smart boards, which may provide flexilility. Using a smart board may limit when the list will be available to students.)

Essential Question: _____

| A – | J – | S – |
|-----|-----|-----|
| B – | K - | T - |
| C – | L – | U - |
| D – | M – | V – |
| E - | N – | W – |
| F – | O - | X - |
| G – | P - | Y - |
| H – | Q - | Z - |
| I – | R – | |

2. Insert the BIG IDEA (ESSENTIAL QUESTION) in the space as indicated above. This activity provides a prime opportunity to engage students and evaluate their knowledge at a glance. As a new book or unit is begun, students focus on the BIG IDEA (ESSENTIAL QUESTION) and provide single words or short phrases which answer the EQ. Some words, alone or when used as a response to the EQ, may need clarification. Other students should be encouraged to initiate this clarifying process. As a last resort, the teacher may ask simply, "Please clarify _____."

   Clarification may include rebus drawings (stick figures) next to the words for non-readers.

3. After each word has been clarified, the teacher will record it next to the appropriate initial letter. It is important to use a single color for all of the prior knowledge answers to the EQ.

4. Touch & Name. While not an element on the taxonomy, this activity requires students to link two or more words from the list into a single sentence. Students are called forward one at a time to choose two words from the list and compose a meaningful sentence.

   This is done orally for two reasons: a) it provides an instantaneous way for the teacher to assess comprehension and correct any erroneous thinking by posing questions for clarification; b) it serves as the first step in the process of self-editing.

   When finished at the beginning of a unit of study, this activity easily serves to assess what students' already know about the topic as expressed in their own words—their schema.

Part 2—New Information: COLOR #2:

1. As study proceeds, after addressing each new resource (or a group of resources), the class should revisit the A-Z Taxonomy. On these return visits, students are again directed to the big idea (essential question) and asked to provide additional words/phrases that they have learned from the new resources. These are added to the chart in a second color. (There should never be more than two colors on a chart. The colors will indicate prior knowledge and new knowledge. New knowledge may be added several times, using the same second color each time.)

When the new words have been added, repeating Touch & Name utilizing all the words will help students to merge the new vocabulary with the old and solidify their overall comprehension of the topic.

(Note: depending upon the number of words added to the list, and the number of students in the group, the number of students "touching and naming" each time this activity is included will vary.)