

Using Mnemonics to Teach States and Capitals

Objective: To teach students the names of states and corresponding state capitals

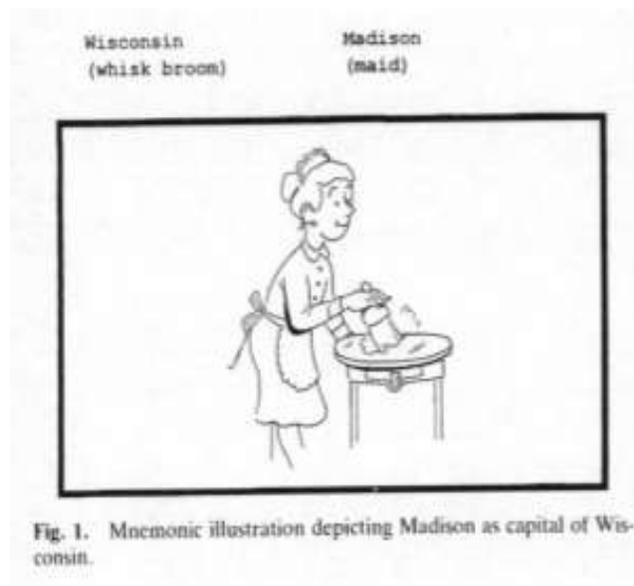
Setting and Materials

Setting: self-contained classroom for students with learning disabilities

Materials: overhead transparencies of 40 out of 50 states and their capitals, teacher guidelines/scripts, and student booklet with worksheets for practice activities

Content Taught

Forty mnemonic illustrations were depicted on separate overhead transparencies. Each illustration contained the name of the state, name of the capital, and keywords for each state and capital names via an interactive illustration like the ones pictured below.



Other Examples

State (keyword)	Capital (keyword)	Illustration
Washington (wash-a-ton)	Olympia (Olympics)	People at an Olympic event washing a ton of laundry.
New Hampshire (hamster)	Concord (Concorde)	A hamster flying the Concorde jet.
Florida (flower)	Tallahassee (television)	A flower on a television.
Connecticut (convict)	Hartford (heart)	A convict pounding rocks into heart shapes.
Kentucky (kennel)	Frankfort (frankfurters)	Dogs eating frankfurters at a kennel.

Teaching Procedures

Present the mnemonic illustration on an overhead projector and orally practice the keywords, interactions, and retrieval strategies (see script example below)

Daily Review: Teacher: Let's practice the states and capitals we have covered so far in class. Everybody, what's the capital of Maine? [Student's respond]

Present new information: Teacher: The capital of Wisconsin is Madison. The keyword for Wisconsin is *whisk broom* [Points to overhead projection of mnemonic illustration]. Here is a picture of a whisk broom. The keyword for Madison is maid [Points to overhead]. Here is a picture of a maid.

The important thing to remember is a mind using a whisk broom. What is the keyword for Wisconsin? [Students respond]. Good. What is the keyword for Madison? [Students respond]. Good. Remember, when I ask you for the capital of Wisconsin, first think of the keyword, which is? [Students respond]. Good, whisk broom. Then, think of the picture with the whisk broom in it. What is in that picture? [Students respond]. Good, a maid is using the whisk broom. And what is maid the key word for? [Students respond]. Good, maid is the keyword for Madison. So what is the capital of Wisconsin? [Students respond]. Good, Madison. What is the important thing to remember about this picture? [Students respond].

Guided Practice: Now, if I ask you to tell me the capital of Wisconsin, what is the first thing you should think of?

Student: The keyword

Teacher: Right, and the keyword is --- ?

Student: Whisk broom.

Teacher: What's the second thing you should think of?

Student: What's happening in the picture?

Teacher: And what is happening in the picture?

Student: The maid is using a whisk broom.

Teacher: That's right. And what's the other keyword?

Student: Maid.

Teacher: And what does that stand for?

Student: Madison.

Teacher: Madison, correct [Repeat questioning for "Madison is the capital of what state?"]

Independent Practice: Now I will pass out a worksheet and go over how you complete it...

Formal Evaluation: Now let's review your answers on the worksheet we just completed...

Evaluation

Record the number of correct and incorrect state names and capitals from the completed worksheet.

Lesson Plan Based on:

Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., Bakken, J. P., & Brigham, F. J. (1992). A complex mnemonic strategy for teaching states and their capitals: Comparing forward and backward associations. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 7*, 96-103.