

Word Bridges

What is it?

The Word Bridges strategy may be used to explicitly teach students to explore vocabulary beyond basic dictionary definitions. Instead of relying on static meanings, students create generalizations that encourage deeper reflection on a word's significance. This strategy also helps students make personal connections to the word, enhancing retention and understanding. Additionally, students analyze how affixes (prefixes and suffixes) modify a word's meaning and how different contexts can affect synonym substitutions.

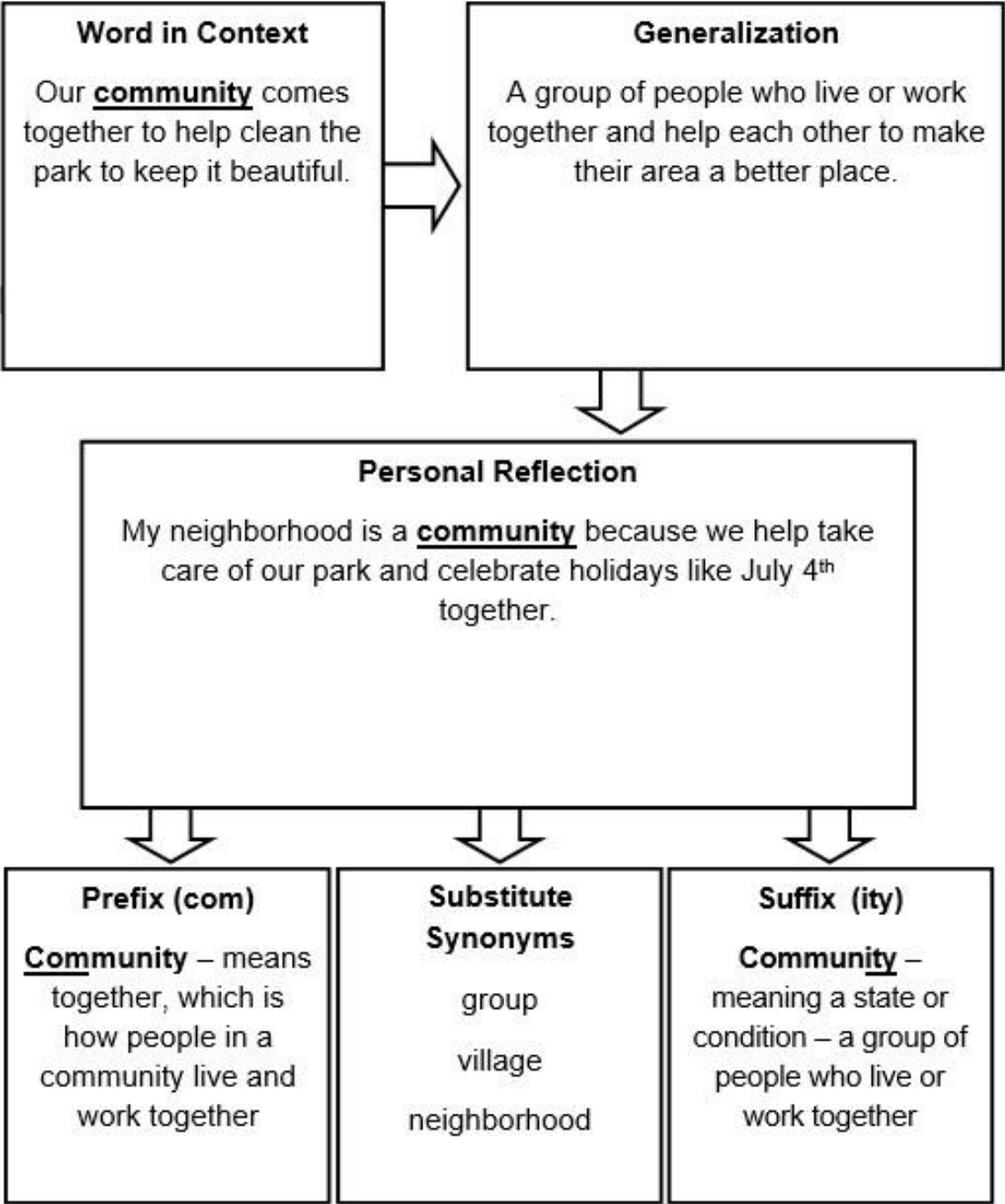
Purpose

Word Bridges support deeper vocabulary comprehension by encouraging students to think critically about word meanings rather than memorizing definitions. By examining affixes, synonym variations, and personal connections, students gain a more flexible understanding of language. This strategy enhances word recognition, strengthens comprehension across different contexts, and fosters greater engagement with vocabulary in both written and spoken communication.

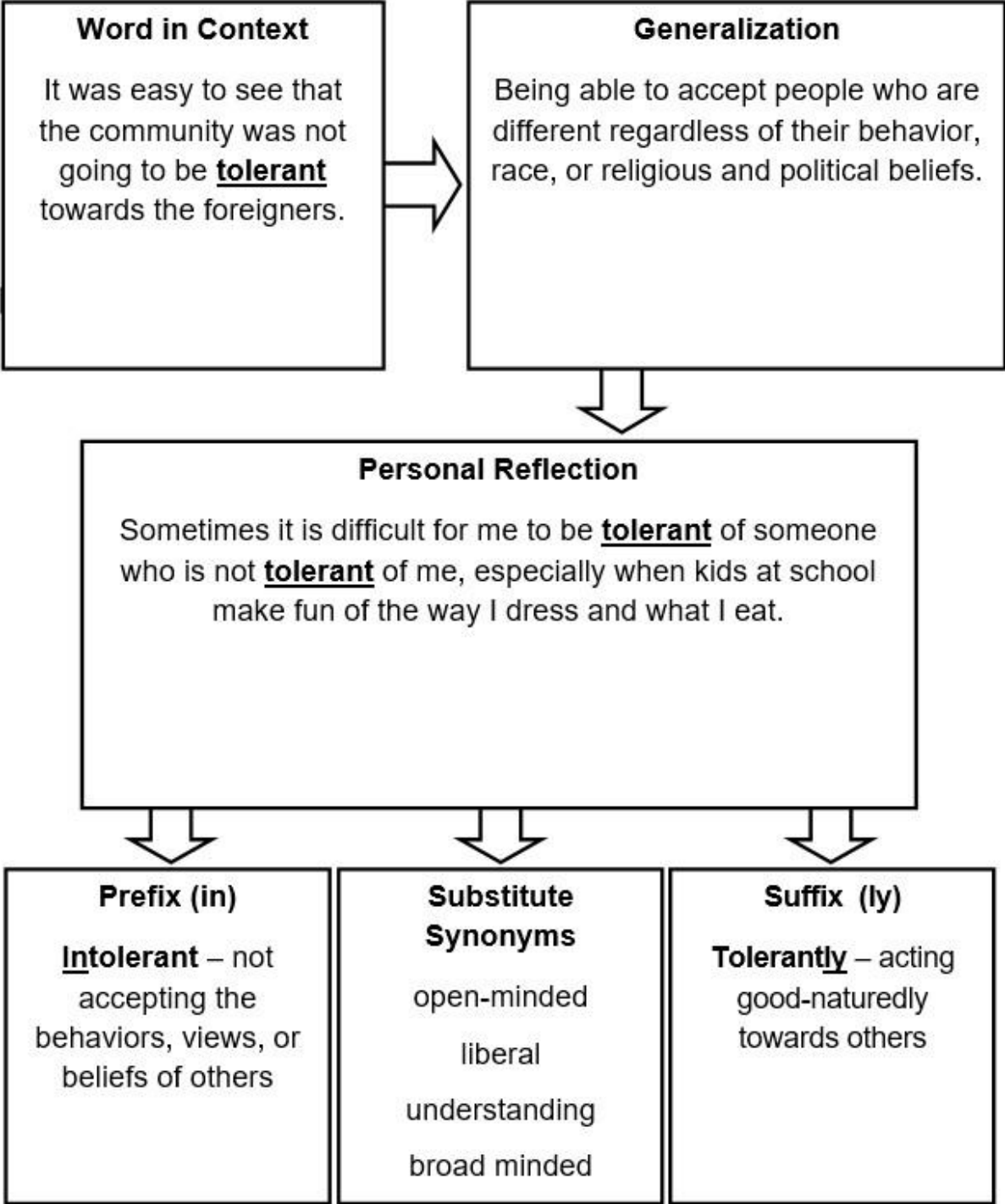
Steps in the Process

1. Distribute a copy of the graphic organizer or have students copy and label the format in their notebooks from an overhead or chart.
2. In collaborative pairs, students use the dictionary to identify the possible meanings of the selected word or term. Then, they analyze each definition until they determine which best applies to the context in which the word was found. Review with the students to assure the correct selection has been made and to determine how the choice was made using context cues.
3. Model how to create a generalization of the word or term. In pairs, students brainstorm and write their own generalization. Students are allowed to refine their responses after hearing peer examples.
4. Model, using the thinking aloud process, personal reflections based on the organizer. In pairs, students brainstorm before writing their own response.
5. Identify a prefix and suffix for the word. Students apply the affixes and determine the meaning and usage of the new. Review.
6. In pairs, students use a thesaurus to identify possible synonym substitutions for the word/term and determine which synonyms would make sense in context. Review.

Example 1: Elementary School – Social Studies



Example 2: Middle School - English



Digital Adaptations

Digital Graphic Organizer Creation

- Instead of distributing physical copies, teachers can share a **Google Slides, Padlet, or Canva** template of the Word Bridges graphic organizer. Students can complete their organizers digitally, allowing for easy editing and collaboration. Alternatively, students can use a **Google Doc or Microsoft OneNote** to replicate the format.

Collaborative Dictionary Exploration and Context Analysis

- Students can work in **Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or a shared Padlet** to look up word meanings using **online dictionaries (Merriam-Webster, Dictionary.com, or Lexico)**. They can highlight or comment on the definitions and discuss which one best fits the context using the comment or chat features in their shared document. Teachers can review student selections and provide feedback in real-time.

Personal Reflection Through Digital Discussion

- Students can then share their personal reflections through a **Flipgrid video response, a Seesaw journal entry, or a discussion post in Google Classroom**. This allows students to articulate connections to their own lives while engaging with peers' perspectives.

Affix Application and Exploration

- Using an **interactive word-building tool (Wordwall, Quizlet, or Flippity)**, students can manipulate prefixes and suffixes digitally to see how they affect word meaning. They can document their findings in a **Google Slide, Jamboard, or OneNote notebook** and share their observations in a class discussion forum.

Synonym Substitutions and Contextual Analysis

- Students can use an **online thesaurus (Thesaurus.com or Power Thesaurus)** to identify synonyms and determine their contextual accuracy. They can record their findings in a **Google Doc or a collaborative Padlet board**, explaining why certain synonyms work better than others in the given context. The teacher can review their choices and guide discussions about subtle differences in meaning.

Vocabulary: Word Bridge

Lesson Essential Question: _____

