WONDERFUL WORD CLOUDS

What's in a Wordle? Well, Wordles only one of many types of word clouds, such as Tagxedo, Yippy and Word Mosaic.

It's easy to create a word cloud by pasting in a chunk of connected text or inputting your own words into a word cloud generator. The generator then creates a picture, with the words that appear most frequently in the text having greater prominence in the word cloud. You can even manipulate the font, shape and color schemes of the cloud.

One way to use word clouds in the classroom is to provide vocabulary for students to use when talking and writing about reading, such as the example below:

45 WORDS YOU CAN USE FOR DESCRIBING CHARACTERS

Here are ten more uses for word clouds in the literacy classroom:

- **Vocabulary Clouds:** Have students choose 20 key vocabulary words from a fiction or nonfiction reading passage to create a word cloud. Then use at least 10 of them in a summary of the passage.

- **Synonymous Words:** Brainstorm synonyms for "tired words" such as *went* or *saw.* Use the word cloud as an anchor chart for student writing.

- **Prediction:** As a prereading activity, create a word cloud of key vocabulary from the passage and invite students to predict or anticipate what the passage is going to be about.

- **High Frequency Word Analysis:** Input a complete reading passage and have students analyze which words appear most and least frequently – and why. (Make sure they know how to spell the 20 most frequently appearing words.)

- **Word Explosions:** Use word clouds to create "word explosions" by brainstorming other words built from a particular root word and affixes.

- **Word Sorts:** Sort a collection of words from a reading passage into groups, such as similar meanings, parts of speech or letter patterns.

- **Introducing a concept:** Introduce a new theme, concept or reading passage with a word cloud and have students generate questions about it.

- **Learning Review:** As a learning review, have students work in pairs to create word cloud riddles of about 10 words on a concept, repeating the most important words to make them large. Other students must guess the concept.

- **Summarization:** Input a short news article into a word cloud and have students summarize the gist of the article.

- **Assessment:** Help students understand assessment criteria by converting a rubric into a word cloud and having students analyze the most important criteria.