General Memory Strategies

Here are some basic techniques for aiding students with memorization and understanding.

Acrostics
King Philip called out for George Smith (kingdom, phylum, class order, family, genus, species)

Grouped lists
“All of these species were first found by the Leakeys.”

Music
Set information to a tune (like the alphabet is sung to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”) or play and explain relevant music (for a time period, for a type of worldview).

Analogies
Make the unfamiliar more familiar; “This is to That as This Other is to That Other.” Use analogies that have to do with simple and recognizable concepts such as cooking, weather, celebrities, and animals. (*Achilles’ withdrawal to his tent is like a heavy-weight champion who won’t leave the balcony*).

Associations
Ask students what new information is “next to” in their minds; establish triggers, e.g., if a concept reminds a student of a quote from a movie, the student can recall the concept by thinking of the movie.

Visualizations
Have students come up with visual stand-ins for concepts: “I remember that longitudinal lines are vertical on the globe by thinking of my fifth grade teacher, Mr. Alongi, who was tall and thin.”