A paradigm is a standard, perspective, or set of ideas. A paradigm is a way of looking at something.

This word comes up a lot in the academic, scientific, and business worlds. A new paradigm in business could mean a new way of reaching customers and making money. In education, relying on lectures is a paradigm: if you suddenly shifted to all group-work, that would be a new paradigm. When you change paradigms, you’re changing how you think about something.

DEFINITIONS AND USAGE EXAMPLES

- a standard or typical example
  - epitome, image, prototype, model
- the generally accepted perspective of a given discipline at a given time
  - “he framed the problem within the psychoanalytic paradigm”
- A theory about how something should be done, made, or thought about
- A way of thinking that determines how one interprets and responds to situations
- (English) systematic arrangement of all the inflected forms of a word
- (English) class of all items that can be substituted into the same position (or slot) in a grammatical sequence (are in paradigmatic relation with one another)

Directions: Discuss the meaning of the word with your students, with special emphasis on any variations or nuances of the word specific to your discipline. Consider taking it a step further by using one or all of the following ideas as you involve students with the new vocabulary. Remember to preview all content you intend to share with students. Not all items on the lists provided below are appropriate for all classes or age levels.

1 (College Prep/General Interest)

As graduation approaches and students finalize their post-high school plans, families would do well to consider their financial paradigm about college.

From plush Student Union centers and rock climbing walls to elaborate social outings and team sports (many of which are unprofitable, subsidized by student fees), the American college experience is flooded with non-educational costs that contribute heavily to rising tuition costs burdening middle-class families.

Forbes Apr 23, 2015
2 (English/General Interest)

Our students love John Green, and for many of them, this book is their favorite. Take just a minute to discuss with those who have read it the following quotes using the concept of a paradigm.

✓ The prank is entitled 'Subverting the Patriarchal Paradigm.'
✓ "But, Lord, 'subverting the patriarchal paradigm'—it's like she wrote the speech."

Looking for Alaska

Or, even better, have students who have read the book explain to the rest of the class the context of these quotes and especially the usage of the word paradigm!

3 (Social Science and Science)

A Call to Look Past Sustainable Development

Our world of seven billion people — expected to reach 11 billion by the end of the century — will require an entirely different environmental paradigm.

New York Times Apr 13, 2015

(Social Studies, Science, and Business)

"What we're talking about is lowering the overall cost of an entire system needed to deliver a service. That's the paradigm shift."

More importantly, d.light and other entrepreneurial firms are showing how to bring power to many of the planet's 3 billion energy-poor citizens without costly construction of electric grids or the destructive growth of greenhouse gas emissions. It's a little-noticed development with major implications for tackling climate change.

Scientific American Apr 20, 2015
“No Living Woman Actually Looks Like Kate Moss”: The Unattainable Thin Ideal”

_Salon_ Apr 17, 2015

One of my favorite assignments in the class I teach on body diversity comes early in the semester... They nearly always feel obliged to explain, in great detail, why a particular body fits the “normal” paradigm.

—Gail Dines, professor of sociology and women’s studies at Wheelock College in Boston

“The Weight of the Evidence: It’s time to stop telling fat people to become thin.”

One of the principles driving the $61 billion weight-loss industries is the notion that fat is inherently unhealthy and that it’s better, health-wise, to be thin, no matter what you have to do to get there. But a growing body of research is beginning to question this paradigm. Does obesity cause ill health, result from it, both, or neither? Does weight loss lead to a longer, healthier life for most people?

_Slate_ Mar 23, 2015

(Cross-Curricular)

Good, concise articles and videos explaining the fundamentals of paradigms and paradigm shifts: (Click on the link to the articles and videos to learn more)

Articles:  _What is a paradigm? What is its purpose? What is a paradigm shift?_

Videos:  Bob Proctor Videos on Changing Your Paradigm:

Including “Six Minutes to Success” and “Shift Your Paradigm”

Click on the picture to link to the videos
“College Sports’ Billion-Dollar Issue: Who Pays Freight on Pay-to-Play?”

Administrators at non-football playing schools have vowed to find the resources to financially help their athletes. But what some fear, more than full cost of attendance, is what the power conferences plan to do next. “They might eventually get everything they want,” Potts said. “But will that satisfy them?”

One concern is that the largest programs might use their financial advantage to change the scholarship paradigm. Southland schools that don’t play football often successfully compete with USC and UCLA in non-revenue sports. Cal State Fullerton has won four NCAA titles in baseball, and other area schools can stand toe-to-toe with the Pac-12 in sports such as volleyball, water polo, and golf. That would change if, for example, UCLA suddenly decided to increase its baseball scholarships from the NCAA-capped 11.7 to 16, or 20. Potts said that could put Pepperdine baseball out of business.

“U.S. Hoping to Stage World Outdoor Track Championships”  By CHRISTOPHER CLAREY OCT. 24, 2014

Boston — The United States, long the leading nation in track and field, has never staged a world outdoor championship in track and field. This is both hard to fathom and far from ideal, but for the first time, the possibility of ending that streak looks strong. “The whole issue is what they are willing to give up out of their usual paradigm to have a competition in the United States.”

Even a pair of world championships is hardly going to propel the sport back into the American mainstream. There are simply too many bigger fish already in the water. But it certainly trumps the status quo, and if the United States does indeed secure the 2024 Summer Olympics, for which it looks an early favorite, track and field will have an unprecedented and sustained opportunity to make a dent in the American psyche again.

“This is a unique moment in time,” Siegel said. “And I do think if we are successful with the Eugene bid, it will give us a really big platform to elevate the sport domestically and globally.”
(Mathematics)

Discuss these events in mathematics history as what are arguably three major paradigm shifts.

#1 19th-20th century—the rise of abstract algebra, which combined and generalized large swaths of existing math into a more cohesive whole. It also gave birth to many of the major fields of modern advanced math: algebraic geometry, algebraic number theory.

#2 Mid 19th century—the rise of hyperbolic/non-Euclidean geometry and the fall of the parallel postulate. Euclidean geometry was so engrained in mathematicians of the day that Lobachevski was largely ignored—though a helpful letter from Gauss (saying roughly "yes, I thought of that decades ago and never told anyone; yup, you're right") greatly aided his credibility.

#3 Early 20th century—the "foundational crisis" in math. See Russell's paradox and the downfall of naive set theory. See also Hilbert's work on the foundations of math.

(Science/Mathematics and Social Science)

Discuss these paradigm shifts in science with your students:

Physics. Newton's Laws were an example of a paradigm, and scientists worked upon his principles for centuries. The discovery of the internal structure of the atom started to find holes in the theory, and Einstein provided the 'out of the box thinking' that dragged the paradigm in another direction.

Physics. Feigenbaum's explorations of chaos theory took a long time to take root, and his ideas were marginalized, because they lay outside the established classical paradigm of physics. Early Chaos Theorists found difficulties in receiving funding, finding supervisors, and finding journals willing to publish their research.

An example of fringe science beginning to build up evidence against a paradigm. —Ptolemy and Copernicus

The Paradigm is closely related to the Platonic and Aristotelian views of knowledge. Aristotle believed that knowledge could only be based upon what is already known, the basis of the scientific method. Plato believed that knowledge should be judged by what something could become, the end result, or final purpose. Plato's philosophy is more like the intuitive leaps that cause scientific revolution; Aristotle's the patient gathering of data.
“The Most Surprising Way to Increase Employee Wellbeing and Productivity (That Costs Almost Nothing)”

The old paradigm of leadership viewing employees as objects to maximize, with long, grueling schedules and few breaks is shifting. Now, effective leadership recognizes that employees, as human capital, are the company’s most valuable asset and deserve the treatment associated with that title.

Forbes Mar 24, 2015

“What It Really Means to Lead 'Like a Woman’”

Until recently, women pursuing leadership positions often had to emulate men to fit the existing power paradigm. However, that leadership dynamic is steadily shifting.

In 2013, women made up 23% of all entrepreneurs seeking angel capital, and our goal is to drastically increase that number. According to John Gerzema and Michael D’Antonio’s book *The Athena Doctrine: How Women (and the Men Who Think Like Them) Will Rule the Future*, business is quickly becoming a woman’s world.

Forbes Mar 23, 201

“Getting Social: Online Collaboration Helps Women-Owned Businesses Thrive”

For women who thought success meant they had to learn how to achieve in a man’s world, Hello Fearless is changing the game. The online education platform is creating a new template for female entrepreneurs that focuses on collaboration and teaches women how to build companies that match their unique strengths.

While female entrepreneurs are making great strides, they often lack access or awareness of the networks and resources required for a start-up to grow. In fact, some 90 percent of women-owned businesses are solo entrepreneurs, says Sara Davidson, founder and CEO of Hello Fearless, the school for female entrepreneurs she started with her partner in 2014.

“There’s a paradigm shift happening in entrepreneurship right now that’s all about business and life integration,” she says.

Forbes Mar 15, 2015
“Contemporary Art Sizzles in Shanghai: Power Station of Art Grows Up with a 10th Biennale”

“Censorship is part of being a public institution in China,” said Uli Sigg, one of the world’s leading collectors of contemporary Chinese art. This year works by Ai Weiwei were removed from an exhibition that Mr. Sigg helped organize for the Power Station about the history of a prize the collector created for Chinese contemporary art.

“The **paradigm** for contemporary art is to show things as they are, to document and to criticize,” Mr. Sigg said. “It doesn’t represent China in the way the government wants it to be represented to their people and to the outside world.”

Museum officials agree that escaping the shadow of politics is among the foremost challenges facing the Power Station.”

“In the Galleries: Simplicity, Spontaneity and the Beauty of Imperfection”

Stephen Addiss’s calligraphy, ceramics and ink paintings, on display in “Thirty Years of Discoveries” at Robert Brown Gallery, are highly traditional, although not without personal touches.

Addiss’s approach is an intriguing blend of hubris and humility. He inserts himself into venerable styles, but with utmost respect. The artist treats inked paper and kiln-fired clay as fundamentally akin, expressing the Asian **paradigm** of the essential unity of diverse things. Or — as he encapsulates that idea in a few loosely sketched (English) words — “A thousand rivers, one moon.”
Fun illustrations of paradigm shifts:

A group of scientists placed 5 monkeys in a cage and in the middle, a ladder with bananas on the top.

Click here for an illustration of how a paradigm is formed >>