

Concept Maps

Concept Maps is a strategy that promotes the development of logical thinking by revealing the connections that exist between the words or concepts. As students consider how various ideas, images, or words associated with a topic are related, they are able to make meaningful connections that help them make sense of the concepts. They are able to see how the individual parts connect to form the larger whole.

Concept Maps have been used successfully as a pre-reading strategy to invite students to share their prior knowledge about a particular topic. As students engage in learning experiences and read additional texts, they are able to revisit and revise their Concept Maps to reflect the refinement of their thinking.

There are many types of Concept Maps but most are comprised of words or phrases surrounded by a circle or square that are connected to another with a line. According to Hyerle (1996), the lines help students “negotiate meaning” as they read the concepts and making meaning of the connections between the main idea and other terms.

Research suggests that Concept Maps support struggling readers (Lovitt & Horton, 1994) because they facilitate sense-making. Students build off their prior knowledge and reflect on learning experiences to make connections and identify the relationships between the ideas, images or words associated with the main idea.

How to implement the strategy:

1. Select the focus for a Concept Map that is related to relevant content to student learning.
2. Complete a model Concept Map to practice and make note of the “self-talk” you will use to ensure students recognize how concept maps benefit and deepen understanding of terms related to a concept.
3. Explain to the students that you will model a strategy for them that will help them see how the words, ideas, or images about a particular concept are connected.
4. Model how to construct a Concept Map by making your thinking visible through “self talk” as you identify the major ideas associated with a concept and the relationships between the words.
5. Engage the students in dialogue throughout to ensure they understand the purpose of the strategy and how can support their understanding of concepts.

Extensions:

- Students can use the Concept Maps to help them organize their thinking and write a summarizing paragraph or create a study guide at the end of the unit.

Additional Resources:

- Hyerle, D. (1996). Visual tools for constructing knowledge. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervisors of Curriculum Development.
- Lovitt, T.C., & Horton, S.V. (1994). Strategies for adapting science textbooks for youth with learning disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 15, 105-116.