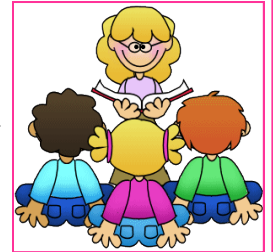


The Kindergarten Chronicles

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NEPF Standard 1: New Learning is Connected to Prior Learning and Experience

Activating students' schema comes naturally to most kindergarten teachers. However, current brain research shows that without background information or prior knowledge of a topic, the chances of students learning a new concept are greatly diminished. To connect new learning with prior knowledge, teachers need to be able to take account of the social and cultural prior knowledge with which students enter schools (Cazden, 2001; Gee, 1989). How can we ensure that our five year olds' brains are connecting new information to previously stored information? By using multiple modes, forms and methods, teachers can get a complete understanding of students' prior knowledge. Below are some activities that can help you create context for new information:



STANDARD 1

New Learning is Connected to Prior Learning and Experience

1

Indicator 1

Teacher activates **all** students' initial understandings of new concepts and skills

Indicator 2

Teacher makes connections explicit between previous learning and new concepts and skills for **all** students

Indicator 3

Teacher makes clear the purpose and relevance of new learning for **all** students

Indicator 4

Teacher provides **all** students opportunities to build on or challenge initial understandings

Short Stories or Journals: Students can use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose short stories or respond to journal topics to describe what they already know about a given topic (i.e. What do you know about Dr. Martin Luther King?).

AlphaBoxes: This strategy by Linda Hoyt, can be used before, during, and after a unit of study. Click [here](#) for more information. Enlarge an **AlphaBox** chart. Ask students to share terms or associations related to the topic (weather, community occupations, pumpkins, etc.) that begin with each letter of the alphabet. They should try to brainstorm as many boxes as possible, as you write the words on the chart. Revisit the chart during the unit of study to add to the chart. Review the chart at the end of the unit to assess students' new learning.

Murals or Collages: Students create murals or collages to communicate prior knowledge. Display the murals on a bulletin board (i.e. "What We Know About the Five Senses") or have students present their work to the class. This can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Students can revisit their mural or collage at the end of the unit of study to compare/contrast their prior knowledge to their new learning.

Realia: Although using realia (pictures, objects, materials from everyday life) is a powerful strategy for our English learners, it is also helpful in activating prior language and building vocabulary with all of our kindergarten students. Click [here](#) to see a video clip of a teacher using realia in her classroom.

Jot Thoughts: Students work in small groups to write/draw as many ideas as they can in allotted time, one idea per slip of paper (i.e. words that begin with the letter Mm, different ways to create the number 12, etc.). Students jot down their ideas, one student at a time, moving clockwise around the group and attempting to "cover the table" with slips of paper. For more information on Jot Thoughts, click [here](#).

Carousel Brainstorming: This **activity** can be used to determine or build prior knowledge, to develop ideas for writing topics or projects, to identify ways to solve a problem, or as a review. Place 4-6 pieces of chart paper around the classroom. Each sheet has a task for students to complete, a question to answer, etc. (i.e. words with one syllable, two syllables... or the characters, setting, problem, and solution in a text). Students are placed in groups and given markers (or select a group recorder). Each group is asked to begin at a different sheet of chart paper. Explain the flow of traffic

and how students will be moving around the room. Set a timer as students begin their first task. When the timer rings, they move to the next piece of chart paper and begin the next task, adding answers, comments, or drawings to the ones already recorded. Repeat until each group visits each piece of chart paper. Once finished, students can take a "gallery walk" and see all the responses.

Want even more ideas for tapping into your students' prior knowledge? Be sure to check out these articles from [Edutopia](#) and [ASCD](#). Don't forget www.rpdp.net for **NEPF Standard 1** resources and videos as well!

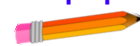
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