

Activating What Students Know

Teaching That Unearths and Upends Students' Understandings

1. Think about a time when you had to learn something new, but it seemed to be without a clear purpose. What happens to learning when there is a lack of purpose?
2. How would you expect your students to describe the purpose of their content learning? Beyond compliance issues, in what ways do you spur their learning?
3. Lessons that cause students to consider an issue from more than one perspective can be effective in activating background knowledge. How can you utilize multiple perspectives in your course?
4. Quick writes are commonly used to activate background knowledge, but they are rarely used beyond the immediate learning event. How could you return to previously constructed quick writes to build metacognitive awareness? What benefits do you see in doing so?
5. Partner conversations are a vital part of learning, but they can be difficult for novice teachers to manage. What are the most common challenges you see for new teachers in developing instructional routines for partner talk? How would you explain the necessity of peer conversations for activating background knowledge? What instructional routines do you share with your colleagues who are trying to implement collaborative learning to make the management of peer conversations run more smoothly?
6. Have you used checklists in your classroom? If so, what were the successes? Were there errors that you changed the next time you used the checklist?
7. Construct a language frame collaboratively in one or more content areas. How could you use the language frame in your teaching?