

Building and Activating Background Knowledge Is Our Job

1. Choose a unit of study you will be teaching in the near future and analyze it using these questions:
 - Have I identified enduring understandings for this lesson, topic, or unit?
 - Have I determined core versus incidental background knowledge for this topic?
 - Have I assessed students such that I recognize their current understandings?
 - Have I established a purpose that makes learning relevant for students?
 - Have I modeled and demonstrated my own understanding before requiring students to complete learning tasks?
 - Have I focused on students' background knowledge that moves beyond facts and isolated skills?
 - Have I provided students with wide reading opportunities to facilitate their background knowledge gains?
 - Have I planned live and virtual experiences to build students' background knowledge?
 - Do I regularly activate students' background knowledge?
 - Do I remind students that background knowledge is critical to understanding?
2. How can schoolwide conversations contribute to a better understanding of students' background knowledge?

3. What currently gathered assessment information can you as an individual teacher use to gain a better understanding of students' background knowledge?
4. In what ways can educators partner with families to build, activate, and utilize background knowledge?