ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Definition

Intentionally bringing to the forefront a learner's existing knowledge or experiences to help them make connections and understand new content. Existing knowledge comes from their family, their community, their experiences, and their own learning, such as from reading.

Why It's Important

- Allows students to connect new information to what students already know, making learning more meaningful, efficient, and easier to retain
- Helps students see the connections between previous learning and new instruction
- Gives students a voice and allows them to feel as though they have past experiences to build on what they are learning
- Increases relevancy and helps clarify purpose
- Activates the brain to make learning easier
- Provides a foundation for new concepts to build upon

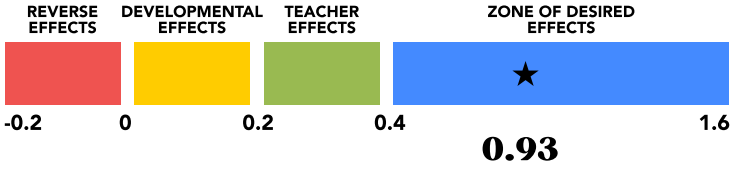
Do

- Consider student's experiences/background
  - Use realia
  - Create an experience
- Use open ended questions
- Check vertical alignment to match learning in previous grade levels
- Provide multiple attempts to engage in prior knowledge
- Bring relevant connections into the learning objective
- Ask students to share what they know from their own experiences, community, culture, family, and other classes
- Believe everyone has an access point

Don't

- Assume students have prior knowledge
- Assume all students have the same prior knowledge
- Criticize students prior experiences
- Assume that a student is an empty vessel
- Only use pre-tests as sole method of activation

Hattie Check



Activities

- KWL graphic organizer & other graphic organizers
- Anticipation guides
- Forecasting or making predictions (not w/out information)
- Carousel brainstorming
- Turn and Talk
- Word Association
- Pre-Assessment
- Picture-Sentence
- Think-Pair-Share
- Power preview (picture walks)
- Use text features like headings
- Opening question or hook
- Rate familiarity w/ vocabulary/content before, during, and after
- survey or poll to discover prior knowledge
- "Brain dump": Ask students to write down everything they know about a topic, process, person, idea, etc.

Teacher Tips

- Ask entry questions to all students:
  - What do you already know about _____?
  - What do your own experiences make you wonder about _____?
- Use well-constructed pre-assessments that help you fine tune instruction based on their prior knowledge
- Share a short story or anecdote related to the topic and ask students to make connections to their own experiences
- Use relatable analogies or real-world connections: Start with something from students' lives (ex. sports, music, or social media) and connect it to the lesson content

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Teacher Rubric Connection

Domain 1- Planning and Preparation for Learning
- E - Anticipation
- G - Engagement
- I - Differentiation

Domain 3- Instructional Delivery
- D - Connections/Relevance
- G - Engagement

Domain 4- Monitoring Assessment and Follow Up
- B - Prior knowledge

Implementation Steps

1. Think about what prior knowledge students have and spend intentional time thinking with lesson planning.
    a. "What do I have that can tap into students' prior knowledge?"
    b. "What part of this can I connect to students' prior knowledge?"
2. Identify ways to launch the learning with sources that we have.
3. Record the student's thoughts/experiences/ideas in a graphic organizer. (KWL chart, anticipation guide, concept map, etc.)
4. Bridge to New Information
    a. Connect new learning to the student's experiences. (explicit connections, real-world examples, multi-media, scaffolding)
5. Facilitate Active Processing
    a. Provide opportunities for student to apply their new knowledge through activities, exercises, or projects (think-pair-share, guided practice, reflection, revisit and review)