



### Activate Prior Knowledge

John Hattie gives much attention to research supporting specific learning strategies. Many of those strategies help students integrate new learning with prior knowledge. There's a reason for that. In his work, Hattie found that those learning strategies carry a 0.93 effect size. What conclusion can we draw from this? We absolutely must give our students a way to link what they already know to the new content they are being presented.

Piaget and Dewey referred to these bits of old knowledge as "schemata." I had a professor who used the analogy of "hangers in the mind's closet just waiting for a new outfit." Either way we look at it, there are reference points within the brains of our students—pieces of information and links to experiences to which new learning can be joined. All we need to do is activate pathways leading to them.

#### Activating Prior Knowledge: a before reading strategy

What YOU bring to the text will affect how you understand what you read.

Participate in activities that awaken and connect the knowledge that you already have to the text that you are reading. Activating your prior knowledge before you begin to read will prepare you to read and learn new information.

Share your experiences with peers and gain new background information from their experiences.



to activate your prior knowledge:  
brainstorm  
group discussion  
concept mapping  
visual aids  
advance organizers

Ask yourself: *What do I already know about this topic?*

How do we do it? The explicit instruction model calls it "activating prior knowledge". It's a jumping off point in our lessons. We might have a guiding question. Perhaps we could start with a graphic organizer such as KWL. Some teachers trigger background knowledge with videos or pictures. Others use discussion stems or Kagan structures to get their students talking about prior experiences relevant to the text they are preparing to read. Brainstorming, pre-viewing a text, and even anticipation guides can be used to get those brain juices flowing.

No matter what strategy you choose, don't ignore the passion you might stir in your students when you help them remember what they already know. It's difficult to start from scratch, but it's empowering to realize you are already equipped with some background knowledge when there's a new task to try.

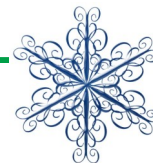
### Spotlight on Excellence

Mrs. Beck's students at East Carter Middle used algebra tiles to build equations. It is important to build, draw and write during mathematics instruction (even for older students). Following a process that develops conceptual understanding will help these students as they move to more abstract work in the future.



### Winter Events

- ◆ January 29 Google Academy
- ◆ January 30 EILA
- ◆ January 30 LMS Academy
- ◆ January 31 Counselors Academy
- ◆ February 1 Spelling Bee
- ◆ February 2 ACTC Science Fair



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