

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES GUIDE

CONCEPT MAP



GRADES + SUBJECTS All

DESCRIPTION

A concept map is a visual learning tool that enables students to identify relationships among concepts and ideas. A concept map looks like a flowchart and connects words or phrases to form logical statements related to an overarching concept, prompt, or focus question. Concept maps are typically organized from general to specific and read from top to bottom. Words or phrases are often set off in separate circles or boxes, and connecting lines or arrows are labeled to show the relationship between words. Color or supporting images may also be used to illustrate relationships between concepts. Concept maps provide a visual record or mapping of students' understanding that they can continue to update and expand as they gain more knowledge. Concept maps can be used during all stages of the learning process. Here is an example of a concept map about concept maps.

WHEN TO USE IT

As a learning strategy, use a concept map when you want students to:

- demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between ideas
- brainstorm or develop their ideas further
- organize and track their learning over a unit of study
- connect prior knowledge to new knowledge on a topic or concept
- synthesize information, concepts, and ideas, and visualize the whole picture

PROS

- Promotes higher-order thinking and deep learning
- Supports understanding and retention with visual representations

CONS

- Concept maps may appear to be overwhelming for some students
- Using it as an assessment tool requires careful planning, time for grading, and clearly communicated assessment criteria

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPLICATION

A concept map is an effective tool for exploring complex topics, especially those involving current and historical socio-political contexts. With a concept map, students can express their unique voices, perspectives, and ideas as they demonstrate their understanding of a topic or respond to a focus question. The process of developing a concept map is student-centered and dependent upon the authentic connections that students make between what they know and what they are learning. As a visual tool, concept maps also provide an alternative modality for diverse learners.

ESTIMATED DURATION IN CLASS

30+ minutes

SKILLS

Comprehension, Vocabulary, Writing, Research, Collaboration, Cooperative learning, Communication, Critical thinking, Analyzing, Computational thinking, Synthesis

BLOOM'S LEVEL(S)

All