

Justice alert

Whose prior knowledge and cultural practices are seen as valid for building upon?

Key actions: Teachers

- Value prior knowledge as fundamental to new learning, seek out what the students already know, can do and understand, and use this to inform planning
- Approach a new topic openly with students, discussing why we need to explore it, how we will share the learning and how we might use it in the future
- Capture and record these initial responses as a starting point for mapping the shared learning journey
- Ensure that all ideas are acknowledged, misconceptions explored and deliberate guidance towards accuracy provided
- Pose guiding questions and listen closely to each student's response, to elicit understanding
- Support learners to identify and clear up basic misunderstandings
- Find hooks to create student interest and meaning making by responding to students' energies and enthusiasm
- Deepen students' curiosity by linking new meanings to what they already know, and discuss how each of us may see these links in our own unique way
- Challenge students to question what they don't know
- Use visualisation, mind mapping and concept maps to capture students' thinking
- Help learners to build on each other's understandings by teaching the skills of reflective listening, paraphrasing and questioning
- Teach skills that enable students to show their understanding in a range of ways such as writing, artwork, practical tasks, roleplays and multimedia presentations
- Design learning challenges that are open and stimulate further questions
- Develop processes for students' active, ongoing reflection (eg where they have come from, what they now know, and where their new learning will lead)

Key actions: Students

- Talk with my friends and teachers about what I already know and what I need to know next
- Record what I know and understand by writing, drawing or other ways that show it best
- Use technology to talk with others beyond the class
- Ask questions to help me understand better
- Think about how my new learning connects to my family and my life
- Listen to other people's ideas and compare them with mine

Ways to build on learners' understandings

Graphic organisers: Use visual ways to connect with what students already know and understand, so that misconceptions can be explored. Examples are:

- Mind Maps
- Lotus Diagrams
- KWS (what I **K**now, **W**ant to learn, and possible **S**ources).

Graphic organisers can be sourced from www.teachervision.fen.com and www.educationoasis.com.

▶ **Reflection partners:** Students work with a partner to reflect on their learning. Useful starters are: 'I know what I'm learning about because ...', 'I could use this learning elsewhere by ...', 'This is my understanding ... This is how I got to it ...', 'I came to this conclusion because ...', 'I heard you say ... Is this what you meant ...?'

▶ **Correlation chart:** This chart can be used for evaluating relationships between factors through looking at responses from a group and showing areas of agreement and difference. On a graph, the axes represent the two factors and each axis has a continuum. For example, when reviewing a task or new topic:

- X axis—'what I learnt' with a continuum of *nothing, something, quite a lot, heaps*
- Y axis—'how useful it will be for me' with a continuum of *not at all, quite useful, very useful, extremely useful*.

Students stick a coloured dot at the point that captures their own response. The results can inform further learning and planning.

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... the challenge for educators is to help individuals construct, for themselves, the understandings that other minds have discovered before them. Left to chance, or open discovery, my belief is that you would have to be Einstein, or Einstein-like, to discover what he discovered.

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understandings

4.1