

Introducing Concept Mapping to Young Children

A Practical Guide for Teachers

Activities Preparing for Concept Mapping

1



Ask children to close their eyes and ask them if they can see a picture in their mind when you say a familiar word. Use 'object' words at first like cave, dragon, mouse, flower etc.

2

cave
dragon
mouse
flower

Type each word on the whiteboard after the children respond. Ask children for more examples of words that make a mental picture.

3

cave	raining
dragon	running
mouse	laughing

Next, ask for 'event' words such as raining, running and laughing. Ask children for more examples and type them onto the whiteboard.

4



Give the children a few words that are unfamiliar and ask them if they can see a picture in their mind. (Use a dictionary and choose short words that are likely to be unfamiliar to younger children such as 'concept'.)

5



Help the children recognise that words convey meaning to them when they represent pictures or meanings in their minds.

6



If you have children who speak more than one language in your class, you might usefully introduce a few familiar foreign words to show that different cultures use different labels for the same meaning.

7

concept		
cave	running	hello
dragon	jumping	bonjour
mouse	laughing	caio
flower	raining	guten tag

Introduce the word 'concept' and explain that concept is the word we use to mean some kind of object or event 'picture'. Look at the words on the whiteboard and ask if they are all concepts; ask if they all bring a picture to mind.

8

NOT Concepts	Concepts
is	cave running hello
are	dragon jumping bonjour
when	mouse laughing caio
that	flower raining guten tag
then	

Type words onto the whiteboard such as the, is, are, when, that, then. Ask if these words bring a picture to mind. Children should recognise that these are NOT concept words; they are linking words we use to link concept words together into sentences that have a special meaning.

9

Linking Words	
is	why
are	what
when	who
that	how
then	were

Label your words 'Linking Words' and ask the children for additional examples of linking words.

10

Linking Words		
grass	is	green
bricks	are	hard
happy	when	playing
dogs	that	bark
spring	then	summer

Construct short sentences with two concepts and a linking word. e.g. grass is green, bricks are hard, sun is hot.

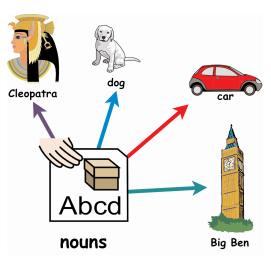
11



Explain to children that most of the words in the dictionary are concept words. You might have them identify concept words from a page duplicated from a young children's dictionary*. Written and spoken language uses concept words and linking words.

* see handout

12



Point out that some words are proper nouns. Names of specific people, places or things are NOT concepts.

13



The summer sun is hot.

Ask the children to construct some short sentence of their own using the concept and linking words on the whiteboard and some of their own words if they wish.

14



Have one child read a sentence and ask other children which are the concept words and the linking words in the sentence.

15

Introduce the children to the idea that reading is learning how to recognise printed labels for concepts and linking words. Ask if it is easier to read words for which they have a concept in their mind. Point to examples used earlier of the familiar and unfamiliar concepts and to words such as when, then, while and there. Ask which are usually the easiest to read.

The **Wind** and the **Sun**

One day, a very long time ago, the Wind and the Sun had an **argument**. The wind said to the Sun, "I am much stronger than you!" This made the Sun very **cross**. He started to shout, "No you are not, I am much **stronger** than you!"

