

Self-Assessment of Background Knowledge

How do teachers foster background knowledge across the school day?

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<i>Knowledge of Misconceptions Common to the Discipline</i>	Units include discipline-specific misconceptions that are directly assessed. Explicit teaching is designed to interrupt misconceptions.	Units include discipline-specific misconceptions. These are assessed, but are not directly addressed in teaching.	Misconceptions are sometimes included and may or may not be assessed or directly addressed in teaching.	Awareness of some discipline-specific misconceptions. These are integrated into some aspects of assessment or teaching.	Unfamiliar with the discipline-specific misconceptions that should be anticipated from students.
<i>Assessing Background Knowledge</i>	Common formative assessments focus on core background knowledge, not incidental knowledge. Assessment results are used to plan instruction and re-teaching. Results are shared and discussed with colleagues.	Formative assessment focuses mostly on core background knowledge. These assessment results are used to plan instruction and re-teaching, but are based within single classrooms.	Formative assessment is used, but core and incidental background knowledge is not differentiated. Results are used for some instructional planning, but not routinely. Results are not discussed with colleagues.	Assessment is used as a pretest, but is rarely analyzed for planning instruction and re-teaching. Results are not discussed with colleagues.	Assessment is summative and is used primarily for grading purposes. Results are not used for the purposes of improving future instruction.
<i>Activating Background Knowledge</i>	Both unit and lesson purposes are established at the onset of every lesson. Varied oral and written language tools are used throughout the lesson to cause activation	Unit and lesson purposes are established during most lessons. Varied oral and written language tools are used to activate Background Knowledge, but primarily at the start of the lesson.	Unit and lesson purposes are posted on the board but are not discussed within the lesson. Oral or written language tools are occasionally used in some lessons.	Purpose of the lesson is posted but is not linked to larger unit purposes. Oral or written language tools are used as icebreakers or warm-ups.	Purposes are behavioral in nature and are not linked to larger unit concepts. Students have few opportunities to reflect on what they know about a topic or concept.
<i>Building Background Knowledge</i>	Indirect and direct methods for building Background Knowledge are used daily, including teacher modeling, wide reading, and experiential learning outside the classroom.	Indirect and direct methods for building Background Knowledge are used daily, including teacher modeling and wide reading. These methods are confined to in-class learning.	Indirect methods, such as wide reading and experiential learning are used, but teacher modeling occurs only occasionally.	Methods for building background knowledge are used occasionally, primarily when students demonstrate a gap.	Lessons are designed to present content. Any gaps in background knowledge are assumed to be the responsibility of students.
<i>Using Critical Literacy to Build Background Knowledge</i>	Critical literacy is central to all learning, with student queries driving how knowledge is understood and questioned. Students are encouraged to take action.	Critical literacy is fostered during two or more specific units designed to provoke sociopolitical questions about representation and marginalization.	One specific unit has been developed to encourage students to analyze issues of race, class, gender, and/or power.	Contrasting viewpoints are presented as part of analysis of information, content, or concepts.	Content knowledge is viewed as singular and monolithic, with little opportunity to question or adopt an alternate stance.
<i>Using New Literacies to Build Background Knowledge</i>	Students search for, evaluate, and create information daily using relevant technological tools and literacy processes that are integrated into classroom learning.	Students search for, evaluate, and create information regularly and in the company of peers in and out of the classroom. Their own technology tools are off-limits.	Students regularly use technology to gather and evaluate information, but rarely to create new digital products.	Some technology is sanctioned for classroom learning, but only to gather information.	Technology is seen as a separate and limited function, with an emphasis on tools. Students must go to another area of the school to use these tools.