



Concept Mapping (Stars and Constellations)

Who is this for?
All Grades

Why use it?
To generate ideas, build conceptual ideas and make connections

As their learning progresses

Thinking Skills
Concept identification and development

Bloom's Level
Analyze

What is it?

Students individually and collectively surface their prior knowledge, assumptions, and conclusions about an essential question. Hearing 4 distinct positions on the same question or statement exposes students to multiple, divergent viewpoints, rapidly increasing the breadth of knowledge available to each student. Inviting students to shift corners in response to others' reasoning encourages the open-mindedness, curiosity, and humility characteristic of an inquiry disposition.

Materials - 4 signs: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree

Set-Up - Small groups


How does it work?

1. As you engage in lesson or unit opening activities, and/or share essential questions and learning targets, record **power words** in a space visible to all.
2. Then, ask small groups of students to create concept maps which connect the concepts in ways that make sense to them.
3. Add to this list continuously throughout the lesson or inquiry.

For example, here are the words in the key vocabulary list in a Grade 1 inquiry: rule, common good, rights, responsibilities, engaged citizen, fair.

Students' consideration of what the word **RULE** means might bring them to the concept of the **COMMON GOOD**, with **CITIZEN** surfacing moments later. Then, **FAIR** might come into play, and the problem of ensuring fairness. With some gentle guidance by the teacher, students might bring the concepts of **RIGHTS** and **RESPONSIBILITIES** into play, which requires citizens who are **ENGAGED**, rather than passive. A star becomes a constellation, and related concepts lend meaning to one another.

Closing

 As new concepts surface, students can move them about to explore their possible connections. Imagine the different meanings small groups of students would make if asked to connect 3 or more of the *stars* above. Forming constellations and articulating their meaning supports students to understand key concepts deeply. Each of these concepts can defined, elaborated, and exemplified to bring additional key concepts into sight and use.