

# Brainstorming

## Description

A strategy used to activate students' prior knowledge about a topic through listing every related idea that comes to mind.

## Purpose

Brainstorming is used to help students make connections to prior knowledge and experiences. As students brainstorm together, they expand their understanding about a topic prior to an activity or reading through thought and reflection. It can be an effective way to generate lots of ideas and raise questions. Teachers can use brainstorming to uncover what students know or think they know about a concept or topic.

## Connection to Inquiry and Standards:

Students ask questions such as "What do I already know about this topic?" They also naturally make connections between what they are learning and what they already know from experience. Brainstorming also provokes interest in learning, encourages new thinking, and helps students develop a sense of wonder about a concept or topic. Pennsylvania Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening Standards addressed by brainstorming include 1.1 Learning to Read independently and 1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature because brainstorming can help to set a purpose for reading and encourage fluency. Additionally, the technique requires careful listening and use of speaking skills (PA Standard 1.6).

## Materials

Chart paper and a marker. Timer.

## Procedure

Choose to place students in small groups or work as an entire class. Define the concept or idea to be brainstormed and make sure everyone is clear on the topic. Set up the rules for the brainstorming session which should include: allowing everyone to contribute in an orderly fashion, ensuring that there is no criticism of ideas, recording each response, and setting a time limit (5 - 10 minutes). Start the brainstorming session and record all ideas even if they seem silly. Encourage a free flow of ideas (fluency) and piggy-backing (building upon the ideas of others). Once the time is up, review the recorded responses.

## Resources

Baumgartner, Jeffrey (2002). The Step by Step Guide to Brainstorming. Internet: [www.jpjb.com/creative/brainstorming.html](http://www.jpjb.com/creative/brainstorming.html)