

KWL

Description

This technique used to elicit students' background knowledge about a topic, foster questioning, and organize information that is being learned. A chart is used to organize the information provided by the students.

Purpose

Teachers use a KWL to uncover what students know or think they know about a concept or topic. In addition, students develop questions and curiosities about the concept. Students make connections to prior knowledge and experiences when completing the "K" (What We Know) of a KWL. The "W" (What We Want to Learn) can be an effective way to generate questions.

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. KWL's also provoke interest in learning and help 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 a KWL can help to set a purpose for reading. Additionally, the technique requires careful listening and use of speaking skills (PA Standard 1.6).

Materials

Three sheets of chart paper and a marker.

Procedure

Create a large KWL chart using three sheets of chart paper - one sheet for K, one for W, and one for L. Label each one. At the beginning of a unit of study, ask students to think about what they know about the concept and write this information on the K (What We know) chart. Sometimes students suggest information that is not correct. Teachers may want to turn these statements into questions and add them to the W (What We Want to Learn) chart. Write the questions that students suggest on the W chart. Continue to add questions to the W chart throughout the study. Also during the study, add information that is learned to the L (What We Learned) chart. At the end of the unit of study, complete the L chart and have students reflect on what they have learned.

Resource

Tompkins, Gail E. (1998). 50 Literacy Strategies: Step by Step. Columbus, OH: Merrill.