

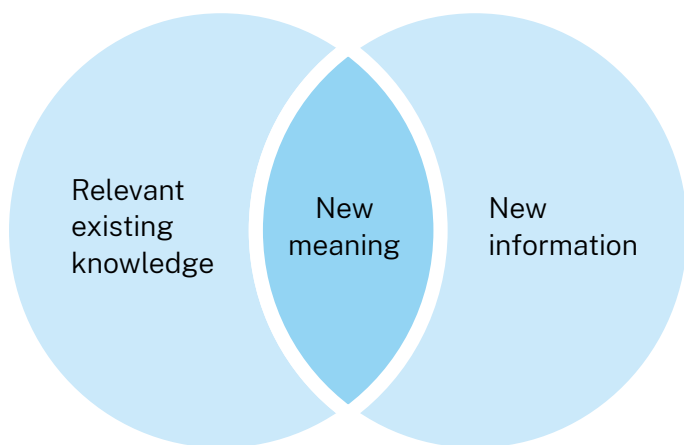
Making meaningful connections through class discussions

Overview

Making intentional connections between prior learning and new knowledge is critical in helping students develop, integrate and strengthen their schemas.

Effective class discussions support students to integrate new learning, through purposeful talk, combined with clear documentation of key information and connections (Cottingham 2023). Students articulate and clarify their thinking prompted by carefully crafted questions, which aim to build connections (Sherrington 2019; Lovell 2020; Hattie 2023).

Recording and organising key information in a concept map makes connections clear and visible (Ritchhart et al. 2009), providing students with a model of how information can be organised and integrated into long term memory (Sherrington 2019; Caviglioli and Goodwin 2021; AERO 2023).



Key considerations

- Pre-plan essential knowledge and connections to ensure discussion structures and supports are most effective.
- Craft questions which facilitate deep understanding and connections.
- Familiar talk-routines encourage thinking and participation from all students.
- Support thinking by displaying sentence stems and key vocabulary and documenting ideas.
- Actively facilitate the discussion, drawing out connections and clarifying misunderstandings.
- Summarise and organise thinking to make connections clear.

(Teachers) need to remember that meaning is made in the mind of their students and that just because the teacher has made the link, this doesn't mean the students have.

(Cottingham 2023:91)

Classroom application

Stage 4 English

Students have been learning to describe the language features of poetry. The teacher has crafted a series of focused questions to help students make connections between various features and their effect. These focused questions support students to engage in a talk-routine, such as a Think-Pair-Share. The talk-routine has been made more effective because the teacher has provided scaffolded language with discussion stems, such as, '...the use of metaphor creates the effect of... because...' and 'I agree/disagree because...'. The teacher selects students to share back with the class, probing for depth of understanding and clarification while recording key words on the board. This allows students to make a clear connection between the language features of poetry and their effect.

Classroom application

Stage 1 PDHPE

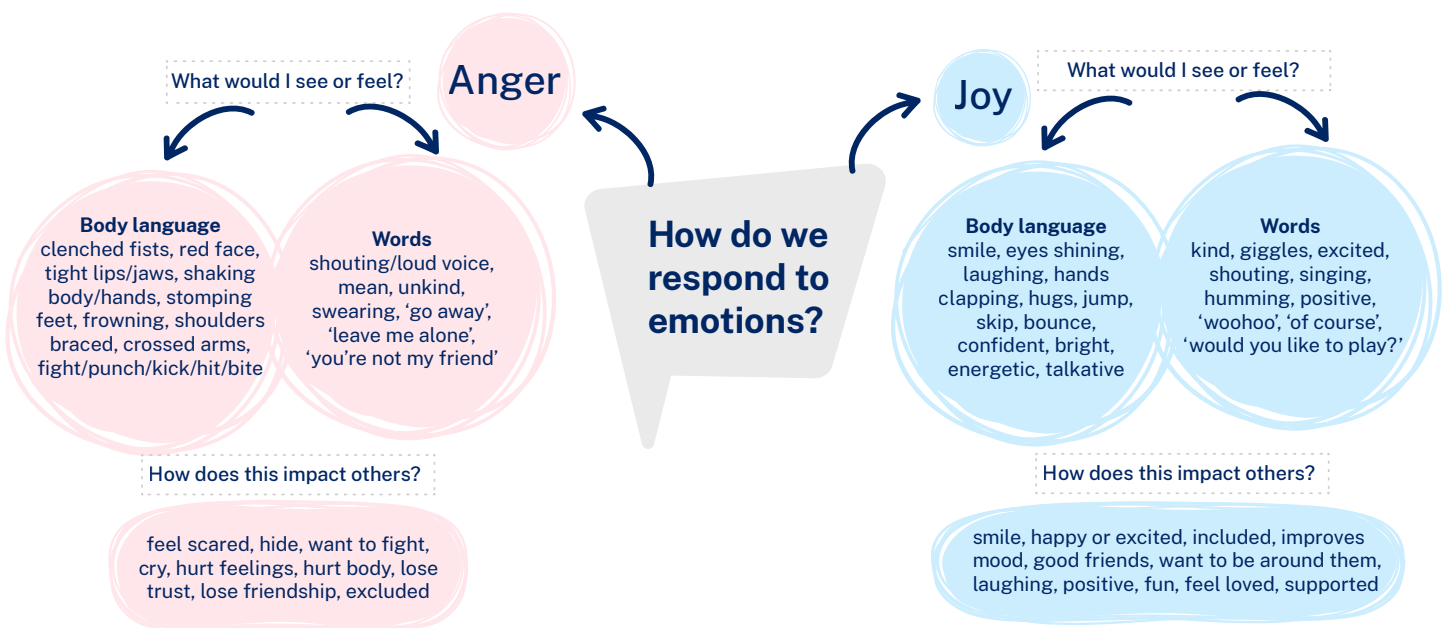
Students are learning to identify the connection between feelings, words and body language and describe the impact on themselves and others. In previous lessons, students have explored 'joy' as a feeling and recorded related words and body language. They have learned that body language and words have an impact on others. They are using a concept map to connect these ideas.

The teacher starts with a retrieval activity related to the words and body language for joy, using choral response. They move to asking questions about the impact these words and body language could have on others, 'how could this response to the emotion make others feel (wait), Mai?'

The teacher introduces the new feeling that the students will focus on, 'anger' and uses a range of examples and non-examples of people expressing this emotion. The different examples include visuals of facial expressions and written descriptions of body language.

'Body language' and 'words' are recorded on the board. The teacher poses the question: "When we feel angry, how does our body respond?" Student thinking is modelled using sentence stems such as, 'when we feel angry, our body responds by', include 'when we feel angry, we might say'.

After a brief wait time, students turn and talk while the teacher circulates to listen. Students are selected to share insights, with the teacher asking probing questions. The teacher summarises and organises thinking visually. The teacher poses an additional question, 'How would these reactions impact others?' and models a sample response, 'when someone is shouting with clenched fists, it can make others feel scared and have hurt feelings.' Students use the concept map responses to turn and talk about how the reactions would make others feel. The teacher guides the discussion and asks probing questions to record on the concept map. When students are learning about other emotions, they will continue to add to this concept map.



Connecting learning resources



<https://edu.nsw.link/explicit-teaching-connecting-learning>

More resources

AERO (2023) – How students learn best

<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/research/research-reports/how-students-learn-best-overview-evidence>

AERO (2023) – Knowledge is central to learning

<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/summaries-explainers/explainers/knowledge-central-learning>

AERO (2024) – Monitor progress

<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/monitor-progress>

Explicit teaching – Checking for understanding

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/explicit-teaching/explicit-teaching-strategies/checking-for-understanding>

Explicit teaching – Using effective questioning

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/explicit-teaching/explicit-teaching-strategies/using-effective-questioning>

Explicit teaching – Using effective feedback

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/explicit-teaching/explicit-teaching-strategies/using-effective-feedback>

References

AERO (Australian Education Research Organisation) (2023) *How students learn best: An overview of the learning process and most effective teaching practices*, (AERO) <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/research/research-reports/how-students-learn-best-overview-evidence>

Caviglioli O and Goodwin D (2021) *Organise ideas: Thinking by hand, extending the mind*, John Catt Educational Limited.

Cottingham S (2023) *Ausubel's meaningful learning in action*, Hodder Education Group.

Hattie J (2023) *Visible learning, the sequel: A synthesis of over 2,100 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, Routledge.

Lovell O (2020) *Sweller's cognitive load theory in action*, John Catt Educational Limited.

Ritchhart R, Turner T and Hadar L (2009) *Uncovering students' thinking about thinking using concept maps*, *Metacognition and Learning*, 4(2):145–159, doi:10.1007/s11409-009-9040-x.

Sherrington T (2019) *Rosenshine's principles in action*, John Catt Educational Limited.