

Infer the Topic

Purpose

This protocol offers students a chance to work together to uncover the heart of a larger concept before they begin to study a new topic. Students also get a chance to experience the ways an inference can change as they take in new information. The protocol allows students to draw on their own background knowledge and work in a fun, collaborative environment with new information from a variety of peers to uncover meaning.

Materials

- Images and/or artifacts related to the topic of study
- Optional: recording form for each student to write down inferences

Procedure

1. Locate images and/or artifacts with and without key words/quotes related to the concept. The goal is for students to infer what is happening in the image. Images can range from concrete to abstract.
2. Have students select an image and record their inference about the new topic of study.
3. Students mingle about the room and stop when prompted, facing a partner.
4. In one minute or less, students view each other's images, discuss, and record a new inference about the upcoming topic of study.
5. Students mingle about the room again, this time with the partner they were just sharing with. When prompted, partners stop, facing another set of partners.
6. All four students share their images/artifacts and inferences, discuss further, and make a new inference about what the new topic of study could be.
7. Students gather as a whole group, each displaying their image for all to see. The teacher invites a few to share their images/artifacts and their inferences about the upcoming topic.
8. After a few have shared, the teacher reveals the topic of study as well as the guiding questions and big ideas.

Variations

- Vary partner instructions or adapt numbers of partners or rounds.
- To monitor understanding and support students struggling to infer the images/artifacts' meaning, teachers can circulate and give these students a "ticket" in the form of a colored card or sticky note. At an opportune time, call a meeting of an invitational group for anyone with tickets or anyone who is struggling.