



Center for School Success

Learning Tip

*"The single most important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly."
- David Ausubel*

Often students who struggle to learn new information don't make connections between information they learn in one subject and what they learn in another. Likewise, these students don't apply skills learned in one setting to another. In fact, prior knowledge can help learners make sense out of new learning.

Summer is an ideal time to "collect" new learning experiences by traveling to foreign places or exploring a local stream, playing a musical instrument or learning how to take care of a pet. Summer always presents a perfect opportunity to read about a favorite or new topic. Summer experiences can and should be referenced and connected to new learning at school.



Brain Fact

When new information is learned, a chemical reaction occurs in the brain between brain cells (neurons). When repeated, this reaction spreads and builds connections between previous knowledge and new information.

The more frequently this process occurs, the more memory and comprehension are strengthened, as it becomes easier and quicker for the brain to access information.

Strategies That Work

- ❖ Before teaching a new fact or skill, survey the students' prior knowledge about a topic. If they are lacking *any* prior knowledge, help them build a bridge by teaching the assumptions that need to be in place before learning the new information.
- ❖ Periodically do a "prior-knowledge" check to see if students are making relevant connections. Ask, "What does this remind you of?", or "What does this make you think about?"
- ❖ Draw concept maps to help connect categories and ideas to one another. A concept map is a graphic depiction of ideas and how they link to one another.
- ❖ When undergoing new experiences with your students/children (e.g., travel), model connecting new experiences and ideas to prior knowledge, by sharing the connections you make yourself.

Learning Resources

Here are some resources we found that might give you more strategies to help your student.

Books and Articles

- ❖ *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice*, Patricia Wolfe
- ❖ *How the Brain Learns*, 2nd Edition, David A. Sousa
- ❖ *The Acquisition and Retention of Knowledge: A Cognitive View*, David Ausubel
- ❖ *Educational Psychology, A Cognitive View*, David Ausubel
- ❖ *Teach Me, Teach my Brain: A Call for Differentiated Classrooms*, Tomlinson, Carol Ann, and Kalbfleisch, M. Layne, *Educational Leadership*. ASCD. Volume 56 Number 3, November 1998.
- ❖ *Revisiting Effective Teaching*, Pat Wolfe, *Educational Leadership*. ASCD. Volume 56 Number 3, November 1998
- ❖ *Getting at It: The Quest for Comprehension*, Dr. Mel Levine,
<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/ArticleDisplay.aspx?articleid=9>

Websites

All Kinds of Minds Institute: <http://www.allkindsofminds.org>

The institute's mission is to help students who struggle with learning measurably improve their success in school and life by providing programs that integrate educational, scientific, and clinical expertise. The website is designed to give parents, caregivers, and educators a better understanding of: learning processes, insights into learning difficulties, strategies for responding to difficulties and resources for learning more.

Brain Connections: <http://www.brainconnection.com>

This site provides accessible information about how the brain works and how people learn.

Great Schools: <http://www.greatschools.net>

Great Schools empowers its parent community with advice about education topics such as school choice, moving with kids, preparing for college, learning difficulties, ADHD and tutoring. Great Schools is an independent, non-profit organization that empowers and inspires parents to participate in their child's development and educational success.

LDOnline: <http://www.ldonline.org>

LDOnLine.org is the world's leading web site on learning differences and offers information and resources.



About the Center for School Success (CSS)

CSS is a non-profit organization located in West Lebanon, NH. CSS services (learning assessments, professional development and community outreach) help teachers, parents, and students understand and manage specific breakdowns in learning, by linking *how* a student learns best with a plan for success.

To learn more about CSS: visit: www.centerforschoolsuccess.org or call (603) 298-6700