Sticky-note Rainbow Webs

Sticky-note Rainbow Webs is a semantic mapping technique that many students thoroughly enjoy. The procedure can be used both as a Think ahead technique to activate background knowledge and create anticipation and as a Think back technique to reflect on what was learned and how it fits with what students already knew.

The procedure involves using sticky-notes to construct a semantic web prior to the lesson. The web reflects an organization of ideas that students already know related to the to-be-learned subject.

Later, as a Think back activity, students identify specific new ideas they gained from the lesson and add it to the original web, only this time, a different colored ink is used to represent the new information. Following each subsequent lesson, additional information is added to the web (each time in a different color), so that eventually a complex, multicolored “rainbow” web will emerge depicting what information has been learned and its organization. Students love to see the web grow and see how much they have learned.

Teaching Tips

Step 1: Identify a key word or phrase related to the content of your upcoming lesson, write it on a sticky-note, and place it on the board. This word should be closely related to the central idea of the lesson.

Step 2: Have students brainstorm a list of related words. Have students write down as many related words or ideas as they can in a three-minute period. Students may work individually, in pairs, or in small teams.

Step 3: Call on each student (pair, or team) to provide you with one word or idea; write it on a sticky note, and place it on the board in column form without regard to organization. As each idea is written on a sticky-note, ask the student to indicate the degree of confidence they have in it; code the sticky-note with a symbol accordingly. Students can use the following symbols to code each idea.

!! = Very confident that this is accurate and is related to the key idea noted by the teacher
!
? = Somewhat confident
? = Not sure, somewhat questionable
?? = Wild guess
Be sure to note only one idea per sticky-note. Continue to cycle through the students, asking each to give one new word until their lists have been exhausted. To ensure participation of less able students, call on them first since their lists may be shorter and others might use their words before they have a chance to contribute.

Feel free to rearrange the sticky-notes (you may want to use tape with the notes to anchor them more effectively). As the web grows, add new arms to represent new categories and subcategories as needed, but do not name them.

**Step 4:** Using input from students, rearrange the sticky-notes into a web. Take one idea at a time, and ask students to tell you where on the web it should go.
**Step 5:** Have students name each arm of the web, thus establishing category names.

**Ways oil spills are removed from the environment**

**Natural ways**
- Decomposition
  - Photo-chemical oxidation
  - Evaporation
  - Microbial degradation
- Dispersion
  - break into bits
  - Tar lumps

**Man made ways**
- Physical removal
  - Circle the spill with special ring
  - Boats that vacuum oil from water
  - Oil mops
  - Skimmers
  - Pick up lumps from beach
- Assisted Decomposition
  - Seaclean Microbes
  - Microchomp 5,000
- Assisted Dispersion
  - Emulsification
  - High-pressure hoses

**Step 6:** Ask students to generate questions about the topic that reflect areas about which they want to know more.

**Step 7:** Make a large hard copy of the web showing the exact ideas and their organization as depicted on the sticky-note web. This might be drawn on a bulletin board or large piece of butcher paper so the entire class can observe the web at once.

**Think Back activity**

**Step 1:** After exploring a portion of the content, have students develop sticky notes representing ideas they have recently learned (one per each new idea). Continue to have students assign codes representing the degree of confidence they have in the idea being noted.

**Step 2:** Have students add the new sticky-notes to the hard-copy web.

**Step 3:** Revise the hard-copy web using a different-colored pen to represent the new information that is added. Repeat the above process every few days or at the end of each lesson, gradually expanding the web with different colors -- each new color will show the next “layer” of new information. If you run out of colors, you can code each new layer with different markings (add a red box around the parameter of idea; add a zigzag line across the top of idea, etc.).
**Step 4:** Periodically, revisit the code students assigned to the ideas and allow them to revise them as appropriate. Ask students if the code should be changed based on what they now know about the topic. For example, a previously “questionable” idea may be recoded so that it is now considered a “very confident” idea; a previously coded “wild guess” idea might be dropped from the web because now students realize that it was inaccurate.

**Step 5:** Periodically, make personal notebook-sized copies of the web for students and have them explain to each other the various sections of the web.