

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

CONCEPT MAPPING

Description: Concept maps are drawings or diagrams showing connections among terms, phrases, and/or ideas related to a particular topic.

Procedure: Concept maps may be developed from a closed list of words, phrases, or terms provided by the instructor or students may be asked to develop their own list of terms associated with a concept from which the map is subsequently developed. To construct a map, terms are written inside boxes or circles and related ideas are then connected by lines or arrows. Frequently, the nature of the relationship between two or more concepts is described by connecting words added by students such as “influences”, “causes”, or “results from”. Depending on the nature of relationships, maps may resemble hierarchies (linear flow diagrams), spokes of a wheel, nests, geographical maps, or blueprints.

Applications: Concept maps are extremely valuable and powerful tools for organizing and recalling ideas, identifying linkages, evaluating relationships, understanding complex ideas, visualizing relationships, and seeing key elements that compose the whole. I have used concept maps to develop frameworks for the development of new curricular materials, as well as to gauge preconceptions prior to formal instruction and misconceptions and growth of conceptual knowledge and skills during and after instruction. Creating mental maps are particularly useful to visual learners and when shared and discussed as an in-class exercise enhance active learning.