

Mind Mapping

a process for building ideas collaboratively

OVERVIEW

Mind mapping is a best practice for exploring an idea or question in a multisensory way.

SUPPLIES

Any kind of paper, poster board, or butcher paper can be used as a foundational base for this activity. We've found it works best with foam core. The size of the base increases depending on how much time the group has for mind mapping. For instance, the group might work on a large wall if they are mind mapping over a year or semester. For a 30 minute or one hour mind map a piece of poster board works or a poster board size foam core (or larger). The important thing is that the base should be able to be filled with text and images during the allocated time. Crayola markers work well to provide a thick enough marks.

PROCESS

1. **THE BIG IDEA.** Mind mapping is meant to explore the contours of a big idea. In a classroom, students can generate the “big ideas” of a text and then place one in the center of the map to explore. Mind maps can also be generated around essential questions for a unit or course of study. We've also used mind maps across a school by writing down the “common values” or “priorities,” one on each mind map. Groups can then expand the thinking around each one.
2. **WRITE THE BIG IDEA.** Ask each group to write the big idea or question in the center of the mind map.
3. **THE EXPLORATION.** Everyone in the group should have space to work at the same time. Each person in the group takes a marker and begins to respond to the main idea or ask additional questions. Provide the following guidelines:
 - a. Write additional questions
 - b. Draw images relating to the big idea
 - c. Write a story
 - d. Describe a personal connection
 - e. Explore the dimensions of the idea by writing definitions of words and synonyms.

4. **RESPOND.** After groups have been working for several minutes (most of the time people work first on their individual responses), have them change places on the mind map and work on someone else's area, responding to what he/she has done visually or with text. Continue asking students to move around the mind map.
5. **CONNECT.** Ask the groups to stop. Have them step back from their Mind Maps and reflect on what they need to visually connect the mind map. What images, lines, or colors can they use to make it an aesthetic whole.
6. **NO WHITE SPACE.** Near the end of the activity, encourage the groups to fill in all the white spaces. It is good to have some white space left, but giving the groups the "no white space" instruction generally leads to more dynamic mind maps. When nearly the entire map has been filled, give the groups a 2 minute announcement, then bring the map making to a close.

REFLECTION

Ask groups first to look at their own map, and have a conversation about the ideas they see that were generated. Ask the questions:

- What surprises do you see?
- How do you see the concept in a new way through the response of your peers?

Then, using the same questions, in pairs or trios have the students browse and have conversations about the other mind maps.

EXHIBIT

The mind maps can then be displayed in the classroom (or conference room) space to remind the group what ideas were generated. Some groups have used larger sheets of paper (butcher paper covering the wall) and added to the mind map as an entire group after every class. Using the mind map over a period of time helps participants monitor how ideas change over time. Mind maps can also be used as a pre/post experience