

Inside Deaf Education TIP SHEET

Cognition Before Communication

This tip sheet was co-created with participants during a live event held on December 3, 2025. Thanks to everyone who contributed!

Big Concepts

Purpose: Introduce a new unit, set the stage for in-depth learning

Plenty of Time?

- Field trip (Yes, at the beginning!)
- Classroom observations of plants, animals, or objects from nature
- Free exploration of manipulatives and models

Short on Time?

- Virtual museum visit
- Web cams for zoos, national parks, or the U.S. National Arboretum
- "Observations" on YouTube

Nested Concepts

Purpose: Connect to prior knowledge, emphasize a concept, enhance memory

- **Realia:** Objects that are related to the topics you are covering
- **Show and tell:** Have students bring related objects from home
- **Sensory experiences:** Add smells, tastes, and movement
- **Conversations:** Provide students with opportunities to talk to each other about what they already know or are curious about

Abstract Concepts

Purpose: Make abstract concepts more accessible

- **Art:** Use historical paintings, sculpture, and maps to immerse students in the time period
- **Movement and role play:** Act out science concepts, take on the character of historical figures WITH CAUTION*
- **Stories:** Use picture books, current events, or personal narratives to provide relatable examples of abstract topics

Things to Keep in Mind



Take pictures!

- Take photographs to support:
 - Recall
 - Retell
 - Sequencing
 - Vocabulary development
- Make books about what you are learning and add them to the classroom library



Connect to life outside of school

- Connect to students' lived experiences in order to:
 - Enhance memory
 - Lower the affective filter
 - Validate students' existing knowledge (Experience is a kind of expertise!)



Flip your instruction

Often, we want to teach and then have an activity. But what if you could:

- Do the science lab first
- Start with the field trip
- Use an object and *then* learn what it is called



Avoid...

- Assuming that a student's inability to explain the knowledge is a lack of knowledge
- Asking students to reenact harmful and oppressive moments from history*



If you try any of these tips or have tips you think should be added, please let us know!

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