Concept/ Definition Mapping

Adapted from Doug Buehl's *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*

Each discipline contains ideas and vocabulary/terms important to understanding the content area. Whether it is hypotenuse in math class, hyperbole in English, or hypothesis in science, students need to make these words their own. Concept/Definition Mapping (Schwartz & Raphael, 1985) provides a structure that helps the student identify key elements of the definition. Those elements are class or category, properties or characteristics, and illustrations or examples.

The Steps

1. Model the map using a blank example. Have students consider the following questions: What is it? What is it like? What are some examples of it?
2. Choose an important concept or definition from the content. Have the students complete a map working in pairs or small groups.
3. Direct them to use all available resources including their textbook, dictionaries, web sites, and personal knowledge.
4. Have the students write an extended definition of the idea/term using their map as prewriting. The resulting definition must be several sentences in length.
5. Require the definition include the class (category), properties (characteristics), and illustrations (examples).
6. Have students generate maps for all key concepts to use as study guides (Buehl, 2000).