

3.10.2 Concept Mapping

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

In primary education, concept mapping is a visual teaching and learning technique where students draw key ideas as nodes and connect them to show relationships, combining what they already know with new information. These maps help students organise and deepen understanding, spark discussion, and give teachers a quick way to assess how well concepts are connected; there is no single “right” map, which supports individual meaning-making and growth. Designed for students aged six to ten, this 15- to 25-minute exercise actively builds connectedness through small, actionable steps.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Connectedness
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Valuing people and nature
 - Critical thinking,
 - Creativity

Age group	Student number	Duration
6-10 years old students	Whole class in small groups	15-25 minutes / activity

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

This activity uses one simple symbolic object to help children notice how they are connected and how they can strengthen connection through small actions.

Teachers introduce a central concept, model a simple example, then have children work alone or in small groups to build their own tiny “connection map” using a simple structure called 3–2–1.

3–2–1 rules:

- 3 WHO: name 3 people/groups connected to the object
- 2 HOW: choose 2 ways they are connected (help/share/talk/learn)
- 1 NOW WHAT: choose 1 small action to strengthen connectedness

(Optional supportive link: one way to care for shared materials/nature.)

Suggested step-by-step implementation of the learning activity:

Preparing the activity:

The teacher chooses a central idea that ties to connectedness—something children can relate to locally and beyond (e.g., “How are people in our class connected to kids in other places?”);

“What helps people in our town stay healthy and how do other places help us?”; “How do we share ideas, goods, or help with others?”).

The teacher creates a simple example map on a large poster or digital board, modelling with pictures and words: start with the central concept (“Our Community” or “Helping Each Other”) and draw branches to people, places, ways to connect, and actions. Provide blank paper or pre-drawn node templates, markers, stickers, and small icon cards (globe, heart, hands, arrows) to help. Prepare guiding question cards like “Who is part of this?” “How do we help each other?” “What travels between us?” and “What can we do together?”

Instructions to give the students:

“We’re going to make a concept map to show how we’re all connected. Start with the big idea in the middle. Then add the people, places, and things that link us – like friends, family, the food we share, or messages we send. Use words, pictures, and arrows to show how things are connected. Talk with your partner or group and try to include things close to us and even far away. There is no wrong map – just show what you notice about how we belong and help each other.”

Running the activity – step-by-step practical description/instructions

Step 1: Model a map together: Teacher builds a large example with the class. For example, start with “Our School” in the centre, connect to “Friends,” “Families,” “Kids in other towns,” “Sharing books,” etc., and add simple arrows showing “send,” “help,” “learn from.” Children suggest ideas and the teacher draws them, naming connections aloud.

Step 2: Individual or pair brainstorming: Children think or talk with peers about things that connect them to others (e.g., “My cousin in another town,” “The internet where we share pictures,” “Helping a new student”). They use icon cards or write/draw ideas on sticky notes.

Step 3: Build the concept map: Using their notes, children place the central idea in the middle of their own map and add branches: people, places, actions, feelings, and ways they connect. They draw arrows and label how things relate (e.g., “We send letters to pen pals,” “Helping makes us feel close,” “Learning from others teaches us new games”). Teacher circulates, asks guiding questions, and prompts inclusion of different levels (local/family and farther away).

Step 4: Share with a small group: Children form small groups, show each other their maps, explain one or two connections, and ask a question like “How are you connected to someone far away?” They may combine maps or add to each other’s.

Step 5: Class synthesis: Volunteers or groups add key ideas from their maps to a large class map, pointing out shared links and surprising ones. Teacher highlights how small actions or relationships reach beyond the classroom (e.g., sharing snacks means thinking of the farmer who grew the food).

Step 6: Action or reflection tie-in: Children pick one connection from their map and say or draw a small thing they can do to strengthen it (e.g., send a kind note, help a new friend, learn something from another place). They add that as a new node or note.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

Typically indoors, but not necessarily. A school classroom or a layout suitable for group work. Desks arranged in pairs or small groups; the teacher at the front with an object and a model map.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

- Makes thinking visible, introduces the idea of connections between people and places, and gives a safe template to imitate.
- Activates personal experience of connectedness and starts gathering building blocks for the map.
- Encourages organizing ideas about relationships, complexity of connections, and mutual influence.
- Develops essential skills for forming and maintaining connections: communication, empathy, and understanding others' perspectives – recognizing similarities and new connections.
- Reinforces collective connectedness, showing patterns and how individual maps contribute to a bigger picture.
- Moves from recognition to responsibility – making connection actionable.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

- Students can name people, places, and actions that connect them locally and beyond.
- Learners show how those connections relate (who helps whom, how ideas travel, how caring spreads).
- Students communicate about their maps, asking and answering questions to understand others.
- Children recognize common links with classmates and discover new ones.
- Learners identify at least one small action to make a connection stronger.
- Students use simple language and pictures to explain how they and others are part of a bigger community.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

General curriculum connection examples

- Science: Students create a simple map showing what plants need to grow (sun, water, soil) or the steps of the water cycle using drawings and arrows.
- Math: Children make a map showing how numbers can be added, broken apart (e.g., number bonds), or grouped using visual models.
- Language/Arts: Students create a character map with traits, actions, and feelings using pictures and key words from a story they read.
- History/Social Studies: Children map out changes in transportation over time, using drawings and simple labels to compare “then” and “now.”
- Environmental Studies: Students make a weather map showing different types of weather and how to prepare for them, using icons and short descriptions.

- Class-teacher lessons: “Welcoming New Classmate” Being Friendly.” Branch to “Saying hi,” “Showing someone around,” “Sharing a game,” “Learning their name,” “Feeling safe.” Show how those actions connect to making community stronger.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- Different size papers (A3, A4, index cards, chart paper)
- Coloured pencils
- Marker pens (various tip sizes)
- Post-its (multiple colours/sizes)
- Stickers (for highlighting, categorizing, etc.)
- Individual whiteboards + dry-erase markers & erasers (optional)
- Images/pictures (printed or cutouts)
- Online platforms/software (optional) (e.g., Google Drawings, Jamboard, collaborative docs)

Guiding questions

- Who is in your map? Who do we care about?
- How does that person or place connect to you?
- What can we do to make that connection better?
- Is there someone far away we are still connected to? How?
- What’s something we both have in common on our maps?
- Did you learn a new connection from your friend’s map?
- Which part of your map shows people helping each other?
- What does your map say about how we belong together?
- What small action did you add to your map today?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** students do not know where to start:
Tip: Give a starter branch or picture (e.g., “Me” → “Family”) and a few example mini-nodes; use sentence or picture prompts.
- **Challenge:** Kids only drawing and not explaining.
Tip: Ask them to add one word or talk to a partner about “Why is this connected?” before moving on.
- **Challenge:** Some maps missing far connections.
Tip: Prompt with “Who helps you even if they’re not here?” or show a photo of a distant place and ask, “How might that place connect to us?”
- **Challenge:** Crowded messy maps.
Tip: Teach simple grouping—use colours or shapes to show “people,” “places,” “actions” so it’s easier to read.
- **Challenge:** Reluctant sharers.
Tip: Let them show one small part first or pair them with a buddy to describe together.
- **Challenge:** Overwhelm with too many ideas.
Tip: Have a “top three” step: choose three strongest connections and circle them.
- **Challenge:** Action step forgotten.

Tip: Provide a small sticky note to add the “I will...” action directly onto their map.

- **Challenge:** Students struggle with HOW words.

Tip: Use picture icons and a small word bank; allow them to point instead of writing.

- **Challenge:** Actions become unrealistic (“save the whole world”).

Tip: Ask: “Can we do it today or this week?” Guide to small steps.

- **Challenge:** Some students don’t participate equally.

Tip: One child draws, one chooses WHO, one chooses the action—rotate roles.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can tailor the Concept mapping to three difficulty levels to meet students’ needs.

- **Beginner learners (6-7 years old):** Give a very clear central idea, model one complete simple map with pictures and words, provide starter branches (like “Family,” “Friends”), and use prompts to help children add one or two connections; keep the action step concrete (e.g., “Say hello to someone new”)
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** Let children choose a related central topic, encourage pair sharing to add more layers (local and farther connections), require labelling of how things relate (e.g., “helps,” “sends,” “learns from”), and guide them to pick a shared small action with a partner.
- **Expert learners (9-10 years old):** Students build maps with multiple levels (people, places, actions, feelings), compare and combine maps in small groups, identify overlapping themes, and co-create a class “big map” with shared action nodes; they also reflect on how their own map changed after hearing others.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- What new connection did you find today?
- Who did you add to your map that you didn't think of before?
- What did your friend’s map teach you?
- Which part of your map makes you feel grateful?
- What is one small thing you can do to help someone you’re connected to?
- Did your map change after talking with others? How?
- Was there someone you want to add now that you remembered them?
- How does your map show that we belong together?
- What will you do with your connection idea this week?