



CREATIVE THINKING, ACCESSING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE & MORE

Accessing prior knowledge is an important element of instruction especially when serving multilingual learners. It doesn't have to take long, but when implemented it can stimulate thinking and help new learning stick too.

ABC Brainstorming is one way to access prior knowledge, and it can also be used as a culminating activity. ABC Brainstorming can be done in small collaborative groups or it can be done individually. I have found it most effective when introduced first individually for a few minutes and then in small collaborative groups.

This brainstorming technique is a structured method that provides each learner with an avenue for creative thinking. The organizer helps to methodically focus thinking while also allowing for individual exploration of ideas. It cultivates diversity in responses based on students' personal experiences and background knowledge. The student-centered approach affirms and validates learners' funds of knowledge.

There are several different formats for ABC Brainstorming. The most common includes 26 boxes, and another has nine boxes with roughly 3 letters in each box.

Here's how to use the ABC Brainstorming method:

1. Before a unit of study, decide which format of the ABC brainstorming best fits your student's needs. Print a copy for each student or prepare to share it with them digitally.
2. Share the ABC brainstorming organizer with students and have them brainstorm words and phrases related to the topic. Ask them to work independently for a given time.
3. Then put students in groups of four to collaborate on the ABC brainstorming organizer. Give them a given time to try to fill in all of the boxes together.
4. Under a document camera or on a SMARTboard, scribe the words that students dictate for each box.



As students work together and as a class to generate words, they continue to dig deeper into the concepts and learn new vocabulary from their peers. The versatility of the ABC brainstorming method is one of the reasons I find it practical. It can be used at the beginning and end of a unit or lesson with whole groups or small groups.

In some instances, multilingual learners will add words in languages other than English. I've also seen students include sketches or visuals in their brainstorming. All are valid and welcomed responses.

Overall, ABC brainstorming serves as a practical and engaging language practice activity that supports vocabulary expansion, grammar application, and creative expression for English learners. It can be integrated into language learning curricula to provide a structured and enjoyable way for learners to develop their language skills.

