



TOOL // Making Connections Diagnostic and Parent Letter

What is it used for?

The tool allows the teacher to gather specific evidence of students' ability to make connections to understand text. It also provides a communication form to share with parents to help them target their support at home.

How do you use it?

During shared and guided reading the teacher records student names next to the indicators listed on the left side of the chart. These groupings can form the basis of targeted intervention and be a record of growth. The parent letter can be sent home explaining about making connections and by highlighting one or two things reflective of the data, that parents can do to support their child's learning. Children's names could be put on sticky tag notes and moved easily to another box as children progress.

MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS
 Developing Deep Connections Instead Of Coincidences

STRENGTHS:	STUDENT NAMES:
1. The student confidently identified the specific sentence, picture and/or words that triggered his/her connection from within the story, allowing him/her to provide the evidence to which his/her connection was made.	
2. The student often recognized and shared connections he/she made to other texts and to world events.	
3. The student understood the difference between a deeper meaningful connection and a coincidence. He/she included feelings in his/her response which elicited a more deeper and meaningful connection.	
4. The student described his/her experiences/other texts/world events with vivid details. He/she was able to communicate his/her thinking and made more meaningful connections instead of coincidences.	
5. The student produced connections that included his/her feelings. These feelings elicited more meaningful connections made by the student.	
6. The student has learned to add details to his/her evidence when recording his/her connection. The details were relevant to the connection that was being made and may have included character names, setting, or important aspects of the event.	

Dear Parents:

We are working on making connections to help us better understand the ideas and information in the text. Students who make connections while reading are better able to understand the text. It is important for students to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to understand.



Below are some ways to support your child in developing this very important skill. I have highlighted the ones your child could benefit most from practicing.

<p>Read aloud books your child can easily relate to. (stories about birthdays, pets, vacations, school) Model for your child how you make connections</p>	<p><i>"This story reminds me about my 6th birthday. I was so excited I kept jumping around just like Julie I understand how she feels like she can hardly wait."</i></p>
<p>Point out specific pictures, sentences and words that helped you make the connection</p>	<p><i>"When I read the part about the sand blowing up in big hills it reminded me of visiting the Sandbanks and how I felt looking at those big sand hills excited just like Jim to climb them."</i></p>
<p>Use specific sentence starters when making prompts with your child and gradually encourage them to use those prompts in their connections.</p>	<p><i>This reminds me of when I....</i> <i>When it talks in the text about tigers I remember when....</i> <i>This story is like the story.... I read</i> <i>This is like in the real world when.....</i> <i>When happened I remembered when this helped me understand how the character was feeling</i></p>
<p>After orally practicing help your child record a connection in writing using the proper format and referring to what in the text helped them make that connection and how it helped them understand.</p>	<p><i>This part of the text _____ reminds me of _____</i> <i>it helps me understand _____</i></p>
<p>Be aware of and draw your child's attention to other stories you read or a TV show or movie that has similar idea.</p>	<p><i>Remember when we read "Help Me Find My Mama" is this story like that? How?</i></p>
<p>Make sure your child understands the difference between a coincidence and a connection. A connection helps you understand the text better.</p>	<p><i>(There is a dog in the story)</i> <i>Coincidence; I have a dog.</i> <i>Connection; My dog got lost once too and I know how the boy feels when he says "my heart hurts," because just like in this story I was sad and scared I wouldn't see my dog again.</i></p>
<p>Help your child add details from the story to their connections by including feelings, character names, places, problems etc.</p>	<p><i>"In the story, the girl visits her grandpa but is not really comfortable because her hands shake and she talks in a whisper. I don't understand because I love to visit my grandpa and we have a lot of fun. She said she doesn't get to see him often so I think that is why she is kind of nervous because I do those things when I am nervous in new situations."</i></p>

- 2. Point out specific sentences, pictures and words that triggered a connection. This is providing evidence of where your connection was made in the story.**
- 3. Practice writing down connections with your child. Often children can make meaningful connections orally, however there is often a disconnect or gap when the connection is recorded.**
- 4. When making connections with your child use the language : The part in the book...reminds me of...this connection helped me to understand...**
- 5. Challenge your child to make connections to other texts and to world events. It is always easier for children to relate what they read to a personal experience compared to an external source.**
- 6. When practicing making connections during reading with your child make sure to encourage deeper meaningful connections. Coincidences are not meaningful connections. A coincidence example is: In the story "Gus's Surprise", Gus got a new dog. This reminded me of when I got a new dog.**
- 7. Encourage your child to include details of their experiences/other texts/world events that is being connected to the story. When a child makes a connection with vivid details, they are better able to communicate their thinking and more likely to make meaningful connections instead of coincidences.**
- 8. Challenge your child to include their feelings that are related to their connections. Feelings can be stated about the child's experiences, another text and world events. Including feelings also elicit deeper more meaningful connections.**
- 9. Practise recording connections including the evidence in the response. Talk with your child about adding details to the evidence that is recorded. Details which can be added to the evidence could include character names, setting, important aspects of an event. Make sure details are relevant to the connection that was made.**
- 10. Help your child exceed grade level expectations by encouraging them to think out loud about how their connections have helped them to better understand the story. Was your child better able to relate to the character's feelings, or an experience that the character endured? Connections can also help us predict what may happen next or help the reader visualize what's happening the story. Meaningful connections will help a reader form an opinion or understand the importance of a topic. The key to becoming a better reader is to be able to explain your own thinking processes. Using metacognition as a tool to monitor and check for understanding of what is read is an amazing accomplishment.**

NEXT STEPS:

- 1. Practice reading aloud books which children can easily relate to. For example, stories about parties, friends, vacations, and school. Model your connections to your child as you read the text. Connections can be made to the title, front cover, pictures and/or words.**
- 2. Point out specific sentences, pictures and words that triggered a connection. This is providing evidence of where your connection was made in the story.**
- 3. Practice writing down connections with your child. Often children can make meaningful connections orally, however there is often a disconnect or gap when the connection is recorded.**
- 4. When making connections with your child use the language : The part in the book...reminds me of...this connection helped me to understand...**
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