

CONCEPT ATTAINMENT

Concept Attainment is a great strategy to encourage critical thinking skills. The target concept or idea is not communicated to the students. The teacher presents examples (verbal or pictures), and the students guess the concept by figuring out the common attributes. You must choose concepts or ideas that have clear characteristics. It can be used for almost anything: grammatical concepts, the topic of the BrainPOP ESL movie, or even spelling rules.

With this strategy, students use cognitive strategies and higher order thinking skills, such as classifying, identifying characteristics and relationships, and applying new ideas while using the target vocabulary and concept. They must discriminate between what is and what is not an example of the target concept. Concept Attainment can be used at any level, and is a good differentiating technique, since students' guesses are so varied.

Procedure:

1. Use pictures, words, and/or actual objects to present both examples and non-examples of the concept.
2. Present the examples in two columns on the board. Always start with a "yes" example.
3. Follow with a "no" example. The additional examples should be given in random order. Avoid giving too many "no" examples at one time. They are given to help clarify what the "yes" examples have in common.
4. During the strategy, ask students for "yes" examples to verify that they are getting the concept.
5. Once most students seem to have the concept, ask for attributes that describe it.
6. Come up with a rule or a name for the concept.
7. Have students discuss their thinking processes throughout the strategy.