

Introducing Depth & Complexity and the Icons

Mini-Lessons



- Introduce the 11 elements of Depth & Complexity and icons. You may wish to teach these mini-lessons “rapid-fire” (3 – 4 per day) or introduce the elements/icons in a slower method.
- You may wish to have students draw each new icon that is presented in their journal/composition book and complete any “work” (listing, sketches, etc.) associated with the mini lesson right there so they can refer back to it. You may have them complete minilesson “work” on post its and post around the appropriate icon poster as an additional reminder to students (pics in powerpoint).
- It is important that the students become comfortable with sketching the icons. Perfection is not necessary.
- Teach the elements not as a new or separate “content.” Depth and complexity is not a “program.” The 11 elements are tools that lead to high level thinking and provide a method for examining a topic thoroughly/deeply.
- While you are presenting the meanings of the elements, not “teaching the icons,” the icons do serve as important visual reminders. Tie the idea of “icons” to the icons students use on their computer/tablet/phone screens. They are very familiar with those!



LANGUAGE OF THE DISCIPLINE

- Show students the lips icon that represents “language of the discipline.”
- Discuss that spoken language comes from the mouth; thus, we use a lips icon.
- Read short monologues from various experts and ask students to identify the field orally. Then discuss how they so quickly could identify them (due to specific language).
 - (a doctor) “Nurse, please prepare the syringes for the booster shots. Pull the charts and check the date of his last injection. Also, bring my stethoscope.”
 - (a chef) “Mr. and Mrs. Brown, I have prepared the entrée especially for you. The tilapia was pan-seared in olive oil. The soup du jour is French Onion and for dessert, I will be serving flan.”
 - (a real estate agent) “I have several listings which may interest you. One is a duplex. Another is a foreclosure that is a fixer-upper but needs only cosmetic updates. Would you like for me to schedule some showings?”
- On a post-it note, ask each student to write a career he/she is interested in and list examples of the language of that discipline (i.e. specialized terms, equipment).
- Alternate Version - Rewrite a paragraph, inserting missing language of the discipline.
- Point out that each subject in school has a special vocabulary also. This is also true of books or time periods in history (i.e. Great Depression – Hooverville, Revolutionary War – Redcoats).



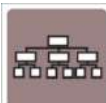
DETAILS

- Introduce the flower icon. Ask students why this icon would be good to represent details (because the flower has detailed parts which make it a flower – stem, roots, petals, stamen).
- Draw a flower on the board. Write your name (teacher's) in the center and list details about yourself in the petals. Have students create their own and share details about themselves.
- Alternate version – Write your grade level in the center and list details specific to that grade level in the petals (i.e. fourth grade – field trip to Austin, switch classes, take writing STAAR, first year eligible for chess club).
- You may also wish to incorporate asking students the difference between the main idea and the details of a story.
- Tell students that when you want them to be more specific or consider details of a topic, you will draw their attention to the details icon.



PATTERNS

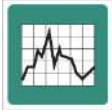
- Have students identify patterns they see in the classroom (stripes on flag, odd & even numbers on their lockers, ceiling tile colors, etc.).
- Read the story of *The Three Pigs* or watch a video of the story. Ask: What patterns did you notice in the story? Were there patterns of behavior?
- Have students go through the classroom library or search online for other books that contain patterns. These may be picture books or novels.
- Alternate version – Assign sections from a science or social studies textbook. Have students identify patterns and share out (i.e. cyclical patterns such as life cycles, water cycle, patterns in history).
- When you want to encourage students to examine a pattern in something you are studying, use this icon.



RULES

- Begin orally listing rules of the classroom. Ask the students how they would categorize these (They are all “rules.”). Introduce the idea that some rules are *stated* and others are *unstated*. Brainstorm unstated rules of the classroom and cultural rules (i.e. allow personal space, shake right hands, children look parents in the eye or do NOT look parents in the eye, etc.).
- Pairs or individuals practice by listing cafeteria rules, both stated and unstated.
- Alternate Version - Pass out board games that contain written rules. Have the students in each group read the rules for their game aloud. Then pose the following questions for discussion:
 - Why are rules important?
 - How do the rules help in the playing of the game?
 - What rule could you add or change to make the game better?

- Where else do you encounter rules?
- The rules icon can be used when you want students to edit writing, work math problems, or dig deeper in social studies or science.



TRENDS

- Discuss trends in a topic interesting to the students such as trends in voting for presidential candidates, social media use, clothing, etc.
- Show students some examples of line graphs. Question them regarding what they can learn about trends from the graphs. Discuss the idea that a trend is a change caused by an event.
- Alternate Version - Have students collect data for one week on the kinds of items purchased from the school store or the cafeteria. Have them explain any “trends” they notice. Can predictions be made based on the trends from this week?
- Use the trends icon when asking students to determine cause and effect, hypothesize, or relate information.



UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- Show students the icon with the three question marks. Explain that unanswered means *not known or not told*
- Choose a fun way to pair students. Have each student ask the same set of “interview” questions to his/ her partner. Turn the paper over and write an unanswered question you still have about your partner.
- Alternate version – Pose a question such as “What do school children eat for breakfast?” Students help you create a list – cereal, eggs, toast, poptarts...
- Then pose the question: “What do school children eat for breakfast in China (or any other country)?” This is an example of an “unanswered question.” Discuss resources students could use to find the answers.
- Use this icon when you want to find out what students do not yet know/what they want to know at the beginning of a study. Use it throughout a study to guide instruction. At the end of a study, use it to expand into independent learning opportunities for students.



ETHICS

- Point out that the icon is dark and light – relate to good and bad or right and wrong.
- May use the example of black hats and white hats in old westerns.
- Tell the story of *Cinderella* and have students find examples of ethical issues within the story. Was Cinderella treated ethically (fairly)? Explain.
- Alternate version – Introduce “ethics” by playing “Take a Stand” with a statement that elicits discussion of an ethical issue (i.e. “The speed limit should always be obeyed.”)

- Remind students that ethical issues will not always be black and white. Discuss gray area!



BIG IDEA

- Show the icon for big idea. Explain that this represents the main or big idea (Parthenon)
- Present students with a list of things found at a circus and ask what all of these items relate to. What is the “big idea?”
- Relate the idea of all of the circus items being under the “big top” just as all the details fall under (and support) the “big idea” of a study or novel.
- The big idea may be explained as the objective for a lesson, the main idea of a story, or even the over-arching theme (i.e. patterns, structures, changes, interdependence, etc.).



OVER TIME

- Share a timeline of your life with the students. Ask the students questions such as: Did you notice patterns or trends in the events? What stayed the same? What changed? How does the past influence the present or future?
- Have students create timelines or write autobiographies of their own lives.
- Discuss changes over time in their own lives.
- Alternate version – Ask students to draw something they loved to do when they were a baby, a toddler, a first grader, and now (varies depending on the students’ current age). Share out.
- Use this icon when you are asking students to relate, sequence, order events, or consider changes over time. This is important in social studies and is also used often in novel studies – How has the character or setting changed over time, and why?



MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

- Show students the multiple perspectives icon. Discuss seeing the world through different lenses or perspectives just as you might wear someone else’s glasses for a day.
- You may wish to point out how an object is seen from different perspectives through a microscope, telescope, binoculars, or with the naked eye.
- Pair students and have one student wear a blindfold. The other student directs the blindfolded partner through the classroom from one point to another. Share out about the difficulties. To describe anything to someone who is blind, one must think from his/her perspective – using words that describe the “feel” rather than perhaps relying on color words.
- Alternate version – A point of view map on the topic “Homework” from the perspectives of parents, students, teachers, and principals is a great way to introduce this element/icon. You can then use point of view maps with other studies and books in the future.



ACROSS DISCIPLINES

- Point out the icon for across disciplines. Tell students each shape could represent a different discipline (art, music, math, science, social studies, etc.). Have them list subjects they study in school as a starting point.
- They all overlap because our “big idea” overlaps every subject we study. This works particularly well if you use themes and generalizations for the year in your classroom.
- Use the skill of cause and effect. Can cause and effect be taught in reading? Science? Math? Have students list examples from the various disciplines. Draw a large version of the icon on the board and record their ideas in the sections of the icon.
- Use this icon when you want students to extend their thinking. Most skills are not specific to only one discipline.



When all of the elements have been presented and students are familiar with the icons that represent them, provide lots of practice! Have students write out the elements of depth and complexity and draw the icons inside their journal cover or in another prominent spot. Encourage students to use the vocabulary of depth and complexity in classroom discussions and in their writing, projects, etc.