

Sensory Memory Activity

To help students understand sensory memory better, you might want to try the following activity.

1. Use card stock paper to create hats/crowns for students to wear. These represent the various stimuli that are entering the sensory memory.
2. Label 2 sensory memory (optional idea to color code as well) Two students where them and hold their arms up and clasp hands to make a bridge.
3. Label 5 of the hats the 5 factors (novelty, intensity, movement, meaning, emotion).
4. Label a few other hats things like (sound of airplane, feeling of clothing, natural light, etc).
5. Some students wear the hats and physically act out brain scene, others watch.
6. The idea is to demonstrate that stimuli are constantly entering the brain and what gets paid attention to and sent on to working memory has to do with the 5 factors. One at a time students representing the stimuli come up to the bridge (2 students acting as sensory memory. If they are one of the 5 factors, the brain says “yes, I’m going to pay attention to you” and so the student passes under the bridge and goes on to working memory. If the student represents a generic stimuli, the brain says “No, I’m going to ignore you” and the stimuli (student) gets discarded out of the brain.
7. The student observers help discuss/decide who moves on, i.e., what the brain will pay attention to and why.
8. Discuss how this idea translates into the classroom and how teachers can use these 5 factors to their advantage to help kids pay attention to content.