Know-Wonder-Learn-How Charts

A Know-Wonder-Learn (K-W-L) chart is one of the most commonly used graphic organizers to tap students' prior knowledge. The chart consists of three columns, one titled "Know," another titled, "Wonder," and a third titled, "Learn." This simple chart activates students' prior knowledge by asking them what they already know about a particular subject and helps them to make personal connections before the content is deeply explored. Students begin by brainstorming their ideas on the Know section of the chart. Then, independently or collaboratively brainstorm questions they have about the content in the Want to Learn section. Finally, as students begin to answer these questions during the project, they record the information on the Learn section of the chart.

K-W-L charts require students to construct meaning from what they've been learning, compare their new knowledge to what they already know, and to clarify their ideas. They also keep students focused and interested in the content and provide a way to keep track of what they are learning. Ultimately, the chart can be used as a document in an assessment portfolio to show what a student has learned.

K-W-L charts can be used across the curriculum at any grade level. They can be used to start a new unit of study and referred to throughout the unit. They usually are not a graded document but rather a place for students to write down their ideas and questions without the fear of being judged. These charts also may help with student organization and can be a starting point for peer-to-peer or whole-class discussion.

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