DISCUSSION MAP

The discussion map is a useful structure for instructors to use to encourage student to construct their own conceptual understandings, unpack their ideas, and generally stimulate discussion and helps to “unpack” their ideas.

1. **Ask a broad question.** Examples:
   a. “What happens to the mass of a log as it decomposes?”
   b. “What might have happened to this deer?”
   c. “Why might lizards lose their tails?”
   d. “Should wolves be reintroduced to this ecosystem?”

2. **Listen to response and thinking.** Accept responses neutrally (don’t imply that responses are good or bad).

3. **Ask for evidence or explanation.** Examples:
   a. “Tell me more about that”
   b. “What makes you think that?”
   c. “Can you show us what you mean?”

4. **Ask for alternate opinions or ideas.** Examples:
   a. “Does anyone have a different idea?”
   b. “What are some other possible explanations?”
   c. “That’s an interesting idea. Let’s all turn and talk about that idea.”

5. **Ask a question leading back to the main topic.** Examples:
   a. “What else should we consider to figure out where the mass of this log is going?”
   b. “Are there any other parts of this deer that might provide some clues about what happened to it?”
   c. “Try thinking about it from a predator’s perspective; can you think of another possible adaptation?”
   d. “What other organisms in this ecosystem might wolves effect?”

6. **When you are ready to end the discussion, briefly summarize the main points and patterns of what has been said and/or ask students to summarize for you.**

Cut out this pocket-sized version to carry with you in the field.

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*Adapted from Talk Science Primer, Michaels/O’Connor, TERC 2012*