Lesson Plan: Stepping Stone Ideas, Possible Open Questions, and Feelings

**Idea #1**  The brain’s connections get stronger when you learn.

1. What is intelligence?
2. How do muscles get bigger and stronger?
3. What does “use it or lose it” mean?
4. How is the brain like a muscle?
5. How do neurons work in our brains?
6. Why is it important for neurons to communicate with each other?
7. Why is it important to challenge your mind?
8. How do brain cells grow?

**Feelings**  surprised, challenged, knowledgeable

**Stop/Talk**  after, “The result is a stronger, smarter brain.”

**Idea #2**  Animals’ brains grow in challenging environments.

1. How were the brains of animals who lived alone different from the brains of animals who lived with others?
2. Why did the animals who lived with others have more nerve connections in their brains?
3. What is an “enriched” environment?
4. How did living in an enriched environment make the animals smarter?

**Feelings**  enriched, curious

**Stop/Talk**  after, “their brains also grew by about 10%.”

**Idea #3**  Learning causes permanent changes in the brain.

1. Why do babies learn to talk?
2. How do babies learn to talk?
3. Why don’t babies get embarrassed when they practice?
4. Why don’t babies forget language?
5. How does the brain change permanently when you learn something new?

**Feelings**  curious, challenged

**Stop/Talk**  after, “just like a weightlifters muscles make them strong.”

**Idea #4**  Growing a smarter brain takes work.

1. Why do some students call others “dumb”?
2. What do students think when other people call them “dumb”?
3. What does it mean if a student seems “smart”?
4. How are the students who appear “smartest” different from the rest of the students?
5. Why is it important to always challenge your brain?
6. Why don’t people try new challenges?
7. What happens to people who do not challenge themselves?
8. What happens to people who accept new challenges?

**Feelings**  struggle, challenged, satisfaction, proud, knowledgeable
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Stop/Talk  

Big Ideas

1. You can make your brain smarter and stronger by challenging yourself
2. Learning occurs across the lifespan
3. Hard work and practice leads to great reward

Thoughts

This article is appropriate for 3rd grade and up.