

# CONTEXTUALIZING TEACHING AND LEARNING

A(5) Know the subject content

C(1.3) Demonstrate understanding of the possible effect of local culture and context on student participation in school



Many people learn quicker and can remember information for a longer time if what they are learning connects with their life. This is called *learning in context*. Some of the benefits of teaching and learning in context are that it:

- Makes learning more relevant
- Engages and motivates hard-to-reach students
- Increases students' confidence and enthusiasm
- Enhances interest in long-term goals and education

*Adapted from: Center for Student Success, Research & Planning Group.  
Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in CA Community Colleges, p. 58.*

## LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Help connect the curriculum to student daily life with the following strategies and activities

### STUDENTS MAKE CONNECTIONS

After teaching a topic, ask students to work individually or in groups to think of ways it connects to other topics they have learned. Ask them:

- How does \_\_\_\_\_ relate to what we learned earlier this week?
- Where did we see something like \_\_\_\_\_ before in the curriculum?
- What do we need to understand before we learn about \_\_\_\_\_?

**For example:**

Animals with and without backbones (Grade 4, Science)

- Link the lesson with previous lessons about living and non-living things. Do non-living things have backbones? Why?
- Ask students if there are any animals in their environment that do not have backbones.
- Ask students to compare and contrast animals with and without backbones. What if humans didn't have backbones? What would life be like?

### BIG PICTURE FIRST

To help students see how your lesson fits into the larger curriculum, start your lesson with a big idea or goal. This will help motivate students by sharing with them how this lesson connects to a larger topic.

**For example:**

Example 1: Family and home (Grade 4, Burmese)

You could say, "After this lesson, you will be able to learn why different houses are built in different regions based on climate. What is your house like?"

Example 2: Three friends (Grade 5, Burmese)

"Today we will learn a story about the friendship between three people. We will learn why we need to help each other, and what happens if we do not help each other. Who has helped you in your life?"



## PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Give students “real-life” problems or situations to discuss together in small groups. When finished, each group shares their proposed solutions.

### For example:

In a science class discussing the Myitsone Dam, sample questions could include:

- What do you know about this situation? Who is involved?
- What does each group want? What strategy could be used to resolve this problem?
- What additional information would you need?
- Where/how could you find needed information?
- How will your group evaluate your solution?



## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

When an error is made by a student ask the class to help, share, expand on, or explore that viewpoint. What can everyone learn from it?

### For example:

“Hsan Bwa has raised a good point. What happens when water is added to an acid? Does anyone have a guess?”

“Good question, Aye Aye. Does anyone know how water changes into a gas?”



## V-A-K

Students learn in a variety of ways. Promote Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic learning to better meet the needs of all students.



Visual: Draw a picture to explain or let the students draw



Auditory: Use a song or memory tool for students to learn easily



Kinesthetic: Let students learn by using their hands or bodies

### For example:

While teaching about dates and months, a teacher could use VAK in the ways below:

- Visual: Have students use a calendar to find important dates.
- Auditory: Read the poem:  
 “Thirty days hath September,  
 April, June, and November,  
 all the rest have thirty-one.  
 February has twenty-eight,  
 but leap year coming one in four  
 February then has one day more.”
- Kinesthetic: Have students sort cut-outs of the months of the year into the seasons or group the months by their length.



## CULTURALLY-BASED LEARNING

Create an activity that relates to students' cultures, backgrounds, or daily lives.

### For example:

In Grade 5, Social Studies, before teaching the lesson about Myanmar's ethnic groups, give students the following questions as homework. For your ethnic group what are the:

- Traditional foods
- Customs and cultural dress
- Songs and poetry
- Indigenous knowledge

Then have students bring items about their heritage to class to show to other students.



## USE THE NEWS

Use recent news or information about what is happening around the world to connect the lesson content to the real world.

You can bring in a picture, show a news video or cut out a news article to share with your class.

### For example:

When teaching the Grade 4 curriculum on types of materials used for clothing, show some pictures with examples of recent fashion.



## TEACH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Take students outside of the classroom to learn. A change of scenery will help students refresh and refocus.

### For example:

While teaching the Science lesson from Grade 3 curriculum about the natural environment, bring students outside to experience it for themselves. Ask students, "What about the natural environment makes them happy? What about the outside environment makes them sad? Why?"



## USE A SIMILE

To help students understand a challenging topic, use a simile to compare a new idea to something students already know.

### For example:

Example 1: "Air pollution makes it difficult to see and breathe, just like when you start a fire using charcoal."

Example 2: "Thermal expansion of solids (Grade 5, Science)

The thermal expansion of solids is like frying a crispy fish cake. It gets bigger when you fry it!"



## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Get students thinking about how what they are learning is related to their daily life. For example, ask your students questions like:

- Where have you seen \_\_\_\_\_ before?
- What is another example of \_\_\_\_\_ you can think of?
- What would happen if we didn't have \_\_\_\_\_?
- What part of \_\_\_\_\_ is the most important? Why?
- When do you use \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ improve your life?

### For example:

Adding 2 numbers (Grade 2, Math)

- Create different stations around the class.
- Divide the class into small groups. Ask students to visit each table and solve practical problems. (For example, at a grocery store table, place fruits or vegetables with price tags and ask students to find the total price.)
- At another table, have students measure their weight and their height.
- Have students order food on a menu and calculate the total price.



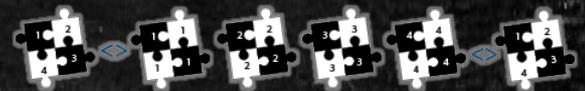
## PEER-TEACHING JIGSAW

- Divide the class into small, equally-sized groups.
- Give each student a number.
- Call all the "1's" to come together, "2's" together, "3's" together and so on.
- Give each group a different paragraph, part of a paragraph, or concept to discuss in their numbered groups.
- Once they have had time to read and discuss, let students to go back to their original groups and take turns explaining about their different pieces.
- Lastly, the teacher can choose one student from each group to report to class.

### For example:

Some texts that would work well with the jigsaw:

- Penicillin (Grade 10, English)
- Farmer Revolution (Grade 5, History)



## OPINION QUESTIONS

Help students develop and share their opinions about what they are learning. Ask them questions and give them time to think about and share their ideas. Some example questions include:

- Which is better: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- Who is your role model? Why?
- What is your favorite place? Why?
- What is the best food to eat?
- What job do you want to have when you grow up?
- Are there risks associated with becoming friends with someone?

### For example:

For a lesson about Bayint Naung (Grade 4, History), ask students to describe Bayint Naung, including his personality and reason for his actions.

