

Developing Contextual Units

Purpose:

This exercise is meant to provide you with an opportunity to explore the contextual teaching and learning process by which students will conduct an activity and transfer their learning.

Elements:

- Develop a short unit of instruction built around a lesson topic, using the REACT strategy and linking academic principles to “real-world” activities or situations. Use the template at the end of this document for planning purposes.
- The unit should be created in a classroom ready format and should include the following:
 - Real world connection: Problem statement or scenario
 - Relating concepts to familiar things
 - Procedure for exploring the problem or scenario (Active learning strategies: hands-on activity, research, data collection, and calculations)
 - Data collection, assessment, representation and reporting
 - A strategy for reflecting on the activity
 - Suggestions for assessment (i.e. student rubric, portfolio prompts, observation rubric)

Questions to Consider:

Who in the world outside of the classroom really uses this concept?

What types of activities can be described or modeled by this concept?

If you have thoughts about where this concept might be used, reach out to appropriate community members for input. You may find applications of lesson concepts in local manufacturing, medical or scientific industries, or even construction sites or grocery stores.

In designing your units, look for ways to take your students – virtually, or physically – outside the walls of the traditional classroom so that they can Relate, Experience, and/or Apply.

Consider the following questions:

- What kind of discussion or activity might help students in RELATING to the concept?
- What kind of activity would enable students to EXPERIENCE the concept?
- How can students be shown the way that the concept is applied, or can they APPLY it themselves in a way that simulates an industry situation or other real-life problem solving scenario?
- How will the experience be set up so that students have the opportunity to interact and COOPERATE in one another’s learning?
- What steps can be taken to ensure that students will be able to TRANSFER learning to new and unfamiliar situations?

Contextual Unit Design Template

Course/Unit/Lesson:	
Standard(s) and Objective(s):	
Real World Connections: <i>Problem Statement or Scenario</i>	
Resources/Materials:	
Contextual Learning Strategies: <i>REACT</i>	Active Learning Strategies:
Activities: <i>Hands-On Research or Process</i> <i>Data Collection, Assessment, Representation and Reporting</i>	
Transfer Strategies:	
Assessment Strategies, Criteria and Design:	