

## CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING: WHAT IS IT?

Contextual teaching and learning involves making learning meaningful to students by connecting to the real world. It draws upon students' diverse skills, interests, experiences, and cultures and integrates these into what and how students learn and how they are assessed. In other words, contextual teaching situates learning and learning activities in real-life and vocational contexts to which students can relate, incorporating not only content, the "what," of learning but the reasons why that learning is important.

Some examples of contextual teaching and learning are interdisciplinary activities across content areas, classrooms, and grade levels; or among students, classrooms, and communities. Problem-based learning strategies, for instance, can situate student learning in the context of students' communities. Many skills learned as parts of contextual learning activities are transferable skills, those that can be used not only for successful completion of a current project, but also in other content areas to prepare a student for success in later vocational endeavors.

Contextual learning, then, engages students in meaningful, interactive, and collaborative activities that support them in becoming self-regulated learners. Additionally, these learning experiences foster interdependence among students and their learning groups. Complementary outcomes assessments for contextual student learning are authentic assessment strategies.

## RESOURCES:

<http://www.ciera.org/library/archive/2001-04/0104parwin.htm>

The role of self regulated learning in contextual teaching.

<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/cl.html>

<http://www.cat.ilstu.edu/additional/tips/coopStruct.php>

<http://clte.asu.edu/active/clvssmgroup.pdf>

These sites provide clear descriptions and examples of cooperative learning and strategies for fostering interdependence among students in learning groups.

<http://www.cord.org/contextual-teaching-resources/>

The CORD resource list assists educators in secondary schools and colleges through new curricula, teaching strategies, professional development, and community partnerships.

<http://www.uwtv.org/programs/displayseries.aspx?fID=382>

Exploring Contextual Teaching and Learning

This series explores new forms of hands-on teaching methods through the Washington State Consortium for Contextual Teaching and Learning.

[www.researchchannel.org/prog/displayevent.aspx?rID=2196&fID=1506](http://www.researchchannel.org/prog/displayevent.aspx?rID=2196&fID=1506)

Research Channel- Contextual Teaching 101 contains a 30-minute online instructional video by the University of Wisconsin.

<http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl/>

This website includes the results of nearly five years of funded projects (1998-2003) from the United States Department of Education on contextual teaching and learning (CTL).

<http://www.cew.wisc.edu/teachnet/ctl/>

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<http://www.texascollaborative.org/WhatIsCTL.htm>

This clearinghouse for the Texas Collaborative for Teaching Excellence contains resources such as on-demand content-specific modules, foundational topics, and professional development planning tools.