

We Need the Real-World!

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Within the high school classroom many of us were told that we would be using the given material or curriculum in our everyday lives, also known as the real-world. The real-world refers to the time after students graduate from high school. To some extent this has been true however, most of what was taught to me in high school I have not yet used in the real-world. An example is how to take state administered tests; this is not going to be relevant in the future of the student and it is not a skill needed to succeed in a career. As a teacher it is your job to know what the students need and what will be useful to them when the schooling comes to an end and the real-world begins. Through real-world applications students can learn effortlessly, understand more, and make connections from the classroom to the real-world with ease.

Real-world applications allow students to progress and can give them incentive to learn and care about what is going on within the classroom. Material can be easier to understand when related to real-life issues through examples. A good example of this can be found in the study created by Dianne Chambers entitled *The Real World and the Classroom: Second-Career Teachers*. The study involved second-career teachers, meaning they started teaching at a later age because of a career change. The study showed that these teachers brought “unique skills and nontraditional methods to teaching” (Chambers, 2002). Through their previous experiences, second-career teachers took their skills and combined them with education to create a connection to the real-world for their students. This will allow the student to take what they have learned and apply it in many different situations within their lives and take their education to the next level.

Children’s minds need to understand and exercise the material. Just doing the work to get it done does not help students advance in their education. This can also include tests. Students cannot just go through the motions with their education, they must apply their current and

previous knowledge to the task at hand in order to really gain knowledge or build upon what they already know. A good example of a real-world application would be project based learning. This is the idea of having students show and exercise their understanding of what they have gained from the lesson through different projects and or activities. The great thing about project based learning is that students get to “freely cross disciplines” as they create their project (Curtis, 2011). This allows a variety of learning to occur; the children are not limited to one specific subject to focus upon. Instead they take a little knowledge from several different subject areas and apply them all to the one project. From this, children learn different things not strictly related to one subject. From project based learning students can retain the information they learned and can apply it in future classes as well as the real world.

The lack of project based learning or unchallenging tasks in the classroom contributes to the poor attitudes students have about learning and school in general (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). One suggestion to fix this problem is applying project based learning within the class. Given more complex problems, students are forced to understand the material and think critically instead of conveying back the information they were told by the teacher. A complex problem or a real world problem can be applied in any content area and formed into a project for students to complete. According to the article *Motivating Project-Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning*, project based learning creates motivation and promotes the cognitive development of the student (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Allowing students to exercise what they know through projects is a good way to keep them busy and engaged in the curriculum.

Applying the knowledge to different situations is what the students are expected to do. The curriculum taught needs to be in-depth and amusing in order for students to remember the

concept for years to come and apply it to the problems they will encounter. Lily Jones, a writing contributor to the website Teaching Channel, noted that “real life doesn’t present itself in compartmentalized subject areas...” (2012). Applying knowledge to solve the problem in front of you is what teachers should want their students to gain; this can happen through application based learning. Having students come up with their own ideas and make mistakes helps further this learning. From here, students become aware of their mistakes, correct or modify their understanding of the problem, and therefore become successful and advance.

Application based teaching can help in classrooms around the world. Students will be superior with, and more prepared for solving the issues they will encounter in the real-world. In the above, real-world applications have been explained and they allow students to broaden their learning capabilities, understand more, and make stronger connections from the classroom to the real-world

with ease compared to those who do not learn through this teaching practice. Real-world scenarios can be brought into the classroom in fun and innovative projects, and or activities that will help students understand not only what they are learning, but also why they are learning it. Through application based learning students will be able to learn effortlessly and remember more; students can look back and say they are using what they were taught in school in their everyday lives.

References

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