

Curriculum Used in Real World Experiences

Brittany D. Millson

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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David B. Oxendine, Ph. D.

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ABSTRACT

The investigation of how to effectively integrate real-world experiences into the curriculum in a classroom setting focuses on the research articles, journals, and books presented throughout this paper. A look into the benefits of why it is essential to incorporate these types of experiences is also laid out alongside the benefits that it makes in retention, high school, and collegiate graduation rates. The authors lay out ways for students to have real-world experiences throughout almost every content area from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The many articles cited in this paper have been intensely researched on how creating opportunities for students to participate in real-world experiences through national, state, or county curriculum significantly benefits student learning. For students of every background, age, and ability level, there is an opportunity to find value in learning. These articles show students' need to experience life situations, build skills, and be exposed to things that are not easily accessible in the traditional classroom setting. Through these experiences, students will make meaningful connections to what they are learning and apply them in real-world situations. Doing so creates a sense of value for education and makes it more of a need and priority. As hypothesized, students will highly benefit from the exposure to real-world experiences through the set curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relating lesson material to students so that they will comprehend and use it is the ultimate goal of classroom teachers. Throughout the articles cited, the overarching idea is how teachers can make material, standards, and assignments relatable to real-world experiences. By making the material taught relatable to the student, the student will ultimately find value in learning and how to use their knowledge in everyday life after graduation. Finding a balance between teaching to a test and what students will use is where the articles become in-depth.

In the article *Integrating Fractions to a Constructivist Classroom*, the concept of how a classroom teacher can use real-world experiences for students to make sense of the concept of fractions is presented. Students could make connections to everyday materials and use those items to form equal portions and ultimately grasp the concept of what a fraction would look like visually. By doing so, the student can make sense of what is being asked of them and apply it to work not only within a classroom setting but also in life experiences. Finding value in what the student is learning will make for lifelong learners and potentially a higher high school and college graduation rate in the future. (Armour, 2013).

Routine jobs such as teaching, the medical field, or any military career could greatly benefit from these connections made within the classroom. In the article *Providing a Link with the Real World': Learning from the Student Experience of Service User and Career Involvement in Social Work Education*, the author touches on how students learn from experiences. These experiences involve the introduction into the field

setting. Throughout the field, the student observes and works for hand in hand with individuals with a degree and prior experience in the setting. These learning experiences help the student become knowledgeable on applying what they have learned to what they will be doing in that specific career field. (Irvine, Molyneux, & Gillman, 2015).

Setting the stage for students to be successful is what making the material relatable is all about. The amount of time that teachers spend making lesson plans to only teach from a scripted manual is mind-blowing. The students' responses are scripted as well. In the twenty-first century, the students in the classroom are complex learners that require engagement through technology, experiments, and experiences.

How Scientists Think in the Real World: Implications for Science Education lays out the concept of a student entering laboratories to observe and are given scientific problems that they must work through. Placing the student within the field setting gives the students the tools and essential reasoning experiences that they must have to succeed within a scientific career field. Some students find success within the experience; others may fail and consider different goals for themselves. This is where the students find their true passion. (Dunbar, 2000)

The standards set forth nationwide or by an individual state consist of materials that students will need to know before entering into a career path. The standards build upon each other. Year after year, the material learned becomes consistently more complex. The standards require the student to build more in-depth knowledge about the world around them. However, the standards do not specify how students will ever use the material they have learned within a real-world setting. Without an understanding of the

value of what they have learned, the student may not retain the information. Thus making what teachers do genuinely in vain.

Real-world experiences can be presented to students in all subject areas. One of the subject areas that is often overlooked is that of physical education. In the twenty-first century classrooms, physical education instructors are given the task of tying in standards that the classroom teacher is currently teaching into the physical and movement of P.E. This requires thoughtful and intentional planning on the instructors' part to weave the two subject areas together in a cohesive manner that will provide the student with value in what they are experiencing. The students must grasp the concept to build a bridge and connect the material with the physical activity that is being performed.

The journal article Health and Physical Education Teacher-preparation Implementation of Clinical Practices: Integrating Academic Content to Real-world Application explains the importance of incorporating and creating these experiences on and off-campus for students. This can be done at all grade levels and would have a meaningful connection with the surrounding communities. So often, the community aspect of education is overlooked. It is one day where the students that are in the classroom setting now will arrive at. Using the community as a tool to implement meaningful real-world experiences can be very beneficial. (Strand et al., 2016)

The surrounding community can provide experiences that students may already be familiar with. These experiences can include physical activity with firefighters, police offices, and military personnel, to name a few. These experiences also show students that some career fields require more physical activity than other career fields might. Using

these ties to the community also can draw funding for local schools. These experiences can make multiple connections through physical activity, career fields, and mathematics.

This brings us to English as a Second Language Learners (ESL) within classrooms of all grade levels. Most ESL students learn through visual and hands-on experiences. ESL students learning through experience put them into direct contact with the English language and process and make sense of the learned phrases as students participate in activities that provide meaningful connections to the English language. The vocabulary words and phrases presented to these students, when allowed to learn through visual and hands-on experience, create a light bulb moment for most students where they realize the value and meaning behind the English language. (Nan, 2013)

On the other end of the educational realm are those talented and gifted students that would highly benefit from real-world connections to learning. Providing a meaningful learning experience through real-world situations involving STEM activities creates a one-of-a-kind learning environment for students that have the capabilities to make those life connections beyond the standards. Placing students in a situation where they are exposed to real-life and career experiences will provide the student with a clear image and expectation of what lies before them in the future. *Developing Your Child's Talent in the Real World: Dealing with the Juxtaposition Between Ideal and Actual Gifted Education* speaks to how a gifted student needs to be provided with resources that will help expand their capabilities provided those experiences through learning can very well build upon their needs. (Cross, 2007)

One of the biggest challenges for teachers is designing instruction and curriculum that suits all learners. Relating the standards to real-world everyday life experiences, places, and things provides all students with a sense of familiarity within a classroom setting. These experiences can be created, sponsored, or provided by many sources. This creates opportunities for collaboration between students and their individual experiences with the material learned. Students can feed off of each other and their opinions and views.

Creating these opportunities makes a teacher's job that much easier in the design of their curriculum. Students can build and bridge the gap between concepts and create new ways of learning with their peers. This benefits all types of learners in and outside of the traditional classroom setting. The material learned with peers also promotes cooperation with the exchange of ideas and concepts. Once these opportunities become part of the everyday curriculum and atmosphere within a classroom setting, students will connect to at-home and everyday experiences.

The numerous careers that students are exposed to through the curriculum and standards that could incorporate experiences with professionals could increase the graduation rates of career-oriented high school students and college graduation rates. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2019 rates have shown an increase in students' employment rates with at least a bachelor's degree. This seems to be an increase towards specific career fields after experience exposure through the college-level curriculum, as we know through college course completion.

To provide an example that everyone is very familiar with is teaching. Teachers are required to have field experience before entering into their career field after graduation. As these students are exposed to things that happen in the classroom every day, these experiences help student teachers prepare for what they may encounter in a classroom after entering their teaching career that no textbook, lecture, or professor could prepare them for. The hands-on actual life positions that they are put in help them to learn decision-making skills, instincts, and professionalism that a college professor in their program could not prepare them for.

The article *The Role of Experience in Learning: Giving Meaning and Authenticity to the Learning Process in Schools* speaks about how teachers, in particular, have to adjust to the career field. The author also speaks about how motivation plays a huge role in how one learns. (Hansen, 2000) If motivated, a person can do anything but with that has to interest. By providing real-world experiences as students, they become intrigued and interested in the subject or situation provided. These interests are already there for the student; it is a teacher's job to tap into and build upon those interests.

Many college courses and programs require a high level of training. However, few programs require the students to spend time before graduation with a professional from their specific field of study. These moments between a student and a mentor in the field provide valuable experiences that the student would not have been exposed to otherwise. Textbooks can only provide so much information on career study but leave out real-life situations that one may encounter. The situations that may arise could be covered in a handbook upon entrance into the job setting. A handbook, text, or given material to a

student entering a career field may be far from in-depth about these preexisting situations as well. Therefore it is essential to have exposure before the entrance of a career.

Every grade level from kindergarten to twelfth could benefit from real-world experiences through the classroom setting. For kindergarten through twelfth grade, these experiences would have to be pulled from the curriculum standards. At the same time, college-level course experiences with real-world situations are based on the career path projected. Either scenario would highly benefit from these opportunities.

These students could all benefit from real-world experiences through learning from the visual/ spatial, auditory/ musical, linguistic, kinesthetic, mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal learner. The visual/ spatial learner thrives on having scenarios presented to them visually, whereas an auditory/ musical learner learns best from hearing instructions directly and processing through them. Linguistic learners express themselves in not only the written form but through the spoken word as well. These learners would be successful in a public speaking situation. The kinesthetic learner enjoys movement and would highly benefit from hands-on experiences to connect ideas.

On the other hand, mathematical learners do well in a classroom setting and a career field and need exposure to situations and scenarios to comprehend the problem given. The last two types of learners, inter and intrapersonal learners, are very different. Interpersonal learners learn best while working with peers. (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009)

These experiences can provide opportunities to work alongside an individual and create a unique learning experience. The intrapersonal learner works better alone but

could learn from real-world experience how to handle situations that may arise. In contrast, little to no experience or situation exposure could create anxiety for the learner.

As teachers, we try to provide our students with a meaningful learning experience. These are sometimes limited to the classroom setting, which is ultimately out of our control. To provide opportunities not only in the classroom setting, outside in a community setting and through assignments would draw the student's interest and make the workload given seem less daunting. Through this type of engagement, the content that students are exposed to will then become more relevant. The more relevant the curriculum content, the more the student will begin to connect what they have learned and how they can apply it in everyday life.

While applying these concepts or strategies into the classroom, teachers can make meaningful connections to their counterparts, students, and the surrounding communities. The county or school can plan these experiences, the course is taken, accessible via the community, or funded events. Exposure can also be provided virtually through web meetings, tours, or prerecorded video. These experiences, especially in today's time, could provide insight when students are conducting their classes through virtual means. Doing so in this manner also cuts costs and only is comprised of time volunteered.

Some of these different virtual platforms used through the articles presented are Skype, Voice Thread, WebEx, Wix, and Today's Meeting. These forms of technology allow students to communicate with teachers, professors, peers, and professionals. The platforms also create and provide a safe environment for students to participate in different types of experiences. Students have the freedom compared to a traditional

classroom setting to explore many forums that can aid in the learning process. The incorporation of technology in today's era is ever-increasing. The need for technology-based programs that provide students with opportunities to experience life occurrences and situations outside of the classroom setting is growing.

After reading through the journal article, *The efficacy of real-world experiences and service-learning for fostering competencies for sustainable development in higher education*, students were asked if they agree or disagree about the benefits of real-world educational experiences. The article outlines how students are exposed to various learning activities that relate to their particular course of study. These students were able to find value through the experience and learned how to apply them to life situations. Through these experiences, many students saw improvements in communication, social, and analysis skills. Students were then able to apply these new skills professionally and see within those relationships and real-world situations. (Molderez & Fonseca, 2018)

Building a well-rounded concept of what is learned inside the classroom is no small task. Teachers are asked to dawn aspects of many different professions while teaching. Some of these include building a student's perception of their self and capabilities. Teachers teach self-esteem, self-concept, and autonomy without even knowing through their instruction. The article *Enhancing Learning by Integrating Theory and Practice* touches on how classroom setting experiences help students develop these skills. (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009)

The article goes on to also talk about the many benefits that students gain from experienced-based learning. Some of these may include being more engaged, higher-

order thinking skills, and exploring attitudes and values. The acquired skills can only be developed to an extent in a traditional classroom setting, whereas through experience-based learning, these skills can be built more in-depth. Promotion of student interest where the student gets to choose an area in which they find value in the curriculum and participate would develop a strong connection between what is learned and how to apply it. Once the connection is made, the application process into everyday life can be made and built upon. (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009)

Real-world experience based on an educational curriculum is not a new topic of discussion. Through the articles sighted, listing back into the early 1990s has been a critical insight on how students learn. These theories, ideas, and research have given a view of how students should find value in what they are learning through the national, state, or county curriculum. These connections play a role in high school and college graduation rates. They also play a role in the retention of student enrollment throughout kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Ultimately making the connection between how students can use what they have learned in the world they live in endless can benefits. The value of education will begin to grow and flourish within all grade levels. The work ethic for students and their drive to excel in each task should also increase. While these increases come from traditional classroom settings, the exposure to real-world experiences would push this to the next level. Throughout the nationwide curriculum of Common Core, there lie numerous opportunities for exposure to experiences.

The ties between Common Core and learning experiences are tightly woven. Teachers are given the task of preparing students for a career or collegiate pathway. Through learning experiences presents the opportunity and atmosphere to create and foster this type of preparation. The standards are placed to support these types of necessary experiences in or outside of the classroom. Common core intertwines many of the content areas to provide interdisciplinary content to make meaningful and valuable connections to students.

The book *Authentic Learning Experiences: A Real-World Approach to Project-Based Learning* creates a picture of the difference between simulations and authentic learned experiences. The difference between these two learning styles is that of engagement and participation. The book compares the two types of learning through various grade levels. The first is elementary, which they deem kindergarten through fifth grade, the middle being sixth through eighth grade, and high school ninth through twelfth grade. In each of the three levels of education, the book finds connections that can be made through the curriculum to school, local, state, national, and global topics. The areas in which they connected to these topics included traditional language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. They included areas of study such as foreign language, music, art, business, and graphic design. (Laur, 2013)

Across the many different content areas, there was always an opportunity and beneficial aspect to incorporating real-world learning experiences. The text provides several examples of how teachers could apply authentic learning experiences in the classroom setting. The ties to the authentic experiences and state testing are also mentioned in this text. The author speaks upon the skills that students acquire through the

learning experiences, also mentioned numerous times in other articles, and how they directly affect their testing abilities. (Laur, 2013) To provide the student with the tools and skills that they need to succeed is a teacher's mission.

In conclusion, the articles provided support the idea that the current curriculum, whether national, state, or county, should include real-world experiences. The articles, journals, and books lay out the clear benefits of how learning experiences provide a student with educational skills, communication skills, social-emotional skills, and analytical and critical thinking skills. These skills will benefit a student in a grade-level classroom, sports, social events, collegiate course, or everyday situations. These are critical skills to a student's development as a learner and an active part of society. Learning experiences are constantly presenting themselves in one form or another. All educators need to embrace them and create meaningful learning from them.

Hypothesis 1 states that students will highly benefit from real-world experiences from the set curriculum or standards. Hypothesis 2 states that students find an additional value in what is learned through real-world experiences through a set curriculum or standards and apply what is learned in real-world situations.

Method

Participants: Participants for the narrow study would include kindergarten through fifth-grade students. The students would include a set number of students from each grade level that are randomly selected by Attitude scales that pertain to how students view the value in what they are learning through the set curriculum.

Participants will include kindergarten students ages (5-6 years old); first-grade students (6-7 years old); second-grade students (7-8 years old); third-grade students (8-9 years old); fourth-grade students (9-10 years old); and fifth-grade students (10-11 years old).

Instruments: The instruments used would be that of the attitude scales and the use of StarTrek to randomly select students by number.

Race/ Gender: The factors of race and gender would be dependent upon the students selected through the attitude scales and then randomly assigned a number through the StarTrek program.

Location: The location of the participants would include Alderman Road Elementary, located in Grays Creek, North Carolina. The school has a total student population of 675

students from grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The student population is composed of 49% female students and 51% male students. The racial population white- 44%, Black- 29%, Hispanic- 15%, American Indian 2%, Two or More Races- 10%.

(2018)

Time Schedule: The study will be conducted from August through May. (Time will be allotted for scheduled breaks during the academic year. Besides, allotted days for inclement weather as well.)

Procedure: All students' kindergarten through fifth grade at Alderman Road Elementary will be given an attitude scale. Students in lower grade levels such as kindergarten who cannot read will assist their instructor(s). Once given these scales, a number will be assigned to each paper. The numbers will be entered into StarTrek to assign students to this study randomly. All students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade will be exposed to real-world experiences through the set curriculum. At the end of the school year, the students selected will again take the attitude scale given at the beginning of the academic year.

Budget: This study's budget would include the cost of the printed attitude scales, which is to be determined.

Results: The intended result for this study is widespread. As a result, students will be exposed to opportunities to experience situations that relate the curriculum learned in the traditional classroom setting to the real world. Students will ultimately find added value in what is being taught in the classroom by professionals and how to apply that to the

world around them. A future result will be one of a higher retention and enrollment rate of students and will build toward a higher high school graduation rate.

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