

# **Contextual Teaching**

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**South Central Middle School**

**8<sup>th</sup> grade Credit Spanish and ESOL**

## **Research**

Suppose you are visiting a foreign country and have an emergency: How would you find a police station or a hospital? How important is it for a person to be able to find their way around their community? Why is it important to teach students these skills in such a way that they will remember them when they are in an actual emergency? There is classroom learning— worksheets, lectures, repetition and memorization. Then—there is learning in the classroom—activities, visuals, guest speakers, moving around the school, and the community. Carl Rogers and Jerome Freiberg have two terms that they use “learning from the neck up” and “significant, meaningful, experiential learning” (Daniels and Bizar, p.170). Daniels and Bizar go on to write that when a child moves to a foreign country and is allowed to play freely with her companions for hours, she will probably learn the language and be able to speak it with a native accent. And Daniels and Bizar quote Rogers and Freiberg when they say, “But let someone try to instruct her in her new language, basing the instruction on the elements that have meaning for the teacher, and learning is tremendously slowed or even stopped” (Daniels, p. 170).

What is needed is to allow a child to learn in a meaningful way—include role play, group activities, and interactions with others. The way that adults learn in the workplace is by learning from others. Why should students be any different? As a small child, learning came through asking questions and imitating what the adults are doing. Then, a child learns from their older siblings, peers and teachers. They learn that school is hard and stifling to their natural curiosity. They learn to stop asking questions. Contextual teaching is a way to bring back the curiosity and fun back into the classroom. Children learn through “authentic experience” (Daniels, p. 171). Authentic experience is learning that involves going out into the community to learn or bringing the community into the schools. Contextual learning involves giving meaning, reason or purpose to students in order to engage them in learning. “Teachers must help students understand the larger meaning of a particular study—how it relates to real-life issues and actual life roles” (Parnell, p. 2). Contextual learning does not mean neglecting content. It does emphasize meaning, context, and application (Parnell, p. 13).

In other words, in order for students to learn how to follow and give directions, they must actually follow and give directions. They need to walk around the school and experience being lost in a “safe” setting so that when it comes to an emergency setting, their responses will be automatic and help them save a life or help others.

## QCC Standards

### Grade 9-12 Foreign Language Spanish Level I

Standard: Uses target language to ask for clarification or express confusion.

6. Topic: Develops listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to communicate information about daily life and activities appropriate to the novice proficiency level.

Standard: Follows and gives directions.

7. Topic: Develops listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to communicate information about daily life and activities appropriate to the novice proficiency level.

Standard: Uses nonverbal communication, including gestures.

13. Topic: Reacts appropriately in uncomplicated social situations within the novice proficiency level.

Standard: Understands, seeks, and gives information.

14. Topic: Reacts appropriately in uncomplicated social situations within the novice proficiency level.

Standard: Demonstrates ability to respond to questions using phrases, one-word answers, and complete sentences.

24. Topic: Demonstrates in oral and written form some spontaneity in generating a response to an oral or written question a situation, or a visual stimulus appropriate to the novice proficiency level.

### Grade 8 Beginning ESOL

Standard: Comprehends high-frequency words and basic phrases in physical surroundings; produces learned words and phrases, and uses appropriate gestures to communicate basic needs.

Topic: Listening/Speaking

h. Asks appropriate questions for clarification.

m. Uses common social greetings and courtesies appropriately.

Standard: Interacts with frequently used English print in a limited fashion, and demonstrates initial English print awareness; writes familiar words and phrases.

Topic: Reading/Writing

d. Uses simple charts and graphs.

f. Recognizes common signs and labels.

Standard: Uses English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

Topic: American Culture

d. Interprets and responds to nonverbal cues and body language.

Standard: Participates actively in non-academic settings requiring English, including functioning in social settings, the community and world of work, accessing community services and becoming an active member of the community.

Topic: Beyond the classroom

a. Draws pictures of common sights in the community and labels same.

f. Follows one and two-step oral directions: gives one and two-step oral directions.

g. Begins to make use of a number of important services and begins to help others use them (e.g. buying stamps, asking a price).

i. Exchanges basic social greetings.

Standard: Expresses and satisfies personal and safety needs in a wide variety of settings.

Topic: Beyond the classroom

a. Identifies the meaning of common traffic signs such as “Stop”.

b. On a community map, labels public resources and safety services.

Standard: Uses English to interact in content-area classrooms.

Topic: Links with Content Areas

a. Follows oral and written directions, both implicit and explicit.

Standard: Uses English to obtain, process, construct and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.

Topic: Links with Content Areas

c. Gathers information orally and in writing with assistance.

## Unit Plan

**TSW:** Learn how to ask and follow directions in order to navigate throughout their local community, including how to ask for clarification

Materials:

Blindfolds

Markers for coloring

Bingo chips or other manipulatives

Butcher paper

Map of local area including Post Office, police station, etc.

Map of school building, including teacher’s names on rooms

Arrange for someone to videotape Friday’s lesson

Vocabulary

I need directions to...

I can’t find....

Would you please help me find...

Turn to the left.

Turn to the right.

Stop.

Watch out.

Enter...

Are you hurt?

Names of various public buildings

Day One

Objective: familiarize students with a local map and a school map

Students will study the local map to familiarize themselves with the location of important places (police station, etc) and will read the map of the school building. In groups of 3 or 4, they will quiz each other as to the location of places and teacher’s classroom assignments. They will draw a map of the school, label teacher’s rooms.

#### Day Two

Objective: map local community

Students will draw a map of the local community including public buildings and include the location of their classmates' homes.

#### Day Three

Objective: use vocabulary to guide another person around a map using manipulatives

Students will work in pairs and use the manipulatives to give each other verbal directions around the maps. The partner will move the manipulative around the map to indicate comprehension.

#### Day Four

Objective: give students practice using their directional vocabulary

Students will blindfold a partner and move them thru the classroom that has been set up as a maze.

#### Day Five

Objective: students will use target vocabulary to guide another around the school

Alert the videographer to be ready to tape the kids in action. Teacher is to monitor hallways and observe/guide students as necessary.

Partnered students will blindfold one partner and walk throughout the school building using oral directions in the target language. They may not enter other classes, run their partner into obstacles or otherwise cause injury to their partner. Halfway thru class (or 20 minutes), the students will change places and continue the exercise. About 10 minutes before the end of class, gather up all students back into the classroom and have them write about their experiences. If time allows, have students read their experiences aloud.

### **Assessment**

Student produced work, teacher observation, videotape, student reflection.

In order to pass the assignment (pass/fail grade), the student must give 90% of their directions in the target language during the exercise and turn in all assignments.

### **Biography**

I teach Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grade High School Spanish for Credit and ESOL in grades 6-12. I have taught Spanish for 6 ½ years in grades K-12 and ESOL for 2 years in grades 6-10. I received a B.A. in Spanish in Dec., 1995 and an ESOL endorsement in June, 2000.

### **References**

Daniels and Bizar. *Methods that Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms*. Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1998.

Parnell, Dale. *Why Do I Have to Learn This? Teaching the Way People Learn Best.*  
Texas: Cord Communications, 1995.