

4.3 Personalise and connect learning: Apply and assess learning in authentic contexts



Essence >
The teacher structures the curriculum so that students apply their learning in real-world/authentic contexts.

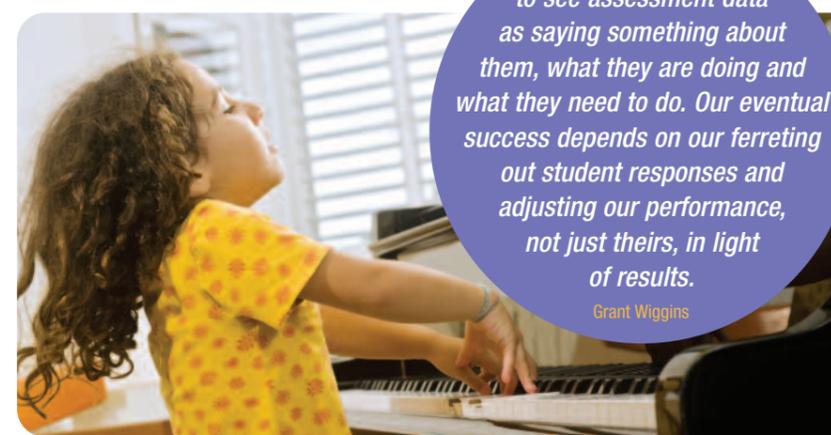
Key actions: Teachers

- Build connections with my students, align curriculum outcomes with real-world settings and model lifelong learning where school is part of the wider community
- Develop topics and assessment through issues and projects that are real to my students and use assessment criteria relevant to these
- Use digital resources and *Scootle* learning objects to simulate real-life situations and assessment scenarios
- Incorporate deliberate and impromptu self and peer evaluation into everyday class activities, focusing on the quality of performance demonstrated in learning skills, understandings and knowledge
- Teach the skills of self and peer assessment
- Scaffold learners' efforts to conduct their own inquiry processes, experimentation and problem solving
- Allocate time for students to share their work with peers, to discuss their thinking and their plans
- Ensure my students learn about their own thinking processes (the metacognitive work of learning) to develop self-monitoring skills
- Negotiate with students how they will demonstrate their learning by directly linking to the intended learning outcomes
- Involve students in local community initiatives to 'make a difference' in contexts that matter to them
- Connect students with authentic audiences face-to-face and online
- Develop students' skills and confidence to take on advocacy roles within the school and the community
- Provide scaffolds for students to participate in authentic contexts (eg coordinate mentor partnerships across year levels)
- Give 'just in time', relevant developmental feedback

Key actions: Students

- Use different situations to show what I know, can do and understand
- Develop projects about issues that matter to me
- Assess whether I achieved what I set out to do
- Give feedback to others and accept it from people who are helping me
- Make sure I check with others to see how I'm going and to get new ideas

Teachers need to see assessment data as saying something about them, what they are doing and what they need to do. Our eventual success depends on our ferreting out student responses and adjusting our performance, not just theirs, in light of results.
Grant Wiggins



Presentation or demonstration: how to make learning relevant

In the SACE Stage 1 English course, an oral presentation is one requirement. My group of students struggled with their learning—in fact, encouraging them to stay in school was a challenge in itself. They made it quite clear that talking in front of the class was not going to happen. As I wanted them to complete the requirement, I had to reconsider the activity.

Perhaps they'd relate better to an oral 'demonstration'? In this way, students could speak on any topic that interested them and bring along whatever props they needed to complete the task.

As I sat discussing the new approach with them, the body language began to change—the enthusiasm was building. Ideas were flooding in. Preparation was underway. We worked together to negotiate the criteria by which oral demonstrations would be assessed. We negotiated what makes a good oral demonstration and we specified the success criteria in a rubric. Their commitment was unprecedented.

We had students energetically demonstrating and talking explicitly about their interests. One student showed us how to decorate biscuits for a child's party and we joined in. Another brought in a complete car brake system to demonstrate how it worked. Later, we all found ourselves down in the student car park with a student

earnestly demonstrating the under-the-bonnet workings of all the engine parts. We learnt how to make scones, use eBay, play a guitar, and on and on it went.

I discovered that these students had vast background knowledge to share; they could speak with ease and confidence when they were sharing their passions. They addressed the class competently, spoke clearly, used expressive body language, and they were interesting to listen to. Many of the demonstrations called for active class participation, with students listening attentively to instructions and keenly following the student lead.

The peer audience rewarded the students' efforts; they were highly supportive of each other, and were very honest in their appraisal of the oral demonstration as they used the assessment rubric to guide their feedback.

What had started off as a bit of a gamble had quickly become one of the best moves I could have made. The students made real connections, our class dialogue became much more meaningful, they provided constructive, targeted and useful feedback and, above all, these students experienced success.

Senior secondary English teacher

Justice alert

Do the dominant assessment practices regularly exclude certain ways of demonstrating understanding?

Ways to apply and assess learning in authentic contexts

Learning shots: Students use digital cameras to capture 'learning moments' throughout a unit of work. Students develop captions for each shot that describe their thinking and progress made at each stage. Post these on the wall to create a 'Learning moments' wall collage. (Ensure that permission for photographs to be taken has been obtained from parents/guardians.)

Hamburger rubric: Three students are to do a well known task—constructing hamburgers. Three other students write a confidential set of criteria that they think a good hamburger should have. Stars can be used to indicate the quality of the hamburger on a rubric; for example:

☆☆	Superb job of placing burger in bun
☆☆	All parts in respective places
	Used sauce to draw a smiley face on the patty
	Wrapped neatly in a folded origami swan
☆☆	Burger in bun
☆	Lettuce piled neatly on patty
	Sauce on inside of bun
	Pickle centred
	Wrapped nicely
☆☆	Burger in bun
	Lettuce in bun
	Sauce on inside of bun
	Pickle in bun, but a little off centre
☆	Burger hanging out of bun
	Lettuce hanging out
	Sauce all over the bun
	Pickle on floor

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