RESEARCH ON CONTEXT
RESEARCH ON CONTEXT

- Interview Questions and Write-up
- Summary of “Community Inquiry Activity” Information
- Analysis of Interview and Community Inquiry Activity
Research in Context

I. Funds of Knowledge and Analysis:

1. Choose a student from your classroom whom you would like to get to know better.
2. Conduct an interview with this student to find out about his/her talents, interests, family, extra-curricular activities, learning styles, etc.
3. Conduct an interview with the parent/legal guardian to gather more information about your student.

The interviews should help you learn about your student so you can become a more effective teacher as you design your unit for the teacher work sample.

Possible questions might be:

   What are some things your child might do on a particular weekend?
   Do you have other siblings that attend the school?
   What subject does your child like to study at school?
   Are there aspects of school that your child has indicated he does not like?
   What are your child's strengths?

(N.B. use the interview protocols from MAT 600 or EDUC 365 to find funds of knowledge that student and student's family possess.

4. Write a one page paper that summarizes the information you have collected from your student, parent, and any other source you may have used such as the mentor teacher, resource teacher, or counselor.

   Include in your summary, how this fund of knowledge will influence your instructional and curricular decisions as you design your unit to better serve this particular student. You may also wish to include your interview questions. (Opt.)

II. Community Inquiry Activity (CIA) and Analysis

Write a two-three page paper that summarizes your observations of the surrounding community, the school community, and the classroom community. See the following pages for the descriptions--"Learning about the Context." You do not have to answer every question that is included there. These are suggestions of things to look for or be aware of as they can impact your teaching. You may include facts and figures about your community, school, or classroom that help define the makeup of students you are working with.

   Include in your summary, how this information will influence and shape your instructional and curricular decisions as you design your unit to better serve your class community.
Learning about the Context

Most people approach new social situations with an eye toward first learning about the context. They reserve judgment and commitment until they know something about the individuals and their expectations, the rules and procedures, and the relationships within the group(s). In other words, some sort of contextual analysis is necessary.

In the social construct of education, one might observe the community surrounding the school, the community within the school and the community within the classroom itself. The classroom is society in miniature and reflects the society in which the school exists. Children of act and interact in certain ways because of what they see and experience in the larger communities. It is therefore important to find out about the communities/context from which the learners come and in which the school is situated.

Following are some ways in which you can explore those contexts. (If you look closely, you will recognize some of these ideas for exploration from the Funds of Knowledge Community Inquiry Activity you completed in your Social Studies course):

The Surrounding Community

1. What is something that shows the natural beauty of the area?
2. What is something that shows the area is changing?
3. What is something that shows growth in the area?
4. What is something that is “kid-friendly”?
5. What are the local businesses?
6. Is the community proud of the school? What do they seem to be most proud of?
7. How diverse is the community? (both ethnically and socioeconomically)
8. Where do people work?
9. How do people spend their leisure time?
10. What is something that surprised you and your partner about the area?
11. What is something you feel could be improved about the area?
12. Any other pictures that you and your partner would like to add? What do they say about the community? The people? The School?
13. Is there something about which you would like to ask people in the community?

The School Community

1. The halls. Who is in the halls? What kinds of social groups do you see? Are there any groups which are ethnically diverse? Are there any students who are alone? Do you notice any difference in behavior between students who are alone and those who are in groups? Look at the posters and student artwork hanging in the halls. Who is represented?
2. **Lunch time.** What do students do during lunch? What happens in the lunch room? Outside in the halls? Outside of the building? What kind of student clusters do you see? Where do students sit in the lunch room? Is there any pattern to the seating? Are there students who are alone? Do you see any students with exceptionalities? How are they treated by other students? What issues of inequality are you aware of?

3. **Recess.** What do students do? What are the topics of conversation? What clusters do you see? Are there behavioral differences between the clusters?

4. **Dress.** How are the students dressed? Comment on neatness and apparent affluence. Also note differences in dress among groups. Are there ways besides dress that students use to individualize and/or maintain group affiliation?

5. **Language.** What is the out-of-class language like? How is it different from in-class language? What sorts of emotions do they express? What about body language? Note differences in languages among groups. What about hybrid language patterns?

6. **Interests.** If you are unobtrusive, you will be able to overhear fragments of conversations. What do the students talk about? Note differences in topics for different groups.

7. **Groups.** What groups can you identify? How would you characterize each group? How rigid is group definition? That is, are some students members of more than one group? OR do some members of groups at least mix with members of other groups? Are there loners? What are their characteristics?

8. Other things you might want to look at are: organization and schedule; rules and discipline; leadership style; faculty room conversations

**The Classroom Community**

Observe students in the classroom. How does their behavior differ from out-of-class behavior? Or does it differ? What kinds of conversations occur in the class? What groups can you identify? Are they a different composition and nature than out-of-classroom groups? How does group behavior differ? What issues of diversity do you see in the classroom? Do you see students with exceptionalities? How are they received by the other students? What accommodations do you see the teacher making for his/her diverse classroom?

Other things to consider are: classroom layout; special resources, bulletin boards, the walls, the atmosphere. Is the room crowded, cluttered, or comfortable? Is it boring and bland, or stimulating? How would you like to spend 6 hours a day in the room? What can the room tell you about the learning approach used?