RESEARCH ON CONTEXT

A. Interview and Summary

B. Learning about the Context (CIA)

C. Connections
Research on Context

Collect information about students that influences instructional and curricular decisions. These inside and outside of classroom contexts include students’ funds of knowledge, students’ interests, present levels of performance, learning preferences, developmental levels in reading, writing, and math, prior lessons taught by your mentor teachers, behavioral supports, functional performance, and academic achievement.

Choose a class that you are working with this semester. Explore students’ funds of knowledge. For example, you can use the interview protocols from MAT 600 to find funds of knowledge that student have (and the student’s family, if applicable), use the COACH interview protocol, or design a survey.

Required Components

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<th>Severe Program</th>
<th>Mild/Moderate Program</th>
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<td>1. Complete the COACH interview protocol with a student and their family.</td>
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<td>2. Submit a 2-3 page write up that summarizes the information you have gathered about the Surrounded Community, The School Community, and the Classroom Community (see the following pages for the descriptions – “Learning about the Context”).</td>
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<td>3. Describe how you have made connections among the information gathered in your interview, the context of the setting, and the unit you will develop.</td>
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Supplement: 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 may have 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 do other students treat them? 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. **Special Education.** What are the attitudes of the school regarding special education? Consider the perspectives of the general educators, the students, the administrators, etc. What inclusive practices have you observed in the school?

9. 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 do the other students receive them? 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?