

PCC = Purposeful (and Transparent), Contextual, Constructivist

Many of us are already teaching in ways that are purposeful, contextual and constructivist. So, "Why the fuss?" you might ask. One of the goals of EFF is to make us think consciously about what we might already be doing intuitively.

Purposeful = Why: Why our students come to learn and why we teach.

Students come to our programs with a purpose, or goal, for learning. During student orientation we discuss these goals with our students. Once we know the students' purposes for coming to our program, we have our purpose: to lead the students through activities that will help them reach their goals.

When we match our learning activities to the student's goals and purposes our students see the connections between the learning activities and their goals. In other words we are making the connections between our teaching and their goals transparent. Because being transparent is a big part of being purposeful, these two are talked about together rather than separately.

Contextual = What: What we are teaching and what our students are learning.

Not only do our students want learning that helps them achieve their goals, they also want learning that is meaningful to them in their lives (their "contexts"). Building learning activities by using issues/concerns/interests of our students can be a good way to keep learning meaningful or contextual for our students.

Constructivist = How: How our students learn and how we teach.

Our students come to our programs with knowledge about many, many things. We find out what our students know by using formal and informal assessments and by talking with them. When we build, or construct, on this foundation of knowledge with our learning activities our students become successful learners and make progress toward their goals.

An example of PCC in the classroom:

One night the students come into class complaining about a new county tax that is going to be enacted. Instead of getting them started on the planned learning activity, their concerns about the tax become the learning activity. They have questions. Some of them have information from the newspaper, the TV or their friends. Who is enacting the tax? Is there a way to stop it or at least get the chance to vote on it? It will raise the price of what we buy by 5%. How much more will my grocery bill be? And diapers for my baby? The students now have a chance to explore this tax issue by using reading, writing, math, social studies, speaking, technology, listening, researching, (which are GED subjects and EFF skills), etc.

The students, who all have the goal of getting their GEDs, are working on the skills to help them get the GED (purposeful) by starting with what they already know about the tax to learn more (constructivist) about this issue that will affect their lives (contextual).