

HAWAII INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

1. Title: **Contextual Teaching and Learning Across the Curriculum**
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Abstract

This presentation will summarize the nearly five years of work to implement contextual teaching and learning (CTL) theory and practices into the preservice preparation of teachers at the University of Georgia. CTL was operationally defined by faculty as an approach to teaching and teacher education that (a) helps students make connections between their learning and “real-world” applications; (b) includes teaching strategies that focus on students as active learners; (c) provides students with opportunities to solve real world problems in varied settings; (d) connect student’s knowledge and its applications to their lives as family members, citizens, and workers; and (e) is based on theoretical concepts derived from research and practice.

The CTL-focused redesign of preservice teacher preparation involved significant reform of university (i.e., colleges of education and arts and sciences) course syllabi and faculty instructional practices. Nearly all departments with teacher education—Elementary Education (Middle Grades), Language Education, Mathematics Education, Social Science Education, Social Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, and Occupational Studies (i.e., career and technical education majors) participated in the project. Seven instructional strategies were taught to students and illustrated: (a) problem-based learning, (b) project-based learning, (c) inquiry-based learning, (d) work-based learning, (e) service learning, (f) collaborative or cooperative learning, and (g) authentic assessment. Throughout the project, several assessment instruments were developed to measure perceptions, use of, and anticipated use of CTL by faculty, preservice teachers, and novice teachers. After 3 years of exposure to theory and practices identified with CTL, eight case studies of novice teachers (those either in student or first-year teaching) were conducted to determine impact on classroom practice and student achievement.

The project is featured on the University of Georgia, College of Education website [<http://www.coe.uga.edu/ctl>] and provides information on the project’s conceptual framework, professional development of faculty, program and course revisions in the various departments, results on University faculty and students, final and

summative report, links to other projects, an abstract of new research with novice teachers, and other data and information on contextual teaching and learning.

The following are selected findings:

1. More than 50 course syllabi in various teacher education departments and the college of arts and science were revised to include concepts and practices of contextual teaching and learning.
2. Professional development of University faculty, particularly through business and industry tours and internships, resulted in greater awareness and use of the “real world” (businesses, community agencies, government) to provide context for academic lessons.
3. Increased exposure to CTL produced significant effects on students’ perceived preparedness ($p < .01$) and plans ($p < .05$) to use CTL strategies in their subsequent teaching careers.
4. All faculty and students involved with CTL thought it a better way to teach to increase student engagement in subject, improve application and use of knowledge, increase student motivation to learn, and improve students’ ability to solve problems, integrate knowledge, and think critically. All showed evidence of increased sensitivity for different learning styles, came to understand better the different education and career paths for different students, increased their skills at teaching diverse students, and came to understand the importance of context and community in teaching and learning.
5. Translating preservice practices into novice teaching is more challenging, according to preliminary cross-case study analysis. Some teaching strategies (illustrations from the community, some focus on problem solving) were welcomed and embraced by students and colleagues. Others (work-based learning, extensive projects, authentic assessments) were not.
6. The community of practitioners approach to support of novice teachers (and support of experienced university faculty, for that matter) was highly regarded by all who participated.