



March Happenings

- March 1 ACT
- March 2 West End Academy
- March 3 MS Lit Academy
- March 7 LMS Academy
- March 17 Math Club
- March 22 Writing Club

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Mathalicious (only some lessons are free)

Mathematical Moments (posters relating math to the world)

Micron Technology, Inc. (Click on the job to go to activities)

The Learning Network (NY Times photos)

Photo Fridays (an online photo sharing group)

Friday Focus

Carter County Schools

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Making Connections

It is critically important to design learning contexts that allow each student to find a way into a learning experience and remain persistent in the face of challenge or failure. We also know that what sparks learners' interest and keeps them engaged differs radically from person to person. A particular subject or activity that inspires passionate interest in some people might bore others to tears. Because of these vast differences in our students, we have to work hard at building connections that engage them in our content. It might be that we can motivate some students with movement and others through the use of visual models. Whatever it is, our lessons have to be created with these thoughts in mind. Flexibility in how we present our information and opportunities for our students to represent their learning in multiple ways will help our students form meaningful connections to what it is we are asking them to study.

Making Connections In Math

Students are motivated to think when the context of a problem appeals to them. At

first, they are much more interested in the particular examples and situation than they are in the math! So, we have to be diligent in giving them problems that build on their "local" context—or that context with which they are most familiar.

Try posing a problem and asking questions like: *What does this situation remind you of? Have you ever been in a situation like this? Is this related to anything you've ever seen on TV or in movies? How about in social studies or science? Have you ever done math like this before? Does it remind you of other math problems? Can we create a picture or model of this problem?* **Help students understand where the math is used by real humans in the real world.**

Reading teachers understand the value of text to text, text to self, and text to world connections. It is critical for math teachers to put this highly successful strategy to use in their classrooms as well.

Making Connections in Writing

Probably the biggest weakness of student writing is idea development. Our children struggle to think of three distinct reasons of support for their main purpose of writing. Perhaps this is because our kids

have such a difficult time making connections to their writing situations and tasks. Remember, context is critical.

Try posting a picture and asking students to free write about what the photo means to them (connections to self). Pause to take a breath. Next, have the students free write about a book, photo, movie, play, TV show, commercial, etc. that the photo reminds them of and why (connections to other text/media). Pause to breathe and reflect, reread, etc. Finally, have the students write about quotes, expressions, or sayings that come to mind when they see the photo. At the end, students should discuss their thoughts with a shoulder partner. This activity should be repeated until children have developed a thought process for creating a context for themselves. Later, do this exercise with writing prompts.

The good news is that we can deliberately provide experiences that help our students build their contexts for learning. We can help them conceptualize math concepts. We can help them make connections.

