

# Constructivist Learning Design

The "Constructive Learning Design" we are using now has been through a variety of revisions in the past seven years and now emphasizes these six important elements: **Situation, Groupings, Bridge, Questions, Exhibit, and Reflections**. These elements are designed to provoke teacher planning and reflection about the process of student learning. Teachers develop the **situation** for students to explain, select a process for **groupings** of materials and students, build a **bridge** between what students already know and what they want them to learn, anticipate **questions** to ask and answer without giving away an explanation, encourage students to **exhibit** a record of their thinking by sharing it with others, and solicit students' **reflections** about their learning. We now longer refer to objectives, outcomes, or results since we expect that teachers have that determined by the district curriculum or the textbook they are using in their classroom and need to think more about accomplishing it than about writing it again.

This brief overview above indicates how each of these six elements integrate and work as a whole, but all need further explanation:

1. **Situation:** What situation are you going to arrange for students to explain? Give this situation a title and describe a process of solving problems, answering questions, creating metaphors, making decisions, drawing conclusions, or setting goals. This situation should include what you expect the students to do and how students will make their own meaning.

2. **Groupings:** There are two categories of groupings:

A. How are you going to make groupings of students; as a whole class, individuals, in collaborative thinking teams of two, three, four, five, six or more, and what process will you use to group them; counting off, choosing a color or piece of fruit, or similar clothing? This depends upon the situation you design and the materials you have available to you.

B. How are you going to arrange groupings of materials that students will use to explain the situation by physical modeling, graphically representing, numerically describing, or individually writing about their collective experience. How many sets of materials you have will often determine the numbers of student groups you will form.

3. **Bridge:** This is an initial activity intended to determine students' prior knowledge and to build a "bridge" between what they already know and what they might learn by explaining the situation. This might involve such things as giving them a simple problem to solve, having a whole class discussion, playing a game, or making lists. Sometimes this is best done before students are in groups and sometimes after they are grouped. You need to think about what is appropriate.

4. **Questions:** Questions could take place during each element of the Learning Design. What guiding questions will you use to introduce the situation, to arrange the groupings, to set up the bridge, to keep active learning going, to prompt exhibits, and to encourage reflections? You also need to anticipate questions from students and frame other questions to encourage them to explain their thinking and to support them in continuing to think for themselves.

5. **Exhibit:** This involves having students make an exhibit for others of whatever record they made to record their thinking as they were explaining the situation. This could include writing a description on cards and giving a verbal presentation, making a graph, chart, or other visual representation, acting out or role playing their impressions, constructing a physical representation with models, and making a video tape, photographs, or audio tape for display.

6. **Reflections:** These are the students' reflections of what they thought about while explaining the situation and then saw the exhibits from others. They would include what students remember from their thought process about feelings in their spirit, images in their imagination, and languages in their internal dialogue. What attitudes, skills, and concepts will students take out the door? What did students learn today that they won't forget tomorrow? What did they know before; what did they want to know; and what did they learn?