Answers to Exercise 4.3

Encouraging Application of Knowledge

1. Identify each of the following examples as one of the types of choice:
   
   A. Choice of task
   B. Choice of reporting format
   C. Choice of learning goal
   D. Choice of behaviors

   • Mr. Lopez is beginning a unit on narrative writing. He tells his students they will be writing short stories. Two of their learning goals will focus on creating sensory descriptions and on using their imaginations to come up with unique storylines. “But we can do a lot more with stories than just these things,” Mr. Lopez tells them. “Think about what you would like to improve on in your own writing. Would you like to create a story that uses a lot of dialogue? Would you like to create a story that makes use of different points of view?” After thinking about what they would like to improve on, Mr. Lopez asks them to write their own goal so that they can keep track of their progress on all three goals for the unit.

   This classroom scenario depicts the use of choice regarding learning goals. Students have all been assigned a specific task and reporting format. Though they have also been assigned two specific learning goals, each student has been given an opportunity to choose his or her third learning goal.

   • Ms. Knapton has had some discipline problems with her class. She knows she needs to address this problem, but she also knows that more severe punishment may backfire on her. She begins the next class by taking down the poster with the classroom rules and throwing it away. “Let’s start over,” she says. “Let’s build our rules together, and maybe this way everyone will be happy.” She thinks students who have been disruptive might suggest unrealistic rules, such as allowing teasing or speaking out of turn, but she also believes that reminding them that the behavior would be allowed for everyone will dissuade them from such suggestions.

   This classroom scenario depicts the use of choice regarding behavior. Students are being asked to design a system of expectations about how everyone will be treated.

   • Ms. Acker’s sociology class has been studying the bystander effect. She tells them they must write an essay to demonstrate their understanding of the topic, but says that the essay can focus on a number of different aspects of the bystander effect. “First, we do not always see the bystander effect
in emergencies, but the fact that it happens at all is problematic. What can society at large do to help minimize the bystander effect? Second, we have discussed in class the idea that most people, when asked hypothetically, would say they would take action if someone was hurt in a public setting. Make a prediction about this and create a survey that tests the idea. Discuss your results. Third, there is no doubt that the bystander effect exists, but what is puzzling is why. Conduct an investigation and see if you can offer a logical explanation. Finally, no one gets to decide when and where a crime takes place, but suppose you could. Would you want to be in a large group, or would you want a more isolated situation where only one or two people might be able to help you? In which situation do you think your chances of survival would be greater?”

This classroom scenario depicts the use of choice regarding tasks. The students are studying the bystander effect, and they will write an essay to demonstrate their understanding of the topic; however, they have been given a choice of various cognitively complex tasks from which to choose.

- Ms. Lane’s science class has been studying the evolution of man’s understanding of dinosaurs. They have been learning about the discoveries of more and more species, how closely dinosaurs were related to birds, and, just recently, a way to tell the color of the fur or feathers of a dinosaur. She announces, “For our final exam on this topic, each of you will provide an in-depth look at how our thinking of a particular dinosaur has changed.” She gives them some options in terms of how they want to deliver their presentations. They can: (A) write an essay, (B) give an oral report, (C) conduct an interview with an expert on the topic, or (D) present a debate on the topic of whether or not our renderings of this species are now correct.

This classroom scenario depicts the use of choice regarding reporting formats. All students are working on the same learning goals and are tasked with looking at the evolution of theories on dinosaurs, but each student is allowed to choose how he or she presents the relevant information.

2. **Explain why cognitively complex tasks help students affirmatively answer the question “Is this important?”**

Cognitively complex tasks ask students to go beyond memorization or regurgitation of information and apply what they have learned in challenging ways. Making decisions, solving problems, or conducting experiments or investigations are authentic tasks that help students make connections to issues of personal concern.

3. **Considering your students and your community, what kinds of real-world applications might be most engaging and meaningful?**

Answers will vary.