



**Meet Student Learning Needs:
Help Your Students
Connect
God's World and Word**

Part 4 of a 4-Part Series

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What can you do to get started using this kit?

- Look at the session guides, noting the title and goal of each session.
- Read "Session 1: How can you meet your students' learning needs in order to help them connect God's world and Word?" (page 6) and "Reading 1: Use the IDEAL process to meet your students' learning needs" (page 13).
- Read through the facilitator guides, especially "Let's help each of our students connect God's world and Word in each subject" (page 2) and "Frequently asked questions" (page 4).

Meet student learning needs

If you want to help your students connect God's world and Word, meet their learning needs. "Learning needs" are anything your students need in order for learning to happen. To better connect God's world and Word, your students might need to understand more biblical principles and to have time to reflect. Meeting your students' learning needs involves defining the needs, exploring the needs, taking action, and looking at the results.

As a result of completing these 7 sessions, you will...

1. Define and meet your students' learning needs.
2. Help your students better understand the importance of connecting God's world and Word.
3. Help your students better understand that God's Word can be connected to the part of God's world they are studying.
4. Help your students understand more biblical principles that connect to what they study.
5. Provide the engaging instruction your students need in order to connect God's world and Word.
6. Provide time during class for your students to reflect on how God's world and Word are connected.
7. Demonstrate your commitment to meeting your students' learning needs.

I would enjoy learning about how you are meeting learning needs to help your students connect God's world and Word. Please email me at learnmore@closethegapnow.org.

—Michael B. Essenburg



Michael

I'm passionate about helping students connect God's world and Word.

Key ways to do this include targeting connections, using assessments, using questions, and meeting student learning needs.

Session 1: How can you meet your students' learning needs in order to help them connect God's world and Word?

Connect with a colleague

1. What is something encouraging that happened in your class(es) recently?
2. What are your students studying about God's world and how people are using it?
3. What is satisfying/unsatisfying about helping your students connect God's world and Word?

Focus on this session's goal

To define and meet your students' learning needs in order to help them connect God's world and Word.

Read

If you want to help your students connect God's world and Word, meet their learning needs. "Learning needs" are anything your students need in order for learning to happen. For example, your students might need to understand more biblical principles in order to better connect God's world and Word. To explore sample learning needs and a 4-step process for meeting your students' learning needs, read "Reading 1: DEAL with your students' learning needs."

Discuss the reading

1. What is one thing that interested you? Tell me about that.
2. What do you like/dislike about meeting your students' learning needs in order to help students connect God's world and Word?
3. What is one of your students' learning needs? (See sidebar in the reading.)

Define your students' learning needs

To define your students' learning needs, complete this assessment. Rate each item, using the following scale: 4: *Strongly agree* • 3: *Agree* • 2: *Disagree* • 1: *Strongly disagree*

To better connect the part of God's world my students study and God's Word...

- ___ 1. My students need to understand the importance of connecting God's world and Word.
- ___ 2. My students need to understand that God's Word can be connected to the part of God's world they are studying.
- ___ 3. My students need more biblical principles that connect to the part of God's world they are studying.
- ___ 4. My students need to experience engaging instruction.
- ___ 5. My students need time in class to reflect.

Reflect on your self-assessment data with a colleague

1. How many 4s, 3s, 2s, and 1s do you have?
2. What excites/concerns you about your data?
3. To help your students make better connections, what is one self-assessment item you want to make progress on? What are your reasons for selecting that item?
4. What 3 or more things could you do to make progress on that item?

Commit to action

1. What 2 or more action steps are you going to take before our next session to define and meet your students' learning needs to help them connect God's world and Word?
2. What are your highlights/insights from this session?
3. How can I pray for you? (Pray together.)

Reading 1: DEAL with your students' learning needs

You're sitting in your classroom thinking: "How can I help my students get this? I'm supposed to help them connect God's world and Word. Maybe I should talk with Tom. Michelle mentioned a good book and a workshop next month. I wonder if we should work as a department to develop some curriculum. What would be the best way to start?"

Stop. Don't start by talking to a colleague. Don't start by reading a book or attending a workshop. And don't start by writing curriculum.

How should you start? By DEALing with your students' learning needs:

- **Define** your students' learning needs. Define what your students need in order to connect God's world and Word (*see sidebar*). How can you define your students' learning needs? By looking at your students' work and by talking with students, parents, and colleagues. Then, select one learning need you want to address.
- **Explore** ways to address the student learning need you selected. Pick one and make a plan to address it. *Now* get the training and support you need.
- **Act.** Just do it! Tell your students what you are doing and why.
- **Look** at the results. Discuss them with students and colleagues.

What happens when a teacher DEALs with her students' learning needs?

Define your students' learning needs: Kim teaches English 10. She wants all of her students to proficiently connect God's world and Word in essays and presentations Kim gives her students a survey. One student need has a noticeably higher response rate—that to really connect God's world and Word, students need to connect their lives with God's world and Word.

Explore ways to address the student learning need you selected: Kim decides to develop an assessment for her poetry unit that requires her students to connect their lives, poetry skills, and biblical teaching.

She collaborates with a colleague to develop the following assessment: Using the poetry analysis skills we practiced and the creation-fall-redemption-restoration framework we applied to poems, critique the lyrics of a favorite song (what the lyrics say, how they say it, and what God might think of what they say).

Act: At the start of her poetry unit, Kim explains the unit assessment and has her students brainstorm a list of songs. She also explains why she developed this assessment—to respond to their survey data.

Look at the results: At the end of the unit, the students write the essay. After submitting the essays, students complete a 5-item survey. Sixty-two percent of students indicate that the essay helped them connect God's world and Word. Kim assesses the essays and is pleased with the results, particularly excerpts like, "In all these situations, it was so much easier to blame God and accuse Him for what was going on, rather than looking at the conditions from a different perspective...."

Take action: Help your students connect God's world and Word by defining and meeting your students' learning needs. To get started, discuss this reading, define your students' learning needs (*see sidebar*), choose one learning need to address, and take 2 action steps to address the learning need you chose.

To connect God's world and Word, do your students need...

- To understand the importance of connecting God's world and Word?
- To understand that the part of God's world they are studying can be connected to God's Word?
- To learn about specific biblical principles that connect to what they are studying?
- To know what good connections look like?
- To connect their lives with God's world and Word?
- To understand how you teach from a biblical perspective?
- To know what key vocabulary words mean?
- To experience engaging instruction?
- To have time to reflect?
- To practice connecting God's world and Word?