



USE WITH:

Individual students, small group, or whole class



GRADE LEVEL:

Middle school or high school



CONTEXT:

Remote friendly

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

# Make School Meaningful

Students will reflect on how their learning is relevant to their lives in order to cultivate interest in academic subjects.

Created by [Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#)

## Description:

This activity prompts students to consider how the topics they're learning in school are relevant to the rest of their lives. This can be a powerful mechanism that helps students engage in class and persevere on academic tasks.

Prep time needed:

**5 minutes**

Est. time to complete:

**10 minutes**

## Steps:

1. Tell students that when they're able to connect what they're learning in class to real life, it often makes the learning more meaningful. You might mention how you relate academic concepts to your life or to the world.
2. Have students write for five minutes about what they are currently learning in a specific school subject (e.g., science) and how it is relevant to their lives or how it might be used to make the world a better place. Offer opportunities for students to reflect in different ways, such as through video, audio, or art.
3. When finished, have students share in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.
4. Ask students how it felt to do this exercise. Did it change how they felt about what they're learning in class? How might they apply this kind of thinking to other classes?

## Tips for Educators:

- Consider sharing the following examples (or develop your own):
  - Science: Examine the ways in which humans have both impacted and been impacted by the environments they live in. Connect human impacts on the environment today to future challenges that humanity might encounter in the environment, and preserving natural resources.
  - Literature: Ask students to name a character in a book they're able to identify with. Ask students to describe the things about those characters they identify with and examine both similarities and differences between their own lives and those of the characters.
  - Social Studies/History: Examine the rights and responsibilities of citizens both in prior societies and of people living in the present day. In what ways are people today living up to their responsibilities? In what ways do people currently have equal rights, and where are the places where our society still has a long way to go?
  - Math: Student loans and credit card debt are both places where math-oriented financial literacy might be both helpful and of interest to your students. Use your creativity to design a lesson that incorporates core math principles while simultaneously helping prepare students for adulthood.



### Inspired by:

1. Hulleman, C. S., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2009). Promoting interest and performance in high school science class. *Science*, 326, 1410-1411. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1177067>