

Reading 1: Use the IDEAL process to meet your students' learning needs

You're sitting in your classroom thinking: "How can I help them get this? I'm supposed to help them connect God's world and Word. Maybe I should talk with Tom. Michele 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 using the IDEAL process:

1. **Identify** the problem and ask God for help.
2. **Define** your students' learning needs. How? By looking at your students' work. By talking with students, parents, and colleagues.
3. **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.
4. **Act.** Just do it! Tell your students what you are doing and why.
5. **Look** at the results. Discuss them with students and colleagues.

What happens when a teacher uses the IDEAL process?

Identify the problem and ask God for help: Kim teaches English 10 at Christian Academy in Japan. She wants all of her students to proficiently connect God's world and Word in essays and presentations.

Define your students' learning needs: She gives her students a survey. One student need had 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 God's Word.

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 possible song titles. 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 understand and apply a Biblical perspective. Kim assesses the essays and is pleased 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 meeting their learning needs. You can do this by discussing this reading, by defining your students' learning needs, by choosing 1 learning need to address, and by taking 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?
- Time to reflect?
- Practice making connections?