

Walk the Week

A routine for connecting school topics to everyday life to broaden understanding beyond the classroom.

This thinking routine is aimed at heightening sensitivity of the many connections there are in our everyday lives with the topics we are studying at school, broadening our understanding of these topics and thinking far beyond them being only school subjects.

Focus on a topic you are learning about:

- **Log** some instances as ideas about this topic came up this week.
- How do these ideas **connect** with what you are learning about this topic?
- How can you **apply** what you have learned in this topic to other parts of your life?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

Too often, subjects and topics are learned at school to meet curriculum and assessment requirements and what happens outside of school is another part of life. When students can see connections between what they are learning at school with the world outside of school and vice versa, it can foster intrinsic motivation in understanding what they're learning.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

How could I help my students see how this thinking routine can be of value to them? Choosing something that students can immediately relate to and modeling how it has helped can provide a concrete example.

For example, consider the science topic Energy, discussed as a property of objects that can be transferred to other objects, with explorations of the energy we use to keep warm or cool, read at night or on a cloudy day. During the week, what could students notice that connects to this? Could it be something to do with the new sleek windmills in fields just outside of town? On the news, there was talk about hydroelectricity. On the bus, I heard someone talking about solar energy.

Looking at Mum turning up the thermostat, I thought about our old log fire that we could watch as we warmed up in front of it. Advertisements in shop windows showed pictures of different foods, describing them as energy foods. The basketball coach talks about building up our energy. How do all these different things connect to what we are learning? Maybe thinking more about this will help me be fit, energetic and comfortable despite the weather.

Why is the Log step included as part of the structure of this routine? Away from school, it's easy to miss things that connect to a current school topic. The request to “log” some connections brings the topic to the forefront of the mind and heightens sensitivity.

When this happens more than once with the same topic, but through different sources, what may at first seem to be a novel experience evolves toward an instinctive routine: looking for possible connections. Logging, whether in a notebook or digital device, as the ideas come to mind or soon after, also builds a visual memory of something noticed that can be retained and referred to.

When the week is over? Invite students to share the instances they logged and the connections they made and how they have or could apply what they learned. After observations and experiences are shared and discussed, enable time for reflections on the topic, perhaps incorporating the thinking routine “I used to think...And now I think...”

What is the broader impact of walk the week? In today's busy world, the week is often neatly parsed into separate parts. School days are usually structured around the timetable. After-school time gets shaped around family commitments, homework and extracurricular activities, weekends around family matters, social engagements, time and sporting or club meetings or practices. Getting into the habit of holding onto current school topics while going about the rest of your week can broaden understandings and surface examples of how what's being learned applies to day to day living.

This thinking routine was developed as part of the PZ Connect project at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.