



Artisan Teacher Tips for Online Learning

Part 1: Locale Memory

We know through multiple studies across many years that skillful teaching is the prime mover of student success. It is not the only mover. It is, however, the largest effect size, most durable variable that drives student success. This is true for traditional classroom style learning and also for other approaches and platforms such as online learning.

Since how we teach is so important for student success, and since the Coronavirus outbreak has closed so many schools, and thrust so many students and teachers into online learning platforms, I thought it might be helpful to take a look at which of the 23 *Artisan Teacher Themes* have particularly positive applications for online learning. We'll take these *Artisan Teacher* inspired online learning tips one at a time. Let's begin with Theme 12: Locale Memory.

Theme 12: **Locale Memory**. *The ability of the teacher to enhance learning by organizing information around the learner's position or "locale" in three-dimensional space.* (See pages 83-86 in [The Artisan Teacher: A Field Guide to Skillful Teaching](#))

How does one find lost car keys? A common and effective strategy is to retrace one's steps. Ever notice though, that one rarely retraces steps to the actual keys? More often, we retrace our steps to a location (locale) that contains the memory of where we left our keys. Memories, and learning, are powerfully linked to the physical context that surrounds us. Human beings, both young and old, are movers, travelers, and navigators.

It seems our brains are built for movement and intense interplay with the natural, physical context of life on Earth. Place, space, and movement (locale) are integrated into our thinking, recall, and the generalization of our knowledge into our behavior. With this in mind, successful online teachers do well to move students out from behind screens and devices at every opportunity.

When students are learning at home, they are perhaps even more able to invoke their powerful locale learning systems than when packed into the confines of a crowded classroom. A helpful thought process might go like this... how can I take what I want my students to learn and toss it out of the space between their ears and into the space surrounding their bodies... into their homes, driveways, living rooms, kitchens, and back yards.

- Think big Venn diagrams drawn with sidewalk chalk on the driveway
- Timelines of WWII drawn down the sidewalk
- A backyard scavenger hunt looking for examples of geometric fractals in the newly growing plants
- Laying on backs outside at night, spotting the big dipper, and using the outside dipper stars to track to Polaris (the North star)
- Place a common adjective (small, for example) at Noon on a clock face and then imagine a more interesting adjective for every hour- 1:00- minute, 2:00- tiny, 3:00- trifling, etc. Walk the clock to build recall.
- Craft a 10 ft. long thermometer, of sorts, out of a roll of parchment paper showing cool to warm and move about it as a text is read. Match the temperature reading to the tone of the text.

- Graph the plot sequence of an interesting piece of literature onto the garage door (avoid permanent markers) showing rising and falling action, climax, and twists of plot.

- At the very least, ask students to use different areas of home to engage with different subjects—math at the kitchen table, social studies on the back porch, and science in the back seat of the family car.

Besides engaging the brain's spatial memory system for improved learning, Locale Memory burns more calories, requires more active engagement, and is more fun. Another added benefit is that students with learning disabilities often possess strong Locale Memory systems. When teachers utilize Locale Memory, they are engaging these students in an area of strength. This creates more engagement, persistence, and transfer.

Also, when students eventually return to their classrooms, why not continue to use Locale Memory to increase effectiveness for classroom learning?

For more information on *Locale Memory* and the other 22 *Artisan Teacher Themes*, see [The Artisan Teacher: A Field Guide to Skillful Teaching](#) ©2013 by Mike Rutherford, ISBN: 978-0-9914724-0-6. Available at www.rutherfordlg.com.