**Application Cards**

**Estimated Levels of Time and Energy Required for:**
- Instructor to prepare to use this CAT: LOW
- Students to respond to the assessment: LOW to MEDIUM
- Instructor to analyze the data collected: LOW to MEDIUM

**DESCRIPTION**
After students have heard or read about an important principle, generalization, theory, or procedure, the instructor hands out an index card and asks them to write down at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned.

**PURPOSE**
Application Cards let instructors know in a flash how well students understand the possible applications of what they have learned. This technique prompts students to think about possible applications and, as a consequence, to connect newly learned concepts with prior knowledge. As they respond to the technique, students also see more clearly the possible relevance of what they are learning.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR USE**
Since there are few, if any, disciplines with no possible application, this CAT can be used in almost any course. It is often used in the social sciences, pre-professional studies, and vocational and technical education. Thanks to its simplicity, the Application Card can be adapted to a wide variety of class types and sizes.

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE**
1. Identify an important – and clearly applicable – principle, theory, generalization, or procedure that your students are studying or have just learned.
2. Decide how many applications you will ask for and how much time you will allow for the assessment. One is often enough, and we suggest asking no more than three applications. Three to five minutes is usually enough time. Before class starts, figure out exactly how you will word the assessment prompts.
3. Announce what you are going to do; then hand out small index cards or slips of paper. Remind students that the point is to come up with their own “fresh” application, not to repeat applications they have heard in class or read in the text.
4. Collect the application cards and let students know when they will get feedback.

**PROS**
- The Application Card is an extremely simple and quick way to get students thinking about the potential uses of what they are learning, and to assess their skill and sophistication at doing so.
- To come up with applications, students have to link what they are trying to apply with what they already know, thereby strengthening learning.
• The realization that theories and principles presented in the classroom have real-world application can increase student interest and motivation to learn.
• When students get feedback on their Application Cards, they benefit from hearing best examples. Many times, students learn more from each other’s examples of applications than from instructor’s or textbook examples.

CONS
• Prompting students to think about applications can shift the focus of the class to a more specific and concrete level than the instructor intends.
• While most students are interested in applications, a few are not. Those who are not interested find this CAT beside the point.
• Not all fields have easily identifiable applications to everyday life; so students in introductory-level courses may have more difficulty responding.

CAVEATS
• Students who come up with poor or incorrect applications are likely to remember and learn those bad examples unless they receive feedback and examples of good applications. Follow-up is critical.
• Students often want to discuss their application beyond the few minutes that instructors have allotted for feedback. While instructors have generally reported that these discussions were lively and valuable, they did leave less time for other elements of the lesson.