



2.1. TEACHER COLLABORATION FOR STRENGTHENING APPLIED LEARNING

Strong teacher collaboration lies at the heart of meaningful applied learning experiences. When you plan together as teachers, you can identify common goals, share expertise and develop authentic projects that reflect how problems are solved outside school. This collaborative approach also supports curriculum mapping, reducing content overlap, aligning schedules and keeping students engaged through practical, relevant learning.

Take a moment to think about your own practice before reading the scenario below. These guiding questions will help you reflect on what is already working and where small changes could make collaboration more effective.

QUESTIONS / ARE YOU WONDERING?

How can I plan proactively with colleagues to make interdisciplinary projects manageable?

What adjustments to the timetable are needed to balance fieldwork with classroom learning?

Are students receiving enough time and support to complete practical tasks successfully?

How can I integrate case studies or best practices into future planning?





SCENARIO: COORDINATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD VISIT

Context: Chemistry and Environmental Science teachers in a higher secondary school

Problem:

- Lack of coordination when planning field visits
- Lost opportunities for interdisciplinary learning
- Teachers and students overloaded

In a higher secondary school, a Chemistry teacher planned a project to analyse industrial effluent data, while the Environmental Science teacher scheduled a one-week field visit to a water treatment plant. Both aimed to extend learning beyond the textbook but faced timetable clashes and limited time for practical work.

After negotiating with other departments, they managed to conduct the field study, yet students felt overloaded and struggled to complete post-school assignments.

Solution: Better coordination and proactive planning would make these applied projects more effective and manageable for both students and teachers.

With a shared plan, both teachers could have developed one interdisciplinary project connecting chemistry concepts with environmental responsibility while managing time and effort more efficiently.



PRACTICAL TIPS

- A digital platform or regular planning sessions for school teachers to notify each other of field visits/excursions/ innovative classes and explore opportunities for collaboration.
 - » Identify overlaps where two or more classes can link activities, share resources, or run a joint session to enrich students' learning experiences.
- Co-design learning tasks for related subjects that meet the outcomes identified in the set curriculum.
 - » Work collaboratively to create learning activities that combine subject knowledge with applied skills. This helps students understand how solutions to real-world challenges are inherently interdisciplinary.
- Build a shared visual map of the learning progression.
 - » Use a digital tool or visual chart to map where key knowledge and skills are introduced and reinforced. This prevents duplication and ensures steady progression of learning across grades.
- Allocate dedicated time for joint planning.
 - » Schedule regular planning sessions and coordinate with school leadership to allow timetable adjustments for project-based or interdisciplinary work.
- Use rubrics early to clarify expectations and guide student feedback.
 - » Develop rubrics before starting a new topic and link the rubric to the intended learning outcomes and/or key components of an authentic assessment task.
 - » Review sample work to align understanding of proficiency levels and assessment consistency (see Assessment resources 20 - 21 for guidance on rubric development).
- Document collaborative sessions for reflection and improvement.
 - » Keep short summaries or digital notes from planning meetings. These help to track decisions, follow-up actions and good practices for future reference.

Teacher collaboration matters because it enables interdisciplinary projects, works to minimise learning gaps and supports more seamless skill progression across grades. An applied learning approach focuses on the application of knowledge and mastery of skills rather than content coverage.

DO TEACHERS REALLY HAVE TO STEP OUTSIDE THEIR SUBJECT AREA?



SCENARIO: BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS FOR REAL IMPACT

Context: Higher secondary Physics students were measuring solar panel efficiency as part of a unit on renewable energy systems. Meanwhile, in Geography, students explored the role of non-conventional energy in sustainability and climate action.

Problem: Both classes included projects and field visits, yet because the activities ran separately, students missed the connection between technology (renewable energy) and community responsibility (sustainability).

Solution: If the Physics and Geography teachers had planned a shared project such as “Solar Energy for Our School,” both disciplines could have deepened understanding and produced tangible results. Students could have analysed energy data, proposed solutions, and built a prototype – linking scientific inquiry with civic action through a singular applied learning experience.



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Choose a strong central theme or project that connects at least two subjects.

- Identify authentic problems that require input from more than one discipline (e.g. renewable energy, water management or sustainable cities).

Align each subject's learning goals to contribute to the shared challenge.

- Discuss with colleagues how outcomes from each subject complement the project so that learning remains purposeful and balanced.

Explicitly assess future-ready skills such as problem-solving and collaboration.

- When designing authentic assessment tasks, include assessment criteria that reward teamwork, initiative and creativity, encouraging students to apply what they know while learning from others.

Show how concepts connect across disciplines and careers.

- Use real-world examples, for instance, how a solar technician benefits from understanding environmental science, to broaden students' perspective on the world of work.
- Attend Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions that focus on interdisciplinary teaching and future skills. These help you link subject knowledge with broader real-world contexts.