Today’s students are urban dwellers

I teach 102 urban high school students each day
Teachers should be aware of cultural differences.
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Racial Demographics of El Cerrito High School:
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Other
- White

Geographic Demographics of El Cerrito High School:
100% Urban
Teachers should be aware of cultural differences

We aren’t yet addressing this “cultural difference.”
Today’s students are urban dwellers

I teach 102 urban high school students each day

25% have never hiked on an unpaved trail

8% have never been to the ocean (<15 miles away)
Today’s students are urban dwellers

“Where is your favorite place to be or spend time?”

>50% reported “my room” / “my house”

Only 9 people reported outdoor settings
Today’s students are urban dwellers

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>50% reported “my room” / “my house”

Only 9 people reported outdoor settings

Scores averaged 19 percentage points higher than class average
What do urban students find relevant?

Students learn better when they see a direct relationship of subject matter to their lives.

Earth science researchers are tackling tough global societal issues, but global issues don’t always engage urban youth.

Too BIG?
Which topics interest urban students most?
Which topics interest urban students most?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Which sounds more exciting to study?

For each row, choose the topic that sounds most interesting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>What causes waves in the ocean?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>What lives in the deepest parts of the ocean?</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>What causes fog?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>What causes tornadoes?</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Air pollution from oil refineries in Richmond?</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>What is a black hole?</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>How do we make bridges earthquake safe?</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>What is a fossil?</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>What does an environmental engineer do?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>What does an astronaut do?</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Is there life on other planets?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Is there life in Antarctica?</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Where does the water we drink come from?</td>
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<th>Score</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>Letter</th>
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Geology faculty at CSU Northridge rated each topic on two scales:
- “Local” to “Global”
- “Relevant” to “Irrelevant”
My urban students actually seem to prefer Global/Irrelevant topics!
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Literature says here.
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**Hypothesis**: New knowledge about their world seems useless because they feel disempowered — “why bother learning about things that you can’t change?”