PECULIARITIES OF GETTING STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THEIR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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Annotation: *The article deals with the peculiarities of student-centered teaching, where students are given chance to explore the new information with their classmates in different interactions. Teacher is responsible to create a friendly environment . Offering students the option of how they'll learn will allow each student to adopt the method of learning that will be most comfortable and effective for them. It also allows student to feel more invested in the learning process.*

Key words: *student–centered, active participation, mutual respect, classroom, learning process, engaging pupils.*

A classroom without rules? Seems a little far-fetched, doesn't it? Well, it may be if you plan on having a teacher-centered classroom where students spend half their time learning, and the other half trying to keep from being bored out of their skulls. So what's the key to the "no rules" approach? Engagement! If you keep activities engaging, behavior will rarely be an issue. Having an engaging classroom environment, with engaging projects, engaging activities and engaging discussions will foster mutual respect and encourages a pursuit of learning that leaves little time for disruptions.

Replace homework with engaging project-based learning activities

The jury is still out on the effectiveness of homework as it relates to improved grades and test scores. Some studies indicate there is a positive correlation between homework and improved grades and test scores, while other studies suggest little correlation. However, the entire premise for these studies is based on the assumption that grades and test scores are an accurate barometer for academic achievement and learning. In the teacher-centered classroom, in class learning and student productivity is lower, making homework more necessary and regular testing essential for measuring learning and performance. In the student-centered classroom, where activities and projects are engaging, students become much more eager to learn, and in class productivity is much higher. Where students complete schoolwork outside of the classroom in a student-centered learning environment, it's typically because they want to complete projects they're working on inside the classroom.

Many teachers are now using engaging project-based learning (PBL) to teach math standards, sciences, technology and other core subjects to their students and increase student productivity and effectiveness of learning in the classroom. So what exactly is project-based learning? In short, it's learning through identifying real-world programs and developing real-world solutions. Not only is project-based learning extremely engaging when implemented correctly, but student learn as they journey

through the entire project. Project-based learning also relies heavily on technology, where projects are driven by interactive web tools and solutions are presented using a multimedia approach.

When implemented effectively, project-based learning can replace the need for out-of-class homework and in class learning becomes more productive.

One of the keys to developing a student-centered classroom and learning environments to create ongoing projects for students. Ongoing projects promotes mastery of subject matter being taught and learned. Learning objectives and standards, for just about any subject matter, can be met through well-designed projects and activities. And providing students with various project choices allows them to demonstrate what they're learning.

Creating a student-centered classroom requires collaboration. It requires placing students at the center of their own learning environment by allowing them to be involved in deciding why, what, and how their learning experience will take shape.

Before students will be willing to invest the mental, emotional and physical effort real learning requires, they need to know why what they're learning is relevant to their lives, wants and needs. Explaining to students that they need to study a subject "because it's required for their grade level," or "they need to know it to get into college" does not establish why in terms of relevance from students' perspective. Such explanations result in lack luster performance, low motivation and poor learning.

Students should determine, or guide, the selection of content matter used to teach skills and concepts. What is taught and learned in a student-centered classroom becomes a function of students' interests and involves students' input and teacher-student collaboration. For example, when learning about American history, students might decide a class play, where each student acts the role of a key historical figure, would be preferable to writing a traditional report or bibliography. In this example, not only do students take ownership of the learning process, all students benefit from the decisions of other students.

The how in a student-centered learning environment is just as important as the why and the what. Students process information, understand and learn in different ways. Offering students the option of how they'll learn will allow each student to adopt the method of learning that will be most comfortable and effective for them. It also allows student to feel more invested in the learning process. Teachers should consider offering students various performance based learning options that meet academic requirements.

Providing students the opportunity to lead in the classroom is a great way to develop a student-centered learning environment that fosters engagement, growth and empowers students to take ownership of the learning experience. Each day consider allowing a few students to each take charge of an individual activity, even if the activity requires content skills beyond the level of the students. Then rote students between leadership roles so each student gets the opportunity to lead an activity. You

may even consider introducing the leadership role, or activity they'll be leading, to each student the day before so they'll have time to prepare and really take ownership of their activity.

In a traditional classroom, performance evaluation and learning assessment are reduced to a series of numbers, percentages, and letter grades presented periodically on report cards, through activities and via standardized testing. These measures say little about what a student is learning and provide little in the way of useful feedback to the student so he or she can improve their performance and achieve mastery. The student-centered learning environment is based on a form of narrative feedback that encourages students to continue learning until they demonstrate they've achieved mastery of a subject. This form of learning, feedback and evaluation encourages students to resubmit assignments and work on projects until mastery is achieved.

The changing demographics of the student population and the more consumer/client-centered culture in today's society have provided a climate where the use of student-centered learning is thriving. The interpretation of the term 'student-centered learning' appears to vary between authors as some equate it with 'active learning', while others take a more comprehensive definition including: active learning, choice in learning, and the shift of power in the teacher-student relationship. It is used very commonly in the literature and in University policy statements, but this has not necessarily transferred into practice.

Student-centered learning is not without some criticism but in general it has been seen to be a positive experience, for example, Edwards (2001) emphasizes the value of student-centered learning: *'Placing learners at the heart of the learning process and meeting their needs, is taken to a progressive step in which learner-centered approaches mean that persons are able to learn what is relevant for them in ways that are appropriate. Waste in human and educational resources is reduced as it suggested learners no longer have to learn what they already know or can do, nor what they are uninterested in'.* (Edwards 2001:37).

Although recognizing that it is not necessarily an easy task, it is hoped that this chapter has gone some way to providing evidence and ideas to move you higher up the continuum towards a more student-centered practice.

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