



Student-Centered Classrooms: A Constructivist Approach Online Participant Syllabus

Course Description

Participants in this course will examine student-centered classrooms with a constructivist approach - a significant shift away from the typical teacher-centered classroom. In a student-centered classroom, much of the direction and leadership is passed onto the students and the teacher becomes the classroom facilitator. This course provides participants with an in-depth exploration of how student-centered classrooms can engage and enhance the learning of all students. Effective student-centered teaching strategies, lesson planning, classroom management methods, and differentiated assessments will be explored. Participants will learn how having a constructivist approach to the student-centered classroom can have students take charge of their learning at any grade level and become independent learners who can create, discover, and problem solve on their own.

Course Prerequisites

This course is recommended for K-12 teachers and administrators looking to gain background information concerning engaged learning and collaboration research and application of these tenets in classroom and school community. Participants must hold a baccalaureate degree.

System Requirements

- Computer with word processing software
- Internet access connection
- Software capable of reading PDF files
- Software capable of viewing PowerPoint presentations

Text Books/Supplemental Reading

No textbook is required for this course. Critical reading of assigned articles and text is embedded throughout the course. Assigned and recommended readings are listed in each milestone.

Global Goals of the Course

1. To examine current research in the area of constructivism and best practice instruction using student-centered classrooms (NBPTS 3,4)
2. To develop an understanding of the need for student-centered learning in today's classroom (NBPTS 1,3,4)
3. To analyze current student-centered instructional practices in order to infuse more constructivist approaches to better support student learning (NBPTS 1,3,4)

4. To explore possible applications for student-centered instruction in the classroom (NBPTS 1,2,3,4)
5. To synthesize best practice research and classroom applications (NBPTS 2,3,4)

Instructional Objectives

By the conclusion of this course, each participant should be able to do the following:

1. Examine the student-centered classroom
 - 1.1 Reflect on one's personal learning and teaching experiences
 - 1.2 Explore student-centered classrooms compared to your current classroom
 - 1.3 Examine the need for student-centered learning and research that supports student-centered learning
2. Understand the framework of the student-centered classroom
 - 2.1 Define and understand key components of the student-centered classroom
 - 2.2 Explore teaching strategies and methodologies in the student-centered classroom
 - 2.3 Review and reflect on student-centered teaching strategies
 - 2.4 Examine current classroom and best fit strategies to foster a student-centered classroom
3. Understand student-centered classroom management
 - 3.1 Investigate student-centered classroom management strategies
 - 3.2 Research how to develop student leaders
 - 3.3 Select management strategies based on classroom resources
 - 3.4 Design a management plan using student-centered research based practices
4. Understand student-centered instruction and learning activities
 - 4.1 Explore student-centered learning activities
 - 4.2 Examine student-centered instruction models in various settings
 - 4.3 Consider grade level factors and classroom culture for student-centered instruction
 - 4.4 Develop a daily plan for incorporating student-centered learning
5. Examine constructivism's impact on the student-centered classroom
 - 5.1 Explore the concept of constructivism
 - 5.2 Examine constructivism strategies and activities in the classroom
 - 5.3 Consider how to blend a constructivist approach with a student-centered classroom
6. Review constructivist teaching approaches
 - 6.1 Explore constructivist teaching approaches compared to activities and lessons in the prior milestone
 - 6.2 Examine Web resources to help aid in developing lessons

- 6.3 Develop a lesson using constructivist principles that are guided by student-centered learning frameworks
- 7. Implement differentiated instruction in the student-centered classroom
 - 7.1 Explore differentiated instruction techniques with a student-centered focus
 - 7.2 Examine and explore multi-tiered lesson planning
 - 7.3 Self reflect on current classroom culture and what changes need to be made to effectively implement differentiated instruction
 - 7.4 Examine how to teach students to monitor their own growth in lessons
- 8. Understand assessment in the student-centered classroom
 - 8.1 Explore assessment techniques and methods in the student-centered classroom
 - 8.2 Examine and explore assessment data and how it correlates to student-centered activities
 - 8.3 Self reflect on current classroom culture and assessment methods that would best fit your instructional design
 - 8.4 Identify targeted areas through student-centered assessment

Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies used in this course are specifically designed to maximize learning in a guided, graduate-level, online distance-learning model. Each course facilitator is trained and/or experienced in facilitating graduate-level online courses as well as the specific content and skills of this course.

1. Online methodologies include instructor/expert presentations, directed skill practice, asynchronous class and group discussions using threaded discussion questions, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, portfolio development, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills in designing grade-specific lesson plans or other educational applications of knowledge and skills.
2. The course is taught in a supportive learning environment with teacher-participant interaction and feedback. Class participants interact with other professionals via the Forum area by replying to existing posts as well as creating new threads on topics of their choice.
3. Content focuses on the presentation of advanced concepts linked to instructional strategies which accommodate learning needs of a diverse student population.
4. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into "milestones" that participants complete during the 8-week span of the course. Course content is intended to cover material equal to 45 seat hours of instructional time.
5. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills to their own teaching situation.

Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, instructor feedback, small-group sharing and activities requiring participants to make sense of new knowledge and/or skills within their realm of teaching. Additionally, three formative assessments are embedded within the course. Summative assessment for the course occurs in the form of a final project which requires each participant to synthesize class content and apply it within the teacher's specific teaching environment. Copies of the course performance assessment rubrics are included in Appendices A-C.

Compliance with National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards represents the highest level of professional achievement in the continuum of teacher professional development. There are five core principles (standards) which cover five aspects of professional educational practice: (1) commitment to students and their learning, (2) knowledge of subject matter and instructional strategies, (3) management and monitoring of student learning, (4) systematic reflection about the teaching profession to learn and grow from experience, and (5) collaborative participation in the educational learning community.

Topics Agenda

Milestone One: Introduction and Overview of Student-Centered Learning

Course expectations and assignment overview is covered. Participants will engage in an examination of student-centered classrooms and sharing of their own beliefs concerning classroom collaboration and engagement. Research on the benefits of student-centered learning will be reviewed.

Milestone Two: Framework of the Student-Centered Classroom

Participants will learn how to develop a student-centered classroom using key foundational elements. Teaching methods and strategies will be explored to implement the student-centered classroom so that it is an evolving process in your teaching.

Milestone Three: Student-Centered Classroom Management

Participants will learn how to manage a student-centered classroom to lead students to a more independent learning experience. Management practices and research-proven strategies will be explored. How teachers can foster the development of student leaders in the classroom will be reviewed.

Milestone Four: Instruction & Activities in the Student-Centered Classroom

Current research concerning instruction methodologies and activity organization in a student-centered classroom will be explored. Participants will review a variety of instructional methods and activities to create daily opportunities for student-centered learning.

Milestone Five: How Constructivism Can Enhance Your Student-Centered Classroom

The idea of constructivist learning will be explored and demonstrated through video. Participants will learn what guiding elements are important in constructivist teaching and learning approach. How constructivist learning activities are related to a student-centered classroom will be outlined.

Milestone Six: Constructivist Teaching Approaches

Several constructivist teaching approaches will be explored. Participants will explore a variety of Web resources to gain valuable constructivist lesson planning resources to easily develop and support current student-centered lesson plans. Participants will construct a mini lesson plan using a constructivist framework.

Milestone Seven: Differentiating Instruction in Student-Centered Classroom

Participants will learn how to differentiate instruction in a student-centered classroom using a variety of activities and constructivist approaches. Multi-tiered lesson/activity planning will be explored, assuring no child is left behind or not part of their learning growth.

Milestone Eight: Assessment in a Student-Centered Classroom

Participants will explore a variety of assessment methods in the student-centered classroom. Assessment models and examples will be provided, allowing participants to reflect what assessment methods would be best in their own classroom.

Final Projects

Participants taking courses for professional development unit (not-for-credit) must follow the same Participation Expectations as posted in the course syllabus. Participants will complete readings and tasks as outlined in the Task List. Forum Postings are also required. However, participants will be exempt from completing the Formative and Summative assignments unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing the state required course evaluation located on the student portal.

In keeping with best instructional and assessment practices, this course requires participants to demonstrate synthesis and application of course knowledge in an applied final project linked to the instructional objectives of this course. Assessment of the project should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

Final projects are due and will be submitted to the instructor within the 8 weeks of the allotted class time. Unless the instructor states otherwise, all papers are expected to be properly formatted electronically.

Grading

Throughout the course, participants will engage in both formal and informal formative and summative assessments. Points are assigned based on a four-point criterion rubric specifically delineated for each assessment that can be further defined as follows:

Distinguished: The assessment is highly imaginative; demonstrates critical thought; is unique; shows substantial application to one's own teaching or professional position; *goes above and beyond requirements*; is creative; demonstrates both breadth and depth of knowledge of transition-related subject matter; shows individual's personality; is professional in presentation and appearance; and demonstrates considerable effort. The assessment is exceptionally completed and demonstrates clear understanding of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Distinguished" on the course rubric.

Proficient: The assessment is well-organized and complete; is effectively and clearly presented; demonstrates clear understandings; applies what has been learned to the author's own classroom situation; clearly shows connections; is detailed; and is thoughtful and supported with ideas. A thoroughly completed assessment demonstrates that the participant shows awareness of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Proficient" on the course rubric.

Basic: This is the lowest passing grade. The assessment meets minimum requirements; includes general information but lacks descriptive detail; shows limited application to teaching/learning; and lacks originality. This denotes work that does not meet **all** aspects of standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Basic" on the course rubric.

Unsatisfactory: The assessment is missing evidence or information; is sloppy and poorly organized; demonstrates only surface understandings; shows no evidence of application to the author's own teaching situation; is poorly written; and does not meet minimum standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Unsatisfactory" on the course rubric.

The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

Participation and Reflection	30%
Formative Assessments	30%
Summative Assessments	40%

Academic Honesty and Integrity

All participants are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the participant receiving a zero for that assignment or paper.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act, participants who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class, are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the first session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

Attendance

Participants will have 8 weeks from the time of their first date of login to complete the course. They will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 should they not be able to complete the online class in the time given.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with assignments and expectations. If a situation arises in which an assignment cannot be completed, the participant is expected to make arrangements with the instructor for the timely submission of such work. Failure to complete all work in this time frame will result in an **incomplete** or a grade of **F** for the work, depending on the reason for the delay.

University Compliance

Course content and instruction are bound by policies associated with the university granting academic credit for the course. Such policies include, but are not limited to: academic integrity and honor codes, institutional objectives and grade grievance procedures. These policies are located within the official academic catalogs which can be accessed through the university's official website.