

Learner-Centered vs. Curriculum-Centered Teachers: Which Type Are You?

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This insightful article will help you understand the difference between learner-centered and curriculum-centered classrooms. Constructivists adhere to learner-centered classrooms. Standards-based teachers adhere to curriculum-centered classrooms. Which one are you?

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The difference between learner-centered and curriculum-centered classrooms is philosophical. Philosophy drives behavior, so when it comes to your teaching style, it is important to have a deep understanding of your own belief system. Your view of learning, students' roles, and teachers' roles determine the method by which you teach. Use this article to place yourself on the pedagogical continuum by considering:

- The types of activities you create
- The layout of your classroom
- The way students learn with you
- How you prepare for class
- How to make the most of your style

Pedagogy

Teachers who adhere to learner-centered classrooms are influenced strongly by constructivism. Constructivism holds that prior knowledge forms the foundation by which new learning occurs (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Because people and their experiences are different, they arrive at school with varying levels of proficiency.

A student is challenged according to his or her individual zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986). The difference between a student's actual developmental level and his or her potential is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Good instruction matches each child's ZPD.

Teachers who adhere to curriculum-centered classrooms are influenced greatly by the standards-based movement. All students are taught the same body of knowledge. Regardless of variations in developmental levels, all children are exposed to the same content in the same time period. The objective is to ensure that there will be no academic gaps in what is taught.

Learner-centered classrooms

Learner-centered classrooms focus primarily on individual students' learning. The teacher's role is to facilitate growth by utilizing the interests and unique needs of students as a guide for meaningful instruction. Student-centered classrooms are by no means characterized by a free-for-all.

These classrooms are goal-based. Students' learning is judged by whether they achieve predetermined, developmentally-oriented objectives. In essence, everyone can earn an A by mastering the material. Because people learn best when they hear, see, and manipulate variables, the method by which learning occurs is oftentimes experiential.

[Learn more about the structure of learner-centered classrooms.](#)

Curriculum-centered classrooms

Curriculum-centered classrooms focus essentially on teaching the curriculum. The teacher determines what ought to be taught, when, how, and in what time frame. The curriculum that must be covered throughout the year takes precedence. These classes often require strict discipline because children's interests are considered only after content requirements are established.

In this framework students are compared with one another. Student success is judged in comparison with how well others do. A fixed standard of achievement is not necessarily in place. In these classrooms grades resemble the familiar bell curve.

[Learn more about the structure of curriculum-centered classrooms.](#)

