

Jefferson Educator: Domain of Learner-Centered Teaching

The Jefferson Educator implements teaching strategies that shift the focus of instruction to the learner, facilitating autonomy and success.

Educators who practice learner centeredness understand that the responsibility for learning ultimately rests with the individual learner. Learner-centered instruction creates a collaborative learning environment that motivates novices (students) to learn from and with one another while guided by an expert (faculty).

To practice learner centeredness, faculty concentrate on what and how the student learns; assess retention and application; and frame the relevance of learning in the present and the future. Learner centeredness develops self-regulated, lifelong learners.

Learner-centered teaching bridges evidence-based practices and learning-environment management with an emphasis on assessment for learning.

When might I use Learner-Centered Teaching?

- To create learning experiences that honor the diversity of thinking and lived experience that students bring to the learning environment.
- To engage students in the hard, messy work of learning.
- To empower learners to take ownership of their learning.
- To develop students' skills, abilities, and habits of mind of lifelong learners.

Key Principles of Learner-Centered Teaching

Learner-centered teaching challenges long-standing education practices and shifts attention from instruction to learning. This shift from instruction-centered teaching to learner-centered teaching may be challenging for both faculty and learners.

In instruction-centered teaching environments, faculty perform many learning tasks for students—they ask questions; they call on learners; they elaborate on answers and provide additional examples; and they organize material and provide previews and summaries. Learner-centered instruction shifts responsibility for some of these learning tasks to the individual learners.

Five principles characterize learner-centered teaching. Learner-centered teaching:

- Engages students in their own learning.
- Includes explicit skill instruction.
- Encourages students to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it.
- Motivates students by giving them some control over learning processes.
- Encourages collaboration.

Faculty may perceive learner-centered teaching strategies as time-intensive practices that detract from their ability to fully address content, and this is partly true. Some learner-

centered activities, such as case-based learning, require significant planning and course time. Other learner-centered teaching practices such as the [muddiest point technique](#) or the minute paper may be integrated more easily and offer additional information about the learners' understanding in real time.

Learner-centered teachers teach students skills essential to mastering material in that discipline over the long term. Teaching essential skills requires explicit instruction, time for practice, feedback, and metacognition.

Sharing the responsibility for asking questions, generating examples, and providing previews and summaries of material may require a reallocation of time and a more flexible approach to covering content. However, sharing responsibility motivates learners to take responsibility for their own learning.

How can I get started?

- Create a [Background Knowledge Probe](#) for learners to complete at the beginning of a unit or term to identify relevant prior examples.
- Set aside time for learners to ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding.
- Develop assignments that allow learners to exercise autonomy in the choice of subject matter or submission format.
- Design peer-to-peer learning experiences to encourage collaboration.

Selected Resources

Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). [From Teaching to Learning - A New Paradigm For Undergraduate Education](#). *In Change* (New Rochelle, N.Y.) (Vol. 27, Number 6, pp. 12-26). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.1995.10544672>

Blumberg, P., & Weimer, M. (2012). [Developing learner-centered teaching a practical guide for faculty](#). Wiley.

Doyle, T. (2008). [Helping students learn in a learner-centered environment : a guide to facilitating learning in higher education](#) (1st ed.). Stylus Pub.

Doyle, T. (2011). [Learner-centered teaching putting the research on learning into practice](#) (1st ed.). Stylus Pub.

Howell Major, C., Harris, M. S., & Zakrajsek, T. D. (2021). [Teaching for Learning: 101 Intentionally Designed Educational Activities to Put Students on the Path to Success](#) (Second edition.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003038290>

Weimer, M. (2013). [Learner-centered teaching : five key changes to practice](#) (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Resources have been linked to University Library holdings or the original source. You may be prompted to enter your Thomas Jefferson University credentials for access.

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