

Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice

By Maryellen Weimer

Thesis: In order for teaching to more effectively promote learning, instructional practice needs to change in five areas.

1. The Role of the Teacher

Currently: Most instructional practice still features teacher action.

The Change: Instructional action should focus on students learning

Examples: approaches that overcome the propensity to tell – not “going over” the syllabus, how-to study advice

Implications: Facilitative roles are more difficult and no less central in student learning experiences

2. The Balance of Power

Currently: Faculty make the key decisions about learning for students.

The Change: In ethically responsible ways, faculty share decision-making about learning with students.

Examples: assignment choices and policy setting

Implication: Teachers control less, but students are involved more.

3. The Function of Content

Currently: Faculty cover content with the goal of build strong knowledge foundations.

The Change: Content should be used to build a knowledge base and to develop learning skills and learner self-awareness.

Examples: approaches that do not separate learning strategies from content – end of class summaries, exam review sessions

Implication: Teachers cover less, but student learn more.

4. The Responsibility for Learning

Currently: Faculty “force” learning on reluctant participants.

The Change: With students, faculty create learning environments that motivate students to accept responsibility for learning.

Examples: activities to create constructive classroom climates and let there be logical consequences

Implication: As students grow more autonomous, they need teachers less

5. The Processes and Purposes of Evaluation

Currently: Evaluation activities are grade-oriented and completed exclusively by teachers.

The Change: Evaluation activities should also be used to promote learning and to develop self- and peer assessment skills.

Examples: ways to use self- and peer assessment - participation

Implication: Accurate self- and peer assessment results in fewer arguments over grades

Content from: *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice* available online: www.josseybass.com