
WHAT IS (AND ISN'T) STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING?

EWA Webinar
December 4, 2014

AMERICAN INSTITUTES OF RESEARCH (AIR) STUDY OF MATH INSTRUCTION & STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

Among the key findings in classrooms with “highly regarded” teachers:

- Students in more student-centered math classrooms showed higher growth on a test of problem-solving skills than students in less student-centered classrooms.
- Students in more student-centered math classrooms reported being more engaged and interested in the material.
- When more student-centered approaches are implemented, the students reported that they find the content more interesting and meaningful.

AIR STUDY OF MATH INSTRUCTION & STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING (CONTINUED)

- Nearly all “highly regarded” teachers in the study employed student-centered learning practices at least part of the time.
 - Student-centered math instruction allows for strong student contribution, active student exploration, uses problems that require students to think critically and to explain the “why” of their answers.
 - Teachers who implement student-centered approaches were more commonly working at campuses with a focus on “preparing students for a variety of future pathways.”
 - Classrooms that emphasized exploratory learning were situated in schools “where teachers have both flexibility in lesson design and access to needed materials.”
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Remembering that correlation is
NOT
causation...

... What do the study's findings suggest?

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING HAS THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS WHEN THERE IS ...

- Teacher buy-in
 - Flexibility in classroom instruction
 - Significant professional development and support
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THE NEW ENGLAND LABORATORY

- States are grappling with new Common Core State Standards and push for “competency” to replace “seat time” requirements.
 - Thirteen schools in four states sharing \$5 million federal “i3” grant.
 - Matching funds coming from public-private partnerships, including Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Rural School and Community Trust.
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Does that mean you need extra money to implement student-centered learning?

Not necessarily.

The Center for Reinventing Public Education found student-centered learning could be implemented successfully with existing district and school-level funding:

<http://www.crpe.org/publications/getting-down-dollars-and-cents-what-do-school-districts-spend-deliver-student-centered>

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Putting students in charge to close the achievement gap

By Emily Richmond

In an 11th-grade English class at Pittsfield Middle High School in rural New Hampshire, Jenny Wellington's students were gathered in a circle debating Henry David Thoreau's positions on personal responsibility.

"Do you think Thoreau really was about 'every man for himself?'" asked one 16-year-old boy.

"He lived alone in the woods and didn't want to pay taxes," another student shots back. "So, yeah."

This story also appeared at:



WHAT IS THE HECHINGER REPORT?

A nonprofit newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about inequality and innovation in education.

Right now, our reporters are asking:

- Will **COMMON CORE** standards reduce the achievement gap?
- Is **HIGHER EDUCATION** doing enough to help low-income students succeed?
- Can **MISSISSIPPI**, one of the worst-performing states, and **CALIFORNIA**, with the largest minority population, lift their students out of poverty?
- Will **TECHNOLOGY** help disadvantaged students?

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QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICTS

- What do you hope to achieve?
 - How will you measure progress?
 - How are you paying for it?
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QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- What training have you received to implement student-centered learning?
 - What has changed in your classroom: Can you share a specific example of a lesson's transformation?
 - Have you noticed changes in your students' attitudes/performance?
 - Imagine yourself as a brand-new teacher: Would you have benefitted from working with a student-centered learning model?
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QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- What's different about your classroom experience?
 - What do you like about student-centered learning?
 - What would you like to change?
 - How are you getting feedback on your performance?
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QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- What did you know, and when did you know it?
 - How often do you get updates on your child's progress?
 - Have expectations changed for your involvement in your child's learning?
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- REMEMBER ...

- “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence”

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– Carl Sagan

- There are no “silver bullets”

- No one has the recipe for the “secret sauce”

- Anecdotes are not enough

SOURCES TO CONSIDER

- Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education
<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/>
 - Center for Reinventing Public Education
www.crpe.org
 - Nellie Mae Education Foundation
www.nmefoundation.org/resources
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EWA Topics Page on Student-Centered Learning

ewa.org/student-centered

Glossary of Education Reform

www.edglossary.org

Students at the Center

<http://www.studentsatthecenter.org/>

Alliance For Excellent Education

<http://all4ed.org/issues/deeper-learning/>

THANK YOU!

- Emily Richmond
 - EWA Public Editor
 - erichmond@ewa.org
 - Follow me on Twitter: @EWAEmlly
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