Student-Centered Classrooms

- The learner is the most important focus of the educational system. In an appropriate way, students are the center of attention. Schools that are learner-centered focus their energies on helping all students to be successful learners.
Student and Teacher Roles: Redefined

- Teachers should learn to give up control of their classroom!
- Students should become active participants in the learning process.
- Teachers must recognize students as decision makers and invite them to develop their abilities to collaborate on learning tasks.
- In this democratic environment, diverse learning styles are honored.
Today’s Situation

- In traditional settings teachers shape an agenda and lead students through each unit to completion.
- Unfortunately, this kind of confined look at information may not allow student expertise to surface.
How Did We Get Here?

- Teachers often think their classrooms are student-centered because their students engage in group-work.
- Are the students really engaging in constructive learning or are they evaluating teacher prepared information to come to the teacher’s predicted consensus?
- Teachers must step back and allow the students to be in the limelight.
- Traditional teachers do not accept the concept of agreeing to disagree, which is an integral part of student-centered classrooms.
Student-Centered or Not?

Positive Signs:
- Walls are covered with student work.
- Signs, exhibits, or lists created by students rather than teacher.
- Students often address one another directly.
- Emphasis on thoughtful exploration of complicated issues.
- Students ask questions at least as often as teacher does.
- Different activities take place simultaneously.
- Teacher is working with students so that it takes a moment to find him or her.

Negative Signs:
- Walls are bare, except for a list of consequences for misbehavior.
- Students' work displayed but it is suspiciously flawless, only the best, or all alike.
- All exchanges involve or directed by the teacher.
- Emphasis on fact and right answers.
- Students race to be first to answer teacher’s “Who can tell me?” queries.
- All students usually do the same thing.
- Teacher is typically front and center.
Making Your Classroom a Community
A Classroom Community...

- Builds personal relationships between the students and the teacher(s)
- Encourages students to work and make decisions as a group
- Is a safe and supportive environment for all students to take risks
- Allows all students to feel valued and appreciated
- Requires time and patience from both the students and the teacher(s)
Ways to Build a Classroom Community

- Photo-Stories – Each student brings in a photograph of something that is important to them and shares the story with the class.

- Know U Hunt – This activity helps students to get to know each other on a more personal level.
Strategies for use in your classroom:

- For English Language Arts:
- **Literature Circles (a concept by Harvey Daniels):**
  - Students **choose** their own reading material.
  - **Small temporary groups** are formed, based upon book choice.
  - Different groups read **different books**.
  - Groups meet on a **regular, predictable schedule** to discuss their reading.
  - Students use written or drawn **notes** to guide both their reading and discussion.
  - Discussion **topics come from the students**.
  - Group meetings aim to be **open, natural conversations about books**, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended discussions are welcome.
  - The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor.
  - Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
  - A spirit of playfulness and fun pervades the room.
  - When books are finished, readers share with their classmates, and then new groups form around new reading choices.
  - **For more info on lit. circles**
A Strategy for the Math Classroom

- Pic-Jour Math uses journal writing, including pictures, numbers, symbols, and manipulatives, to help students in grades 3 through 8 to better understand mathematics concepts and make them truly their own. The results are a better understanding and retention of math, a decrease in “math anxiety”, and a heightened confidence level among students who have really made a lesson “their own”. At the same time, writing about math offers a flexible assessment tool for teachers and parents to review and analyze students’ thinking, reasoning, and learning styles. For more information go to http://www.interactiveclassroom.com/
A Strategy for Foreign Language

- Individually or in small groups, students choose a country that speaks the target language. They are given time and resources in class to create a display/presentation on this country to share with the class.
A Strategy for Social Studies

A Unit on Ancient Egypt

- Students participate in a simulation recreating the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, and they learn hieroglyphic writing. Comparing the ancient Nile Valley civilization to their own, Egyptoman Scavenger Hunt has students studying the effect of ancient Egypt on our own societies. The unit ends with the students playing Egyptian charades to decipher the artwork found in the tombs and other monuments. For more information go to http://www.interactiveclassroom.com/
A Strategy for the Science Classroom

- LecturePLUS is a teaching and learning strategy that converts the traditional lecture format typically used in science classes to a student centered format. Students learn through PowerPoint mini lectures, formative assessments, use of PowerPoint notes and activity sets for cooperative learning. Lesson plans and PowerPoints available at http://karentimberlake.com/