

CUTM 4012: Methods of English Teaching 2



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Student-Centred Learning Principles Matrix

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Contents

SETTING A POSITIVE TONE AMONG THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

- Promote mutual respect..... 2
- Foster independent thinking. 3
- Encourage students to share ideas and opinions..... 4
- Involve students in decisions about their learning..... 5

CREATING A PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Create a stimulating classroom environment..... 6

PROVIDING MOTIVATING AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

- Teach to your students' abilities and learning styles..... 7
- Use a variety of teaching methods. 8
- Engage students in active learning. 9
- Develop higher order thinking skills. 10
- Provide opportunities for reflection. 11
- Assess learners according to the lesson objectives..... 12

LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- Involve family and community members as learning resources..... 13
- Include parents as partners in their children's education..... 14

Promote mutual respect.

Students show respect for one another by listening to one another, taking turns, and showing an interest in what other students have to say.

Benefits:

- Students grow in feelings of self-worth.
- Students develop interpersonal skills that will serve them for their entire lives.
- When students know they are respected, they feel comfortable and safe, which facilitates their openness to learning.

Preparation

Promote mutual respect from the first day of class by guiding students in a class discussion about rules and procedures. Students derive a true sense of responsibility and ownership when they have a voice in rule making.

Steps for a conducting a class discussion about rules:

1. Gather students in the class meeting area.
2. Conduct a discussion about rules and procedures. Students should understand that the purpose of rules and procedures is to keep people and materials safe and to protect the rights of individuals.
3. Have students contribute their ideas, but guide them toward 5-6 rules rather than many detailed ones.
4. Post the rules for everyone to see.

Implementation

Classroom routine presents many opportunities to show respect to others, whether it be while working on a small group project, participating in morning meeting, or simply walking in the hallway.

Morning Meeting

Start every day with a morning meeting. The purpose of morning meeting is to help students understand that the classroom is a democratic space in which everyone's experience is valued. Everyone should feel comfortable to express their feelings, ideas and opinions.

To reinforce the idea the classroom as a democratic space, you should sit in the circle with the students. Do not stand or sit at the front of the room. Every day try to sit in a different place and beside different students. Encourage students to talk to the whole circle, not just to you.

Vary the agenda for the morning meeting from day to day. You might:

- Discuss news events
- Discuss common classroom problems
- Discuss special events for the day
- Have a student bring something for "show and tell"
- Introduce or review a lesson
- Invite a community member to talk to the class

Follow-up

The teacher should pay attention to the ways students treat one another and make specific comments to encourage students to model the appropriate behaviour.

Examples

If one student is intently listening to another, the teacher might say:

- "I noticed you were really paying attention while your classmate was talking. Your eyes were on him, and you nodded your head to show you understood."
- "Even though you disagreed at first, you listened to each other to find a solution to the problem."
- "I noticed that you waited for your classmate to finish talking before asking a question."

Foster independent thinking.

Independent thinkers make sense of the world based on personal observations and experiences rather than blindly following others. They are reflective and have a desire to formulate ideas on their own.

Benefits:

- Practice with independent thinking builds self-confidence in the face of peer pressure.
- Independent thinkers are able to arrive at creative, innovative solutions.
- Independent thinking provides the foundation for rational decision-making.

Preparation

Consider your own ability to be an independent thinker. Teachers who value learner-centred education strive to improve their practice through critical and creative thought. In other words, the teacher must model independent thinking before fostering it in his or her students.

Teachers practice independent thinking by:

- analyzing their own thinking processes and classroom practices and providing reasons for what they do
- seeking imaginative, appropriate, and ethical solutions to problems

Implementation

When students are challenged to think independently, there will likely be moments of struggle as they try to explain and justify their thinking. However, it is precisely in these moments of struggle that learning occurs, because it is at these moments that the students are reshaping their prior knowledge. Teachers can use the techniques below to encourage independent thinking.

Examples

- Give students problems to solve, rather than ready-made answers.
- During group discussions, ask higher order questions instead of just direct recall or knowledge questions.
- Ask students to explain results and defend conclusions.
- Provide opportunities for all students to contribute to team brainstorming and sessions.
- Use differences of opinion as teaching opportunities.

Follow-up

Independent thinking is a real world skill. With this skill, students grow up to be productive members of the work force. Encourage students to think independently outside of the classroom, as part of their everyday lives.

Examples

- When they are with their friends, do students follow what everyone else is doing, or do they make independent choices?
- Do students think critically about ads and information presented in the media?

Encourage students to share ideas and opinions.

Learning occurs by speaking and writing as well as listening. Before speaking and writing, students must formulate their thoughts and integrate new information with their prior knowledge.

Benefits:

- Students feel valued.
- Students learn from each other.
- Discussion provides opportunities to think critically about one's own ideas and the ideas of others.

Preparation

Sharing ideas and opinions involves risk. Students may be hesitant to share if they are afraid their ideas will be ridiculed or dismissed. They are more likely to share ideas in a classroom environment where they feel psychologically safe.

A "safe" classroom has these characteristics:

- Ground rules are well established
- Teacher exhibits a positive attitude
- Teacher shows respect for each student
- Activities are non-threatening
- Student feels success at least part of the time

Implementation

You can encourage students to share ideas and opinions by asking open questions rather than closed questions.

Closed questions typically have one right answer. They almost always require factual recall rather than higher levels of thinking.

Open questions do not have predictable answers. They almost always require higher order thinking. Open questions help students articulate their own point of view and understand others.

Examples

- Closed questions
 - Do you play a musical instrument at home?
 - Do you agree with your classmate?
- Open questions
 - What do you like to do at home?
 - Why do you agree with your classmate?

Follow-up

Students might share ideas and opinions during morning meeting, class discussions, or small group project planning. Stand back and observe. Listen for the points you want covered in the discussion, make sure everyone is sharing ideas, and learners have had enough encouragement.

Involve students in decisions about their learning.

When students are involved in decisions about their learning, they feel respected and in control of their own learning. Students might decide which books to read, the format for a project (report, poster, art project, play), or the topic to be explored.

Benefits:

- Increases student motivation because it allows them to explore areas they are interested in
- Builds the foundation for independent learning
- Helps them develop their individuality
- Provides a way for students to use the learning style that is most effective for them

Preparation

As you're preparing the lessons, keep in mind that students are bringing their own knowledge to achieve learning outcomes. The student may come to you with an idea in mind, or you may need to provide a range of choices for the student.

Examples

- If you're giving the student a choice about what book to read, have a variety of books available in the classroom library.
- If you're giving the student a choice about the format for a book report, provide a list of options. The student might illustrate several scenes from a book, write diary entries as the main character, dress as the main character and tell the class about himself/herself, write an imaginary interview with a character from the book, or construct a diorama of a scene from the book.

Implementation

Put yourself in the role of facilitator. You don't need to know everything about the topic a child might choose, but you do need to provide guidance and parameters. Help the student define the scope of their work.

Example

If a student is doing a presentation, meet with the student ahead of time to discuss questions such as:

- What form will your work take?
- How will you go about doing it?
- Where will you find your resources?
- How much time will it take?

Follow-up

In evaluating the student's work, determine whether the student has achieved the defined outcome. Provide constructive criticism, opportunities for the student to reflect on their own work, and suggestions for other areas the student might want to explore. For example, if the student enjoyed a particular book, suggest other books on the same topic or written by the same author.

Create a stimulating classroom environment.

A stimulating classroom environment is intriguing and inviting to all who enter. It is clean, colourful, and interesting. Student work is clearly visible. Core information related to students' studies is posted. The arrangement of tables and/or desks should reflect a student-centred approach. The classroom contains a library and centres for independent learning.

Benefits:

- Increases student motivation
- Provides prompts for topics students are studying
- Helps students feel pride in their work
- Provides opportunities for individual learning

Preparation

Draw a plan for your room arrangement. Consider your teaching style and what you will be teaching.

You might organize the desks in clusters to accommodate group work or in circles and U shapes for class discussion. Be sure to include space for small group and individual work, as well as for morning meeting, where the whole group can gather. Dedicate some space to the learning centres and classroom library.

Consider the routines of classroom activity. Where will children turn in their work? Sharpen pencils? Find a dictionary? Throw away trash? A carefully planned layout will facilitate a smooth flow of movement in the classroom.

Implementation

Devote space for the display of student writing and other work, and change the display on a regular basis.

Provide tools and materials from the local environment: the more resemblance the class environment has to home, the better students' motivation will be. If possible, use a carpet for the morning meeting space and provide a comfortable chair for independent reading.

Display materials that are relevant to the student's learning. For example, you could create a "word wall" with words from current or past areas of study. Students would refer to the wall for spelling help or vocabulary practice.

In the classroom library, you might:

- Reserve a shelf for students' works and encourage them to write.
- Encourage students to borrow books and discuss them in the morning meeting.
- Encourage students to lend their own books to the class library.

Set up learning centres for individuals and small group use. The centres might be organized around topics (science or art) or skills (writing or listening).

Follow-up

Allowing students to help in the organization and decoration of the room is a powerful way to develop responsibility and help the students feel ownership for the classroom.

Encourage students to participate in decisions about where materials are kept, the physical arrangement of the room, and who will be responsible for classroom jobs.

Students can assist by labelling objects and materials within the classroom, selecting and creating pictures for the walls, and constructing such things as job charts, birthday calendars, graphs, and word lists.

Teach to your students' abilities and learning styles.

Student-centred teaching starts with the learner's own needs, abilities, learning styles, existing skills, and experiences.

Benefits:

- Students are more likely to be successful learners when the lesson is appropriate for them.
- Successful students are more likely to maintain their motivation for additional learning.

Preparation

Get to know your students as a group. What are the common age characteristics for the students you teach? Where are they in their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development? What implications do these characteristics have for your lesson planning? For example, 8-year-old children have a limited attention span. For this age child, a teacher should vary activities every 10-20 minutes or so.

Get to know your students as individuals.

- How do students prefer to learn? Are they visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic learners? Try to make your lessons multi-sensory so they are of benefit to all students.
- What special talents do the students have? Who is musical or athletic or who is good with numbers or has advanced linguistic skills? Incorporate opportunities for students to use their talents.
- What interests do the students have? Using their interests as a starting point will help to motivate learning.
- Which of your students have special needs? Be prepared to adapt lessons for these students.

Implementation*

Learning centres are an effective way to individualize the curriculum and meet the needs of many students simultaneously. They are developed from a set of criteria, but they take many forms. Essential learning centres for the classroom of older primary students would include literacy-writing, science, math/manipulatives, and art centres.

Suppose a class has just visited a bakery as part of their study about community. The teacher asks the students to work in pairs and to select a learning centre where they can reflect on what they learned about the bakery. The teacher has different tasks set up at the learning centres: at the writing centre they can write a play about baking bread or write some recipes for bread; in the art centre they make a collage of what they saw in the bakery; in the science centre they read about yeast and try some experiments.

Follow-up

Pay attention to the choices students make over time. For example, does a student always choose the art centre? You may have to push students beyond their comfort zone so they can strengthen other skills.

*Content for Implementation adapted from *Creating Child-Centred Classrooms*, published by Children's Resources International, 1997.

Use a variety of teaching methods.

Use a variety of teaching methods, including whole group, small group, and individual instruction.

Benefits:

- Prevents boredom
- Provides a means for addressing the preferred learning style of individual students at least some of the time

Preparation

When deciding on a learning method, think about what you are trying to achieve and match the method with the objective.

Also consider which method best matches the students' stage of understanding. If the concept is brand new, a whole group activity might be best. If students need both practice and support with a skill, have them work in pairs or small groups, so they can get help from their peers but are at the same time working independently from the teacher. Toward the end of a lesson or unit, you might want to have students work individually so you can accurately assess their mastery of a skill.

Implementation

Whole group

In any whole group activity, involve as many students as possible. It might be through a discussion, a game, or a debate. Stimulate their thinking by asking open-ended questions. Encourage higher order and critical thinking.

Small group

When students are working in small groups, circulate around the room as they are working. Support and scaffold, but do not give answers or do their thinking for them. Examples of small group activities include:

- Think-pair-share
- Round robin discussion
- Role plays
- Interviewing

Individual activities

Individual activities teach independence. An individual student might:

- Keep a journal
- Give a demonstration
- Tell a story
- Teach a mini-lesson

Follow-up

To prevent classes from becoming stale, vary the type of activity, the duration of the activities, the size of the groups, and the participants in the groups.

Engage students in active learning.

Active learning is learning by doing. It refers to techniques in which students are actively engaged in constructing knowledge through exploration, reflection, and interaction with others. It is an active search for meaning by the learner.

Benefits:

- Activities encourage students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information.
- Students make greater learning gains when they are actively engaged.
- Active learning builds intrinsic motivation.
- Active learning builds self-confidence.
- Because active instruction involves a variety of activities, it can accommodate many learning styles.

Preparation

The role of the teacher in active learning is different from the role of the teacher in a traditional classroom. Traditionally, a teacher might lecture and explain content while students listen and take notes. In active instruction, teachers create a variety of learning activities, and then guide and support students as they take more responsibility for their own learning.

You may encounter some resistance if your students are used to a passive style of learning in which the teacher tells them what to do and makes decisions for them. Prepare your students for active learning by explaining your objectives and the benefits of active learning.

To prepare for a specific activity:

- Gather the necessary materials.
- Use action verbs to describe what you want the students to learn.
- Be explicit about the outcome.
 - What will they do?
 - How long will it take?
 - What is the product?

Implementation

Active learning includes many ideas about how to help students participate on more than one level in the learning process. Active learning uses classroom activities such as small group discussion and problem solving. When students are involved in active learning activities, they **generate their own** knowledge as well as gather knowledge from books and the teacher.

Active learning leads to students learning more because they spend more time talking and writing about the content as well as applying new skills to solve a problem. For example, research shows because students in a small group have more opportunities to speak in a discussion, they remember more about what they are discussing.

Here are some active learning strategies you might consider:

- Problem-based activities
- Case-based activities
- Group work
- Questioning
- Cooperative work projects
- Role playing
- Decision-making simulations
- Debates
- Journaling
- Minute papers

Follow-up

It is critical to have students summarize, evaluate, and reflect on their learning after the activity is over. For some students, active learning is invisible. They aren't able to see how they've progressed. You might ask:

- What changed for you over the course of the activity?
- Where are you now, relative to where you started?

Develop higher order thinking skills.

Higher order thinking skills refer to the thinking skills at top four levels of Bloom's taxonomy: **evaluation, synthesis, analysis, and application.**

Evaluation: Students present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

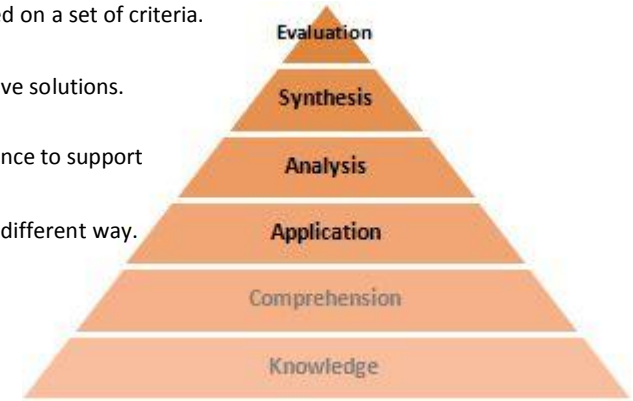
Synthesis: Students compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

Analysis: Students examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. They make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.

Application: Students apply new knowledge. They solve problems by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.

Comprehension: Students demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.

Knowledge: Students exhibit memory of previously-learned materials by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.



Benefits:

- Higher order thinking skills can be applied in a variety of situations.
- Skills in higher order thinking prepare students to participate in an increasingly complex society.

Preparation

When planning your lessons, establish clear objectives so you know how to measure success. Use these key verbs as a starting point.

Knowledge:	Define, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recognize, record, select, state
Comprehension:	Arrange, classify, describe, discuss, explain, give examples, paraphrase
Application:	Adapt, apply, demonstrate, modify, produce, relate, show, solve, use
Analysis:	Analyze, compare, contrast, diagram, differentiate, distinguish, examine, infer, separate
Synthesis:	Combine, compose, create, design, generate, integrate, make, organize, plan, prepare, predict, summarize, synthesize
Evaluation:	Appraise, argue, assess, conclude, criticize, justify, interpret, prove, rate, validate

Implementation

In his book, *Teaching for Tomorrow*, Teacher Ted McCain makes some suggestions for developing higher order thinking skills:

- Resist the temptation to tell. Telling may be the quickest path to get through a lot of material, but it takes the excitement out of learning and dampens internal motivation.
- Place content in a real world context.
- Stop giving students the final product of your thinking. Instead, give students opportunities to discover information for themselves.
- Give students real problems to solve.

Follow-up

Be sure your assessment methods match your learning objectives. Consider having students produce a portfolio of their work rather than giving them multiple choice tests, which typically test only knowledge and comprehension.

Provide opportunities for reflection.

Reflection is important because it deepens learning. It helps ensure that the new knowledge stays with the learner.

Benefits:

- Reflection maximizes learning by bringing new thoughts into consciousness.
- Reflection provides a means for applying higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Preparation

Learning is both an active and reflective process. People learn by talking, integrating, and writing, but also by thinking about activities, events, and experiences. Reflection is as essential as action, but due to time constraints, it is often the forgotten activity. Be sure to include time for reflection in your lessons.

Implementation

When students pause to reflect on their learning, they see things in a new way and gain a better understanding of themselves as learners.

In student-centred learning, teachers plan regular reflective experiences for their students. Students might reflect individually or in small groups on questions such as those below.

- What did you wonder about as you were reading?
- What is one new thing you learned today?
- What did the story make you think about in your own life?
- What is the hardest part of working in a group?
- What new skill did you gain during the week?
- What questions do you have?
- What do you feel more confident about?
- What were some of the key points raised in today's class?

Follow-up

Offer feedback to students about their reflections. Feedback shows that you are concerned about their learning process.

Assess learners according to the lesson objectives.

Objectives specify the new skills that the learner will gain as a result of the lesson. Design assessment methods so they align with the lesson objectives.

Benefits:

- Provides an accurate indicator of student progress

Preparation

The assessment method should be decided upon at the same time that the learning goals are defined. Doing so ensures that both address a skill at the same cognitive level. If test items are used that require only lower-level thinking skills such as knowledge and comprehension, students will not develop and use their higher-order skills even if instructional methods that employ these skills are implemented.

For example, if the objective is “Students will use socially appropriate greeting expressions in role play situations,” then the student should not be assessed with a paper-and-pencil test.

Implementation*

Assessment of higher order learning can be accomplished through means such as these:

- **Portfolios** – Portfolio assessment is a method of evaluating a student based upon a collection of the student’s work.
- **Observations** – For assessment purposes, teachers do observations with a clear focus in mind and record their observations with the use of anecdotal records, checklists, inventories, and audio recordings.
- **Rubrics** – Rubrics are a set of scoring guidelines that students see before the activity. A rubric identifies specific qualities that a teacher expects to see evidenced by the student.
- **Student and teacher conferences** – During conferences, the teacher and student discuss the student’s work. They centre on something specific, such as a book being read or a story being written.
- **Paper-and-pencil tests** – These have limited application because they best assess the lower two levels of cognitive skill: knowledge and understanding.

Follow-up

Give students feedback on their assessments. Inform parents about the results of assessments.

*Examples of implementation methods are adapted from *Creating Child-Centred Classrooms*, published by Children's Resources International, 1997.

Involve family and community members as learning resources.

Bring family and community members into your classroom as guest speakers. When students see family and community members involved in education, they realize that school has a purpose beyond the four walls of the classroom.

Benefits:

- Enables students to see the richness of the broader community
- Helps students see how the topics they're studying have meaning in the real world

Preparation

Communicate with speakers in advance so they know what to expect:

- Help them form reasonable expectations for your students, given their age and experience
- Explain what students already know about a topic
- Find out what needs the speaker has (overhead projector, space for displaying materials, work area, etc.)

Prepare your students for a guest speaker with some pre-instruction.

Implementation

On the day the speaker arrives in class:

- Introduce the speaker to the class.
- Provide the necessary resources and materials, such as an overhead projector, pens, pencils, or books.
- Monitor behaviour. Although the guest may be the focus your attention, he or she is not responsible for classroom management.

Follow-up

After the guest speaker or volunteer leaves:

- Have students write thank you notes.
- Offer students other resources for extending their learning on the topic.

Include parents as partners in their children's education.*

Collaboration between parents and teachers fosters personal and academic growth for the students.

Benefits:

- Students receive the message that the important adults in their world care about them.
- When students see their parents as active partners with the teachers, it motivates them to do well.

Preparation

Parents hold the same broad goals for their children as the teachers do. After all, parents are the first teachers in their child's life. They are the first models for problem solving, cooperation, and sharing. Parents intentionally instruct their children in becoming part of a community and a large society.

It is the school's responsibility to initiate the collaboration between parents and teachers. Teachers can help parents feel welcome and involved when they:

- Issue an open invitation to parents to visit and volunteer in the classroom.
- Inform parents about student progress on a regular basis.
- Invite parents to contact the teacher with questions or concerns.

Implementation

A successful parent/school connection can be achieved in these ways:

- **Consistent, clear, two-way communication** – Teachers should maintain two-way communication with the parents. Effective communication entails (1) keeping parents informed about student progress, (2) listening to parents' concerns, and (3) working together to set goals for the student.
- **Parent conferences** – Parent and teacher conferences should occur on a regular basis.
- **Volunteering** – As volunteers in their child's school, parents might help in the classroom, coordinate a special event, supervise the playground, or participate in maintenance and improvement projects.
- **Parents supporting learning at home** – The teacher might offer tips to the parent about supporting learning at home. For example, the teacher could suggest that the parent and child read together every day.

Follow-up

After a parent conference or communication, teachers should follow up immediately when a response is required. This might include:

- Referrals to other resources
- Scheduling another conference
- A telephone call
- A written report
- An informal note to parents on a regular basis

Follow-up is important because it reaffirms the partnership between home and school. It is a way to let parents know that the teacher and school are reliable and caring.

*Content on this page is adapted from *Creating Child-Centred Classrooms*, Chapter 8, published by Children's Resources International, 1997.