

# Solution Tree | Press

## **The Student-Centered Classroom: Transforming Your Teaching and Grading Practices**

*By Jeanetta Jones Miller*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *The Student-Centered Classroom: Transforming Your Teaching and Grading Practices* by Jeanetta Jones Miller. *The Student-Centered Classroom* outlines six teaching practices that will help K–12 teachers create a coherent, effective, and immensely satisfying student-centered approach in any grade level or content area.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Encourage Academic Success**

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1. What three key elements are essential for encouraging academic success?
2. Why is it important to integrate students' interests, experiences, and concerns into the course material? Why might students be resistant to a student-centered approach?  
  
Consider a unit or lesson you teach. How might you anticipate and prevent resistance before and while teaching that unit or lesson?
3. Reflect on your classroom's design and setup. Have you arranged it in a manner that supports a student-centered approach? How might you organize your classroom to create more opportunities for student interaction?
4. Define *collaboration group* and *peer-conference group*. In what ways do these two group configurations support interaction among students?
5. The author notes that it is important to make time to get to know students for individualizing their work. What are some tasks you currently perform that you could give up in order to provide more opportunities for individualization and feedback?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Support Personal Growth**

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1. Why should teachers let go of some of their authority as the subject-area expert? How might you encourage independent thinking in your classroom?
2. According to psychologist and psychometrician Robert J. Sternberg (2008), “Wisdom is the most important and yet most neglected aspect of education today” (p. 25). Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Consider an assignment you recently assessed. Did you encourage student creativity? How might you invite students to use imagination in their next assignment?
4. List the six steps that support thoughtful decision-making. Why do students need opportunities to practice making decisions? How might you incorporate figure 2.2 (page 35) into your classroom?
5. Do you devote class time to discussing personal beliefs? How might you invite students to connect their lives, opinions, and experiences to the learning happening in the classroom?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Make Space for Speaking and Listening**

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1. Why is it important to provide opportunities for students to develop strong oral communication skills? In what ways do you encourage spoken language in your classroom?
2. What is choral reading? Have you utilized this strategy in your classroom? If not, how might you use choral reading to encourage productive talk, and how would you, if necessary, adapt the example guidelines in figure 3.3 (page 46) or figure 3.4 (page 46) to fit your students' needs?
3. What are the benefits of strong listening skills?
4. What is an occasional paper (OP)? What are some possible topics or aspects of your life that you can use to create a sample OP?
5. Consider this scenario: You ask your students to create a short speech by revising existing work. What advice can you offer students to help guide them through this process?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Deepen Understanding With Writing and Reading**

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1. What are researched narratives? Define *provisional writing* and *process writing*.
2. Students may interview individuals and generate surveys when conducting field research.  
  
What are some reminders and tips you can give students when they are preparing for an interview? What are some steps students need to take to create effective surveys?
3. What are four narrative devices students can use to enhance their writing and engage readers? Describe each.
4. In what ways does a collaborative reading workshop give students opportunities to deepen their understanding of challenging texts? What are seven techniques teachers can use to get students engaged in reading?
5. What is the teacher's role during a text-based discussion? What is the students' role?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Meet Individual Needs in the Evaluation Process**

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1. Douglas B. Reeves (2008) identifies five problems with the practice of averaged grades.  
What are they?
2. Why might teachers struggle to let go of traditional teaching methods? What words of encouragement and evidence supporting a shift to a student-centered approach to evaluation could you offer someone who is struggling with the transition?
3. What does the author mean when she writes, "...feedback and grades are not necessarily the same thing" (page 97)? When should teachers provide feedback to students, and when should students' achievement be expressed as a grade?
4. Compare figure 5.2 (page 103), which shares an example of a traditional gradebook, and figure 5.3 (page 104), which shows an example of a log of student work. How does the log in figure 5.3 lend itself to flexible sequencing?
5. Why is it important to ask students to evaluate their current level of progress toward achievement of learning goals before a unit begins? How are these baseline scores used throughout the unit?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Communicate With the School Community**

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1. What are some misconceptions about the student-centered approach that administrators, colleagues, parents, and community members may bring up? Why is it important to share your student-centered teaching practices with the school community?
2. How might you reach out to other teachers who also have an interest in creating a student-centered classroom in your school or district?
3. What professional development opportunities are available to you? Are there any workshops or conferences you would like to learn more about? What steps do you need to take to participate in one of these programs?
4. Why is it important to inform your principal about your student-centered approach? How will you address concerns if an administrator challenges your student-centered practices?
5. How does taking a student-centered approach promote strong school-home partnerships? How frequently do you communicate with parents? What are some ways you can increase communication with parents?