

## CLASSROOMS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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*[T = Teacher; CT = Classroom Teacher; S = Student; I = Instructor]*

T: I'm a very traditional teacher. That's the way I was taught and trained in college. And I'm really working hard to become more student-centered. I need to learn to back off and let them take charge. And it's hard on me. After all these years, I have to change. Because technology is changing everything.

T: Some of the practices that are more traditional, that are more kind of teacher-led may not be the best way for all kids to learn. It was a little difficult for me to let go and realize that I could still have a lot of control in my class, in the groups. Letting go of traditional practices is not easy. Teachers have to feel safe and comfortable and have a supportive environment before they can try new things in their classroom. The kids have learned very quickly how to share, how to work together. They help one another. That's nice to see.

T: I am able to become more of a facilitator of my children's learning. And they're becoming more interactive with me. I am no longer the focus of everything. What is happening now, the focus. A lot of their learning I'm placing on the students. And I'm so impressed.

T: I'll give them the problem. I'll lead them, and then they're on their own. And they discover all kinds of neat things on the way.

T: Student-centered learning to me is having the students take charge. I really dwell on their prior experience, their prior knowledge. They take that ball and run with it. They develop their own idea. They take control of that learning.

T: Connecting new information with what students already know, with what they bring into the classroom, and folding that information into authentic student projects can be a radical departure from what teachers traditionally do.

CT: You all know some things about things that float and things that sink? In your groups, I want you all to really brainstorm and decide what you know about things that float. It could be about things in your pool. It could be about things that you've seen at the beach.

S: She throws them in there and they contain a lot of air. So a beach ball floats. It's soft. It's filled with air.

33 S: \_\_\_\_\_.

34 CT: So you all have done your research. Now you're going to have to make your  
35 hypothesis. Do you think that clay will float? If you think it will, you have to tell  
36 me whether you think they can carry more than their own weight.

37 *[Students working and talking together]*

38 CT: And the same thing with foil. If you think foil can float, do you think that it can  
39 carry more than its weight?

40 *[Students working and talking together]*

41 CT: And you all don't have to agree on it. If you don't agree with your group  
42 members, you can put your own hypothesis.

43 *[Students working and talking together]*

44 CT: Before last year I probably would have just used the book. I don't think I would  
45 have felt very comfortable doing activities with the students at that time,  
46 grouping. I may have attempted one activity or two, but now I feel a little bit  
47 more comfortable with it just because I see the kids enjoying it a lot more than I  
48 did a few years ago when I was teaching from the book.

49 *[Students working and talking together]*

50 I: Just as it's important to bring students' prior knowledge into the classroom for  
51 their learning, it's important to build on what teachers already know in  
52 professional development experiences. One thing is getting teachers to share what  
53 they are bringing in and build from the knowledge base that they have. Let them  
54 share that and then provide opportunities throughout all of our sessions so that  
55 they continue to be able to share their experience with each other. We'll provide  
56 lots of hands-on but then also we'll stop and have some time for reflection to  
57 really talk about the difficulty they may be having in making that transition to a  
58 student-centered classroom. What we try to do with our staff development is set  
59 up situations where the participant in the activity is an active learner, that they get  
60 the feeling of being a student.

61 T: I was one of the mentors. So I got to go on the computer and actually learn the  
62 program. And then I had to bring my group over and show them how to use the  
63 computer. I had to verbally explain to the person I was working with.

64 T: It was very difficult for me because I wanted just to grab the mouse and do it  
65 myself.

66 T: I'm not as computer literate as Kayann (?). And every time I have a problem, I go  
67 straight to her and I say, Kayann, I did something wrong. Can you help me? It's  
68 good that we have Kayann.

69 T: I had to really put myself in their place. If they were going to show someone how  
70 to use it, they had to actually have their hands on it. They had to actually do it  
71 themselves.

72 I: We model the role of a teacher as someone who manages the structure but  
73 provides an environment where learning can occur on its own where students  
74 have—or in this case, teachers have the ability to acquire and learn at their own  
75 pace. Once that's occurred, we can go back and we can look at it and we can say  
76 okay, this is what happens with you as a learner. How do you think that would  
77 translate for your students?

78 T: I went through a program that put me in as a learner. And I realized that all I was  
79 doing was modeling and they were spitting back information, and that there  
80 wasn't a lot of learning going on.

81 I: It is a risk. They're taking a risk in changing their practice. So they need the  
82 support of other teachers, of the principal.

83 I: It was going to be a supportive process. It wasn't going to be "you have to do it."  
84 It was going to be "we need for you to start working with this." You have this  
85 entire year of constant support. We just want to see what you're doing. We want  
86 you to try it. We want you to play with it. We want you to experiment with it.  
87 We really worked very hard to create a non-threatening environment for them to  
88 begin to do it.

89 T: I think that this program has also helped us to work together as teachers even  
90 across the curriculum. More of the teachers are getting together and asking each  
91 other, well, do you all need help with this, do you need help with that. And it's  
92 really helping us out a lot. And I think it's helping all of the teachers out.

93 I: They're very willing to share ideas and things they've tried that have worked and  
94 not worked. Somebody will say I didn't know you were doing that. And next

95 year I can do my language arts project with that. Or we can use that in history  
96 class. And it really is a cross-fertilization of ideas.

97 T: We did deserts. We shared by putting it up in the hallway and everything. But  
98 now with the computer, we can share each other's work just by going there.

99 T: After we did the training, I kind of had the feeling that we're all working together  
100 and we all have the same ideas and philosophies about where we want our  
101 children to be by the time they leave the elementary program.

102 I: There's a lot of teachers matching up with each other in their classes and teachers  
103 teaming up. This would be an excellent opportunity next year also to start  
104 teaming up teachers. That that have had that one-year SEDL experience with  
105 people that have not, and start that teaming process and mentoring process.

106 I: The excitement, the happiness that they have, what I'm hoping for them to  
107 accomplish is that this will go to the other classes, the other teachers that have not  
108 experienced the training that they have.

109 I: The staff development we're providing shows the teachers how they can use the  
110 computer with their students in a way that fits in with their classroom. It's not  
111 separate from what they're doing normally.

112 I: For the teacher making the transition from the traditional teacher-centered  
113 classroom to the student-centered classroom, technology adds another element  
114 that has to be learned.

115 I: In our professional development, we really encourage them to try a lot of things  
116 and to fail if they have to. We don't make judgments about it. If they can't do it  
117 perfectly, we encourage them constantly.

118 T: I appreciate you allowing us to have time. And I think a lot of times we don't let  
119 the kids have time just to play and get used to it. Where we expect them to go and  
120 produce something right away. And we need to really take that into account.

121 T: I have always wanted to see my classroom with the computers integrated. But I  
122 never knew how. My kids will question me. They wanted to know what they  
123 would be doing on the computer. And I thought my goodness, there's so much  
124 that these students can learn with technology. How can I limit my students from  
125 learning that?

126 I: The technology is useless without the training. As they got involved with it and as  
127 they became more familiar, the excitement seemed to grow with their ability to  
128 use the technology they had. All of a sudden, they started branching out into  
129 group studies and started using more of the computers in there, letting their kids  
130 get involved.

131 T: I was at first a little apprehensive about the way the computer technology would  
132 play into a constructivist classroom. But what I've noticed is that it's enhanced my  
133 students' learning and ability, and the ability for my students to use computer  
134 technology to further their own thoughts and their ideas, has been positive for  
135 them.

136 T: I wanted a class where the students were actually going to have to sit there and  
137 think about what they were doing, plan how they were going to do it, and then  
138 figure out how they were going to implement it. To us, that seems more  
139 important because that develops their critical thinking skills which is what we're  
140 basically here for.

141 I: It's not just technology. It's the way you teach the student-centered learning. It's  
142 going back to prior knowledge. This is the way students learn the best. And this  
143 technology is just that tool which is helping this happen.

144 I: We came up basically with the idea of encouraging the teachers to begin making  
145 the change over from utilizing the technology for drill-and-kill repetition type  
146 work to actually integrating it with what they were doing in the class.

147 T: In a thematic unit on Native Americans, we had the students do research on a  
148 specific Indian group, in their cooperative groups. And then from that point, I had  
149 each group create a slide show from their questions.

150 *[Students working and talking together]*

151 I: Instead of the teacher owning the learning, they turned it over to the students in  
152 the classroom. Students get more engaged because they are learning and they  
153 own what they're learning.

154 *[Students working and talking together]*

155 T: We're a community in here. We set up, we told them from the very beginning,  
156 respect yourself and it's so easy to respect other people when you respect yourself  
157 because you have pride in who you are. My boys and girls are writing stories for

158 the newspaper and I will sit down with the reporters and I'll say okay, who do you  
159 want to interview. I'll say okay, that's fine with me. Just write the questions and  
160 prepare, work with me and then go ask your questions.

161 *[Teacher working with students]*

162 T: I have to agree that my students are well-behaved. And I'm very proud of that. I  
163 say that very proudly. And I tell them often that I love them. And I say that very  
164 openly, that I love them. And sometimes I will say I love you, but I'm still going  
165 to make you do as I ask you to do. If I know you're doing wrong. They come to  
166 school thinking anyway because I tell them they come with their five senses. So  
167 you already bring a lot with you. They love talking anyway. So I try to enhance  
168 what they already have. And if you can talk to me, you can talk to anyone with  
169 enough practice.

170 *[Students working and talking together]*

171 T: So when you go out on an interview, greet the person you're going to talk to. Let  
172 them know who you are. You look at people when you talk to them. And you  
173 speak with confidence. Let them know that you're not afraid to speak because it's  
174 all about you. You're very important, you have a lot of pride in what you want to  
175 share. And it's one way to enhance the writing skills. And they don't see it as  
176 work. They say are we going to have a copy of this? I say yeah, you always have  
177 a copy of your writing. They say is anyone else in the school going to have a copy  
178 of this? I say probably, but I'm not sure how many copies we need to make.  
179 Well, let's double them. I say well, for how much? And it's like 25 or 30 cents. I'm  
180 not sure how much we're going to sell them for. That's going to be up to them,  
181 too. They wrote it. It's theirs. They own it. And they can decide.

182 I: If you have wonderful computers in the classroom and the children are going to  
183 be using them for educational curriculum purposes, all the children can't be doing  
184 the same thing at the same time. The teacher is going to need to change the  
185 structure of her classroom.

186 T: So it's up to you to divide your time among the three activities. You could be  
187 working on the rewrite, you could be doing literature circles. What happens if you  
188 decide you want to do one by yourself different from the group? Is that okay?  
189 Yes, it is.

- 190 S: In the classroom, we get to work in groups and stuff. We get to do activities on  
191 the computer.
- 192 S: Our teacher seems to give us more responsibility. She leaves it up to us to get our  
193 work done. And she really doesn't check until it's in. And we have our own  
194 responsibility when to turn it in and what time we have to do it.
- 195 T: I've used computers in my classroom. One of the centers. To broaden my  
196 students' thinking and they've been able to utilize it as far as a tool and a resource  
197 to further their own knowledge and information base.
- 198 T: We've been using Inspiration. We're really just getting started with it this past  
199 month. And I saw great possibilities for generating organizational materials for  
200 the kids because they have so much difficulty keeping track of who did what,  
201 when, why. And I've instructed two or three of them in how to use the program  
202 and they, in turn, taught two or three.
- 203 T: Students take on new roles. You have peer tutoring or mentoring going on in the  
204 classroom.
- 205 *[Students working and talking together]*
- 206 T: When the students help me out on the computer, it doesn't only help me but it  
207 helps them in their self-esteem.
- 208 T: They feel they can do the work that I do, so they're happy to go in and help other  
209 students.
- 210 T: Kids really seem to like it a lot better teaching one another. They do seem to get  
211 more out of it. Ironically, they always know more than I do about the whole  
212 program. So within five minutes, they've pretty much mastered it and gone on  
213 and dusted me.
- 214 S: I'm doing Inspiration on the computer with our social studies group. These are  
215 like links. They tell you this is chapter seven. It's easy to study because you have  
216 your own personal notes. You can keep track of anything you have to write in  
217 class. Make your own little specific notes that you need.
- 218 T: The perks are that they really do seem to get more out of it, more than you even  
219 realize that they're getting out of it because they seem to have more control.

220 I: Although the roles of the teacher and the students change in a student-centered  
221 classroom, the teacher is always essential. Teachers become partners with  
222 students in the creative process.

223 *[Teacher and students speaking Spanish]*

224 T: I feel very much that you learn by putting your hand on something and letting all  
225 that knowledge kind of like ooze up into your creative area. Your imagination.

226 *[Teacher and students speaking Spanish]*

227 T: The students seem to take a lot of pride in knowing that their ancestry, their  
228 culture, goes back as far as 6,000 years. There's a big tie-in to that because they  
229 know that. And people were here for many, many years living on this land,  
230 working the land.

231 *[Teacher and students speaking Spanish]*

232 T: Sometimes the kids will ask me well, can I do this. They can do anything. They  
233 say can I cut here. You can cut there and here and anywhere you want.

234 T: One day walking down a hall some of our students came up to me and just drove  
235 me into their classroom. Every one of them was all excited. The teacher's excited.  
236 And when they showed me a Power Point demonstration, at first I thought it was  
237 the teacher that did it. But then the teacher made it clear that the students did the  
238 whole project. And this is from what she had learned and showed the children,  
239 and then they in turn did it.

240 T: I see their eyes light up now that we do activities. I don't think I would have  
241 reached as many kids as I reach now, because I think they're learning in a bunch of  
242 different ways now with the hands-on program.

243 T: I see them engaged all the time. You know, they're all working together. Before,  
244 I would stand up in front of the class and I would teach. You never know if you  
245 have 100 percent of your class paying attention. I look around now and they're all  
246 working together. They're in groups of four or five. And it's nice because they'll  
247 say come on, you know, if so-and-so is not participating. They get each other  
248 working together.

249 T: Before I felt the learning was more passive. The students weren't interacting with  
250 one another and with the teacher. And now it is problem solving. It is critical

251 thinking. It is them constructing their own learning and it has made a tremendous  
252 difference.

253 T: I just kind of stand back and facilitate, and I like that. I didn't think I would. But I  
254 really do because I see them learning more with me being a facilitator.

255 T: Going into my classroom and seeing the enthusiasm of the students as well as the  
256 teachers, it's not oh, I have to go to science. Oh, I have to go to math. It's the  
257 hands-on experiences, the things that they do now, that is fun. And without the  
258 students realizing it, they're learning. And I think that has been a beautiful  
259 accomplishment. *[End of tape]*