Implementing learning centered approaches in your teaching

Phyllis Blumberg, Ph.D.
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
p.blumbe@usip.edu
Workshop Outcomes

- Learn more about learning centered practices
- Gain experience with learning centered teaching practices worksheets
- Explore utilization strategies
- Explore implementation strategies
Learning centered teaching

• It is an approach to teaching that focuses on student learning rather than on what the teacher is doing.

• Changes the focus from what the teacher does to student learning.

• Learning centered teaching is not one specific teaching method.

• Many different instructional methods can use a learning centered approach.
Why implement learning centered teaching?

- Research shows that learning centered teaching leads to
  - Increased student engagement with the content
  - Increased student learning and long term retention
- Educators are under increasing pressure to use learning centered teaching
Myths about learning centered teaching

- Can only be implemented in small classes
- Can only be implemented in upper level or graduate classes
- Reduces the content covered
- Reduces the rigor of the courses
  - When students engage in active learning the course gets dumped down

Essential concepts about Learning Centered Teaching

• Teacher centered and learning centered teaching are not a either/or situations, but a series of continua

• Courses can be at different points along the teacher-learning centered continua

• Transitioning to learning centered teaching takes time and effort

• Easier and more practical to make incremental steps toward learning centered teaching
According to Weimer (2002) there are 5 practices that need to change to achieve learning centered teaching

- The functions of content
- The role of the teacher
- The responsibility for learning
- The processes and purposes of evaluation
- The balance of power

The function of content

• In addition to building a knowledge base, the content facilitates students to:
  • Practice using inquiry or ways of thinking in the discipline
  • Learn to solve real problems
  • Understand the function of the content, why it is learned
  • Build discipline-specific learning methodologies
  • Build an appreciation for value of content
The function of content

• Content can help students develop a way to learn in this discipline
• Content is framed so that students see how it can be applied in the future
• Students engage in most of the content to make it their own, students make meaning out of the content
The role of the teacher

- The teacher creates an environment that:
  - Fosters students learning
  - Accommodates different learning styles
  - Motivates students to accept responsibility for learning
The role of the teacher

- Explicitly aligns objectives, teaching methods and assessment consistently
- Utilizes multiple teaching techniques appropriate for student learning goals
- Designs activities in which students interact with the material, the teacher and each other
- Inspires and encourages student ownership of learning
The responsibility for learning

• Responsibility is shared between the teacher and the students
• Students develop learning skills for further learning
• Students become self-directed lifelong learners
The responsibility for learning

- Students can and do assess their own learning
- Students become proficient at self-assessment
- Students become proficient with all information literacy skills (e.g., accessing and evaluating sources, using information legally)
The purposes and processes of evaluation

- **Integrated Assessment**
- **Formative assessment with constructive feedback**
- **Peer and self assessment**
- **Multiple opportunities learn and demonstrate mastery**
- **Students encouraged to justify their answers**
- **Students and teachers agree on feedback timeframes**
- **Authentic assessment is used throughout**
The balance of power (control issues)

- Students are encouraged to explore additional content
- Students are encouraged to express alternative perspectives whenever appropriate
- Use mastery or contract grading
- Assignments are open ended
- Policies, deadlines are negotiated and adhered to
- Students take advantage of opportunities to learn
Rubrics on 5 practice areas

1 rubric for each practice area

- The functions of content
- The role of the teacher
- The responsibility for learning
- The processes and purposes of evaluation
- The balance of power

Courses can be at different points on each practice criterion within each rubric
Pick 1 course you wish to transform

- Pick one practice area you wish to transform in your own teaching
- Complete the rubric for that practice area
- Complete part 1 of the worksheets for these practices within groups of people who are working on the same practice
Share a brief description of your course

- Pick 2-3 practice criteria that you would consider changing to be more learning centered
- Brainstorm how you can overcome barriers and make changes as a small group
- Complete part 2 of the worksheets together
Uses of the rubrics

- Assessment tool
  - Self, peer or in conjunction with consultation on teaching
- Shows how implemented learning centered teaching
- Create dossier artifacts, can be used over time
- Can plan developmental progression of an educational program
Worksheets

- Two part evaluation tool
  - Part 1 validity check
  - Part 2 tactical planning tool
- Follows format of Learning Centered Teaching Practices rubrics
- Color coded in the same way as the rubrics
Uses of the worksheets

- Plan enhancements to existing teaching practices
- Develop strategies for incorporating new teaching practices
- How to plan incremental and achievable changes toward learning centered teaching