

## APA's Learner-Centered Psychological Principles

In December of 1995, the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs circulated a draft of its *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Redesign and Reform*. (Revision prepared by a Work Group of the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs [BEA], 1995). The document was met with both praise and criticism. In fact, discussions and debate continue even as I write this paragraph. The authors of the document plan to continue revisions, but this draft is a concise statement from advocates of student-centered learning and motivation. The principles are:

**Principle 1: The nature of the learning process.** There are different types of learning—from learning habits in motor skills, to generating knowledge, to learning cognitive skills and strategies. Learning of complex subject matter in schools is most effective when it is an intentional process of constructing meaning from information and experience. Successful learners are active, goal-directed, self-regulating, persistent, and assume personal responsibility for contributing to their own learning.

**Principle 2: Goals of the learning process.** The successful learner, over time and with support and guidance, can create meaningful, coherent representations of knowledge. To learn, students must have a goal. To construct useful knowledge and acquire learning strategies for life-long learning, students need to pursue personally relevant goals. Teachers can help students set short- and long-term goals that are both personally meaningful and educationally sound.

**Principle 3: The construction of knowledge.** The successful learner can link new information with existing knowledge in meaningful ways. Because each student has different experiences and because the mind works to link information meaningfully, each student will organize information in a way that is unique. Teachers can help students develop shared understandings about important knowledge and skills. However, unless new knowledge becomes integrated with the learner's prior understandings, the new knowledge remains isolated and difficult to apply to new situations.

**Principle 4: Strategic thinking.** The successful learner can create and use a range of thinking and reasoning skills to achieve complex learning goals. Successful learners use strategic thinking in learning, reasoning, problem solving, and concept learning. They can use a variety of strategies and continue to expand their repertoire by reflecting on and changing their current strategies, observing others, and benefiting from instruction.

**Principle 5: Thinking about thinking.** Higher-order strategies for “thinking about thinking and learning”—for overseeing and monitoring mental operations—facilitate creative and critical thinking and the development of expertise. Successful learners can reflect on how they learn, set reasonable goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor progress toward goals, and change strategies when necessary. These abilities can be developed through instruction.

**Principle 6: Context of learning.** Learning is influenced by environmental factors, including culture, technology, and instruction. Teachers play major interactive roles with both learners and the learning environment. Instruction must fit the students' level or prior knowledge, cognitive abilities, and ways of thinking. The nurturing qualities of the classroom environment are particularly influential in student learning.

**Principle 7: Motivational and emotional influences on learning.** The depth and breadth of information processed, and what and how much is learned and remembered, are influenced by (a) self-awareness and beliefs about personal control, competence, and ability; (b) clarity and saliency of personal values, interests, and goals; (c) personal expectations for success or failure; (d) affect, emotion, and general states of mind; and (e) the resulting motivation to learn. The inner world of beliefs, goals, and expectations can enhance or interfere with learning. Intense negative cognitions and emotions (e.g., feeling insecure, worrying about failure, being self-conscious or shy, and fearing punishment, ridicule, or stigmatizing labels) thwart complex learning.

**Principle 8: Intrinsic motivation to learn.** Intrinsic motivation, creativity, and higher-order thinking are stimulated by relevant, authentic learning tasks of optimal difficulty and novelty for each student. Students need opportunities to make choices about learning in line with their personal interests. Students are more likely to be creative and think deeply about projects that are as complex as real-world situations.

**Principle 9: Effects of motivation on effort.** Learning complex skills and knowledge requires extended effort, persistence, and practice (with guidance and feedback). Learning of complex subject matter requires considerable investments of time and energy. Unless students are motivated to learn, they are unlikely to expend the needed effort without being coerced.

**Principle 10: Developmental constraints and opportunities.** Individuals progress through stages of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development that are a function of unique genetic and environmental factors. Students learn best when materials are developmentally appropriate. Overemphasis on one kind of developmental readiness—such as reading readiness, for example—may interfere with development in other areas.

**Principle 11: Social influences on learning.** Learning is influenced by social interactions and communication with others. Learning can be enhanced when students have the opportunity to interact and collaborate with others on instructional tasks. Learning situations that allow for and respect diversity encourage flexible thinking, social competence, and moral development. Learning and self-esteem are heightened when individuals are in respected and caring relationships with others who see their potential, appreciate their unique talents, and accept them as individuals. Self-esteem and learning are mutually reinforcing.

**Principle 12: Individual differences in learning.** Individuals have different capabilities. These differences are a function of environment (what is learned and communicated in different cultures or other social groups) and heredity (what occurs naturally as a function of the genes). Through learning and social acculturation, learners have acquired preferences for how and at what pace they like to learn. But these preferences are not always useful in helping learners reach their goals. Teachers need to help students examine their learning preferences and expand or modify them if necessary, while respecting individual differences.

**Principle 13: Learning and diversity.** Learning is most effective when differences in learners' linguistic, cultural, and social behaviors are taken into account. Although basic principles of learning, motivation, and effective instruction may apply to all learners, language, ethnic group, race, beliefs, and socioeconomic status all can influence learning. When learners see that their individual differences in abilities, background, and cultures are valued and respected, then motivation is enhanced and learning supported.

**Principle 14: Standards and assessment.** Setting appropriately high and challenging standards and assessing both the learner and the learning process are integral parts of successful learning. Assessment provides important information to both the learner and the teacher at all stages of the learning process. Ongoing assessment can provide feedback of progress toward goals. Standardized, performance, and self-assessments—used appropriately—can guide instructional planning, support motivation, and provide necessary corrections to guide learning.

Teaching based on these learner-centered principles would make sure that students are active in solving problems, practicing learning strategies, making choices, and discovering important ideas.

## *Guidelines for Observing Classroom Behavior*

### **Student-Teacher Relations**

- What is the evidence of organization and clarity in teacher presentations?
- How enthusiastic is the teacher?
- How does the teacher demonstrate care, warmth, empathy, and nurture students?
- How does the teacher motivate students?
- What is the evidence that the teacher listens to and respond to individual student's needs, interests, and concerns?
- How does the teacher encourage respect for other students and their views?
- How does the teacher encourage and build on student discussions?
- What is the evidence that the teacher is concerned with the social-emotional development of students?
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### **The Teaching-Learning Process**

- To what extent is the teacher concerned with comprehension and application of knowledge? Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation?
- To what extent does the teacher use inquiry approaches?
- Which instructional methods did the students find most interesting?
- What is the evidence of student learning?
- How does the teacher use real-life examples to stimulate interest, illustrate, and integrate the concepts being taught?
- What instructional techniques are used to motivate divergent thinking?
- How does the teacher integrate different instructional activities?
- How does the teacher prevent frustration and confusion?
- To what extent and how is learning reinforced?
- To what extent and how does the teacher use groups?
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### **Classroom Management**

- What student behaviors were acceptable and unacceptable in class?
- How does the teacher effectively use classroom space?
- What did you like and dislike about the physical environment of the classroom?
- How does the teacher enlist student cooperation?
- Are the rules of the classroom known and used by students?
- What activities encourage student engagement? Prevent management problems?
- How is conflict managed?
- What is the evidence that a positive leaning context exists?
- What is the evidence that students are developing responsible and manage themselves?

## Conducting a Job Interview\*

### *Questions about why applicant wants a position in your school system*

1. Why do you want this position?
2. Why do you want to work in this district?
3. What do you know about our school/school system?

### *Questions about the applicant's conceptions of good teaching*

1. Do you remember your favorite or best elementary or high school teacher? Tell me what there was about him/her that you admire.
2. What makes a good teacher?
3. Why would you be a good teacher? What are your strengths? Weaknesses?

### *Questions about the applicant's beliefs/goals/philosophy*

1. What do you hope to achieve with your students?
2. If there were only one skill or concept that you could get them to learn, what would it be and why?
3. Why did you want to become a teacher?
4. What is your stance on (be familiar with the initiatives of the school or district to identify issues that might come up):
  - Inclusion?
  - Inquiry vs. direct instruction?
  - Using concrete rewards to motivate students?
  - Involving families and the community in your classroom?
  - Integrated curriculum?
5. If you were to be on an advisory committee for your college to improve the preparation of teachers, what would you suggest and why?
6. What current trends in public education please you? Displease you?

### *Questions about the applicant's skills/abilities*

1. What is the best lesson you have taught? What made it good?
2. What has been your best experience in the classroom so far? What made it good?
3. What support do you need to make you successful?
4. Tell me about all your experiences in working with children in addition to your student teaching.
5. What has happened in your student teaching experience that you felt you were not well prepared for and how did you handle it? What would you do differently now that you have had this experience?

### *Questions about the applicant's classroom management skills*

1. What are the challenging aspects of classroom management for you?
2. What was your most challenging discipline problem so far and how did you handle it?
3. Here is a specific situation (interviewer describes a student who challenges your authority or refuses to follow rules or do work). What would you do?
4. How will you establish rapport with students and motivate them?

### *Questions about the applicant's instructional strategies*

- How do you accommodate different student abilities and learning styles in your teaching?
- How do you make accommodations for students with special needs and challenges?
- How would you involve families and the community in your classroom?
- Based on what you know so far, would you prefer to work alone and be responsible for smaller numbers of students or collaborate with other teacher and be responsible for larger numbers of students?
- What role does technology play in your teaching?

Thanks to Dr. Harry Galinsky, former superintendent of Paramus, NJ and Superintendent of the Year and Dr. Michael DiPaola, former superintendent of Pitman, NJ and Associate Professor of Education at the College of William and Mary for their questions and suggestions.

# ***Instructional Leadership: A Learning-Centered Guide***

## **Anita Woolfolk Hoy & Wayne Kolter Hoy**

### **Internet Resources**

#### **General Resources**

**Instructional Leadership** [http://wps.ablongman.com/ab\\_woolfolk\\_instrlead\\_1](http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_woolfolk_instrlead_1)

Sites for Educators

<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/>

<http://www.ozline.com/>

ERIC's guidelines for evaluating websites

[http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed426440.html](http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed426440.html)

#### **The Students**

The Southern Poverty Law Center sponsors the Teaching Tolerance education project [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

Language and Literacy Effective Classroom Practices: Education Place®

<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/>

Research in Literacy Development: The National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement

<http://cela.albany.edu/research.htm>

Language Development: The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

[http://www.asha.org/speech/development/lang\\_lit.cfm](http://www.asha.org/speech/development/lang_lit.cfm)

#### **LD Online** [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

Child Psychology Development Index <http://psychology.about.com/cs/child/>

KidsHealth for Parents <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/>

Parent Soup <http://www.parentsoup.com/>

Center for Adolescent Studies (<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/>)

Child Development Institute (<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/>)

Connect for Kids (<http://www.connectforkids.org/>)

Resources on Adolescent Development [http://www.indiana.edu/~iuepsyc/topics/r\\_ado.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~iuepsyc/topics/r_ado.htm)

#### **Learning**

Theories of learning <http://tip.psychology.org/index.html>

Piaget <http://www.piaget.org/>

Vygotsky <http://www.igs.net/~cmorris/vygotsky.html>

Constructivism in mathematics <http://mathforum.org/mathed/constructivism.html>

Teaching intelligent behaviors <http://www.carr.lib.md.us/ccps/fve/intellig.htm>

NASA's Applied Cognition game

<http://human-factors.arc.nasa.gov/cognition/tutorials/index.html>

The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse <http://www.enc.org/topics/inquiry/>

The Center for Critical Thinking <http://www.criticalthinking.org>

NEA Works4Me Tips Library <http://www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/works4me/teachtec/thinking.html>

NRWEL <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/6/cu11.html>

#### **Motivation**

Visit Frank Pajares' website and check out the resources of self-efficacy: <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/>

Carol Dweck [http://www.education-world.com/a\\_curr/curr197.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr197.shtml)  
Alfie Kohn <http://www.webtools.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,3-281-0-1,00.html>  
The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory <http://www.nwrel.org/request/oct00/index.html>

### **Teaching for Learning**

Cooperative Learning  
<http://www.clcrc.com/>  
<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>

Reading <http://www.ciera.org>  
Schrock's Guide for Educators <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/>  
Problem-based learning <http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/projects/funded/Jasper/>  
The Questioning Toolkit <http://www.fno.org/nov97/toolkit.html>

### **Classroom Management**

The Southern Poverty Law Center sponsors the Teaching Tolerance education project [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)  
The Center for Talented Youth (CTY) <http://www.jhu.edu/gifted/teaching/classroom.htm>  
Self-quiz on your style of classroom management <http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v1i2/what.html>

### **Assessing Student Learning**

General Sites <http://www.middleweb.com/SBRGuide.html>  
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/pathwayg.htm>

Edutopia Online <http://www.glef.org>  
*Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation* <http://ericae.net/pare/>

### **School Culture and Climate**

Find a number of instruments to assess climate and culture at:  
[http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/whoy/instruments\\_6.htm](http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/whoy/instruments_6.htm)

### **Teacher Evaluation**

For resources on teacher evaluation, see these sites.

<http://ericae.net/db/edo/ED315431.htm>

<http://ericae.net/db/edo/ED364926.htm>

<http://www.teacherevaluation.net>

<http://www.teacherevaluation.net/PrincipalRoles/monitor.html>

# *A Learning-Centered Guide*

Anita Woolfolk Hoy and Wayne Kolter Hoy

## *Leadership Challenges*

### **Students Challenge**

You are the principal of a fairly homogeneous elementary school. In fact, most of your students are middle or upper-middle class and white. In January, a new student enters your school—the daughter of an African-American professor who recently moved to the nearby college. After a few weeks, one of your third-grade teachers comes to you with a potential problem. She has noticed that the new student is not being included in many activities. She sits alone in the library and plays alone at recess. All these things are troubling to your teacher, but most disturbing of all is that yesterday the teacher overheard two of her higher achieving girls talking about their "White Girls Club." Your teacher is shocked and has turned to you for advice.

- Would you investigate to learn more about this "Club?" How?
- What advice do you give this teacher?
- Should you formulate a plan of action? What should you do? What should the teacher do?
- If you find that the students have created a club that excluded nonwhite students, what would you do?
- Do you need a school policy on this matter? If so, what should the policy be? If not, why not?

### **Students Challenge 2**

One of the girls in your 10th-grade class is desperate for friends. Vanesa seems so lonely and depressed—no one ever joins her at lunch or walks with her to class. She is a reasonably good student, but just doesn't seem to fit in. On several occasions she has tried to join a group by offering help or asking questions, but these initiations never go anywhere. Even when a friendship begins, it never lasts. It seems like Vanesa gets so excited about the possibility of a developing relationship that she pushes the newfound friend away by overwhelming her with attention, showering her with special gifts, pouring out her heart, and sharing her deepest secrets and worries. Then Vanesa always seems to be the one exploited, abandoned, or hurt. Lately her schoolwork is careless and incomplete; she looks tired and pale.

- What are your concerns for this student?
- How do you think Vanesa feels about herself?
- What are some danger signs you might watch for?
- How would you help her form some genuine relationships?
- Consider the same situation, except the child is a third-grade student.

### **Learning Challenge**

The seniors in the history classes seem to equate understanding with memorizing. They prepare for each unit test by memorizing the exact words of the textbook. Even the best students seem to think that flash cards are the only learning strategy possible. In fact, when you try to get them to think about history by reading some original sources, debating issues in class, or examining art and music from the time period you are studying, they rebel. "Will this be on the test?" "Why are we looking at these pictures—will we have to know who painted them and when?" "What's this got to do with history?" Even the students who participate in the debates seem to use words and phrases straight from the textbook without knowing what they are saying.

- What do these students "know" about history? What are their beliefs and expectations, and how do these affect their learning?
- Why do you think they insist on using the rote memory approach?
- How would you teach your students to learn in this new way?
- How will these issues affect the grade levels in your building?

### **Learning Challenge 2**

Your school's social studies department is highly regarded for its innovative approach to teaching. The program is oriented toward inquiry as a process, rather than the retention of historical fact. Typically, the department develops curriculum. The teachers are enthusiastic about their program and it is well received by the students. You do not always agree with the direction of the curriculum, but there is little question that this is a highly skilled and professional group of teachers whom you respect.

Recent reform in the state has argued for back to basics and the use of curricular materials that stress recall of specific persons, places, and events in state and national history. A battery of state tests supports the reform. Although the state maintained that no invidious comparisons would be made, your community has made them. The superintendent has her feet to the fire on this issue, and now you too are feeling the heat. Recent test scores show that your students are not doing nearly as well in history as they are in science and mathematics. The superintendent has "requested" that you integrate the state curricular materials into the history program to correct the current deficiencies. Your history faculty, on the other hand, claim that this is exactly the wrong tack to take to develop inquiring minds. They are not overly concerned with the students' performance on the state tests because they claim the tests measure the wrong thing. Parents, however, cannot understand why their children are not doing as well in history as they are in math and science; in fact, at the last board meeting the superintendent promised that the history scores would rise.

- What do students need to "know" about history?
- What is the role of rote memory in learning?
- What do the behavioral, cognitive, and constructivist perspectives on learning have to offer?
- How does one achieve the right balance of teaching facts and teaching for discovery and understanding?

### **Motivation Challenge**

For some reason this year, many of the students in your middle school classes seem defeated about learning. At a recent faculty meeting, teachers started to complain about their students: "They look at an assignment and protest--This is too long (too hard, too much)!" "We can't do this by tomorrow (Monday, next week)!" Because they don't exert much effort, of course, they prove themselves right every time—they can't do the work. Your teachers claim that neither pep talks nor punishments for incomplete work are making a dent in the students' defeatist attitudes. And the "I can't's" seem contagious. Even the better students are starting to drag their feet, protest longer assignments, and invest minimal effort in class. Teachers also maintain that more students are have started to cheat on tests to save their sinking grades. A few teachers blame the negative attitudes on students from the "projects" who are in school this year because the other middle school in the district was closed and those students had to be redistributed. A cloud of despair seems to be hovering over the whole school. You are starting to dread Mondays. You need to show some leadership, and you begin by asking yourself these questions:

- Are these students "unmotivated"?
- Why might they be so pessimistic about learning?
- How can you help your teachers get a handle on this problem?
- What can you and your teachers do to change student attitudes toward their school work?
- How can teachers get students to believe in themselves?
- What perspectives on motivation seem most useful?

### **Classroom Management Leadership Challenge**

There are students from four different ethnic groups in the middle school "pod" you are working with this year. Last week, you added a student with pretty severe emotional/behavioral problems and a student with cerebral palsy to the group as part of an experiment in full inclusion. The boy with cerebral palsy is in a wheelchair and has some difficulties with language and hearing. Each of the four ethnic groups seems to stick together, never making friends with students from "outside." When the teachers ask students to work together for projects, the divisions are strictly on ethnic lines. Many of the subgroups communicate in their native language—one you don't understand—and you assume that often the joke is on you because of the looks and laughs directed your way. Clarise, the emotionally disturbed student, is making matters worse by telling ethnic jokes to anyone who will listen in a voice loud enough to be overheard by half the class. There are rumors of an ambush after school to "teach Clarise a lesson." You agree she—and the whole class for that matter—needs a lesson, but not this kind.

- How would you structure the class to help the students feel more comfortable together?
- What are your first goals in working on this problem?
- Is conflict negotiation called for here? How would you handle the situation?

How will these issues affect the grade-levels in your building?