



Facilitating Learner-Centered Approach

In the earlier reading we had begun to understand what we meant by learner-centered approach. Through this reading we hope to build an understanding on how we could facilitate this approach within our learning spaces/classrooms.

While the learner-centered approach focuses on the learner it does not necessarily reduce the role of a facilitator/educator. We play a crucial role in facilitating an environment that supports the development of our children through this approach.

Facilitator is someone who holds a lot of responsibility when it comes to a child's development within a classroom space. They create an environment that promotes shared trust and care which in turn creates a safe space that encourages explorations to take place.

How do we create this space of trust and care?

1. Establishing a non-hierarchical classroom – It is important for facilitators to not enter from a place of authority but enter from a place of equality.
2. Being authentic and vulnerable – For students to be able to place their trust in us we need to be able to shed our pre-conceived notions or experiences of who a teacher should be and show our authentic selves.

How do we facilitate a learner-centered approach after establishing a safe space for learners?

1. Dialogues – Promoting dialogue in the classroom involves asking open-ended questions that activate learning and promotes active engagement among learners. Facilitating dialogues gives children a voice, opens them up to multiple perspectives, broadens their thinking, and deepens their understanding.
Traditionally we are accustomed to asking close-ended questions that have a right or a wrong answer only, to check if students know the content. But for this approach to be effective we need to thoughtfully structure a sequence of open-ended questions that have no right or wrong answer and invites reflection.
(e.g., when 3rd std students are learning about mapping, instead of merely providing them with information from the textbook such as sign boards, directions, etc., that are removed from the child's lived experiences, using dialogue teachers can help their students connect the content to their experiences, by encouraging them to talk about the routes to their home, what would they do if they are lost, etc.)

With this brief introduction to Learner-Centered Approach we would like to encourage you to answer the following reflection questions to explore your own practice –

Reflection

1. What are some practices that you follow to build trust and care to create a safe space in your classroom? Is there something more you can do?



Activity

1. Think of an area of content you are teaching your students (e.g., trips). Come up with at least two open-ended questions to enable dialogue for your students to understand the content.
2. Test out these open-ended questions in your class and observe the difference between classes where dialogue was facilitated versus where dialogue was not facilitated.

Here is an example to help understand the difference between close-ended and open-ended questions.

‘Rajiv and his father Madhav were very happy that day. Rajiv was especially thrilled because his father would take him out on a visit to the lighthouse. They started out in the evening by 5 p.m. and reached the shore by 6 p.m. Madhav pointed out to the lighthouse in the distance. It was a tall, strong building in the shape of a tower with powerful lights at the top.’

Close-Ended Questions	Open-Ended Questions
1. How was Rajiv feeling?	1 Share with class your idea of a trip.
2. Where was Rajiv’s father taking him?	2 If you were to go on a trip, who would you like to travel with and why?
3. What time did they reach at the lighthouse?	3 If you have been on any trip how was your experience?