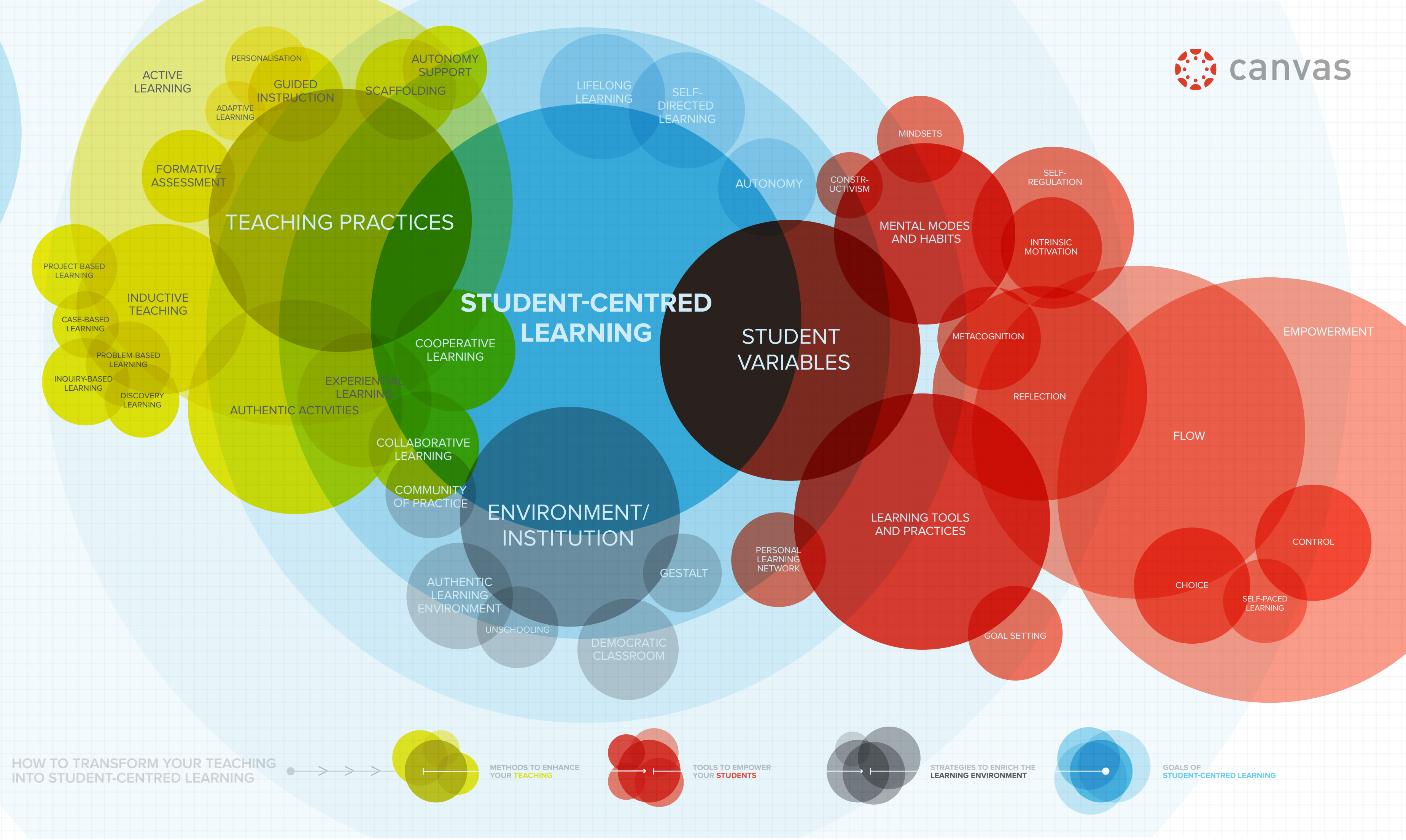


STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING

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Teachers can transform the way students look at learning—while improving outcomes and increasing engagement—by incorporating practices that fall under the umbrella term, student-centred learning. Student-centred learning is fundamentally about changing our understanding of how teachers and students work together so that, eventually, every student becomes a confident, capable, self-directed learner, able to adapt to the challenges of the modern world. Student-centred learning is not a light switch we turn on or off; rather, by changing small things, incorporating different activities, or even talking about learning in new ways, we can help students become autonomous, lifelong learners.



GLOSSARY

● active learning

: learning that happens through student participation in activities that emphasise active retrieval, application of knowledge, and reflection. Responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher as students are expected to do more with information than simply receive it. See also **student-centred learning**.

● adaptive learning

: an instructional practice that uses assessments of individual students' needs and abilities in order to deliver customised learning content or activities, often at their own pace. See also **personalised learning**.

● authentic activities

: learning tasks or activities that use actual or simulated real-world content, and reflect real-world situations.

● authentic learning environment

: an environment designed to make learning relevant and transferable to the real world by providing opportunities for students to work on activities and projects situated in real-world contexts and aligned with real-world problems. See also **problem-based learning** and **project-based learning**.

● autonomy

: (general) independence or freedom, the state of self-governance.
: (applied) when learners rely upon their own ability to successfully initiate and organise their learning.

● autonomy support

: support provided by the teacher in order to develop learners' motivation and autonomy by emphasising personal choice and goal setting, and diminishing common academic pressures, for example, grades or high-stakes tests.

● case-based learning

: a learning method in which students engage in researching real-world or hypothetical case studies in order to develop applied knowledge by confronting possible misconceptions, and solving real-world problems. See also **inductive teaching**.

● collaborative learning

: when a group of students come together, with joint responsibility to each other, to accomplish an open-ended learning goal. Collaborative learning aims to help students achieve more than they might individually (e.g., solving a problem or producing a project or artefact). See also **active learning** and **cooperative learning**.

● community of practice

: a group of **active learners** who share common learning goals, participate in community activities at the level of their experience and ability, and share their learning with other community members.

● constructivism

: a theory of learning suggesting that students individually construct their own understanding of the world in context of their unique experiences and background knowledge.
: an approach to teaching that values **active learning**, **metacognition**, **reflection**, **collaboration**, personal **autonomy**, and relevance.

● control

: (general) the exercise of power over others.
: (applied) when students determine the time, place, path, and pace of their own learning in accordance with their current understanding and cognitive abilities. See also **personalisation**.

● choice

: (general) the power to make a decision.
: (applied) when students decide their own curriculum, educational resources, and learning materials in order to tailor learning to their interests, thus increasing self-motivation. See also **personalisation**.

● cooperative learning

: students working together, rather than in competition, to develop a common foundational understanding, either as a class or in small groups. Cooperative learning takes advantage of individuals' knowledge, skills, and resources for the benefit of the group. See also **active learning** and **collaborative learning**.

● democratic classroom

: a classroom management style that transfers some decision-making power from the teacher to the students. Students may collectively make decisions about classroom rules, goals, and approaches to learning.

● discovery learning

: an instructional technique in which students are faced with a challenge and arrive at a solution on their own, while teachers provide little to no direction and minimal feedback. See also **inductive teaching**.

● experiential learning

: a theory that suggests people learn through inquiry and direct experience with subject matter, followed by critical **reflection**. See also **active learning** and **authentic activities**.

● flow

: a pleasurable mental state of full engagement and absorption. Flow states occur when people are sufficiently challenged in a self-directed activity that they have both competence in and **intrinsic motivation** to perform.

● formative assessment

: the low- or no-stakes evaluation of student learning that focuses on providing constructive feedback to support students' self-improvement and mastery. Formative assessment by an expert can model self-assessment and help students monitor their own learning and productivity.

● gestalt

: (general) a theory suggesting an organised whole is regarded as more than the sum of its parts.
: (applied) a theory promoting the idea that the "whole person" in a learning community is of greater importance than the "student" in a classroom.

● goal setting

: (general) a process that starts with identifying what one wants to achieve and includes steps toward achieving it.
: (applied) a process whereby a student establishes short- or long-term objectives for mastering a topic or skill, identifies what mastery means, then plans the tasks or activities necessary to get there—keeping in mind the **intrinsic motivation** necessary to move along the path. See also **scaffolding**.

● guided instruction

: an instructional approach that uses extensive teacher modelling and **scaffolding** aimed at helping students learn to accomplish tasks independently.

● inductive teaching

: a suite of teaching techniques—including **case-based**, **discovery**, **inquiry-based**, **problem-based**, and **project-based learning**—in which the teacher presents a challenge, and students work on their own to address the challenge.

● inquiry-based learning

: an instructional method in which students consider a broad, **authentic** question before formulating their own research objective. Students do independent research to address the original question and reach that objective. See also **inductive teaching**.

● intrinsic motivation

: the enjoyment of learning for an internal reason, for example, for the sake of learning itself, for the pursuit of mastery, or for the pleasure of entering states of **flow**. Intrinsic motivation can be facilitated by providing students with productive challenges, **formative feedback**, and **autonomy support**.

● learner-centred teaching

: alternately defined as either **personalisation** or **student-centred learning**.

● lifelong learning

: the philosophy that active, goal-oriented learning should extend throughout a person's life, far beyond mandatory or formal education. Lifelong learning is voluntary, requires **intrinsic motivation**, and reflects personal or professional interests.

● metacognition

: (general) knowing about knowing; thinking about thinking.
: (applied) the process of reflecting on and understanding what one knows and doesn't know in order to **self-regulate** and **self-direct** one's progress toward learning goals.

● mindset

: theory that learners' assumptions about their own intelligence affect their success, and that these mindsets can be taught. Learners with a *growth mindset* assume that intelligence can be developed, and are motivated to overcome challenges. Learners with a *fixed mindset* assume that intelligence is set, and thus avoid challenges.

● personal learning network

: the informal interconnection of a wide array of learning resources (people, information, tools, etc.) that a learner makes use of to support self-directed goals. While not exclusively digital, personal learning networks can be enlarged and amplified by use of the Internet.

● personalisation

: a learning method that provides students with different learning opportunities, experiences, or pacing based on individual background knowledge, abilities, or preferences. Personalisation can be done *for* the student (by the teacher) or *by* the student.

● problem-based learning

: an instructional approach in which students solve a real-world, **authentic** problem by gathering information and applying research or problem-solving skills. See also **inductive teaching**.

● project-based learning

: when students learn by discovering and applying new knowledge to a real-world, **authentic** project. Students complete the project over an extended period of time, either independently or **collaboratively**. See also **inductive teaching**.

● reflection

: (general) careful consideration or thought.
: (applied) thinking about the experience of learning in order to improve one's learning strategies and tactics, as well as to develop self-confidence in reaching learning goals. See also **metacognition**.

● scaffolding

: guidance, frameworks, strategies, or tools a teacher provides that help a student accomplish a learning task that would otherwise be too challenging. In **student-centred learning**, teachers gradually withdraw scaffolding as the student develops mastery over the topic.

● self-paced learning

: (general) to establish one's own speed.
: (applied) when students move through learning experiences at their own speed—based on their own ability—without depending on other students' progress. Teachers often manage and support self-paced learning by relying on computer-automated, digital learning designs. See also **personalisation**.

● self-directed learning

: when students choose, direct, and assess their learning driven by their own motivation to achieve a goal. See also **self-regulation**.

● self-regulation

: habits of self-monitoring and reflection that lead students to adjust their behaviour based on their motivation to achieve learning goals. See also **metacognition**.

● student-centred learning

: an educational approach that aims to develop the capability for **self-directed**, **lifelong learning** by granting students more **control** and responsibility for the learning process. It is

- : **active learning** because it requires that students directly engage with materials, activities, and practice in order to build lasting understanding.
- : **authentic learning** because students develop skills based on real-world content and problems in order to transfer their learning beyond the classroom.

Because it requires that teachers shift from being the primary source of learning to providing individualised, **scaffolded** guidance to students, student-centred learning is often synonymous with **learner-centred teaching**.

● unschooling

: an educational approach that disregards traditional, formal schools and situates student learning at home or wherever they are. Unschooling focuses on students' personal interests, and encourages **self-direction** as students weave learning activities into their everyday life.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER TO TRANSFORM YOUR TEACHING

MAKE LEARNING **ACTIVE**

- Provide ample hands-on practice opportunities for each learning objective.
- Use techniques like peer instruction for whole-class participation.
- Scaffold only as much as needed to keep work challenging.
- Have students build habits of retrieving new knowledge, not just reviewing.

MAKE ACTIVITIES MORE **AUTHENTIC**

- Design mock sessions or role-play activities based on real-life situations.
- Use (and encourage students to use) real-world resources from the open web.
- Model assessments after actual life or career responsibilities.

DEVELOP STUDENTS' **METACOGNITION**

- Prompt students to self-evaluate what they know and don't know.
- Teach students to pause for reflection, using journals or shared note-taking.
- Explain how experts approach a problem, including the hidden mental steps.
- Use digital tools that provide easy access for review and self-editing.

FOSTER INTRINSIC **MOTIVATION**

- Foster growth mindsets by teaching students that mastery is a path, and everyone can succeed.
- Encourage students to create their own learning goals, and recognise their progress toward those goals.
- Introduce cooperative activities and collaborative projects that create a shared purpose.

INCREASE STUDENTS' **RESPONSIBILITY**

- Have students create their own learning tools, like reminders, task lists, and **flash cards**.
- Move from specific problem-based activities to open-ended, inquiry-based activities.
- Design projects that require student planning, milestones, and self-assessment.
- Shift more **decision-making** to students' control on projects, resources, or even class policies.