EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Utah State Board of Education

CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING

EFFECT SIZE: 0.92

High-Quality Instruction Cycle Connection:

Step 1: Goals and Outcomes
Step 2: Planning Instruction
Step 3: Instruction

Utah Effective Teaching Standards Alignment:

- Standard 2, Element 4
- Standard 3, Elements 1, 3

Personalized, Competency Based Learning Framework Essential Component:

Culture of Learning
Learner Agency
Social Emotional Learning

WHAT?

Constructivist Teaching involves providing students with learner-centered, active instruction, where students explore ideas, propositions, explanations, solutions and take subsequent actions. The main idea of this approach is that students "construct" their own meaning through experiential learning. In a constructivist environment students are provided authentic, engaging experiences to build understanding rather than being told through a traditional lecture approach.

WHY?

The effect size of constructivist teaching is 0.92 which is more than two years of growth for one year of learning. This approach allows students to have a personalized learning experience as the meaning they gain comes from their own experiences asking questions, applying understanding through activities, and assessing themselves as to what is still needed to build on the knowledge they've gained. There is evidence that these personalized learning opportunities lead to stronger retention of that learning due to the memorable experiences students have as related to this instructional design approach.

HOW?

Teachers can build flexibility with the constructivist approach with a strong understanding of

the content standards being addressed. Anchoring the learning intentions in the content standards helps inform the components of the lesson/unit. Additionally, including intentional engagement opportunities is critical to implementing this approach.

PREPARATION:

- Design a clear set of learning intentions as they apply to the content standards being taught.
- Define the success criteria of how it will be known if these learning intentions have been met by students.
- Consider how students could apply this standard to build a deeper understanding of the overall scope and sequence of the curriculum.
- Connect the standard to prior knowledge and previous learning experiences to ensure students have sufficient background to engage in the constructivist learning activities.
- Ensure students understand the procedures for accessing materials, tools, or other components that they may be used to engage in constructivist learning.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Teacher Actions

- Actively engage with students as they are exploring the concept through building their knowledge.
- Formatively assess how well students are constructing their meaning. Some questions to ponder and perhaps ask of students:
  - Do students have what they need to construct meaning that would lead to achieving the success criteria?
  - Is there a need to correct misconceptions or redirect to scaffold the students' strategies?
- Support students in talking through their understanding with one another.
- Help students to identify how they are learning more about how they learn — build capacity for metacognition awareness — so that they are more confident in subsequent constructivist learning opportunities.

Student Look-Fors

- Diligently engage in learning — they may be reading, writing, speaking to one another or focused on an application task.
- Confidently share what the learning intentions are and where they are in the process when asked.
- Effectively use strategies that allow them to personalize their approach to the tasks and learning intentions in order to construct their own meaning, rather than being confused about where to begin.

(Continued)

Reflection

- What background knowledge is needed for students to be able to engage with this learning intention?
- What classroom management expectations will students need to understand to effectively construct meaning through the materials, resources and experiences available? How will I ensure they understand these expectations?
- How will I facilitate conditions for students to reinforce the learning for each other and build a stronger Culture of Learning in the classroom by doing so?
- Where is there space for students to construct meaning and attach this concept to the bigger picture of their understanding about the world?

Go Deeper—Resources to learn more

Constructivist Teaching — Visible Learning Metax

Semerci, Ç., & Batdi, V. (2015). A Meta-Analysis of Constructivist Learning Approach on Learners' Academic Achievements, Retention and Attitudes. Journal of Education and Training Studies, 3(2). https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v3i2.644

Constructivism. (2023, April 4). Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation - University at Buffalo. https://www.buffalo.edu/catt/develop/theory/constructivism.html#:~:text=Constructivist%20Classroom%20Activities-,What%20is%20constructivism%3F,%2Dexisting%20knowledge%20(schemas).

Designing Curriculum for a Changing World (Corwin Teaching Essentials) (1st ed.). Corwin.

Stern, J. (2017, December 7). Impact the World: Strategies for Transferring Learning. Corwin Connect. https://corwin-connect.com/2017/12/impact-world-strategies-transferring-learning/

McDowell, M. (2020, November 30). 5 Ways to Help Students Transfer Their Learning to New Situations. Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-ways-help-students-transfer-their-learning-new-situations/

HOME CONNECTIONS:

- Communicate with families of your students the learning intentions of the overall unit you are teaching. Give them targeted questions to ask their students that relate to the learning they've engaged in constructing.
- Ask your families if they'd like to share any expertise they have as it relates to the learning intentions of the unit of study. Welcome career or other experience that could help students to make meaning and see relevancy in what is being taught.