

Descriptors of a Learner Centered School

**James Waterson, Editor
St. Lawrence University (ret.)**

[Editor's Note: The following list was created by a team of 15 public school teachers and administrators attending the annual Constructivist Design Conference, held at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY in July 2005. The conference is sponsored by the Learner Centered Resource Collaborative. The product of the week-long project is the following list, which represents the consensus definitions developed by the team facilitated by Prof. James Waterson of St. Lawrence University's Graduate Program in Educational Leadership.]

Descriptors of a Learner Centered School

- 1. In a learner centered school the atmosphere is appealing throughout in that it is a comfortable, colorful, and stimulating learning environment.** It allows for flexibility of grouping for teachers and learners and is rich in resources; student exemplars, which meet and exceed standards, are displayed throughout the school and community.
- 2. In a learner centered school students demonstrate a high level of on-task engagement effectively using resources with multiple opportunities for peer teaching and shared learning.** All members of the learning community demonstrate knowledge of standards for quality, learner-initiated work.
- 3. In a learner centered school teachers and administrators act as members of the learning community and facilitators of learning.** Instructional practices provide options and accommodate a variety of learning styles, modalities, multiple intelligences, and individual aptitudes and interests. Facilitators of learning provide training and guided practice in activities such as cooperative learning, peer review, authentic tasks, hands-on projects and journal writing. Students become independent and life-long learners.

4. **In a learner centered school there are multiple opportunities for interdisciplinary learning where students see direct application of their learning beyond the classroom.** There are standards and multiple opportunities to explore career development and occupational studies. There is integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening, investigation, problem solving, conflict resolution, and hands-on kinesthetic learning.
5. **In a learner centered school there is a strong focus on student achievement.** A high quality of work is expected from all and elicited through the use of rubrics and authentic assessment with clear connections to standards and designed with student input. Parents are aware of rubrics and become assessors along with peers, teachers, students, and other members of the learning community.
6. **In a learner centered school there are multiple opportunities for all members of the learning community to reflect on their processes and products.** This includes linking to prior knowledge, journals, and formative rubrics for revision purposes.
7. **In a learner centered school there is a clearly articulated vision about the core values that underlie the instructional process;** there is a self-renewing organization – a learning community that thrives on an environment of collaboration, teamwork, and reflective dialogue with a strong foundation in educational research.
8. **In a learner centered school technology allows students to do independent research, invent, create, tabulate, and collaborate inside of their school environment and with others outside of the school.** Technology allows educators to efficiently record individual student

results, manage time more efficiently, access research, and collaborate with colleagues.

9. In a learner centered school there is a strong, creative leadership.

The Superintendent, Board of Education, and Principal are committed to the principles of learner-centered education and provide staff development for all members of the learning community which models the learner-centered strategies expected in the classrooms. Leadership is differentiated so that everyone shares and bears the responsibility for student learning and success.