TENETS OF MODERN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

- Learning is dependent on the prior conceptions the learner brings to the experience.
- The learner must construct his or her own meaning.
- Learning is contextual.
- Learning is dependent on the shared understandings learners negotiate with others.
- Effective teaching involves understanding students’ existing cognitive structures and providing appropriate learning activities to assist them.
- Teachers can utilize one or more key strategies to facilitate conceptual change, depending on the congruence of the concepts with student understanding and conceptualization.
- The key elements of conceptual change can be addressed by specific teaching methods.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on “learning how to learn” than on accumulating facts. In terms of content, less is more.
Curricular Models

Learning Through Broad Based Themes

Kaplan (1986) uses broad based themes as a curriculum organizer. A theme can span several disciplines and give rise to the study of many topics. The content of the curriculum, the thinking and research skills used, and the end product of the investigation are taken into consideration in the development of the theme and related lessons. Examples of broad based themes are: change, cycles, structures and systems. Students at any level can take part in lessons developed around any theme. The work will vary in levels of sophistication.

Teachers Sharon Friesen and Pat Clifford used the theme "structures" with a multi-grade primary class in Calgary in 1993/94. (Clifford & Friesen, 1993). Throughout the year, all lessons were woven around this theme. Students were presented with two questions:

What holds things together?

What causes things to fall apart?

Everything the students studied was viewed through the lens of these two interrelated questions. For example, the questions were used to study friendships, families, communities, countries and economies. The same questions were used to examine plants, animals and ecological systems.

Students explored patterns in math and studied structures in literature. As part of a study of robotics, all students had an opportunity to experiment with building structures.

Although the two teachers established intended learning outcomes for the year, they did not decide on the precise content materials they would use. Instead, content emerged from the questions, interests and concerns of their students as they related to the topic of study. These lead to a variety of independent and group investigations. A final, important component of the program was the expectation of students to present the outcomes of their studies to parents and the community.

The design of this program follows a model often recommended for gifted students. Friesen and Clifford found, at the end of three years, that student's with average ability were functioning several years above grade placement. (Clifford & Friesen, 1994. Unpublished raw data.)


Learning Through Cases

In case study teaching students are presented with a realistic scenario that is woven around a dilemma. Students read the case and then work together in study groups to discuss questions about the case. After they have formulated some ideas about the issues.
MENU PLANNER

Use this template to help you plan a menu for your classroom.

Menu:_______________________________________________

Due: All items in the main dish and the specified number of side dishes must be complete by the due date. You may select among the side dishes and you may decide to do some of the dessert items as well.

Main Dish (complete all)

1.
2.
3.
4.

Side Dish (select ____)

1.
2.
3.
4.

Dessert (optional)

1.
2.
3.
ELEMENTS OF ROLE PLAYING

- BRIEFING STUDENTS - explaining the topic and establishing the situation in understandable terms for each student.
- CONDUCTING THE DRAMA - that is, behaving as an actor in the described situation.
- DEBRIEFING - analyzing how the roles were played and identifying what concepts were covered.

GOALS OF SIMULATION

- Develop changes in students' attitudes
- Change specific behaviors
- Prepare participants for assuming new roles in the future
- Help individuals understand their current roles
- Increase students' ability to apply principles
- Reduce complex problems or situations to manageable elements
- Illustrate roles that may affect students' lives but that they may never assume
- Motivate learners
- Develop analytical processes
- Sensitize individuals to other persons' life roles
FLIGHT ITINERARY

Destination: Fantasyland
When Due: 1 week

Main Trip (complete all)
- Select one fairy tale. Read it
  ▶ to yourself
  ▶ to another person
  ________________________________ (name)

- Complete a story map (to show characters, setting, problem, solution).
- Find five new interesting words. Write a sentence for each word.

Side Trips - Learning Centers (Choose one or more)
- Compare this fairy tale to another story you have read. How are they alike? How are they different? Choose your design: trifold, flip book, mini-book.
- Tape center: Record your favorite part of the fairy tale on the recorder.
- Art Center: Illustrate the most important event in your fairy tale.

Rest Stops
- Listening post: Listen to a fairy tale of your choice.
  Title:
  ____________________________________________

  Summary:
  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________
  ____________________________________________

- Library corner: Find another fairy tale to read.
  Title:
  ____________________________________________
MENU - SOCIAL PROBLEMS

MAIN DISH (complete all):
- Summarize two articles (of your choice) on your subject.
- Interview two original sources
  - Develop a survey or questionnaire for the interview
  - Develop a problem-solving matrix
- Design graphics to highlight three main points
- Prepare (type) a 10-page report with your proposed solutions
- Write a letter to a person or agency of your choice presenting your proposal.

SIDE DISH (select two)
- View an interview on television. Observe the techniques used.
  Take notes and use information in your interview.
- Music: Locate the lyrics to a song dealing with social problems.
  Prepare a one-page opinion or reaction paper to the song.
- News Center: Review your newspaper and look for an article that deals with social issues. Add your article to a class mural/bulletin board.

DESSERT (optional)
- Read a novel of your choice. The novel must deal with a real-life social problem.
- Write your own music or lyrics to highlight the social problem you have selected. You can record the music on a class tape or submit the lyrics in writing.
- Prepare a poster to increase public awareness of your social problem.
PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

1. Define the problem in detailed, concrete terms. List all parts of the problem.

2. Brainstorm. Generate as many solutions as possible.

3. Develop criteria statements to use in evaluating solutions. Consider cost, time, safety, health, etc.

4. Analyze each possible solution against the criteria. Give each possible solution an evaluative mark. (Points)

5. Select the best solution based on the criteria and the evaluations.

6. Develop a plan of action to carry out the solution.
20 WAYS TO PRACTICE SPELLING

Directions: On a cover sheet, include:

- List of words for the week
- Number of each activity completed and points earned
- Total points earned

75 Points = A  60 Points = B  45 Points = C

1. _____ Alphabetize the words. (5 points)
2. _____ Write the dictionary respelling of each word. (5 points)
3. _____ Divide each word into syllables. (5 points)
4. _____ Write the words and circle all the vowels. (5 points)
5. _____ Write the words and circle all the consonants. (5 points)
6. _____ Write the words and cross out all the silent letters. (5 points)
7. _____ Write the words neatly in pen. (5 points)
8. _____ Make a set of flashcards for studying your words. (5 points)
9. _____ Write the dictionary definition for each word. (10 points)
10. _____ Write the definition in your own words. (10 points)
11. _____ Write sentences using the words. (10 points)
12. _____ Write a synonym for each word. (10 points)
13. _____ Write an antonym for each word. (10 points)
14. _____ Classify the words according to parts of speech. (15 points)
15. _____ Use the words in similes. (20 points)
16. _____ Make a crossword puzzle on graph paper. (20 points)
17. _____ Write a story using the words. (25 points)
18. _____ Use the words in a poem. (25 points)
19. _____ Write newspaper headlines using the words. (20 points)
20. _____ Write telegrams using your words. (20 points)

Extra: Suggest your own activity and ask for approval.
Consider these questions:

1. What is the most creative thing you have done lately?

2. What led you to be creative?
INTEREST INVENTORY

1. My name is ________________________________.

2. My address is ________________________________.

3. My phone number is ________________________________.

4. I have _____sisters and _____ brothers.

5. I like to read books about ________________________________.

6. The best book I ever read is ________________________________.

7. I would like to know more about ________________________________.

8. I already know a lot about ________________________________.

9. Some interesting places I have visited are ________________________________.

10. Places that I would like to visit are ________________________________.

11. I like to collect ________________________________.

12. My favorite television show is ________________________________.

13. When I have free time, I like to ________________________________.

14. My favorite sport is ________________________________.

15. The person I most admire is ________________________________.

16. When I grow up, I want to be ________________________________.

17. The thing I worry about most is ________________________________.

18. The thing I do best is ________________________________.

19. The area in which I need the most help is ________________________________.

20. The way I like to learn best is ________________________________.