

# Leveraging Student-Centered Learning Approaches

Progressive learning for developing minds

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*We can nurture progressive, student-driven learning across grade levels by recognizing six key ways that student-centered approaches align in early childhood and deeper learning.*

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## Active Exploration & Inquiry

**Early Childhood**  
Hands-on play and learning through exploration of materials, ideas, peers

**Deeper Learning**  
Project-based learning requiring active investigation and application

## Choice & Agency

**Early Childhood**  
Choices in activities and centers that follow interests

**Deeper Learning**  
Autonomy through projects tied to interests and passions

## Individualized Learning

**Early Childhood**  
Adapts to developmental stages and pace

**Deeper Learning**  
Personalized learning plans, differentiated instruction

## Social Emotional Development

**Early Childhood**  
Group activities build skills through peer interactions

**Deeper Learning**  
SEL integrated into curriculum and collaborative projects

## Responsive Teaching

**Early Childhood**  
Scaffolding and tailored interactions

**Deeper Learning**  
Facilitators provide adaptive guidance and feedback

## Family Community Involvement

**Early Childhood**  
Families as partners in learning

**Deeper Learning**  
Community partnerships and service learning

# Conversation Guide

for bridging student-centered learning across grade levels.

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*While the core principles remain the same, consider developmental needs in implementation:*

**Structure and guidance:** Provide more direction and supervised exploration in early childhood. Allow for more independent work in upper elementary.

**Concrete to abstract:** Focus on hands-on learning in early childhood. Introduce more symbolic and abstract concepts in upper grades.

**Teacher's role:** Child-led in early childhood with teacher scaffolding. Ensure academic rigor in upper grades.

**Individualized learning:** Focus on developmental milestones in early childhood, grade-level standards mastery in upper grades.

**Social-emotional skills:** Progress from basic skills like sharing to managing stress and behaviors.

**Community involvement:** Classroom partnerships in early childhood to broader community service-learning opportunities in upper grades.

**Student choice:** Choosing activity centers in early childhood to choosing project topics/inquiries in upper grades.

**Assessment:** Observational notes to documentation of work products and mastery.

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How can we provide developmentally appropriate structure and guidance?

What hands-on, concrete learning experiences are needed?

How can teachers scaffold to ensure students reach the next level?

How can we assess progress developmentally?

What social-emotional skills need further development?

How can community involvement expand appropriately?

What choices and autonomy are suitable at each level?