

Resistance: When Student and Colleagues Object to Learner-Centered Teaching

Why do students resist?

- Learner-centered approaches require more work
- Learner-centered approaches are threatening
- Some students are not ready for some learner-centered approaches

What does student resistance look like?

- It may be passive and nonverbal
- It may be partial compliance
- It may be open resistance

What are the best ways to overcome student resistance?

- Explain the rationale for using learner-centered approaches
- Offer encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Regularly solicit feedback on their learning experiences
- Resist their resistance

The best article on student resistance: Felder, R. M. and Brent, R. (1996). Navigating the bumpy road to student-centered instruction. *College Teaching*, 44 (2), 43-47.

“Professors who move into student-centered instruction gradually rather than trying to do it all at once, who are prepared for initially negative student reactions, and who have the patience and confidence to persevere will reap their rewards in having students who learn more deeply and who have better attitudes toward their subjects and themselves. It may take work to get there, but it is an effort well worth making.” (p. 46)

Why do colleagues resist?

- They think that these methods take too much time and course content won't get covered
- They think these methods pander to students and diminish academic standards
- They worry that giving students control may result in the teacher losing classroom control
- They find these methods threatening

What are the best ways to respond when colleagues resist

- Be able to answer legitimate questions
- Be mindful of politics and don't try to convert the masses
- Use the autonomy of the classroom and document the impact of your approaches
- Find like minded colleagues

This content is discussed more fully in the second edition of Maryellen Weimer's book, *Learner-Centered Teaching* (available at www.josseybass.com). Maryellen's email is grg@psu.edu and she blogs in the Teaching Professor blog at www.facultyfocus.com