

# Student-Centered Learning is the FOCUS!

By Heather L. Johnson and Liz Lawrence

Student-centered learning is the model that invites students to participate, question, and interact with one another and with the teaching staff in meaningful ways. In student-centered learning, children become passionate about learning that is grounded in their own experiences and active, engaging classroom methods lead them to knowledge. To achieve student-centered learning in the classroom, the content (state standards and benchmarks, school curriculum, etc.) and the process of learning (manipulatives, resources, mini-lessons, workshops etc.) must meet the needs of all learners.

Through the FOCUS program, Julie Homuth, Engage Learning Consultant for Santa Rosa Boarding School, provides leadership and support through one-on-one modeling and math coaching. “The first step is to gather local assessment data so we can see what the needs of the student are. I model the entire process, everything from how to give the local assessment, how to score and analyze the data, and how to use the specific assessment results to plan for instruction.” says Julie. Julie then works with teachers to develop lesson plans to meet the needs of the students as identified by the assessment results. Julie uses the time before and after school or during teacher planning time to coach teachers on differentiating the content and the process of instructional activities.

At Santa Rosa Boarding School, Julie uses *The Coaching Model*™ to support teachers as they improve their classroom practices. Engage Learning Consultants use *The Coaching Model*™ as they work side-by-side with the teachers and administrators of FOCUS schools to facilitate the acquisition of new skills.

## *The Coaching Model*™

Coaching is the transfer of skill and thought process so that the student may gain competency and with practice, mastery of a concept or action. Engage Learning employs *The Coaching Model*™ to transfer knowledge and provide direct mentoring to create individual growth, goal-oriented action, and continuous improvement.

The key elements of our model include:

- Chunking the information into manageable pieces
- Connecting to prior knowledge and skills of the participants
- Eliciting thinking through questioning and reflection

At every FOCUS school, Engage Learning Consultants use *The Coaching Model*™ with the teachers and administrators to:

- Provide n-class support for teachers by modeling research based instructional strategies.
- Support teachers in use of on-going data collection and analysis.
- Develop specific action plans in response to students' instructional needs.
- Use scientifically based resources to guide instruction.
- Guide teachers in use of assessments to differentiate instruction.

In addition to the one-on-one coaching, Engage Learning consultants also provide teachers with a first-hand experience of student-centered learning in action. During the school day, Julie will model student-centered differentiated mini-lessons, workshops and guided instruction with the students for the teachers to observe. Julie comments that “the key to the big AHA for many teachers is when the assessment data for their own students is used to create a mini-lesson or workshop that they observe really working in their class.” She goes on to add, “many teachers must see student-centered learning in action before they really understand the process or believe it will happen with their own students.” Santa Rosa Boarding School Principal Keith Seaman commented that the individual coaching and modeling is “very supportive [and] encouraging” to his teachers.

As Engage Learning consultants coach and model, they are supporting teachers and administrators as they implement the student-centered model in their own classrooms. Through its student-centered educational approach, Engage Learning will achieve the FOCUS project goals of providing administrative and educational leadership and instructional support to schools in order to promote a quality education system and increase student achievement.

Engage Learning consultants are currently providing staff development and coaching for Mathematics Assessment and Instruction for:

- Chi Chil'tah Community School (Vanderwagon, NM)
- Santa Rosa Boarding School (Sells, AZ)
- Santa Rosa Ranch School (Sells, AZ)
- San Simon School (Sells, AZ)

In addition to providing staff development and coaching for Mathematics Assessment and Instruction, Engage Learning is also providing staff development and coaching for Reading Assessment and Instruction at:

- Lake Valley Navajo School
- Ojo Encino Day School
- Tohaali' Community School
- Tohono O'odham High School
- San Felipe Pueblo Elementary School
- San Ildelfonso Pueblo Elementary School