

# Child-centered teaching practices

In a nutshell

- Good teaching practices support a child's learning and motivation to study in your classroom.
- If the child has learning difficulties or struggles to learn to read, it is even more important that the teacher-child relationship is positive and the teacher supports the child's learning by using carefully planned strategies and interventions.
- In child-centred teaching, the teacher assists and facilitates the child's learning by actively providing support and guidance, and by building opportunities to learn and practice new skills together with other children.
- A child-centred teacher is sensitive to each child's needs for support in learning and interests.
- Teacher-directed teaching practices are rooted in the premise that basic academic skills need to be mastered before more advanced learning can occur.
- Teacher-directed teaching practices are seen to be effective in children's learning of basic academic skills and when children have learning difficulties, struggle with learning tasks, or display task-avoiding behaviour.

## Good teaching practices

Good teaching practices support a child's learning and

motivation to study in your classroom. Good teaching is based on the sociocultural approach to learning<sup>1</sup>Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press., in which learning is seen to happen through social interaction between the teacher and the child, as well as among the children. Good teaching practices provide a framework to create a safe learning environment that promotes opportunities for each child to participate, learn, and achieve the most from a classroom experience and teaching. If the child has learning difficulties or struggles to learn to read, it is even more important that the teacher-child relationship is positive and the teacher supports the child's learning by using carefully planned strategies and interventions.

### ***Child-centred teaching practices***

Child-centred teaching practices are grounded on principles suitable to each child's developmental level. Teaching practices should be developmentally appropriate. Child-centred teaching is based on the socio-constructivist theory, where children are seen as active constructors of knowledge. In child-centred teaching, the teacher assists and facilitates the child's learning by actively providing support and guidance, challenging the zone of proximal development (a learning area that emerges when a child is assisted by a teacher or more skilled child) by building opportunities to learn and practise new skills together with other children. A child-centred teacher is sensitive to each child's needs for support in learning and interests; moreover, they actively support children's learning efforts, social skills, sense of belonging, and sense of mastery. Child-centred teaching practices have been found to benefit children's academic and social skills development and learning motivation. Child-centred teaching which takes place in the zone of proximal development has been found to support, for example, children's

interaction with the teacher and other children, as well as their willingness to join a group<sup>2</sup>Rasku-Puttonen, H., Lerkkanen, M.-K., Poikkeus, A.-M. & Siekkinen, M. (2012). Dialogical patterns of interaction in preschool classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 138–149., self-directedness<sup>3</sup>Salonen, P., Vauras, M. & Efklides, A. (2005). Social interaction – What can it tell us about metacognition and co-regulation in learning? *European Psychologist*, 10, 199–208., academic skills)<sup>4</sup>Lerkkanen, M.-K., Kiuru, N., Pakarinen, E., Poikkeus, A.-M., Rasku-Puttonen, H., Siekkinen, M. & Nurmi, J.-E. (2016). Child-centered versus teacher-directed teaching practices: Associations with the development of academic skills in the first grade at school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 36, 145–156., and interest in reading and mathematics<sup>5</sup>Lerkkanen, M.-K., Kiuru, N., Pakarinen, E., Viljaranta, J., Poikkeus, A.-M., Rasku-Puttonen, H., Siekkinen, M. & Nurmi, J.-E. (2012). The role of teaching practices in the development of children's interest in reading and mathematics in kindergarten. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 37, 266–279..

### ***Teacher-directed teaching practices***

Teacher-directed teaching practices are rooted in the premise that basic academic skills need to be mastered before more advanced learning can occur. Such practices are based on the behaviourist notion that the teacher has a strong directing role, and they stress children's repeated practice. In this didactically-oriented approach, teachers emphasize the provision of information and use structured, drill-and-practice group lessons that are fast-paced, teach discrete skills in small steps, and include praise when predetermined goals are reached. In this approach, interaction is mainly one-way, from teacher to learners, and children's ideas or interests, as well as support for the development of social skills, receive little attention. Furthermore, peer

interaction in learning situations is not applied. However, teacher-directed teaching practices are seen to be effective in children's learning of the basic academic skills and when children have learning difficulties, struggle with learning tasks, or display task-avoiding behaviour<sup>6</sup>Kikas, E., Peets, K. & Hodges, E. V. E. (2014). Collective child characteristics alter the effects of teaching practices on academic outcomes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 35, 273–283.. Then, the child benefits from a clear teaching structure and intensive, direct, strong support for learning from the teacher.

## References

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## Research briefs

[First Grade Classroom-Level Adversity: Associations with Teaching Practices, Academic Skills, and Executive Functioning](#)

[The Role of Teaching Practices in the Development of Children's Interest in Reading and Mathematics in Kindergarten](#)

[Child-centred versus teacher-directed teaching practices: Associations with the development of academic skills in the first grade at school](#)

[Associations Between Reading Skills, Interest in Reading, and Teaching Practices in First Grade](#)

[Effects of Teacher's Individualized Support on Children's Reading Skills and Interest in Classrooms with Different Teaching Styles](#)

[Investigating Bidirectional Links Between the Quality of Teacher-Child Relationships and Children's Interest and Pre-Academic Skills in Literacy and Math](#)

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