



Wendell Smith Elementary School

DAILY SHARING TO INFORM LEARNING



CORE COMPONENT

Learner Focused: Understand each individual learner's needs, strengths, interests and approaches to learning

Learner Focused at Wendell Smith Elementary School

Wendell Smith Elementary has been implementing Learner Focused instruction to personalize learning for students. Learner Focused instruction emphasizes a child's strengths, needs, and interests to effectively tailor learning experiences for each student.

Our Sources



Ms. Cynthia Treadwell - Assistant Principal

"When we started designing our plan for personalized learning, we started with the why. We really found that it was a motivation problem...students sometimes just don't have the will to learn... But with personalized learning, students...have a lot of input, a lot of buy-in, and you just see a tremendous difference in their affect regarding school because they are part of the school and the learning process, versus it just happening to them."



Ms. Anglense Jones - 4th & 5th Grade Teacher

"I wanted my students to become self motivated and be responsible for their own learning. The impact of personalized learning for me is knowing who my students are...diving in deep, having that one-on-one personal conversation with them. It's not really about the teacher, it's about those learners in the classroom. I see the success of my children and I realize that personalized learning works."

Community Share to Inform Learning

At Wendell Smith, teachers and administrators recognized that students often came to school lacking the motivation to learn, and the traditional classroom environment was not helping students build intrinsic motivation. When designing a personalized learning plan, the staff addressed this issue of motivation by focusing on the needs and interests of each student, from the student lens, to build their own empathy for the student. This allowed them to design with the student needs and interests in mind.

For Ms. Jones, establishing a warm, loving classroom culture of respect for each other and for learning was critical to building motivation. A key piece of this culture is understanding who her students are "for that day." Doing this every day is critical to informing what they need in order to learn effectively. Recognizing that her students bring positive and negative experiences from their home environment to school with them, she has them write down how they're feeling on an index card each morning and share those reflections with the class. Students support each other's achievements and setbacks, and Ms. Jones listens closely to determine which students may need extra attention from her on any given day.

Ms. Jones believes this change in practice has positively impacted the community of learners in her classroom. While working towards their goals, Ms. Jones encourages students to select the work that best fits how they're feeling, and notes that students now ask to share what they've accomplished with the class at the end of the day. Addressing how her students feel daily has allowed Ms. Jones to engage more productively with her students, helped them engage more supportively with each other, and enabled them to more effectively engage with their own learning.

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ABOUT

Wendell Smith Elementary School

Chicago Public Schools Neighborhood School
Attendance based on student living in boundary

354
Total K-8 Students

99%
African American

0%
Asian

0.3%
Hispanic

0%
White

0.3%
Other

97%
Low Income

13%
Diverse Learners

0.3%
English Learners

34%
Mobility
(Reflects any enrollment change between the first school day in October and the last day of the school year.)

HOW IT WORKS *in Ms. Jones' Class...*



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STEP ONE: Ask students how they feel and what they want to achieve

- **Regularly solicit and compile information regarding learners' interests, strengths and needs:** Each morning, Ms. Jones asks students to write on an index card how they are feeling and their goal for that day. Her purpose is to understand how her students' lives outside school may affect their motivation or approach to learning that day.
 - 🗣️ Let students experience their feelings, and help them articulate those feelings. Use tools that offer adjectives to help students identify their mood, create your own mood wall, or ask students to write about how they



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STEP TWO: Offer students the opportunity to share how they're feeling with the classroom community

- **Review available information:** Ms. Jones knows that her students' feelings impact their learning. Every day she provides the opportunity for them to share and support each other. Ms. Jones takes notes and uses those notes to support student learning and build her classroom community.
 - 🗣️ Be responsive and supportive. Look for students who express feelings that result from something at home and help them develop strategies to work through their feelings. Look for opportunities to support students in exploring curiosities and feelings of excitement.



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STEP THREE: Include flexibility to conference with students in response to their feelings or need for extra attention from the teacher

- **Offer flexible modalities, groupings and times/places for learning:** Ms. Jones maintains flexibility in her own schedule, recognizing that the number of students she needs to conference with may fluctuate each day. By listening closely to what her students share from their index cards, she identifies the students she feels will benefit from additional time with her.
 - 🗣️ Students entering the classroom with negative feelings need time to work through their emotions before diving into learning for the day. Students entering the classroom with excitement and motivation need to jump right into learning. Being responsive to student feelings means acknowledging their current emotional state and helping them work through or use those feelings to support their learning.



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STEP FOUR: Use student feelings to inform learning plans and meet learning expectations for the day

- **Partner with learners to explore: ways to modify or vary content, the where/when of learning, and other aspects of their learning experiences to align with their interests, strengths and needs:** Ms. Jones uses the students' feelings and interests to inform how she helps them accomplish their learning that day. She may adjust the amount of support she provides students, how she facilitates student collaboration, or how much time students work independently or collaboratively. She helps students adjust learning plans to respond to their needs while still meeting the learning goals for the day.
 - 🗣️ Feelings and emotions are probed each day to provide insight into students' mindset and motivation for that day. Use this opportunity to help students manage their feelings and channel their energy into productive, targeted learning outcomes appropriate for that day. Can they use their feelings to meet a writing standard? Can they share their curiosity and excitement to facilitate a group project?



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STEP FIVE: Provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their day

- **Partner with learners to continuously align learning opportunities with learners' interests, strengths and needs:** At the end of every day, Ms. Jones provides the opportunity for students to reflect on their day. Students consider how they felt at the beginning of the day, how those feelings changed, and which of their own learning goals they met that day. Ms. Jones uses those reflections to coach students during their conferences.
 - 🗣️ Daily reflection is an important component in helping students build metacognitive skills. It offers students the opportunity to consider how their actions affected their learning outcomes or changed their feelings. Reflection can provide closure on the day, and also tee up excitement for the next day.

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