

PROJECT CONSTRUCT NATIONAL CENTER



Project Construct National Center
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Project Construct —

an approach to **teaching**
based on what we know
about **learning**...

Teaching. Designed for preschool, primary, and elementary students, Project Construct is a rigorous, contextualized, learner-centered approach to teaching that encourages students to explore questions, test ideas, investigate possibilities, conduct experiments, invent strategies and solutions, and apply what they learn to new situations.



Learning.

Project Construct is derived from the belief that learning is a lifelong process in which learners construct knowledge through interactions with their physical and social environments. Through “hands-on, minds-on” learning experiences, students in Project Construct classrooms attain deep understandings in the core content areas, while they also learn to work collaboratively with adults and peers in vibrant learning communities.

Project Construct

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MoDESE) initiated Project Construct in 1986 in response to a widespread call for significant reform in early childhood education. At its inception, Project Construct was intended to offer Missouri's early childhood educators a structure for implementing theory- and research-based practice. Over time, the project enjoyed overwhelming success. As a result, the Project Construct National Center was established in 1992 to promote and support constructivist education in a more comprehensive way for preschool through the elementary grades, both inside and outside Missouri. Since then, with the continued sponsorship of MoDESE, the National Center has facilitated the professional growth of thousands of educators.

Project Construct Approach

The Project Construct approach to teaching and learning is built on the idea that the teacher is a professional whose day-to-day decisions in the classroom influence the student's development. Within a framework for curriculum and assessment, the teacher has considerable autonomy in choosing or designing experiences that will actively involve students and best promote learning.

Educators implementing Project Construct share the following beliefs about learning:

- Learning is a constructive, developmental process. Our minds naturally classify, order, organize, interpret, represent, and create as we attempt to make sense of our environment and our lives.
- Learning is fostered through communication, collaboration, and reflection. The classroom is a mini-society, a diverse community of learners engaged in constructive activity, accountable talk, and reflection.
- Academic disciplines and developmental domains are interactive and interrelated, each influencing the other. Within this context, educators must

use their knowledge of how children develop in order to facilitate each student's conceptual and sociomoral growth.

The Project Construct approach is based on goals for students that reflect current knowledge about how children learn, state and national standards, and the values of an interdependent, democratic society. The project design provides a variety of resources, including curriculum materials and assessment instruments, as well as support pieces for parents and administrators.

Accountability

Project Construct provides a means for educators to be accountable for meeting learning objectives and to translate what

they know about how children learn into appropriate teaching practices.

Teachers using Project Construct make their classrooms powerful learning

environments, where each child is valued and respected, both as a learner and as an individual. The foundations for academic learning in Project Construct classrooms are embedded in the social and physical environments and integrated into contexts that are meaningful to children and appropriate to their stages of development.

Institutes

The Project Construct National Center offers early childhood and elementary educators the opportunity to be part of an ongoing, comprehensive professional-development program. The program begins with attendance at an introductory institute—offered in conjunction with academic credit—that provides training in theory-based practice and implementation of Project Construct.

Institutes are staffed by practicing educators, who are supported and informed by university researchers, teacher educators, and nationally recognized educational consultants and policy makers. These institute facilitators, who also receive ongoing professional-development in both educational practice and working with adult learners, are the 'front line' for Project Construct. They represent a truly teacher-to-teacher, collaborative model for professional growth and lifelong learning.

Since we believe that ongoing support and assistance is crucial for sustaining teachers' growth and change, the National Center is committed to providing continuing support to all institute participants as well. Our comprehensive follow-up support program provides a variety of additional resources, coaching, mentoring, and networking opportunities for educators implementing Project Construct.

Site-Based Professional-Development Services

Research indicates that site-based, job-embedded professional development is one of the most effective ways to promote best practices, which in turn leads to improved student outcomes. The National Center offers a variety of site-based services that can be tailored to meet specific program needs. These services include in-service workshops; in-class coaching, modeling, and mentoring; customized institutes; reading and discussion groups; and ongoing staff development during the school year.

Resources for Teacher Educators and Administrators

In addition to supporting in-service educators, the National Center also offers a variety of resources for pre-service teachers or educators interested in implementing this approach. These include publications, videos and DVDs, as well as downloadable documents that are available at no charge on our Web site.

For more information, including dates and locations of upcoming professional-development opportunities, contact us at

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Academic Collaborations:

The Project Construct initiative continues to evolve in order to reflect the most current scientific research on children's learning and development and best practices for adult learners. We partner with teacher-educators at universities, colleges, and community colleges to stay at the forefront of research-based innovations in early childhood education, as well as to provide academic credit for our institutes.