Tips and Research Resources on Best Practice Teaching

BEST PRATICES for Teaching and Learning

Student-Centered: based on student needs and interests
Experiential: active, hands-on, concrete to abstract
Whole-Part-Whole: big ideas in meaningful contexts
Authentic: real, rich, complex ideas and applications
Expressive: engage ideas, construct meaning using all
forms of expression--reading, writing, arts, movement, technology
Reflective: balancing experience and reflection, debriefing, making meaning of the experience
Social/Collaborative: learning is socially constructed and interrelated
Developmental: activities fit the definable stages of student's development
Constructivist/Cognitive : students make meaning and develop
understanding of ideas using inquiry and thinking
Challenging: genuine challenges, choices and students taking responsibility

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING READING

Increase
Reading aloud to students
Time for independent reading
Children's choice of their own reading materials
Exposing children to a wide and rich range of literature
Teacher modeling and discussing his/her own reading processes
Primary instructional emphasis on comprehension
Teaching reading as a process: Use strategies that activate prior knowledge, Help students make and test predictions, Structure help during reading, Provide after-reading applications
Social, collaborative activities with much discussion and interaction
Grouping by interests or book choices
Silent reading followed by discussion
Teaching skills in the context of whole and meaningful literature
Writing before and after reading
Encouraging invented spelling in children's early writings
Use of reading in content fields (e.g., historical novels in social studies)
Evaluation that focuses on holistic, higher-order thinking processes
Measuring success of reading program by students' reading habits, attitudes, and comprehension

Decrease
Exclusive emphasis on whole-class or reading-group activities
Teacher selection of all reading materials for individuals and groups
Relying on selections in basal reader
Teacher keeping his/her own reading tastes and habits private
Primary instructional emphasis on reading sub skills such as phonics, word analysis, syllabication
Teaching reading as a single, one-step act
Solitary seatwork
Grouping by reading level
Teaching isolated skills in phonics workbooks or drills
Punishing reconvention spelling in students' early writings
Segregation of reading to reading time
Evaluation focus on individual, low-level subskills
Measuring the success of the reading program only by test scores
Round-robin oral reading
little or no chance to write

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING MATHEMATICS
Best Practice in Mathematics

Increase

TEACHING PRACTICES
Use of manipulative materials
Cooperative group work
Discussion of mathematics
Questioning and making conjectures
Justification of thing
Writing about mathematics

Problem-solving approach to instruction
Content integration
Use of calculators and computers
Being a facilitator of learning
Assessing learning as an integral part of instruction

MATHEMATICS AS PROBLEM SOLVING
Word problems with a variety of structures and solution paths
Everyday problems and applications
Problem-solving strategies
Open-ended problems and extended problem-solving projects
Investigating and formulating questions from problem situations

MATHEMATICS AS COMMUNICATION
Discussing mathematics
Reading mathematic
Writing mathematics
Listening to mathematical ideas

MATHEMATICS AS REASONING
Drawing logical conclusions
Justifying answers and solution processes
Reasoning inductively and deductively

Decrease

TEACHING PRACTICES
Rote practice
Rote memorization of rules and formulas
Single answers and single methods to find answers
Use of drill worksheets
Repetitive written practice
Teaching by telling
Teaching computation out of context
Stressing memorization
Testing for grades only
Being the dispenser of knowledge

MATHEMATICS AS PROBLEM SOLVING
Use of cue words to determine operation to be used
Practicing routine, one-step problems
Practicing problems categorized by types

MATHEMATICS AS COMMUNICATION
Doing fill-in-the-blank worksheets
Answering questions that need only yes or no responses
Answering questions that need only numerical responses

MATHEMATICS AS REASONING
Relying on authorities (teacher, answer key)

BEST PRACTICE IN TEACHING ART
Best Practice in Visual Art, Music, Dance, and Theater

Increase
Art making; more doing of art, music, dance, drama
Student originality, choice, and responsibility in art making
Stress on the process of creation, the steps and stages of careful craftsmanship
Art as an element of talent development for all students

Exploration of the whole array of art forms, from Western and non-Western sources, different time periods,

cultures, and ethnic groups
Support for every student's quest to find and develop personal media, style, and tastes
Time for art in the school day and curriculum
Integration of arts across the curriculum
Using art as a tool of doing, learning, and thinking
Reasonable class loads and work assignments for arts-specialist teachers
Artists in schools, both as performers and as partners in interdisciplinary work
Long-term partnerships with artists and arts organizations
Teacher, principal, and parent involvement in the arts

Decrease
Studying other people's artworks
Art projects that require students to create identical products or closely mimic a model
Concern with final products and displays that smothers learning about process
Art as an arena for competition, screening, awards, and prizes for a few
Exclusive focus on Western, high-culture, elite art forms disconnected from a wide range of art making
Cursory dabbling in many art forms, without supporting a drive toward mastery in one
Once-a-week art classes that lack intensity
Restricting study to separate arts discipline instruction
Art as body of content to be memorized
Overloading arts specialists with excessive class loads
Arts experiences provided only by school arts specialist
One-shot, disconnected appearances by artists
Art-phobic, noninvolved school staff members running arts programs for students

METHODS THAT MATTER

Within a climate of choice, responsibility, expression and community, these methods make a difference in student learning:

1. Integrative Units
Curriculum should come out of problems, issues and concerns posed by life, with the disciplines being called upon to support student investigation and study; need blocks of concentrated time

2. Small Group Learning
Opportunities for students and teachers to coach and learn from each other; diversity is an advantage not a liability; can use inquiry and thinking skills; must establish norms; learning by doing
Buddy and Partner Activities--reading, editing, labs
Dialogue Journaling
Literature Circles
Group Investigations
Cooperative Learning Structures

3. Representing-to-Learn
Using writing, technology, visual and performing arts to demonstrate learning

4. Classroom Workshop
Individuals or small groups choose topics for investigation/study, they inquire, research during 'workshop' time; due dates and portfolio work samples, showcase finished products/services
10 mins. Mini-Lesson and Status of Class Conference
30 mins. Work/Conference Time
10 mins. Sharing and De-briefing

5. Authentic Experiences/Experiential Learning
Self discovery, real-life experiences, coming together of cognitive and affective, appeals to learner curiosity; engaged outside the classroom or bringing 'outside' into the classroom/school

6. Reflective Assessment
Becomes an integral part of and guides instruction; student self-assessment, using

a variety of strategies, such as portfolios, conferences, anecdotal records, checklists, performance assessments and classroom tests
Cooperative Learning Rubric

http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr287.shtml

Doing What Matters Most
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future,
PO Box 5239, Woodbridge, VA. 22194-5239, 1999.

The single largest factor affecting academic growth of student population is differences in
effectiveness of individual classroom teachers. Lower achieving students are the first to benefit
as teacher effectiveness improves. -Chris Pipho, Phi Delta Kappan

Texas study finds that teacher's expertise accounts for 40% of the variance in student's reading and mathematics achievement grades 1-11, more than any other factor--more than socioeconomic status or student ethnic group.

> -*Results*, NSDC, April 98

To make a difference in student learning, professional development must:

help teachers understand the content they are teaching, the content standards and the assessments for those standards;

be linked to work students are expected to do;

be continuous.

"Professional development that is fragmented, that is not focused on students and does not afford teachers consequential opportunities to learn cannot be expected to be a constructive agent of state or local policy.

Teachers need to use assessments as a way to review their classroom practices. Teachers need to collaboratively study curriculum materials, develop and trial lessons, and discuss results with colleagues. The most effective teachers have:

Deep knowledge of content standards;

Repertoire of instructional skills;

Knowledge regarding students; and

Attitudes that support high levels of learning.

David Cohen and Heather Hill, Univ. of Michigan
Research conducted in California, Math Program
Consortium for Policy Research in Education, #RE-23

School districts spend less than one half of 1% of their budgets on professional development for teachers, as compared with nearly 10% of revenues spent on employee education by corporations.

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MAKING THE TRANSITION

Helping Teachers

Create regular time to talk and work together

Support collaboration and open discussion of issues

Strong leadership from top, while emphasizing teacher decision- making and initiative

Provide professional development that strengthens school community and educator professionalism

Provide PD that is experiential, so educators see and feel what is possible in the classroom

Provide time for reflection, analysis and learning from their implementation and experience
Time to Explore and Plan

Create time and find finances to support it

Take time for long view (study groups, needs assessments, providing in-depth training, in classroom implementation assistance, revising structures to support changes)

Be patient
Collaboration and Peer Leadership.

Be sensitive to organizational dynamics and details (time, pairings, structures, accountability, and for may informal roles)

Allow for differences and build mutual respect
Administrative Support

Nurture positive school culture and climate

Be a guide and model

Provide incentives

Look for best in others
Concrete Experience of New

Visit others in school and other schools

Provide classroom consultation and assistance
Adapted from Best Practices in Teaching and Learning in America 's Schools, Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, Heinemann Press, 1998; shared by InnerActions in Education, F: (517) 362-2541; email: carolecoopper@vovager.net

THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR GOVERNING STUDENT LEARNING...

It is **PRACTICES**, not **PROGRAMS** that govern student learning. We keep talking about programs, always skirting the real issue that governs student learning - how a teacher manages a classroom.

It does no good to add new recipes to a poorly managed restaurant.

It does no good to add new plays to a poorly managed team.

It does no good to add new songs to a poorly managed choir.

And it does no good to add new programs or new practices to a poorly managed classroom.

We are in education for one reason only - student learning. An article in the December/January, 1994 issue of Educational Leadership, entitled "What Helps Students Learn?" reviewed 50 years of research on student learning, encompassing 11,000 statistical findings. The authors discovered 28 factors and these were rank ordered. The Number 1 factor governing student learning is Classroom Management.

It is not block scheduling, not self-esteem, not whole language, not computers, not...(all good programs); it is Classroom Management.

How a teacher manages, not disciplines, a classroom is the single most important factor governing student learning.

A principal is Washington said,

> "When I interiew new teachers, I always ask them to tell me how they manage their classrooms. Ninety-nine percent talk about discipline. Some even mention very popular discipline programs. One percent talks about procedures and routines. That's the one I hire!"

Those who dare to teach must never cease to learn

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