Simply, the Best: Best Practices

Myranda Robinson

University of Mary

As teachers, or humans in general, we are constantly looking and striving for the best. The best routes to take to work to avoid traffic, the best lunch spot that is convenient and decently priced, the best way to talk to someone we may be interested in or have a conflict with or simply pushing ourselves to see the best in a person or difficult situation. Whatever subject area it is tied to, we still look for the best because it is the most honest and efficient way in getting something done. This is true in the classroom. We want our students to be efficient and challenged in their studies as much as we are providing it for them. This is where this idea of “best practice” is derived from. This is the concept that demonstrates to teachers what works best in the classroom to educate students, to the best of our abilities, and with the resources and tools we are given.

Best practice strategies range from across the board highlighting and pinpointing effective ways of teaching material in different learning levels. There are sectioned into specific categories, such as reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and technology, for teachers to better investigate and take what they need from the specific subject. For secondary educators this is an easy way for them to look up their specific area of study in an efficient manner. For early childhood and elementary educators it is made easy by that manner as well; however they have to go through each category seeing that they are obligated to teach all areas of study to their chosen grade level (Santrock, 2011).

I am an early childhood, elementary and special education triple major. From this I hope to one day have my own preschool or kindergarten classroom. With that said, I would research my best practices in all given six areas of study seeing that I am required to teach all to the best of my abilities to ensure my students are well educated. First looking at the subject area of reading, from birth to the first grade, students have developed the organization and pattern of reading from left to right. They have identified letters and linked them to words that incorporate the same sound. They also by this time have been able to write their name and identify “site words”, words that have been reviewed and seen enough that when made available the students know it off the top of their heads. From here teachers take advances into furthering the students ability to read well and comprehend what they are reading. Approaches or practices that have showed the most improvement and best results have been the phonics approach and the whole-language approach. The phonics approach emphasizes that when teaching students how to read phonics it has a basic rule of translating letters into sounds by using simplified and basic material. Whole-language approach demonstrates that a student’s reading instruction should be paralleled with their natural language learning and that reading should hold meaning and value. From both of these learning strategies the author states that the phonics approach is the more idealistic approach when teaching the earlier grade levels to later ensure the development of decoding and comprehension strategies (Santrock, 2011).

Linked closely with reading is the subject area of writing. It is from those random scribbled pages that fine motor skills are being developed and foster into those early learned letter formations that are then pieced together to form whole words and then gradually sentences. With this said the area in which I intend to teach will be able to write their name and copy and reiterate simple words down by the end of the year. This is the foundation of their future writing skills. It is from these building blocks that they will expand and begin a cognitive approach of planning, problem solving, and revising. From here they will be able to socially expand into meaningful lyric filled writing, peer collaboration and high intellectual context of writing (Santrock, 2011).

Next, we shift to the logical and systematic area of teaching, mathematics. Through the early years of preschool and kindergarten the emphasis on mathematic curriculum is more so the development of seeing and reciting the numbers in order, as well as being able to write them done. From this comes the branching of more skills, such as, addition and subtraction, multiplication and division. Once these are learned and remembered after years of practice comes higher levels of geometry and calculus, in the secondary years (Santrock, 2011).

Closely related to mathematics is science. In the earlier years there is less of an emphasis on units that need to be covered because they go together cohesively, but more so what is practical. A lot of the science taught goes hand in hand with what children experience around them daily. In researching their surroundings they have to be observant, collect material or data, organize, and analyze what is given to them. This is where logical and systematical thinking begins in their development. Teachers find that by achieving this set goal it is essential to teach science in a guided discovery setting. This is how the students build their own scientific knowledge in their schema and understand and later apply it to the outside world (Santrock, 2011).

Social studies is an area of study that goes along with having an awareness of what is beyond what they can physically see. This is a hard concept however to teach to the younger years because for them what they see is essentially all they know to exist, in a physical sense. However, we do want to expose them to the world in a broad manner. Teachers overlap other areas of studies to expose the world, historical events, and current events that are applicable and relatable to what the students’ given knowledge is. It is important to expose young students to the idea that the world is a big place. They can then build from this as they move up in grade levels to develop more understanding of different cultures and world events (Santrock, 2011).

Last, the learning subject of technology, which in fact plays a role in every learning area in today’s society. Technology has become a crucial learning tool as the classroom and world demand for it. Research tools, such as the internet is of help to students and teachers for more efficient learning tactics. Aside from thinking technology based and only using the internet for research, it goes farther than that, especially for young students. The earlier levels, before they begin learning how to type, use the computer for fun based learning in all subject areas. It cultivates and stimulates material that they have been learning in class in a whole different way to better ensure the information will stick and be applied to the real world (Santrock, 2011).

This is essentially what best practices are. They are the way in which curriculum is taught to better make connections to the real world. They do this by opening the door to having an understanding on the development of thinking and problem solving, as an individual and in collaboration within groups. This is how relationships and the important tool of teamwork is fostered and used repeatedly throughout the student’s educational career. This all falls under the responsibilities that a teacher has for his/her early learners. The four best practices that a teacher must obtain while meeting the requirements of the grade level are to teach a balanced curriculum, teach an integrated curriculum, dividing instruction to meet specific needs to students, and provide active leaning activities to further engage student’s learning (Best Practices: A Resource for Teachers).

Overall, these are what we innately strive for daily. As it was stated above, we as human are continually searching for the best. We as teachers are continually researching and seeking out the best ways to relay information or define more specifically so that our students retain and fully understand the information. We simply just want the best.

References

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