BEST PRACTICE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS[*]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING READING

INCREASE	DECREASE
Reading aloud to students	
Time for independent reading	Exclusive emphasis on whole-class or reading-group activities
Student's choice of their own reading materials	Teacher selection of all reading materials for individuals and groups
Exposing students to a wide and rich range of literature	Relying on selection in basal reader
Teacher modeling and discussing his/her own reading processes	Teacher keeping his/her own reading tastes and habits private
Primary instructional emphasis on comprehension	Primary instructional emphasis on reading subskills such as phonics, word analysis, syllabication
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	Teaching reading as a single, one-step act
Social, collaborative activities with much discussion and interaction	Solitary seatwork
Grouping by interests or book choices	Grouping by reading level
Silent reading followed by discussion	Round-robin oral reading
Teaching skills in the context of whole and meaningful literature	Teaching isolated skills in phonics workbooks or drills
Writing before and after reading	Little or no chance to write
Encouraging invented spelling in student's early writings	Punishing preconventional spelling in students' early writings
Use of reading in the content fields (e.g. historical novels in social studies)	Segregation of reading to reading time
Evaluation that focuses on holistic, higher-order thinking processes	Evaluation focus on individual, low-level subskills
Measuring success of reading program by students' reading habits, attitudes, and comprehension	Measuring the success of the reading program only by test scores

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[*] Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, Arthur Hyde *Best Practice* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998).

BEST PRACTICE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS[*]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING WRITING

INCREASE	DECREASE

- Student ownership and responsibility by:
  - Helping students choose their own topics and goals for improvement
  - Using brief teacher-student conferences
  - Teaching students to review their own progress

- Class time spent on writing whole, original pieces through:
  - Establishing real purposes for writing and students' involvement in the task
  - Instruction in and support for all stages of writing process
  - Prewriting, drafting, revising, editing

- Teacher modeling writing – drafting, revising, sharing – as a fellow author and as demonstration of processes

- Learning of grammar and mechanics in context, at the editing stage, and as items are needed

- Writing for real audiences, publishing for the class and for wider communities

- Making the classroom a supportive setting for shared learning, using:
  - Active exchange and valuing of students' ideas
  - Collaborative small-group work
  - Conferences and peer critiquing that give responsibility for improvement to students

- Writing across the curriculum as a tool for learning

- Constructive and efficient evaluation that involves:
  - Brief informal responses as students work
  - Thorough grading of just a few of student-selected, polished pieces
  - Focus on a few errors at a time
  - Cumulative view of growth and self-evaluation
  - Encouragement of risk taking and honest expression

- Teacher control of decision-making by:
  - Teacher deciding on all writing topics
  - Suggestions for improvement dictated by teacher
  - Learning objectives determined by teacher alone
  - Instruction given as whole-class activity

- Time spent on isolated drills on "subskills" of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, paragraphing, penmanship, etc.
- Writing assignments given briefly, with no context or purpose, completed in one step

- Teacher talks about writing but never writes or shares own work

- Isolated grammar lessons, given in order determined by textbook, before writing is begun

- Assignment read only by teacher

- Devaluation of students' ideas through:
  - Students viewed as lacking knowledge and language abilities
  - Sense of class as competing individuals
  - Work with fellow students viewed as cheating, disruptive

- Writing taught only during "language arts" period – i.e. infrequently
- Evaluation as negative burden for teacher and student by:
  - Marking all papers heavily for all errors, making teacher a bottleneck
  - Teacher editing paper, and only after completed, rather than student making improvements
  - Grading seen as punitive, focused on errors, not growth

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BEST PRACTICE IN SCIENCE[*]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING SCIENCE

INCREASE	DECREASE
- Hands-on activities that include: - Students identifying their own real questions about natural phenomena - Observation activity, often designed by students, aimed at real discovery, employing a wide range of process skills - Students hypothesizing to explain data - Information provided to explain data only after students have engaged in investigation process - Students' reflection to realize concepts and processes learned - Application, either to social issues or further scientific questions	- Instruction based mainly on lecture and information giving - Dependence on textbooks and lockstep patterns of instruction - Cookbook labs in which students follow steps without a purpose or question of their own - Questions, concepts, and answers provided only by the teacher - Students treated as if they have no prior knowledge or investigative abilities
Focus on underlying concepts about how natural phenomena are explained	Memorizing detailed vocabulary, definitions, and explanations without thorough connection to broader ideas
- Questioning, thinking, and problem solving, especially: - Being skeptical, willing to question common beliefs - Accepting ambiguity when data aren't decisive - Willing to modify explanations, open to changing one's opinion - Using logic, planning inquiry, hypothesizing, inferring	- Science approached as a set body of knowledge with all answers and information already known - Attempts to correct student misconceptions by direct instruction
Active application of science learning to contemporary technological issues and social choices	Isolation of science from the rest of students' lives
In-depth study of a few important thematic topics	Superficial coverage of many topics according to an abstract scope-and-sequence
Curiosity about nature and positive attitudes toward science for all students, including females and members of minority groups	Sense that only a few brilliant "nerds" can enjoy or succeed in science study
Integration of reading, writing, and math in science units	Activity limited to texts, lectures, and multiple choice quizzes
Collaborative small-group work, with training to ensure it is efficient and includes learning for all group members	Students working individually, competitively
Teacher facilitating students' investigative steps	Teacher only as expert in subject matter
Evaluation that focuses on scientific concepts, processes, and attitudes	Testing focused only on memorization of detail, ignoring thinking skills, process skills, attitudes

[*] Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, Arthur Hyde *Best Practice* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998).

PRACTICE IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES[*]

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

INCREASE	DECREASE
■ In-depth study of topics in each social studies field, in which students make choices about what to study and discover the complexities of human interaction	■ Cursory coverage of a lockstep curriculum that includes everything but allows not time for deeper understanding of topics
■ Emphasis on activities that engage students in inquiry and problem solving about significant human issues	■ Memorization of isolated facts in textbooks
■ Student decision making and participation in wider social, political, and economic affairs, so that they share a sense of responsibility for the welfare of their school and community	■ Isolation from the actual exercise of responsible citizenship; emphasis only on reading about citizenship or future participation in the larger social and political world
■ Participation in interactive and cooperative classroom study processes that bring together students of all ability levels	■ Lecture classes in which students sit passively; classes in which students of lower ability levels are deprived of the knowledge and learning opportunities that other students receive
■ Integration of social studies with other areas of the curriculum	■ Narrowing social studies activity to include only textbook reading and test taking
■ Richer content in elementary grades, building on the prior knowledge children bring to social studies topics; this includes study of concepts from psychology, sociology, economics, and political science, as well as history and geography; students of all ages can understand, within their experience, American social institutions, issues for social groups, and problems of everyday living	■ Assumption that students are ignorant about or uninterested in issues raised in social studies ■ Postponement of significant curriculum until secondary grades
■ Students' valuing and sense of connection with American and global history, the history and culture of diverse social groups, and the environment that surrounds them	■ Use of curriculum restricted to only one dominant cultural heritage
■ Students' inquiry about the cultural groups they belong to, and others represented in their school and community, to promote students' sense of ownership in the social studies curriculum	■ Use of curriculum that leaves students disconnected from and unexcited about social studies topics
■ Use of evaluation that involves further learning and that promotes responsible citizenship and open expression of ideas	■ Assessments only at the end of a unit or grading period; assessments that test only factual knowledge or memorization of textbook information

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BEST PRACTICE IN TEACHING ART[*]

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING ART

INCREASE	DECREASE
Art making: more doing of art, music, dance, drama	Studying other people's artworks
Student originality, choice, and responsibility in art making	Art projects that require students to create identical products or closely mimic a model
Stress on the process of creation, the steps and stages of careful craftsmanship	Concern with final products and displays that smothers learning about process
Art as an element of talent development for all students	Art as an arena for competition, screening, awards, and prizes for a few
Exploration of the whole array of art forms, from Western and non-Western sources, different time periods, cultures, and ethnic groups	Exclusive focus on Western, high-culture, elite art forms disconnected from a wide range of art making
Support for every student's quest to find and develop personal media, style, and tastes	Cursory dabbling in many art forms, without supporting a drive toward mastery in one
Time for art in the school day and curriculum	Once-a-week art classes that lack intensity
Integration of arts across the curriculum	Restricting study to separate arts discipline instruction
Using art as a tool of doing, learning, and thinking	Art as a body of content to be memorized
Reasonable classloads and work assignments for arts-specialist teachers	Overloading arts specialists with excessive classloads
Artists in schools, both as performers and as partners in interdisciplinary work	Art experiences provided only by school arts specialists
Long-term partnerships with artists and arts organizations	One-shot, disconnected appearances by artists
Teacher, principal, and parent involvement in the arts	Art-phobic, non-involved school staff members running arts programs for students

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