



# Best Practices Instruction, Distilled\*

\*Distilled (di-stild') adj. 4. Separated or extracted essence

## What does “Best Practices” mean?

- The term *best practices* is “borrowed” from the professions of law, medicine, and architecture.
- The term is used to describe “state-of-the-art” work, based on current research in the field and the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures.

## Best Practice Instruction is . . .

### ***Student-centered: focuses on student interests, needs, & questions***

- Authentic: real-world ideas, materials, tasks
- Holistic: whole ideas, events, materials in real contexts
- Experiential: active, hands-on, concrete work
- Challenging: real challenges, choices, and responsibilities

### ***Cognitive: elicits deeper learning through higher-order thinking***

- Developmental: scaffolded and appropriate
- Constructivist: inquiry- and problem-based
- Expressive: meaning constructed through speaking, writing, drawing, movement, visual arts

### ***Interactive: includes conversation, discussions, debates***

- Sociable: friendly, supportive, safe environment
- Collaborative: partner and small-group inquiry work
- Democratic: community-like

(Zemelman, et al. 2012)

## Key structures of “Best Practice” instruction

1. ***Gradual release of responsibility***--a scaffolded approach in which the teacher models, then teacher and students do the work together, then the students do the work with teacher help, and finally students do the work independently (“I do, we do, you do”)
2. ***Classroom workshop***--students process and make meaning during structured class interaction and learning experiences
3. ***Strategic thinking***--teacher models the thought processes throughout a process or problem, showing students how a “professional” in that area solves problems
4. ***Collaborative activities***--students actively work together to think, solve, discover
5. ***Integrated units***--units integrate a variety of disciplines, more “real-world”
6. ***Representing to learn***--students “show” their learning by doing—talking, writing, drawing/sketching, etc.
7. ***Formative-reflective assessments*** rather than only the end, summative test (Zemelman, et al. 2012)

## For a best practice classroom,

<i>Increase . . .</i>	<i>Decrease . . .</i>
In-depth study of the few essential concepts	Cursory coverage of broad topics, in order to “get through” content
Active learning, through which students interact with the teacher, the material, and classmates	Presentational, one-way transmission of information from the teacher (teacher-focused)
Experiences that engage students in inquiry and problem-solving about significant concepts in content	Memorization of facts or recitation of acquired knowledge
Experiences that require application of concepts, content	Answering of recall, content questions from material presented
Continuous informal assessment of student understanding (to guide instruction), with students participating in ongoing self-assessment	Testing for factual knowledge at the end of a unit, chapter, course
Questions that require thinking, reasons, justification of answers (open-ended questions)	One-right-answer questions
Questions or tasks that require higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)	Questions or tasks that require restatement or reproduction of factual information
Student-centered activities	Teacher-centered activities
Student-to-student collaboration in learning experiences that mirror real-world	Time spent on worksheets, workbooks and other “solitary” work
Student choice in projects, readings, activities	Teacher selected and directed assignments
Student action (discussing, debating, problem-solving, demonstrating, testing hypotheses, role-playing)	Student passivity (sitting, listening, viewing, receiving)
Reading of “real” texts (whole books, primary sources, manuals, documents)	Reading of “contrived” texts (excerpted, adapted, superficial)
Flexible, adaptable seating	Rigid, static seating arrangements
Sources: Zemelman, SDaniels, H., and Hyde, A. (2012). <i>Best practice. Bringing standards to life in America’s classrooms</i> . 4 <sup>th</sup> Ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.	