

50  
Practices



that  
Engage  
Students

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- 1.) Have a **student centered classroom**. The activity should surround the students, not the teacher.
- 2.) Teach students according to their **learning style**. Whether you subscribe to Multiple Intelligences, VARK, or Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, students learn best when you teach them in a way that is easiest for them.
- 3.) **Make learning meaningful**. Tell your students why they have to know something and give it meaning.
- 4.) Teach according to **student's interests**. That means if they are hugely into basketball, find ways to tie your curriculum to basketball.
- 5.) Keep things in **your classroom fair**. When I say fair, I'm not referring to everyone has the exact same thing. I'm referring to the "fair may not always mean equal."
- 6.) **Make teaching concrete**. Students need to see things in a concrete manner in order to make connections and to build that foundation. I have two posts related to concrete teaching – [one for math](#) and [one for reading](#).
- 7.) Use **inquiry and independent learning projects** to spark interest in students. Researching on a topic that interests them or hunting for an answer to a wondering question always engages students.
- 8.) Make **real world connections**. Not only does Common Core tell us to do this, but it is also a great way to help students make learning meaningful.
- 9.) Have **originality** in your lesson planning and activities. You don't always have to do what your neighbor down the hall is doing. Think outside the box and do something different!
- 10.) Have **enthusiasm and passion** in your teaching. Students get hooked when the teacher is passionate about what he or she is teaching!

- 11.) Use **warm-ups or quick write activities** to start the day or even the lesson. I like to use my [Science Picture of the Day!](#)
- 12.) **Use emotion.** I have found that if I can create a little emotion, students listen and pay attention. We are naturally emotional human beings.
- 13.) **Build relationships** with your students. Really get to know them and see the good in each one of them. Your year will have tremendous success and you will get farther if you have those relationships.
- 14.) **Put rigor in your lessons.** Oh no, I said it. Rigor. But it's true. All students need to be challenged and what is rigor to one student is not rigor to another. Don't drop the gifted students- challenge them too!
- 15.) **Hold all students accountable.** ALL students.
- 16.) **Use humor.** If you feel you're not funny (like in my case – my sister got the comedian genes!) – use puns. Who doesn't love a punny joke?
- 17.) **Allow self-expression** in all your students. There is a difference between expressing yourself and expressing yourself respectfully. Just teach the difference.
- 18.) **Use effective questioning strategies.** Teach students how to ask good questions. Plant questions on students to ask. Try to avoid closed questions and use more open ended (she's making me think) questions.
- 19.) **Use games.** Yes, game-like learning is highly effective. I love when students learn and they don't know they are learning. You can read about some of the games I play [here](#) and [here](#).
- 20.) **Build curiosity.** Pique students' interests by bringing in artifacts or other materials that make them wonder just what your plans are.

- 21.) **Use personal stories.** The more students feel they know you, the closer they build that relationship. Let them see you are human too. Share your personal stories and let the connection making begin!
- 22.) Have a **growth mindset** and teach your students to too. Anyone can achieve.
- 23.) **Integrate the arts** – roleplaying (I love roleplaying!), drama, drawing, painting, sculpting, crafts, dancing, so on.
- 24.) **Integrate technology.** (You saw this one coming didn't you?) [Here](#) is a post I wrote about creating book trailers.
- 25.) Enhance **feelings of self-confidence** in your students. The more self-confidence they have the greater their learning grows.
- 26.) **Provide choice.** Everyone loves having a choice. Just make sure the choices you provide, you are okay with if they choose them.
- 27.) **Build students' prior knowledge** for everything as if they had NONE. Never assume. Never.
- 28.) **Talk less** and have students do the talking more. Teach them the art of conversation. You can download speaking and listening task cards free [here](#).
- 29.) With number 28, comes **peer tutoring.** Students learn a lot from their own peers. If you have children, you know what I'm talking about. You can say something a hundred times but if someone else says it, they get it!
- 30.) **Support your students and encourage them.** Everyone does their best and want to be engaged when they feel supported and encouraged.

- 31.) Use **collaborative learning**. Students learn best from their peers and we all do better in teams.
- 32.) **Have a lively pace** in your classroom. I found if I move fast right away in the beginning, despite all the grumbling at first, students eventually start moving faster too. If you go too slow, you're setting yourself up for behavior issues.
- 33.) **Create a secure environment** where ALL students are accepted and cherished for their differences they bring to the class.
- 34.) **Set goals**. Then celebrate them when students meet them- no matter how small.
- 35.) **Have consistency**. Nothing destroys security and classroom management faster than not having consistency in the classroom. Students need structure and they need to know just what to expect.
- 36.) **Have hands-on learning**. If you have been following my blog and using any of my products, you know I'm a HUGE advocate for hands-on learning and experimentation. Read a few different ideas [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- 37.) Have **Performance Based Learning**. This challenge boosts students confidence when they succeed and it allows for that hands-on learning.
- 38.) **Use media clips** to help teach a concept. Students are most familiar with the media arts, but aren't likely thinking, "What can I learn from this?" Help them do so.
- 39.) **Have high expectations** for every child. Seriously. I cannot stress this enough. High expectations for *every* child- whether they have a special need or not. Expect them to rise to the occasion and they will with your encouragement and support – a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- 40.) **Have powerful classroom management**. This is the key piece to student learning and engagement. If you have a bunch of behavior issues going on, there's no time for learning.

- 41.) **Have an active learning classroom.** Expect students to be active in participation. They should do the work- make *them* tired – not you. I love using my causation cards to get all students involved- and they love it too! You can read all about them (and download a freebie) [here](#).
- 42.) **Write, write, write.** Write in everything – math, science, social studies, reading. Writing is 98% thinking!
- 43.) **Never “dumb down” materials.** I can think of some colleagues that would infuriate me using these exact words.
- 44.) **Accept students** for who they are – but do not accept their behaviors. We are moving quickly toward (if we aren’t already there) a culture of entitlement, laziness, selfishness, and disrespectful children. Do not accept it.
- 45.) Have **clear communication and expectations.**
- 46.) Use **openings and closings** to lessons. This creates anticipation and it wraps things up when finished. Students need that structure. It’s not outdated teaching practices.
- 47.) **Differentiate.** I really couldn’t make a huge list like this and not mention it.
- 48.) **Integrate literacy** into everything. Create that love for learning and books.
- 49.) Use a **spiral review.** Don’t teach it and forget it (until test time). Review frequently!
- 50.) **Model, model, model.** If you model to students and teach them using the I do, We do, You do method, students will be engaged.