Best Practices in Education

What is "Best Practice?"

The term "Best Practice" has been used to describe "what works" in a particular situation or environment. When data support the success of a practice, it is referred to as a *research-based practice* or *scientifically based practice*. As good consumers of information, we must keep in mind that a particular practice that has worked for someone within a given set of variables may or may not yield the same results across educational environments.

Grover J. Whitehurst, as assistant secretary for Educational Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education, defined evidence-based education as "the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction." Professional wisdom allows educators and family members to adapt to specific circumstances or environments in an area in which research evidence may be absent or incomplete. But without at least some empirical evidence, education cannot resolve competing approaches, generate cumulative knowledge, and avoid fads and personal biases.

These are the nine standards:

1: A Clear and Common Focus - In high-performing schools, administrators, teachers, students, and parents share and commit to clearly articulated and understood common goals based on the fundamental belief that all students can learn and improve their performance. There is clear evidence of school practices to support this belief.

2: High Standards and Expectations - High-performing schools show evidence that each teacher believes "all students can learn and I can teach them." Staff members are dedicated to helping every student achieve challenging state and local standards. All students are engaged in an appropriately ambitious and rigorous course of study in which the high standards of performance are clear and consistent and the conditions for learning are modified and differentiated. This results in all students being prepared for success in the workplace, postsecondary education, and civic responsibilities.

3: Strong Leadership - School leadership is focused on enhancing the skills, knowledge, and motivation of the people in the organization and creating a common culture of high expectations based on the use of skills and knowledge to improve the performance of all students. Leadership fosters a collaborative atmosphere between the school and the community while establishing positive systems to improve leadership, teaching, and student performance.

4: Supportive, Personalized, and Relevant Learning - In high-performing schools, supportive learning environments provide positive personalized relationships for all students while engaging them in rigorous and relevant learning.

5: Parent/Community Involvement - In high-performing schools, parents and community members help develop, understand, and support a clear and common focus on core academic, social, and personal goals contributing to improved student performance and have a meaningful and authentic role in achieving these goals. The school community works together to actively solve problems and create win-win solutions. Mentoring and outreach programs provide for two-way learning between students and community/business members.

6: Monitoring, Accountability, and Assessment - In high-performing schools, teaching and learning are continually adjusted on the basis of data collected through a variety of valid and reliable methods that indicate student progress and needs. The assessment results are interpreted and applied appropriately to improve individual student performance and the instructional program.

7: Curriculum and Instruction - High-performing schools have aligned curriculum with core learning expectations to improve the performance of all students. Students achieve high standards through rigorous, challenging learning. Staff delivers an aligned curriculum and implements research-based teaching and learning strategies. Students are actively involved in their learning through inquiry, in-depth learning, and performance assessments.

8: Professional Development - Ongoing professional development aligned with the school's common focus and high expectations to improve the performance of all students is critical in high-performing schools. These professional development offerings are focused and informed by research and school/classroom-based

assessments. Appropriate instructional support and resources are provided to implement approaches and techniques learned through professional development.

9: Time and Structure - High-performing schools are flexibly structured to maximize the use of time and accommodate the varied lives of their students, staff, and community in order to improve the performance of all students. The structure of programs extends beyond the traditional school day and year as well as beyond the school building. The program draws on the entire community's resources to foster student achievement.

http://ctserc.org/s/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=8&Itemid=28