

Best Practices

Best practices are what educators call the researched based methods for teaching. We will discuss a few of them here:

1. Questioning

Questioning is an important part of teaching. There are different types of questions and we should use all of the types. For our practices here, I am going to simplify the types of questions.

- Short answer questions
- Constructed response questions
- Recall questions
- Higher order thinking questions

2. Wait time

Wait time is the practice of waiting after answering a question to give students the time to think about an answer. All of us think at different speeds. If you don't allow wait time, the faster thinkers will answer the question and then the other students do not have to think about the answer. We want everyone in class to be thinking because that is how we learn and retain information. Another important reason for wait time is that it allows all the students time to really think about a question—even the fast thinkers who may only be repeating what they heard have time to think about it and make the learning theirs.

3. Review

Research shows that students need lots of review of the same material (6 or 7 times) to put the information into their long-term memory. Review is important and this review should take place over a period of weeks and months. It is also important that the material is presented in different ways so it does not appear “boring” to the students. This does not mean to repeat a lesson over and over in different ways, but to refer back to the lesson in future lessons.

4. Class participation

Every student's participation is important. Instead of asking for volunteers all of the time, involve students who normally do not answer questions by calling on them when you have a question that you are sure they can answer. For example: What do you usually do on Sunday afternoons? Other ways to involve students is to use them to do things like pass out materials, turn off the lights for videos, etc. Making sure every student is engaged is an important part of teaching.

5. Variation within a structured schedule

Research has shown that young students need a structured schedule. Students are more comfortable and in tune to learning if they know the schedule. This does not mean that you must do things in the same order all of the time, but it is helpful to have a general schedule to follow.

Within that general schedule it is also important to provide variety. In other words, do not teach the Bible lesson the same way every week. Use a variety of ways.