

# Teaching Practices that Encourage Excellence Among Students

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Imagine if you had to recollect and talk about the best and worst teachers from school or college life? Almost every one of us would instantly be able to draw a name or two from their memory. Ever wonder why it is so easy to remember such teachers or professors? Is it because of their lesson plans and the content they taught us? We also remember them because of our quality of interactions with them, which has etched them in our memory. In fact, it is their enthusiasm, engagement or style of delivery or lack of it that has remained with us for a longer time.

Best teaching practices embody more than just simple learning strategies. The social and emotional well-being of children has been the basis for developing healthy behaviours. It has also been strongly associated with educational achievement in children. In fact, best practices emphasize on creating a supportive physical, social, emotional and learning environment. Such a conducive environment fosters enjoyable and engaging learning experiences for students in schools.

## What are these strategies?

**Preparing the student for the lesson:** Start the class with an ice-breaker activity or question or observation. Drawing the students' attention in the beginning of the lesson. This process of engagement prepares the students to be mentally, emotionally, and physically receptive to start a lesson or transition from one lesson to the other. When students are aware of the purpose and objective of the lesson plan, it results in increased engagement from their end.

**Focus on emotional and social well-being:** Schools or colleges should systemically assess the emotional and social well-being of the children. A professor's observation in the classroom could provide crucial information about the emotional and social well-being of children. Such information can guide teachers in designing activities and curriculum. For example, teacher could ask students to identify the best feeling and thought they had that day.

**Interpersonal communication:** Teacher-student interpersonal communication promotes learning behaviour. Teacher's professionalism, sensitivity and care towards the students and their needs are associated with favourable outcomes such as, students feeling happy, communicative and participating responsibly in the learning process.

**Providing feedback:** Feedback is a crucial element in the learning process. It can be both positive and negative. Timely feedback is of immense importance in the learning process. Help children recognize their emotions, and share appreciation. This knowledge is empowering for both the teachers and the children.

**Reinforcement and punishment:** Usually there are two types of reinforcement and two types of punishment. In case of positive reinforcement, a pleasant stimulus is provided such as, praise, applause, a sticker, a prize or an appreciation. This positive reinforcement increases the frequency of the desired behaviour. On the contrary, in negative reinforcement, an unpleasant stimulus is removed to increase good behaviour. For example, taking away an important assignment, or taking away a deadline.

Stopping a child from being 'laughed at' and 'bullied or ridiculed by others' could increase student participation in the class because an unpleasant stimulus has been removed by the teacher. Positive and negative punishment can decrease undesirable behaviour. An example of positive punishment is when a child fails in an exam because he or she did not prepare for the exam. Next time, the child will study if he or she does not want to get a negative stimulus.

**Innovative techniques:** Faculty members who use tools such as flipped classroom techniques (where the child or group of children are assigned to prepare for a lesson), design thinking (such as group discussion, role play, games, creativity, brain storming), audio-visual aid (videos of lessons, a good example would be khan academy lessons), self-learning tools (self-analysis, learning by doing) are often effective. These techniques not only ensure retention of the content but encourage learning through participation and engagement.

The last significant thing is the faculty's satisfaction in imparting the content of the course. Through their research work, Bulger, Mohr and Walls found that the teacher's enthusiasm is contagious. If the faculty member loves to teach, it will be reflected in their creativity and delivery of lessons in the classroom and in the enthusiasm and engagement of the students. Conversely, if a teacher hates to teach, that too will be reflected in the lack of engagement in the entire classroom. Undeniably, faculty has the ability to shape the thoughts of students in any academic institution.