

“Good Practices” Derived from Educational Research*

1. Create high expectations for student learning. Students appreciate general education’s aims and goals; faculty need to be clear that they expect students to attain them.
2. Provide coherent, progressive learning. Students learn, grow, and develop when the first step is not too high, when each step is a reasonable and connected elevation from the preceding one, and when there are clear standards for attainment in sight.
3. Create synthesizing experiences. Students benefit from the challenge of synthesizing their learning through essays and journal keeping, capstone and cornerstone courses, and integrative experiences in cooperative and service learning.
4. Integrate education and experience. The relevance to students’ lives, aspirations, and perceptions is brought home when education is bolstered by application and experience.
5. Create active learning experiences. Students who are engaged in their studies learn more. First generation students may need validation that their involvement is a legitimate part of the learning experience.
6. Require ongoing practice of skills. Skills, once learned, soon atrophy without practice. For example, second-language learning in college suffers from students’ lack of practice.
7. Assess learning and give prompt feedback. Students cannot improve their learning unless they receive constructive suggestions for improvement in time to adjust their behavior to enhance their efforts.
8. Plan collaborative learning experiences. Students are affirmed in their learning by their peers’ support, criticism, and collaboration. Collaborative learning promotes behavior expected after college.
9. Provide considerable time on task. The press to cover the material leaves much of general education cursory; key knowledge, skills, and abilities are fostered by thorough explanation, discussion, and application.
10. Respect diverse talents and ways of knowing. Not all students learn the same way. Making a student conform to the predominant curriculum may militate against success. Diversity challenges the curriculum to represent learning in multiple, coherent, purposeful forms.
11. Increase informal contact with students. A minority of students’ time is spent in the classroom. Students value the mentoring and advice offered by faculty outside the classroom. Make the curriculum and extracurriculum work together to support student learning.
12. Give special attention to the early years. The transition to college (and between colleges) presents significant social and academic adjustments for students. Instilling a thirst for inquiry and reflection early on will set the stage for more rapid growth, development, and educational attainment.

*D.P. Jones and P.T. Ewell (1993, pp. 9-13) Cited in Chapter 7: *Quality and Coherence in General Education, Handbook for Undergraduate Curriculum*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1997, p. 164.