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Best Practices for 21st Century Learners

After witnessing the continuous evolutionary process of human society for the last 20 centuries, we are now proceeding towards the golden period of 21st century which is offering unprecedented opportunities for students and learners to explore the new horizons of knowledge. While the fast-paced technological advancements are influencing all and sundry; our educational system still needs a new look to provide better facilities for the young generation. Arguably, teaching profession offers much more contribution for the future of human society than any other profession. It is need of the hour to blend the traditional ways of teaching along with modern innovations to provide students with better opportunities to develop such skills that will help them thrive in future competitive life.

The Task of the 21st Century Teacher

The importance of traditional education systems cannot be denied as it is important for students to focus on core subjects. However, it is also necessary for teachers to innovate ways to offer an educational system for learners that may not only provide them excellence in core subject knowledge, but the 21st century educational system must also emphasize on financial literacy, environmental literacy, technological literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and global awareness.

Henry Adams once said that ***a teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.*** For every professional teacher, it is must to ascertain that they are influencing the future in a positive manner. Teachers must evolve such educational models that may offer better and deeper knowledge of core-subjects (such as social studies, languages, maths, and science) while ascertaining that their educational models are helping students in becoming

- Critical thinkers and problem solvers
- Good communicators; able collaborators and team members
- Flexible, adaptable, and globally competent
- Creative, innovative, technology literate
- Healthy, aware, and financially literate

Best Practices for Teachers

The task of a teacher is to provide students with proper career and life skills that will help them thrive in the competitive 21st century. The following teaching practices will not only help a teacher to perform their task successfully; but also, it will help them in innovating newer methods and practices to improve educational models.

- **Good Communication Skills are Must:** a teacher must be able to create a rapport with all students as a class and with each student individually. With proper open and clear communications, a teacher can easily create a friendly learning environment helpful for every student.
- **Engage the Students in Learning Process:** Students often suffer the consequences of multi-tasking and hence they can easily get bored, disconnected, or lacking concentration in a class. However, it is necessary for teachers to ascertain that students are taking active part in the learning process. Teachers may use technology, multimedia activities, and interesting educational games to fight this off. Ultimately, teachers need to implement such innovative educational model that must remain student-centred.
- **Humour is the Key:** Even while pursuing a core subject in the class, using a relevant dose of humour to ascertain students' engagement is highly recommended. A teacher must understand the importance of non-violence and hence they must shun any idea of authoritative or coercive method of education. Coercion often disheartens students and prove to be a competent killer of motivation. Appropriate humour; on the other hand acts as a tonic for the developing minds of learners and make them realize the importance of non-violence and self-restraint.
- **Avoid Impulsive Reactions:** Young students always try to outsmart the teachers with their juvenile activities. However, impulsive reactions against their juvenile nature may cause serious harm to the learning abilities of students. Causing fear is no solution. Sometimes, ignoring the disruptive tricks of students during a class prove to be a better solution than reprimand them. Even if this disruptive behaviour becomes repetitive, the teacher may opt to discuss the issue with student involve individually. Chastising a student or few students in front of whole class may prove to be a discouraging and negative pattern.
- **Be Straightforward and Precise:** learners often suffer the issue of lack of attention and the teacher is required to ascertain maximum attention of students in their class. Unclear, ambiguous communication may discourage students from taking active part in the class. It is necessary for teachers to remain clear about their teaching goals in the class and it is equally important for them to remain precise and straightforward while explaining classroom ethics and subject knowledge.

- **Individualized Learning Encourages Students:** The classroom may prove to be a hideout for some students. However, when a teacher starts pursuing each student individually, the student tends to reduce their inhibitions and starts taking active part in the educational process. A teacher should try to tend the problems of every kind of students in their class while encouraging them to excel in their skills.
- **The Potion of Positive Feedback:** while it is recommended to not to scold or reprimand any student in front of class, it is also a known fact that positive feedback often encourages students to do their best at studies or activities. Publicly praising the positive behaviour of students will also encourage other students to improve their behaviour. Celebrating the achievements of students will create a lasting engagement between teacher and students.
- **Decision Making and sense of Responsibility:** Learners often enjoy positive feedback and they feel responsible towards classroom ethics and decorum when teacher starts engaging them in decision-making processes. Students start improving as a whole when they feel that they are equally important for the education system and are being trusted. Performing voting and polling practices to investigate specific issues pertaining to class will help a teacher in inculcating sense of responsibility among the students.
- **Implementing Positive Peer learning:** while peer pressure may prove to be a negative aspect of educational systems, proper management of peer learning processes can provide excellent results for the betterment of learners. Some useful positive peer learning strategies may include:
 - Solution and Critic Learning Grouping:** Teacher may divide students in two sub-groups with one having responsibility of researching and developing tutorial and presentation for a topic while the other sub-group may act as responsible critic offering rational feedback, comments and evaluations for the presentation.
 - Buzz Grouping:** The whole class can be divided in various groups containing 4-5 students. Each sub-group can be assigned with researching and investigating about certain aspects of singular problem. Proper collaboration of all groups will resolve the given problem within the classroom or school premises.
 - Affinity Grouping:** students can be divided in groups of 4-5 students to discuss, investigate and work on particular project outside the school premises after school timing.
 - Teach-Write-Discuss:** At the end of study hour, students can be offered a short quiz regarding the subject. Each student will write their answers individually and after that they will be required to compare and discuss their answers with each other.

It must be noted that coercive methods of education need to be discouraged and instead of authority, teachers of 21st century must express their authenticity towards their job as a teacher.

The more a teacher will prove to be genuine and passionate towards their job of teaching, the more engagement and respect they will garner from their students. Furthermore, a passionate authentic teacher will have better understanding and motive towards the evolution of education system for the betterment of 21st century learners.