



# Literacy: It All Connects

## Best Practices



LAURENT CLERC  
NATIONAL DEAF EDUCATION CENTER



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## **Best Practices**

### **Principles of Learning Underlying Best Practices Across the Curriculum**

**CHILD-CENTERED.** The best starting point for schooling is kids' real interests; all across the curriculum, investigating students' own questions should always take precedence over studying arbitrarily and distantly selected "content."

**EXPERIENTIAL.** Active, hands-on, concrete experience is the most powerful and natural form of learning. Students should be immersed in the most direct possible experience of the content of every subject.

**REFLECTIVE.** Balancing the immersion in direct experience must be opportunities for learners to look back, to reflect, to debrief, to abstract from their experiences what they have felt, thought, and learned.

**AUTHENTIC.** Real, rich, complex ideas and materials are the heart of the curriculum. Lessons of textbooks which water down, control, or over-simplify contest ultimately disempower students.

**HOLISTIC.** Children learn best when they encounter whole, real ideas, events, and materials in purposeful contexts, and not by studying sub-pacts isolated from actual use.

**SOCIAL.** Learning is always socially constructed and often interactional; teachers need to create classroom interactions which "scaffold" learning.

**COLLABORATIVE.** Cooperative learning activities tap the social power of learning better than competitive and individualistic approaches.

**DEMOCRATIC.** The classroom is a model community; students learn what they live as citizens of the school.

**COGNITIVE.** The most powerful learning for children comes from developing true understanding of concepts and higher order thinking associated with various fields of inquiry and self-monitoring of their thinking.

**DEVELOPMENTAL.** Children grow through a series of definable but not rigid stages, and schooling should fit its activities to the developmental level of students.

**CONSTRUCTIVIST.** Children do not just receive content; in a very real sense, they recreate and re-invent every cognitive system they encounter, including language, literacy, and mathematics.

**PSYCHOLINGUISTIC.** The process of young children's natural oral language acquisition


provides our best model of complex human learning and, once learned, language itself becomes the primary tool for most learning, whatever the subject matter.

CHALLENGING. Students learn best when faced with genuine challenges, choices and responsibility in their own learning.

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Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., and Hyde, A. (1993). Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center is comprised of two federally mandated demonstration schools for students from birth through age 21 who are deaf. Located on the campus of Gallaudet University, these schools work in collaboration with a national network of exemplary programs and professionals to identify, research, develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative curricula, materials, educational strategies, and technologies for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Clerc Center also provides training and technical assistance to families and programs throughout the United States, and serves as a model individualized educational program, working in close partnership with its students and their families.

Working for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Throughout the United States



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