

We have designed each “White Paper” to explore a fundamental educational principle and key issues engaging the education community we serve. It is our goal to partner with our readers as they meet the challenges they face.



Student Review, Testing & Assessment
CastleLearning.com



626 Layport Drive, Suite 100
Sebastian, FL 32958
800-345-7606
Fax: 772-581-1066

Prepared by Bill Ingui
President and Retired Educator

Best (and Effective) Practices & Castle Learning Online

In the summer of 2004, about 200 teachers participated in a US Department of Education Teacher Workshop in Portland, Oregon, with a goal toward exploring the latest **best/effective practices** and research-based methods to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap. Then US Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, postulated that “**effective teachers are the key to fulfilling the promise of the *No Child Left Behind Act.***” Since they take educational research and turn it into the **best/effective practices** in the classroom, Paige predicted that these educators would be able to make data-driven decisions and focus on the best ways to raise student achievement.

So how are **best/effective practices** being defined? Sampling published **best/effective practices** will show the definition can depend on whether you are organizing a federal or state government agency, training ballplayers in playing a sport like football, basketball or baseball, making a factory run at optimum, or teaching in a way that can engage students in learning. What it comes down to is to know what you want to do, trying methods that are innovative and taking advantage of the tools around you. As educators, we need to explore a variety of strategies and share the best of them with colleagues, while focusing on the ultimate goal of encouraging and supporting all teachers in achieving greater excellence in the classroom.

The educators who developed *Castle Learning Online* considered the ongoing process of defining **best/effective practices**. Field studies with teachers indicate *Castle Learning Online* supports their efforts. Here are some examples:

- A North Carolina educator who uses *Castle Learning Online*, explained his innovative style when he creates two randomized question assignments, using the feature of an “open and close” date, encourages students to work together, then creates a new assignment from the best and worst of the results, giving it as a post-assignment experience. Students have mentored / tutored each other during the learning curve. We are witnessing technology innovation as a **best/effective practice** for this teacher.
- Innovative parental involvement was fostered in the spirit of **best/effective practices** at the **Manhattan Hunter Science High School** when we learned the Principal fostered parental involvement in the learning process, echoing the work done by teachers in the classroom. She wrote “**Parents are increasingly using *Castle Learning Online* as we promote “parents as coaches. Like our guidance counselors, parents find that they can focus on helping their children focus and review when they can rely on *Castle Learning* as their “content expert.”**”
- When are limited funds a blessing, not a curse? When it encourages creativity! *Castle Learning Online* is one of the most cost-effective parts of a **best/effective practice** for a school or district when it costs less than a single course review book, yet allows access 24/7 in course content from grades 3-12.
- An obvious **best/effective practice** that has been drawn into the current need to address the *No Child Left Behind Act*, places a greater emphasis on courses that are clearly aligned to state or national standards. *Castle Learning Online* questions are aligned to state standards and teacher have the ability to select questions that meet these standards.

Educators using *Castle Learning Online* are truly tuned into **best/effective practices**. At a minimum, they want students to reach academic proficiency, but they need to know when to adapt. When asked what benefits can *Castle Learning* offer to you, one educator said “**it allows me to view student weaknesses and to self-check my effectiveness.**” After analyzing weaknesses and strengths, we teachers are at the top of our game when we can retool our teaching style, incorporating technology into learning and adapt to our student’s needs.