Sharing best practices is integral to the teaching profession for the success of students. Through the Golden Apple Recognition Program, teachers with engaging and innovative classroom strategies are given the opportunity to share them with the community and with each other, knowing that this is part of the learning and refining process.
Sandy Mendoza  
Calusa Park Elementary, K - 5th grade  
**International Café and Acting Right Classroom Management**  
Using the Acting Right © program and the monthly International Café, Ms. Mendoza is empowering her students. Through both processes, students are bridging their knowledge of their home country to the United States, meeting community members who have similar stories, and learning what it means to be part of a classroom community.

Lisa Holtz  
Corkscrew Middle, 7th grade  
**Engage! Motivate! Perform! History Come Alive!**  
Readers Theater promotes engagement and a better understanding of content. Students practice literacy skills and fluency by adding emotion and intonation into their parts and gain confidence in their presentation skills. In Ms. Holtz’s class, this practice helps to build confidence, increase knowledge, and bring history to life!

Stephanie Cashion and Deniece Giovinazzo  
East Naples Middle, 8th and 6th grade  
**Cross Grade-Level Partnership**  
By pairing different levels of learners to exchange knowledge, ideas and valued perspectives in a comfortable environment, 6th graders learn one-on-one with 8th grade partners. Through this practice, Ms. Cashion and Ms. Giovinazzo use successful instructional strategies to facilitate deliberate pairings of students that encourage student empowerment and individualized learning.

Deborah Brousseau  
Golden Terrace Elementary, 2nd grade  
**Integrating Research**  
During Ms. Brousseau’s Genius Hour, students participate fully in each stage of their project. Her students take ownership of their learning by selecting a topic of interest, researching, determining how to present the information, and giving the final presentation. The students find their voice, build their confidence and celebrate their success with their classmates.

Jennifer Wise  
Immokalee Community School, 1st grade  
**Building Language Skills Through Student Collaboration**  
Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) is a group of strategies that promote language acquisition, literacy and high academic vocabulary. Through the use of integrated thematic units, Ms. Wise’s students take on the role of researcher as they explore each topic. Working together they create shared sentences, then build the paragraph as a community of learners. The result is an increase in speaking and listening skills, confidence and ownership of their learning.

Rita Kentros  
Lorenzo Walker Technical High, 10th grade  
**Motivating Students to Engage in Rigorous Instruction**  
By cultivating a climate of acceptance and intellectual curiosity and with a commitment to excellence, Ms. Kentros’ students thrive. With rigorous learning goals incorporated into project-based learning, students engage in regular feedback and reflection to gain a deeper understanding of the content and its relevance outside the classroom.

Kelsey Papworth and Matthew Sibert  
Manatee Elementary, 4th grade  
**Thematic Units with Theatrical Elements**  
Without a common understanding of literary themes and references, students have difficulty connecting with and retaining knowledge. Using theatrical elements within a unit of study, Ms. Papworth and Mr. Sibert immerse themselves and their students in the theme, using room transformations, costumes and learning journeys to engage students with the standards and learning goals. The result is a greater understanding not only of the content but how it relates to other content areas and the world outside the classroom.

Nicholas Martinez  
Manatee Middle, 6th - 8th grade  
**Vocabulary Acquisition Activity**  
Through love, fun, encouragement, patience, and empathy, students will attain success. By connecting what students already know in their home language to what they need to know in English provides familiarity in context. When all of these elements are infused into the content, students grow academically, socially, and personally. This is how success is defined in Mr. Martinez’s classroom.

**BUILDING LITERACY, CONTEXT, and COMMUNICATION**

“Communication – the human connection – is the key to personal and career success.”  
— Paul J. Meyer

Through these best practices, the teachers are helping students build their vocabulary, contextual understanding, and their confidence around the written and spoken word.
Yanet Rodriquez  
Oakridge Middle, 8th grade  
The Power of Rapport  
Building solid relationships is the key to success in any endeavor and is especially true in the classroom. Ms. Rodriguez crafts not only her lessons, but the atmosphere of her classroom in order to engage and motivate students. The mutual respect and understanding results in increased engagement and accomplishment.

Martha Soto  
Pinecrest Elementary, 2nd - 5th grade  
Breaking the Silence: Celebrating EL Newcomer’s Voices  
The Newcomer Center offers a welcoming, motivational, and inspiring setting where students are encouraged to use their voices. In the center, Ms. Soto and her fellow teachers embrace students with support to assist them in acquiring the language, literacy, social and emotional skills needed to be academically successful. Confidence is built by celebrating every learning accomplishment.

FOSTERING LEADERSHIP and TEAMWORK

“Unity is strength...where there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.”
— Mattie J.T. Stepanek
By providing opportunities for students to work together in a variety of ways, these teachers are showing students that teamwork is often a key to success.

Tom Zucchi  
Alternative Schools, Math – TAPP, 6th – 12th grade  
Energizing the Classroom with Math Contests  
Using technology of today, Mr. Zucchi connects his students to others around the world through the FAI-TO math competition, delivered by Managahigh.com. The challenges can be focused on a student’s individual needs, but at the same time the activity increases motivation, engagement and confidence of the class as a whole. The competitions build grit and a sense of community within the classroom.

Kerrie Anne Thomas  
Cypress Palm Middle, 7th grade  
Making Learning RICH: Relevant, Interesting, Collaborative and Hands-on!  
Making learning RICH means providing students with a wealth of learning opportunities that are Relevant, Interesting, Collaborative, and Hands-on. Ms. Thomas provides her students with a variety of ways to show their learning that connects to the real world. The ultimate goal of RICH learning is to invest in students and make them lifelong learners; therefore, the RICH practice is not only valuable, it’s priceless.

Niki Rutkowski  
Eden Park Elementary, 4th grade  
Positive and Supportive Learning Community  
Student collaboration is the foundation to a positive and supportive classroom. Ms. Rutkowski’s students come to school each day ready to support each other in their individual and shared learning goals. Using various Kagan structured activities to enhance their social skills, her class has been successful in building a collaborative atmosphere that promotes learning.

Dana Mook  
Estates Elementary, 4th grade  
Making Learning Stick! Engaging the Brain  
Using Whole Brain teaching, Ms. Mook connects new content with movement, giving students a physical way to remember the information. Student confidence increases and knowledge is cemented through a variety of collaborative activities that build on the previous knowledge. The result is students who are hooked into learning, having fun, and helping their peers!

Tamara Loux and Justin Moomaw  
Gulfview Middle, 6th – 8th grade  
Developing Emerging Leaders Through Motivation of Peers  
Through the Peer Expert Program co-teachers Ms. Loux and Mr. Moomaw provide an avenue for their students to become leaders and mentors in middle school. By giving a student the opportunity to share their skills with others, they are fostering independence, leadership and kindness. The results are not only students who have learned the basic skills and rules associated with various sports and physical activity, but students who have learned to motivate, include and encourage others.

Chad Crary  
Highlands Elementary, 5th grade  
Incorporating Student Leadership Through Collaboration  
In Mr. Crary’s classroom, students have the ability to process new information collaboratively in a safe environment. Through structured activities students are able to grow as a group. They each bring their own unique piece to the learning that occurs, showing that each member of the group is vital.

Rocio Castineira Bailey  
Immokalee High, 9th grade  
Group Learning for Individual Success  
By working together in small groups, Ms. Bailey’s students are solidifying their math content knowledge, as well as learning English. Talking through the problems, reteaching the concepts to each other, and working on how things translate from their home language to English, provides ownership and autonomy in their learning.
Jessica Dallett and Lynn McNamara  
Lely High, 9th – 12th grade  
Keep Calm and Collaborate  
Identifying a need for increased engagement and collaboration, Ms. Dallett and Ms. McNamara developed an instructional method that encourages teamwork and full participation. Students practice math concepts in a supported environment with feedback from their peers and teachers. This practice in the inclusion Geometry classes has given the students confidence in their mastery of geometry concepts and has resulted in significantly increased student achievement.

Mary Snyder  
Palmetto Elementary, 5th grade  
The Secret to Classroom Management  
An engaged and positive classroom community means an incredible amount of accountability. In Ms. Snyder’s classroom, students are responsible for their learning choices, which helps them understand the value of the work needed to be successful. Being intentional in each activity leads not only to higher achievement, but also to a well-managed classroom.

Phuong Gano  
Shadowlawn Elementary, 3rd grade  
Growing Through Collaborative Learning  
Moving forward with grit and determination, as a team, is a central tenant of Ms. Gano’s classroom. The students support each other academically, emotionally, and socially through collaborative structures. This enables students to voice their understanding with and to each other, and learn from their misunderstandings, leading to true growth.

Janice Iacovino  
Veterans Memorial Elementary, 2nd grade  
Social Emotional Learning Through Leadership, Character, and Culture  
A strong sense of community built on respect, acceptance of differences and genuine care for one another is foundational in Ms. Iacovino’s classroom. Students know that they are safe and that they can take risks and make mistakes in order to grow and learn. The care and genuine concern for one another is nurtured daily and the results are students who thrive.

Lance Merchant  
Barron Collier High, 10th – 12th grade  
Electronic Presentation and Delivery Content  
Through the use of Electronic Presentation Mr. Merchant is able to teach students using a variety of mediums. Students experience classroom presentations in-person and outside the classroom using their personal computer, tablets, or even their phone. This translates to more complete notes and higher engagement with the content material.

Lauren Audra Caplan  
Golden Gate Middle, 6th – 8th grade  
Guided Math Centers  
Ms. Caplan’s Guided Math Centers provide an opportunity for students to practice and apply skills and strategies taught within the class. This format allows teachers the opportunity to work with individuals and small groups, while other students are engaged in purposeful centers. Targeted, standards-based, rigorous instruction leads to student confidence and growth in their learning goals.

Yesenia Gonzalez  
Gulf Coast Charter Academy South, 2nd grade  
Power Teaching  
Ms. Gonzalez’s practice is an exciting method of delivering instruction that keeps students actively engaged in the learning process. Through kinetic gestures, classroom discussion, peer teaching and real-world experiences, all students are focused on learning. In this positive and caring atmosphere, students know that they are important people in the classroom.

Katie Meanor  
Marco Island Academy, 9th – 12th grade  
Making Learning Interactive Through Notebooks  
Ms. Meanor uses interactive notebooks to help students engage with the material they’re learning in new ways, develop organizational and study skills, stay on track in classes, and take responsibility for their own learning. This tool helps to guide instruction in class, and the skills learned by students are useful in their academic classes and beyond.

Traci Bratcher  
Pelican Marsh Elementary, 1st grade  
Reaching the Whole Class Teaching Whole Brain  
A variety of learning styles can be addressed through the use of Whole Brain Teaching (WBT). In Ms. Bratcher’s classroom, character education is also infused with WBT strategies, engaging students to take a leading role in their own learning. With peer encouragement, students aren’t afraid to make mistakes and are motivated to show their improvement.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

“The students who are the most engaged are the ones who think they matter to the teacher.”
—Dr. Russell Quaglia

Focusing on the building blocks of student engagement, these teachers use technology, creativity, high energy and diversity of activities to help their students attain success.
UNDERSTANDING and ACHIEVING GOALS

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.”
— Henry David Thoreau

Setting the expectation and learning how to work toward achieving it is central to these best practices, laying a solid foundation for necessary life skills.

Susan Baumler
Everglades City School, 3rd grade
**Realistic Goal Setting Based on Past Performance**
Using a logical format for students to assess their current ability in any given topic, they can strive to strengthen their understanding or knowledge of that topic. Meeting weekly with her students, Ms. Baumler guides her students’ goal setting and puts the responsibility of critically assessing their own work on their shoulders. Once assessed, they can build on what they know, and in the process build their intrinsic motivation to succeed.

Alexandra Kersey
Golden Gate Elementary, 2nd grade
**Empowering Learning Through Leadership**
Instilling intrinsic motivation in the pursuit of knowledge is a key factor in Ms. Kersey’s classroom. By experiencing the learning process through hands-on activities, students develop an understanding of standard content and real-world situations. Tracking their own progress and data allows students to take control of their learning experience and fosters leadership.

Ryan J. McQuade
Golden Gate High, 11th – 12th grade
**Employment Through Science**
The elements of science can be seen in business, industry, home repair, art and music. Mr. McQuade endeavors to expose his students to science in the world outside their text books. His goal is to inspire in them a passion to use science in making the best and most productive future for themselves possible.

Philip G. Barton
Immokalee Middle, 6th – 8th grade
**Using Band to Prepare Students for Life**
In Mr. Barton’s band room, students not only practice their music, but also the skills they need to be successful in life. Through his mastery-based “pass off system”, students learn how to recognize the expectations, practice and perform at 100%. Students learn how to constructively support one another through a peer critiquing process. Students are laying the groundwork to meet their maximum potential for each performance, and for their future.

Melissa Stevens
Lorenzo Walker Technical College
**My Dental Office**
“My Dental Office” teaches the students the employability and technical skills they need to be successful Dental Assistants. In Ms. Steven’s “classroom”, the students are held accountable for performing to the standards an employer will expect upon hiring, from running an office, to equipment sterilization and patient care. This preparation means students are ready to get to work upon course completion.

Michelle Joyce
Palmetto Ridge High, 10th – 12th grade
**Variety is the Spice of Life**
Content plus communication equals empowerment in Ms. Joyce’s classroom. Providing a variety of avenues for students to pursue the learning goals and present their understanding, they feel more confident in their own skills and in their ability to impact the world around them. This strategy leads students to be creative, curious, collaborative and critical thinkers.

Jill Striz
Village Oaks Elementary, 3rd grade
**MAD About Learning!**
Through the day-to-day structure of her lessons of Modeling high expectations, Accountability, and Dynamic interactions (MAD), students are being taught the very skills of effective learning. Meeting the needs of all learners allows for all students to find their voice and gain confidence in themselves. Through collaboration and accountability students are extending their knowledge, exceeding their goals, and learning social skills along the way.

Krista Fusco
Vineyards Elementary, 4th grade
**Laugh, Grow, Learn**
With so many challenges and experiences in a student’s life that may hinder learning, Ms. Fusco endeavors to create a safe place to learn, laugh and feel loved. With a focus on the Growth Mindset, the power of wonder, and activities that build confidence, her students are learning that there is always a way to achieve their goals.

Ross Porter
Immokalee Technical College
**Prints, to Production, to Industry Certification**
In Mr. Porter’s Machining Technology classroom, the focus is on designing and creating a workable product. Students participate in each phase of the machining process, creating materials that will be tested in local businesses to make sure they pass muster. The end result is 100% job placement and students ready to enter the workforce with highly sought-after skills.

_golden apple recipient_
CURRICULUM INTEGRATION SUPPORTING STUDENT GROWTH

“I believe that logic + emotion is a winning combination. When useful and useable meet delight – great things happen. It’s about balance.” — David Armano

Through these best practices, students are seeing how the various disciplines of the classroom continually cross over and fit into the context of the real world.

Alicia MacIntyre
Corkscrew Elementary, 1st grade
M.A.D. About Literacy
Ms. MacIntyre utilizes arts integration as a learning and teaching technique that allows students to use their creativity in art, theater, and music to become innovators, problem solvers, and outside the box thinkers. This integration creates greater intrinsic motivation, encourages learning for understanding, turns what students perceived to be barriers into opportunities to be solved, and motivates students to continue learning.

Ashley Stafford
Lake Park Elementary, 4th grade
InteGREATive Mathematics: Transforming the Math Classroom
Promoting mastery of math content through literature, technology, and classroom transformations allows Ms. Stafford to play to each student’s strength. Engagement, creativity and classroom management are all achieved through the use of these techniques, which are always directly tied to the learning goals. The result is authentic, student-centered learning that creates an exciting and effective learning environment for every student.

Josephine Potter
Mike Davis Elementary, Kindergarten
Differentiation Using Music and Movement
Ms. Potter incorporates music, movement and fun into the day to get her students up and moving! Engaging the body and the brain through singing their lessons helps these kindergarteners learn and recall without anxiety, leading to confident learners.

Anujah Balachanthiran
Naples High, 9th – 12th grade
Student Movement to Enhance Learning
Studies have shown that music enhances learning and Ms. Balachanthiran is putting this to the test! In her classroom, students engage with various curriculum topics through music and movement-enriched activities to enhance group collaboration and increase comprehension. With greater concentration and less stress, the result is higher achievement.

Kathryn A. Smith
Naples Park Elementary, 2nd grade
Knowledge Ignites Imagination, Creativity and Innovation
With purpose and reflection, Ms. Smith designs learning opportunities for maximum engagement. Knowledge stimulates creativity and when you add new skills, the result is innovation. Encouraging her students to ask further questions, form hypothesis, or construct new ideas, she is fostering a deeper understanding and higher-level learning.

Romi Rameau
Parkside Elementary, Kindergarten
Promoting Movement in the Classroom
Chants and movement create a lively and engaging classroom that appeal to multiple learning styles. While improving memory, concentration, and positive attitudes in students, they also help in decreasing stress levels and behavior problems. Getting students up and moving while they practice a range of other curricular subjects including math, science, social studies, and reading makes Ms. Rameau’s classroom an enriched and exciting learning environment.

Brooke A. Hale
Sabal Palm Elementary, 4th grade
Integrating Fun, Cross-Curricular and Meaningful Experiences
Life is not lived in content areas, and in Ms. Hale’s classroom, lessons are not taught that way either. Real-life, practical lessons cover multiple subject areas at one time and create a high level of engagement. By assuming various roles associated with the work world, students are practicing life skills as they conquer the content standards.

Georgiana Dolan
Tommie Barfield Elementary, 3rd grade
Future World Changers
With a mission to build leaders and future world changers, Ms. Dolan’s students investigate real-world problems and generate multiple solutions. In her 3rd grade science lab, they create blueprint plans that are carried through their investigations, adapted and justified with the evidence collected. Students then have the opportunity to showcase and celebrate their final projects.

Did You Know?
The Support Education license plate has a fresh look! The new design focuses on Florida’s bright education system with a look that can only be found in the Sunshine State.

Every time someone purchases a “Support Education” plate in Collier County it provides classroom grants to local teachers.
Christine Brady  
Avalon Elementary, 5th grade  
**Cultivating a Caring Classroom Community**  
In this classroom, the “Brady Bunch” works as a team to collaborate, learn, and have fun! With a strong focus on celebrating success, character building, and growth mindset, Ms. Brady is able to create a caring environment where students want to be in school, encourage each other, and want to see growth in their own learning and understanding.

Barbara Clawson  
Big Cypress Elementary, K – 2nd grade  
**Growing Love and Awareness**  
This classroom of students with special needs is an inclusive and welcoming environment. Under Ms. Clawson’s guidance, a variety of behavioral and academic supports are in place to ensure success for all her students, such as having 5th graders come in during their recess time to read with her students. These types of activities increase awareness and cooperation inside and outside the walls of the classroom.

Angel Rafaloff  
Lake Trafford Elementary, 1st grade  
**Nurturing Relationships, Growth Mindset + Positive Reinforcement = Success!**  
Nurturing relationships with compassion creates long-lasting social and emotional connections. Working through difficult situations, problems, and content with grit, productive struggle and perseverance is an accepted and embraced culture in Ms. Rafaloff’s classroom. Positive Reinforcement is the key to strengthening good behavior for the entire class. These components all equal success in the classroom.

Jenna Garcia  
Laurel Oak Elementary, 2nd grade  
**Creating a Loving, Encouraging, and Kind Environment**  
In her classroom, Ms. Garcia makes sure each student has the opportunity to shine brightly. Through her positive practice, a loving, encouraging and kind environment is created. Infusing fun and Kagan cooperative strategies into this setting leads to increased engagement, positive behavior and a caring classroom.

Brittany Crouss  
Lely Elementary, 1st grade  
**Throw Kindness Around Like Confetti**  
With young impressionable and open minds, the simple habit of reinforcing and rewarding kindness activities throughout the day, every day, leads to instilling kindness that will become natural to them and last a lifetime. In Ms. Crouss’ classroom, she reinforces this simple behavior until it becomes infectious, spilling out of the classroom and into her students’ lives outside of school.

Patsy Garcia  
Marco Island Charter Middle, 7th grade  
**Growth Mindset in a Culture of Kindness**  
In Ms. Garcia’s classroom, students learn the importance of working hard, making mistakes, growing through failure, never giving up and persevering in an environment where they accept one another. They recognize that their approach to every aspect of life affects the outcome. Kindness goes a long way in forming a safe and comfortable learning environment filled with respectful and resilient students.

Gina Margaret Nesbit  
North Naples Middle, 6th – 8th grade  
**Character Education in the Fine Arts!**  
In Ms. Nesbit’s classroom, character education is taught through the visual arts. Using art, she fosters the development of ethical and responsible students by teaching them about the positive values of caring for others, respect, responsibility, and what makes a well-rounded upstanding citizen. The result is not only beautiful art, but students who have a deeper understanding of what it takes to build community.

Darlene Pellechia  
Osceola Elementary, 1st grade  
**Together, We are a Family of Learners**  
In Ms. Pellechia’s classroom, the concept of family is established from Day 1. Participation in classroom discussions and group activities designed to encourage critical thinking and respect for each other helps students understand that they are each a valued member of the class. With that realization, students are more willing to take risks, challenge themselves and persevere.

Amy York  
Pine Ridge Middle, 7th grade  
**Instafam: Creating a Second Home in my Classroom**  
Using a play on social media, Ms. York has created an “Instafam” in her classroom. By likening each class to a family, she establishes open communication with students and parents, and focuses on inclusivity, kindness and high energy. These foundational elements lead to increased comfort in the company of their peers, which in turn means higher engagement and learning.

— Golden Apple recipient
Maria Vollrath
Poinciana Elementary, 1st grade
A Positive Community: Fostering Motivation and Engagement
While integrating the state standards into positive school and community service projects, Ms. Vollrath’s students are motivated and engaged in making a difference in the world. Through these service projects, the class is building a foundation of kindness and instilling the spirit of empathy and compassion within the classroom and the greater community.

Deborah L. Marino
Sea Gate Elementary, 2nd grade
S.P.I.C.E. Up Your Life
Ms. Marino believes that character defines who you are, and it affects the choices you make in life. Her best practice motivates students to be successful by using spices (good character qualities) to develop the “BEST ME.” Students learn and practice through a variety of activities and earn spice ingredients for their “BEST YOU STEW” Recipe Card. Students transfer this learning into their homes and out into the community.

Special thanks to these individuals and organizations who have provided support to facilitate the sharing of practices between teachers and with our community.

MARY INGRAM FUND OF THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION

Naples Daily News

Suncoast Credit Union

WELLS FARGO

To learn more about the Golden Apple program and how to support teachers visit ChampionsForLearning.org