

## **BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES**

**Best Practice:** New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools, Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, Arthur Hyde, 1998

<b>INCREASE</b>	<b>DECREASE</b>
<p><b>In-depth study of topics in each social studies field, in which students make choices about what to study and discover the complexities of human interaction</b></p> <p><b>Emphasis on activities that engage students in inquiry and problem solving about significant human issues</b></p> <p><b>Student decision making and participation in wider social, political, and economic affairs, so that they share a sense of responsibility for the welfare of their school and community</b></p> <p><b>Participation in interactive and cooperative classroom study processes that bring together students of all ability levels</b></p> <p><b>Integration of social studies with other areas of the curriculum</b></p> <p><b>Richer content in elementary grades. building on the prior knowledge children bring to social studies topics; this includes study of concepts from psychology. sociology. economics. and political science. as well as history and geography; students of all ages can understand. within their experience. American social institutions. issues for social groups. and problems of everyday living</b></p> <p><b>Students valuing and sense of connection with American and global</b></p>	<p><b>Memorization of isolated facts in textbooks</b></p> <p><b>Isolation from the actual exercise of responsible citizenship; emphasis only on reading about citizenship or future participation in the larger social and political world</b></p> <p><b>Lecture classes in which students sit passively; classes in which students of lower ability levels are deprived of the knowledge and learning opportunities that other students receive</b></p> <p><b>Narrowing social studies activity to include only textbook reading and test taking</b></p> <p><b>Assumption that students are ignorant about or uninterested in issues raised in social studies</b></p> <p><b>Postponement of significant curriculum until secondary grades</b></p> <p><b>Use of curriculum restricted to only one dominant cultural heritage</b></p> <p><b>Use of curriculum that leaves students disconnected from and unexcited about social studies topics</b></p> <p><b>Assessments only at the end of a unit or grading period; assessments that test only factual knowledge or memorization of textbook information</b></p>

**history. the history and culture of diverse social groups. and the environment that surrounds them**

**Students. inquiry about the cultural groups they belong to. and others represented in their school and community. to promote students. sense of ownership in the social studies curriculum**

**Use of evaluation that involves further learning and that promotes responsible citizenship and open expression of ideas**

### **STUDENT-CENTERED**

The best starting point for schooling is young people's real interests; all across the curriculum, investigating student' own questions should always take precedence over studying arbitrarily and distantly selected "contents"

### **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.

### **HOLISTIC**

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

### **AUTHENTIC**

Real, rich, complex ideas and materials are at the heart of the curriculum. Lessons or textbooks that water-down, control, or oversimplify content ultimately disempower students.

### **EXPRESSIVE**

To fully engage ideas, construct meaning, and remember information, students must regularly employ the whole range of communicative media-speech, writing, drawing, poetry, dance, drama, music, movement, and visual arts.

### **REFLECTIVE**

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

### **SOCIAL**

Learning is always socially constructed and often interactional; teachers need to create classroom interactions that "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 comes when children develop true understanding of concepts through higher-order thinking associated with various fields of inquiry and through 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 re-create and reinvent every cognitive system they encounter, including language, literacy, and mathematics.

**CHALLENGING**

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