

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

INCREASE	DECREASE
<p>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</p> <p>Emphasis on activities that engage students in inquiry and problem solving about significant human issues</p> <p>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</p> <p>Participation in interactive and cooperative classroom study processes that bring together students of all ability levels</p> <p>Integration of social studies with other areas of the curriculum</p> <p>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</p> <p>Students valuing and sense of connection with American and global</p>	<p>Memorization of isolated facts in textbooks</p> <p>Isolation from the actual exercise of responsible citizenship; emphasis only on reading about citizenship or future participation in the larger social and political world</p> <p>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</p> <p>Narrowing social studies activity to include only textbook reading and test taking</p> <p>Assumption that students are ignorant about or uninterested in issues raised in social studies</p> <p>Postponement of significant curriculum until secondary grades</p> <p>Use of curriculum restricted to only one dominant cultural heritage</p> <p>Use of curriculum that leaves students disconnected from and unexcited about social studies topics</p> <p>Assessments only at the end of a unit or grading period; assessments that test only factual knowledge or memorization of textbook information</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.