**Elements of Best Practice in Social Studies**

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| **Element of Best Practice with definition** | **What the teacher is doing…** | **What the students are doing…** |  |
| **Student Centered** Educational instruction technique that places students at the center of learning by  connecting content in meaningful ways to students’ experiences through self-discovery and motivation | \* Formulating relevant lessons that allow students to engage with the content  \*Allowing student stakeholders to make democratic choices in assignments and assessments  \*Engaging students in practical real world experiences that are authentic and related to the students’ lives  \*Involving local businesses and community leaders with instructional projects  \*Utilizing multiple intelligence instructional strategies to support students’ diverse learning styles  \*Providing critical, constructive and timely feedback on student performance  \*Supporting students and groups of students as a knowledgeable and informed facilitator | \*Working at their own pace  \*Students are learning by doing  \*Self-motivation is driven by topics that inspire themselves  \*Being accountable for learning by making responsible choices   \* Actively engaging in discussions, sharing ideas and being supportive listeners when others are speaking  \*Expressing their ideas in a variety of mediums  \*Using reflection to digest/debrief, recognize broader principles, and developing an understanding for how obstacles were overcome |  |
| **Constructivist** A learning approach that guides learners to new understandings by allowing students opportunities to build and construct ideas based on previous learned knowledge | \*Pre-assessing at the start of each new unit and lesson  \*Integrating a    read aloud story that relates to the topic to be learned so that students can make connections to what they already know.  \*Establishing and creating an environment where students can build their own understandings.  \*Demonstrating patience by allowing students time to build their own understandings  \*Front-loading vocabulary by giving students working definitions  \*Using a holistic approach, showing students the  big picture before examining the components  \*Scaffolding content to meet the needs of all students | \* Visualizing and discussing what is happening in the book and their opinions/knowledge.  \*Extending learning beyond the classroom  \*Assimilating new information with content previously learned  \*Writing definitions based upon their current understanding, then revisiting their definitions as they gain more understanding |  |
| **Inquiry-Based** Student centered and teacher guided instructional approach inspired by student interest questions | \*Asking guided questions as a facilitator   \*Facilitating  student learning by asking students questions to lead their own research  \*Fostering a sense of community with student groups  \*Immersing students in learning experiences from multicultural perspectives  \*Focusing on depth vs. breadth through spiraling foundational topics and introducing new content that expands on previously learned content | \*Working collaboratively and interactively to find the answer to a problem - students don’t wait for an answer from the teacher  \*Synthesizing information from multiple resources to find answers to complex problems  \*Willingness to self-discover  \*Planning and carrying out learning activities |  |
| **Social** **Interaction** The relationship between two or more students | \*Establishing guidelines for group work and training students for roles by modeling for example   \*Designing activities that provide opportunities for group work during activities  \*Promoting learning with other students with ideas from all students  \*Developing and maintaining a classroom culture where students are willing to take risks | \*  Providing  feedback for fellow students  \*  Working collaboratively on projects  \*  Debating issues with other students  \*  Appreciating and respecting different perspectives  \*Working in heterogeneous and homogeneous ability grouping situations  \*Delegating responsibilities to group members based on their known strengths |  |
| **Literacies** Weaving reading, writing, listening, and speaking within the curriculum content | \*Providing students with more than a textbook -  primary and secondary sources  \*Teaching students to question the reliability of text  \*Conducting mini-lessons to teach nonfiction text features   \*Assisting students in learning specific strategies for reading newspapers, magazines, maps, almanacs, etc.   \*Integrating social studies with other content subjects | \*Synthesizing text through analysis of multiple texts and drawing conclusions  \*Making connections with the first-hand accounts described in primary texts  \*Supporting inferences by citing text  \*Distinguishing between fact and opinion within a text  \*Writing about historical events from multiple perspectives  \*Utilizing a variety of literary mediums within their research (books, online sources, newspapers, maps, etc.)  \*Presenting meaningful research to their peers via written projects, spoken presentations, and technology |  |