

Elements of Best Practices	What the teacher is doing...	What the students are doing...	How I decided on this best practice
<p>1. Making Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will gain greater knowledge by making connections. Social studies instruction and learning should be built on students' prior knowledge of their lives and communities. By making connections between new information and past knowledge, skills, and experiences students will discover the importance and purpose of social studies as well as have a better sense of the world around them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding out what students already know. Building instruction on students' prior knowledge, skills, and experiences that they bring to school. Providing a variety of ways to understand a given concept. Differentiating instruction in order to meet the diverse needs of all students. Providing a variety of instructional strategies. Plan a strong integrated curriculum. Modeling ways to make connections. Coaching students to support their thinking in order to make connections. Focusing on the everyday lives of people (people are one of the subjects children understand best) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting information they are learning to previous understanding. Engaging in conversations with the teacher and their peers. Processing and thinking about their learning. Applying knowledge they have gained to current issues and authentic experiences. Comparing what they encounter to what they already know. Creating webs and KWL charts to link new knowledge to old knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While reading the three articles for this week I began to notice the word "connection" continuing to be used throughout all of the readings. There are many ways to make connections, but I found that connecting students' background knowledge, skills and experiences to new information is one of the most powerful. Because of this, I decided that a very essential element of best practices is making connections. Chapter 2 <i>The Theory Behind Disciplined Inquiry</i> states, "research on learning and instruction constantly shows that when school experiences aren't linked to prior understanding, students learn very little." It is both amazing and scary to think that the lack of connections made between students' background knowledge and new information can result in very little learning. This quote on research on learning and instruction greatly impacted my decision to make it an element of best practices.

Elements of Best Practices	What the teacher is doing...	What the students are doing...	How I decided on this best practice
<p>2. Giving Students Choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will gain greater knowledge by giving them the opportunity to choose topics of study, instructional strategies, and forms of assessment. By giving opportunities to exercise choice, students will be more motivated, engaged, and find social studies more meaningful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listing significant topics for students to choose from. Giving mini-lessons on how to thoughtfully choose what to study. Conducting conferences with students to support them. Listing assessment choices for students to choose from (writing piece, conference, presentation, visual, etc.) Listing instructional strategy choices for students to choose from (visual discovery, experimental, nonlinguistic representation, etc.) Learn students' needs, interests, hobbies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing topics that interest them. Choosing a form of assessment that they feel they will best represent their learning. Choosing instructional strategies that best support their learning. Engaging in topics, instructional strategies, and assessments that support their interests and needs as well as prepares them for democratic citizenship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giving your students' choice was a concept seen throughout this weeks readings. Chapter 2 <i>The Theory Behind Disciplined Inquiry</i>, discusses the benefits of allows students the opportunity to choose the form their assessment takes. <i>A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in Social Studies</i> lists being meaningful as a quality of powerful and authentic social studies. Meaningful instruction includes understanding and meeting the needs of your students as well as the interests and diversity of yours students. Lastly, Chapter 6 Best Practices in Social Studies, discusses students' needs for opportunities to exercise choice and responsibility by choosing there own topics of inquiry. I also believe that giving students choice is a best practices due to prior experience. While student teaching I often gave my students choices in their form of assessments. Allowing students to choose the way they wanted to show me what they have learned resulted in a huge difference in their motivation, engagement, and final product. I believe that giving students choice in other areas of instruction will produce the same results.