**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 |  |