

Best Practices in K–12 Social Studies

Look For	Best Practice	Highly Effective Description
Classroom Environment	<p>Establishes physical classroom environment and positive classroom culture to support learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher treats all students as smart and capable learners who are expected to contribute to classwork and discussion. • Teacher creates and maintains classroom culture of respect, encouraging students to ask questions and allowing all opinions to be safely shared and discussed. • Classroom arrangement accommodates a variety of student groupings (i.e., whole group, small groups, partners, independent work). Group work tasks are organized, and groups are organized so students are engaged at all times. • Teacher celebrates and displays proficient student work with scoring criteria; wall displays change periodically and reflect current content learning. • Students can access available technology. • Teacher provides regular, specific informal and formal feedback to students. • Teacher has established rituals and routines for classwork and homework that maximize instructional time; students know and follow procedures. • Routine tasks, such as taking role or handing back papers, are accomplished efficiently. • Teacher has established specific, measurable goals for student achievement. • Lessons and classroom environment are focused on student proficiency and demonstration of learning.
Instruction	<p>Plans and teaches lessons to support full implementation of DPS K-12 social studies curriculum</p>	<p>Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher engages students in lesson activities that address units’ identified big ideas, concepts, and essential questions with time for differentiation and re-teaching. • Lesson- and/or unit-specific standards are identified and posted in classroom. Units are focused around these standards and related learning objectives or intended learning. Teacher and students refer to standards and learning objectives or intended learning throughout units. <p>Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher explicitly develops and links concepts to students’ background experiences and between past learning and new concepts. Preview or introductory tasks provide short, intriguing activities that help students connect upcoming lessons to their own experiences, activating prior knowledge. • Teacher selects activities and tasks that tap students’ multiple intelligences and different learning styles. • Teacher explicitly provides closure through activities or discussions that challenge students to synthesize and apply information they learned during lessons. • Visual supports and/or demonstrations accompany oral and written instructions, so they are comprehensive, clear, accurate, and detailed. • Teacher uses a variety of question types, including ones that promote higher-order thinking skills. <p>Student Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable talk strategies are evident, encouraged, and commonly practiced. • Teacher uses established procedures to move quickly and easily into instructional groups (i.e., whole group, small groups, partners, individual); students understand and follow these procedures. • Teacher provides hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice, using new content knowledge and integrate all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking). • During lessons, teacher uses different multiple intelligences teaching strategies that involve students in learning through active, hands-on learning experiences.

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Assessment of Student Learning	Uses assessment to support student learning	<p>Informal and Formal Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments are directly tied to standards and learning objectives or intended learning. • Ongoing and daily assessments are developed with colleagues and/or data teams. Teachers seek critique from peers for improvement. • Assessment criteria and standards have been clearly communicated to students and posted in the room. Standards being addressed in current lessons are highlighted. • Near the beginning of units, teacher shares assessments and scoring criteria with students. When possible, teacher provides and discusses sample responses that represent each performance level with students. • Culminating assessments and rubrics are designed before the start of units of instruction using backwards design. Assessments are scored with rubrics that give students sufficient information about how to improve their proficiency. • District embedded and end-of-course assessments are used routinely. District-created end-of-unit assessments are used routinely in middle and high school. • Performance assessments require students to think critically and place them in real-world, authentic scenarios. <p>Management and Use of Assessment Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher uses classroom assessment results to evaluate success of previous instruction and modify instruction for all students. Teacher re-teaches concepts and skills to groups and individuals who have not yet demonstrated acceptable performance levels. Teacher provides enrichment for students who have demonstrated high performance levels. • Teacher closely links assessment and instruction to determine appropriate instructional strategies (formative) and support student progress and attainment of big ideas of social science disciplines (summative). • Teacher uses student work to guide instruction (formative) and assessment data analysis to understand student progress (summative). • Teacher maintains and generates reports of bodies of evidence (BOEs), using progress indicators and including both accurate assessment records and student work samples. <p>Teacher Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher provides constructive, accurate, timely, and specific feedback to students. Students can use feedback to improve learning. • Teacher has scoring rubric that outlines proficiency levels for major assignments and essays. Students use rubrics to help them succeed at higher levels. • Proficient student work is posted with rubrics and criteria and updated regularly.

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Disciplinary Literacy in the Social Sciences	Supports and promotes disciplinary literacy in civics, economics, geography and/or history	<p>To support and promote disciplinary literacy in civics, economics, geography, and/or history, teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs and/or uses lessons that include multiple texts and source documents. • Designs and/or uses lessons that require students to examine multiple points of view. • Engages students in lesson activities that focus on inquiry, analysis, and interpretation. • Requires that students formulate and test hypotheses using a variety of evidence. • Prompts students to share their interpretations and/or challenge other’s interpretations by using evidence and asking questions. • Provides students opportunities to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources. <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use chronology to organize historical events and people. • Students use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships. • Students apply knowledge of the past to analyze present-day issues and events from multiple, historically accurate perspectives. • Students examine change over time. <p>Geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students analyze pattern and distribution in both human and physical geography. • Students examine physical and human characteristics of places. • Students analyze interactions between human and physical systems. • Students analyze spatial relationships. <p>Economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students analyze costs and benefits, needs and wants. • Students apply knowledge of limited resources to make economic decisions. • Students analyze causes and effects of economic interdependence. <p>Civics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identify and understand sources of and differences between power and authority. • Students evaluate advantages and disadvantages of government policies. • Students suggest changes to either improve existing government policies or create new ones. • Students develop, evaluate, and defend positions with regard to specific issues and policies. • Students develop the capacity to participate in civic activities.